



## **Note of Meeting**

**Thursday, 24 January 2013**

**Due to heating failure in meeting room at Summerhill Methodist Church meeting moved to Kit and Helen's house. Many thanks for their hospitality.**

Present: Rob (chairing), Kit (Memb Sec), Bryan (Cttee), Jude (Cttee) , Clare (Cttee), Jules (BCC), Fabian (Cllr), Elaine, Stephen, Helen (Minutes)

Apologies: Susan, Norman, Margaret, Denise, Steve (Pearce)

The previous minutes were approved without amendment.

## **Issues and thank yous for Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team**

- Thanks to Jules for all his valuable work including spreading grit elsewhere during the snowiest periods. It was confirmed that it would be inappropriate to put salt and grit on nature reserves. Jules thanked the individual(s) who had collected rubbish and placed it near to the bins. He reported seeing interesting makeshift sleds including wheelie bin lids and one bath. Apparently, the activity had not had much effect on the Hill.
- Work on felling the leylandii at the nursery (with their agreement) had been delayed by the snowfall, Jules had carried out some preparatory work and it was understood that the work was due to be contracted out. The timing was problematic because of the nursery's opening hours. **Post meeting note** - work completed the following week.
- Since the last FOTH meeting the hedge at Greendown hedge had been suitably cut, ruts from the flailing machine were not too severe. Stephen enquired about keeping the natural form of the hedge. It was explained that Greendown residents prefer the height restricted to preserve their views. The traditional method of laying the hedge would require extensive upward growth in advance. Jules suggested a rejuvenating cut once every few years and a tidy-up at the next work party.
- Jules suggested a small project to improve the footpath between Greendown and the gully (as far as the estate fencing). This was the most used path on the Hill, also the muddiest and slipperiest. Jules suggested that a few tonnes of stone should be brought in to surface the path. Rob made a point that the limit of the stone needed clear demarcation.
- Re-pointing work to the top of the lower (Square) chimney stack was scheduled for March/April. The scaffolding might require closure of Troopers Hill road and a traffic diversion.
- New growth had been trimmed from base of the poplar tree recently felled on Troopers Hill Field. The middle ash tree had lost its leaves early, was checked for Fraxinus dieback but did not seem to be affected. It was recognised that ash dieback was difficult to control.
- The meeting viewed photographs of shrubs at the entrance gate to the Field at Malvern Road illustrating concerns that they were becoming large enough to provide hiding places. It was agreed that Jules would use his judgement whether, and how much they should be trimmed.

- The Neighbourhood Partnership had decided to allocate section 106 money for the Field tarmac path with wooden edges. [Work started in February].
- The benches and slide on Troopers Hill Field could benefit from painting (photographs circulated) either at a summer work party or with assistance from local schools.
- Work was needed to widen the kissing gate to Lamb Hill (to be organised by Justin Smith using Community Payback labour) - **Done**

**Progress on the "Stepping Forward" Project 2013 - Experiencing Troopers Hill - funded by the Big Lottery and the Co-operative Community Fund.**

£3500 had been granted from Community Spaces and £2000 from the Co-op for an audio trail and a physical trail marked with small plates on the face of steps, designed in conjunction with local children. It was acknowledged that metal might attract thieves and perhaps plastic coloured to look like brass could be used for the plates. Funding was also available for the re-drawn maps on the interpretation boards to support the audio trail, with an A3 version also available. Jules also mentioned his idea for a map of short cuts and off-road routes interconnecting nature reserves.

**Actions: Rob to speak to Ruth (meeting at the school next week) Kit and Stephen to discuss the audio trail.**

- Jules commented on the appearance of the aerial photograph used for the green flag judging in which the compartments were distinguished in red, and hard to see on a mobile phone. A map was preferred to a photograph. Rob commented that the Council map from 1946 was available on the Troopers Hill web site, which showed the Field covered with allotments.

**Work parties completed recently included**

- Saturday 6th October when for the first time participants removed gorse that was spreading into heather. On 3rd November volunteers cut more gorse and some of the activity was filmed by students from UWE. On 1st December and 7th January the work party cut down bramble and saplings in Sally's Glade.

**Work parties in prospect included**

- Saturday 2nd February, to cut bramble and cherry saplings in the area above the square chimney bramble and cherry trees. The activity for 2nd March was still to be decided.

Rob mentioned Good Gym Bristol whose participants go for a run, work on a conservation project and run back to central Bristol. A separate web site promoted a Two Towers challenge run time taking in both Cabot Tower and Troopers Hill. Rob proposed a leisurely Two Towers walk at some time in the summer.

**Advertising for volunteers**

- Numbers at work parties had declined. It was agreed that the website could be clearer about what volunteers can join in with on the Hill. The Volunteer Bristol web site <http://www.volunteerbristol.org.uk/> does link to Troopers Hill.
- Fabian suggested advertising at the Community Fair and Neighbourhood Partnership Forums
- Bryan suggested a poster in shop window, linking to VOSCUR and Volunteer Bristol
- Jules observe that he has promoted Troopers Hill opportunities when companies offer large groups of volunteers. Rob suggested that sizeable groups might be able to take lunch breaks at the Summerhill Methodist Church.

## **Awards**

- Green Flag: Bristol Council would definitely repeat an application for a Green Flag award for Troopers Hill, and were expecting a mystery shop visit rather than formal judging.
- It's Your Neighbourhood : All present agreed that it would be appropriate to enter for this award.

## **St George Strollers Walking for Health update**

Clare reported that arrangements had operated smoothly up to Christmas, including walks and the Strollers' half-yearly meeting. More recently, bad weather and illnesses amongst walk leaders had prevailed. The new year had begun with two short walks in the Barton Hill area (re-scheduled from Nightingale Valley walk due to excessively muddy conditions). Clare estimated that 20-24 walkers had attended. A walk in Redland and Clifton was the first to be cancelled, because of poor weather. Jules mentioned power walking was being introduced in St George Park at lunchtimes. The meeting discussed various degrees of walking opportunities used by different types of walkers.

## **Events since our last meeting**

- Sunday 14th October, Family Fun Dog Show

The show had attracted fewer entrants than previous years but had nevertheless been a success. The set up had been particularly practical and would be repeated for a future event. The next dog show would be held at Eastwood Farm at Easter, but FOTH would not hold a dog show in 2013.

- Saturday 20th October, Stepping Forward Celebration 2pm - 4pm

Sally Oldfield had paid a return visit, to open the trail and celebrate completion of the project. There had been some Press coverage. The event was reasonably attended but more children would have been welcome.

- Sunday, 4th November, Fungi Foray 10.30am

A rainy morning had cleared up in time for a well attended walk with a wide range of fungi. One of the specimens found was suspected of being of Norwegian origin and Justin Smith was in correspondence with other experts to establish its provenance.

- Thursday 6th December - AGM/Slide Show, the meeting had gone well and it was proposed to repeat the format of the event for future years.

## **Forthcoming Events**

Following the planning meeting on Thursday 1st November, leaflets were available showing the programme of events for 2013. A further leaflet was being prepared which would combine FOTH events with Wild City (including Eastwood Farm, Avon Valley, East Bristol Riverscape & Brislington Brook Project) activities, aiming to have the information available by the end of March.

- Sunday 3rd February: Geology Walk- led by Andrew Mathieson, who had been in contact with Rob. A dozen people had already booked for the walk and spaces would be limited to 25,

- Saturday 9th March: St Aidan's Community Fair; volunteers would be needed on the previous night and during the event to set up and host two stands (FOTH and Strollers). Kit and Helen would be responsible for the FOTH stand and walk leaders and walkers for the other.

- Sunday 17th March: Dawn Chorus. Ed Drewitt's walk at 6.30 am had already attracted some bookings.

- Extra Event - Bristol 99 - Bristol Natural History Consortium. The organisation proposed to run a series of bio-blitzes leading up to Festival of Nature in June. They aimed to record species at some of 99 sites of nature conservation interest. They had asked for assistance from FOTH given the special conditions on Troopers Hill. The prospective date was the afternoon of 26th May. FOTH were asked to set up gazebos and

a display and otherwise facilitate generally. It was possible that FOTH would pay for an expert and might be able to recoup the expense. Certain details remained to be sorted out

- The Ambling Band had confirmed availability for Music on the Hill in June.
- August Bugs & Beasties event: someone from Phoenix 52 would run the crafts activities.

### **Facebook/website update**

Likes of the FOTH Facebook page had reached almost 200.

Rob explained that replicating the Neighbourhood Partnership model would cause no extra work in opening a Twitter account, reflecting the Facebook content, and would be useful for spreading immediate news such as changes/cancellation of events, as well as opportunities to invite feedback. The meeting agreed a six-month trial period for the Twitter account

### **Newsletter**

Many people had thought highly of the last issue, including Jules' Diary.

Ideas for the next issue (due March) included articles on the Ambling Band and Bristol 99. It was agreed that it may be too late to organise a photographic competition for 2013 but perhaps one could be held next year in conjunction with the Avon Valley Partnership.