



Note of Meeting 14 May 2015 in Summerhill Methodist Church

Present Susan (Chair) Rob (WPO) Kit (Memb Sec) Fabian (Cllr) Doreen Elaine Gill Keith Rod Margaret D Sharon Helen (Minutes)

Apologies: Margaret (Cttee)

The minutes of the March meeting were approved without amendment.

Chair invited introductions round the table, as there were new faces at the meeting. She said that Clare had resigned from the Friends of Troopers Hill Committee but would still remain a Friends supporter.

The meeting honoured the memory of the late FOTH member, Pete Harris. Susan, Kit and Helen had attended his funeral in April 2015 on behalf of FOTH. Kit thanked Susan for sending a note of condolence to his widow, Val.

Issues and thank yous for Parks staff

- Works on winter maintenance had begun late and had not so far been completed. Bramble and bracken were still to be cleared from the steps at entrance E (Troopers Hill Road).

Action: Chair to establish the reason for delay to this task

- The edges of paths on the Hill in general needed strimming. A fallen apple tree blocking the path in 'Sally's glade' had been reported to the Council.

Action: Rob to confirm arrangements for addressing wear and tear on the recently refurbished steps, and for future maintenance and management

- The Council had offered a Green Capital Flag to occupy the flagpole in place of last year's Green Flag, and a new flag was expected to arrive in the following week. Changing the flag would also entail replacing a missing weight

Troopers Hill Field

- Progress on play area consultation

Susan reported that the on-line consultation had opened on the previous day (13 May) and had reached about 3000 consultees according to Facebook statistics. She circulated and outlined the contents of the consultation questionnaire. 500 copies were delivered to local addresses, and further copies had been provided to Summerhill Infants and Air Balloon Primary schools. The Council had provided a Freepost address and return envelopes for the home delivered questionnaires. The consultation would remain open until 1 June. So far the on-line consultation had attracted 146 responses, including 4 opponents. Susan explained the next phase of consultations and Kit recommended re-tweeting the closing date.

Susan mentioned that Chris Deane had been in contact with Kerry McCarthy MP. Gill commented the proposals should attract families and picnics. In her view, objections to the plans should be minimal, given the distance of the site from other local play provision (St George and Dundridge Parks), with particular reference to open space in Hanham, and the opinions of dog owners. Fabian mentioned the progress on improving play facilities at Dundridge, which had also been assisted by FOTH. Chair explained the issues in avoiding overlapping provision.

Keith remarked on the low incidence of vandalism in St George Park. Kit mentioned that the play area needed to be near the houses, for that very reason.

It was proposed that the slide would remain in place, being uneconomic to remove. A preliminary conversation with tree officer, Leigh Cadogan, had taken place. The play facilities would cost in the region of £65,000. The grant available from SITA was limited to £50,000. It was probable that another landfill grant provider would be approached to make up the balance. The St George Neighbourhood Partnership Committee have agreed £15,000 for the project some of which would provide match funding.

- Tree maintenance

A consultation on tree planting was planned for later in the year, to include applications for memorial trees which are bigger than the whips normally supplied as new and replacement trees for municipal sites. On the subject of memorials, Susan proposed that 'Little Elizabeth's' bench – which is deteriorating - could potentially be replaced by a memorial bench.

- Grass cut

Friends were awaiting a response about the quality of the grass cut on the Field.

Work parties - recent

- The 4 April work party had concentrated on freeing an area of broom from bramble, above the top of the steps at entrance E, the broom was reported to be looking well and covered in yellow flowers at the time of writing.

- On 2 May, volunteers in a party led by Kit had worked on eradicating saplings and low-lying bramble in 'Sally's Glade'.

Work parties - before the next meeting:

- 6 June – to be led by Kit, aiming to clear the overgrown edges of the accessible path between the Field gate and the top chimney.

- 4 July – activity TBA.

Events – recent

- A highly successful Star Party had been held on 26 March – the last opportunity of the year before the clocks changed. The event had attracted 26 people (including children) on a fine night. It was hoped that further dates could be arranged for next year. Liz R had offered to apply on behalf of FOTH for a Dark Skies designation, and discussion ensued about whether the designation offered any planning protection. Chair thanked Rod for liaising with the Bristol Astronomical Society over arrangements and for the star party. The meeting was reminded that the Bugs and Beasties event in August would include solar observations from the Bristol Astronomical Society.

- Good Friday Service (3 April)

Rob reported that the arrangements had proved satisfactory. A display of FOTH material was provided inside the Methodist Church before the procession during coffee and hot cross buns. The keyboard had been successfully protected from light rain.

Action: To remind the organisers about a keyboard power supply for next year's event.

- Dundridge Park Dawn Chorus (18 April)

The event, run jointly by FOTH and Friends of Dundridge Park, had attracted over 20 participants to hear Ed Drewitt's commentary on the dawn chorus, starting at 5.30. The intensity of the chorus had peaked at 6.00. The event included listening to birdsong from the fields and woodlands via the Deer Path. A falcon was brought along by a local resident and displayed at the end, and the event finished with tea and coffee in the pavilion.

Events – Before the next meeting

- Avon Valley Walk (17 May)

The event was fully booked (25 individuals). Rob and a representative from the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust had planned a route to include Troopers Hill Field, the Bath House, Conham and Dundridge.

- Music on the Hill (27 June)

FOTH had booked the Fantasy Orchestra whose programme includes film scores and music from around the world. Susan intended to announce the results of the play consultation at the event.

- St George Strollers 100th walk

Susan was considering options for a special walk in July celebrating four years of the Strollers, including points of particular interest in St George. She circulated the current Walk Fest leaflet.

In the context of event funding, Rod asked whether FOTH had considered becoming a registered charity in order to apply for grants available only to charities. In the following discussion it emerged that the administrative demands of running a charity, though perhaps not so onerous as formerly, would probably exceed the resource capacity currently available to FOTH.

Networking

- Neighbourhood Partnership

The meeting agreed to re-nominate Rob as the Friends' representative at the St George Neighbourhood Partnership, for the forthcoming year (June 2015-16).

- LNR celebration

To celebrate 20 years of local nature reserves in Bristol (Troopers Hill was the third of eight to be designated), four more designations were under way and it was proposed – during Green Capital year - to designate four further sites. A celebration event was proposed for October. LNR groups were invited to organise walks for members of other LNR volunteers with the aim of encouraging networking and publicity. Rob and Susan were liaising with Richard Ennion over the arrangements. The meeting agreed that credit was due to the Acton-Campbells for the influence that FOTH has exerted on other LNR and community groups.

- Parkhive

The free app for Parkhive – a collaborative project by Bristol Parks Forum and the University of the West of England - was due to be launched at this year's Festival of Nature. Another aim of the project is to gather an archive of photographs of the city's parks and green spaces.

Action: Kit to consider linking with the Troopers Hill audio trail
Rob to send stargazing photographs

- Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob reported 495 Facebook 'likes' – the number had been inflated recently by respondents to the play area consultation. Rob showed the meeting a graph of Facebook activity that showed, among other things, a peak around the falconry event. The number of Twitter followers had increased to 442. The website was currently receiving around 500 visits per day. It had been updated to facilitate access to the play consultation and weather information. Kit suggested a webcam link showing views of the Hill.

Newsletter

- Suggestions for articles included thanks to Clare on her resignation from the Committee, a call for new Committee members, and concerns about the future viability of the Friends group, given the low levels of volunteers currently attending work parties and events. Options were discussed for changing future meeting arrangements.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 9 July, same time and venue.