



Note of Meeting: Thursday 26 September 2013

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road, St George, Bristol

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Kit (Memb Sec), Clare (WFH), Bryan (Cttee), Jude (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee), Roy, Helen (minutes)

Apologies

Denise (BCC), Julian (BCC), Fabian (Cllr), Keith.

Minutes of the previous meeting (July 2013)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment.

Issues and thanks for our Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team

- Rob was expecting (on the following day) to discuss maintenance arrangements with Jamie Roberts for the refurbished steps, the raised bed outside the Greendown entrance, and patches of worn grass at the goalposts on Troopers Hill Field. In addition he intended to ask about resourcing now that Jules' working hours were shared with St Anne's Woods and Nightingale Valley as well as Troopers Hill.

- Susan reported that the issue over Ramblers' Association waymarks had been resolved, after agreement had been reached about placing route markers for their South Bristol circular walk.

- Patches of grass burnt in fires over the summer had generally recovered, with scarcely any remaining visible signs. Community Payback would be asked to remove the scorched broom, and it was expected that the burned areas would quickly regenerate.

Action: Denise to investigate the question of Fire Severity Index –carried forward from the last meeting.

- Kit reported two approaches to Friends for permission to place geocaches on Troopers Hill, for which the landowner's permission is necessary. It was recognised that Bristol Parks do not condone placing caches in general. Kit arranged for a micro cache to be hidden, on condition that the written instructions emphasise that nothing is to be disturbed and barbecues were not permitted. Thanks to Jamie Roberts for agreeing this request on behalf of the landowners, Bristol City Council. A request from someone to hide a cache under a stone amongst the heather was discouraged as it would be unsuitable on a nature reserve as well as too close to other existing geocaches.

Plant survey

Tony Smith, a naturalist also involved in the Bristol 99 survey, had met Susan, and Stephen Williams on 26th July and had surveyed 3 compartments on Troopers Hill, finding 51 plant species in the hay meadows. Friends of Troopers Hill expressed gratitude to Tony for donating his time to this task. Tony Smith had approved of Steve Pearce's seed storage idea (see minutes of previous meeting)

Action: Helen to type the species list and assist with progress on the seed bank idea.

Troopers Hill Field

- The worn grass at the goal mouths was discussed (see above)
- A stake and cage missing from the recently-planted hornbeam tree had not been replaced. Rob stated that Tree Bristol currently lacked the resources to deal with it. Jude reported receiving favourable comments about the new path and benches.

The Chimneys

- Rob reported that the lower chimney stack was now in better condition than it had been for a long time, although it was possible that further (non-urgent) attention to the stonework might be necessary. He displayed photographs including those of the refurbished street name plate.

- Works to the top chimney had required ropes inside for rebuilding and re-pointing the interior. The chimney was no longer dangerous inside from a risk of falling stones. The work was due to finish during the following week. The shape of the chimney had shown no signs of distortion and had not needed metal bands to support it. An annual check had been recommended. Some non-urgent minor cracks had been reported on the outside of the chimney but the current strengthening was expected to last for at least two years. The metal sheet covering the entrance, which had been made into a door, had been ripped away on the previous weekend.

Action: Rob to write to the Bristol Post suggesting a Press release on re-opening the chimney (a 'good news' story for the paper).

Operation Scoop

- The Council had held an exercise on Troopers Hill to engage and possibly catch dog walkers not clearing up after their pets, in the event no offenders were identified. The activity had involved a partnership of the police, dog wardens and Neighbourhood Working Party. St George Park had also been also targeted.

Action: Rob to add Council contact details to the web site.

Progress on the "Stepping Forward" and Co-operative Community Fund grant

- The entire budget of over £30,000 had been spent. Susan explained that a supplementary application to Community Spaces for up to £2000 had not been granted due to restrictive conditions and time constraints. The most recent expenditure had been on the Tree Trail, Fun Learning Trails and the new Audio Trail (a short demonstration of the audio material followed). The Audio file was available to download from the Troopers Hill web site and to mobile phones via the QR codes on information boards. Rob suggested putting a poster at the start point (entrance to Hill from Field).

- Leaflet re-prints had been funded from the Co-Operative Community Fund. Bryan and Jude offered to display the new leaflets at Model Mania.

Actions: Bryan and Jude to investigate having a purpose-made display stand for leaflets. Chair to write to the Co-op with an end of project report.

Awards

- Since the last meeting it had been announced that the Hill had been awarded a Green Flag for the seventh successive year.
- Susan reported the news that the Hill had been assessed as level 5 'Outstanding' in the RHS It's Your Neighbourhood awards.

Work parties

- The 3 August work party had raised this year's new Green Flag, and tackled bracken growing amongst heather in the Gully.

- Unsuitable weather resulted in the cancellation of the 14 August evening work party during which it had been proposed to re-paint the slide on the Field, some discussion of the practicalities ensued.
- Badminton school had donated £100 in relation to a work party on 3 September in which pupils had participated.

Action: Susan to write a thank you note and confirm there were no objections to posting photographs of the Badminton school visit on the FOTH web site.

- The 7 September work party, led by Kit, had attracted two new people. The volunteers had tackled bramble and an overgrowth of broom in above the lower middle steps from Troopers Hill Road,

- Next work parties

Susan planned to lead the 5 October work party. The activities for the 2 November work party were still to be determined.

Volunteering

At least two work party participants had volunteered after referral by the Job Centre.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

- Clare reported that the need to charge £2 per walk (following an unsuccessful grant application to FirstGroup) seemed not to have deterred walkers. Susan detailed the types of expenses covered by the charge, including bus fares incurred by walk leaders. A discussion followed of the charging policies of other Walking for Health groups.

Community First and Quartet grants permitted expenditure on running costs but otherwise it was difficult to obtain such funding. Susan confirmed that Bristol Council covered the mailing costs for the St George Strollers' publicity. There were 90 people on the current mailing list, and walks had attracted a maximum of 36 individuals.

- Susan reported that the Neighbourhood Partnership Wellbeing fund had provided £650 to pay for special trips from January onwards, that will be used for walks further afield needing transport (at least one per quarter) -

Actions: Bryan offered to print and laminate posters for the Strollers. Clare to investigate prices of coaches.

- Rob suggested that parts of the new audio trail could be used for a Strollers walk on Troopers Hill.

- The day before this meeting had been the 10th anniversary of Walk for Health Bristol and there had been a commemorative walk followed by speeches, whose content was briefly summarised by Susan.

Events

- It was reported that the family fun picnic had not attracted many visitors to begin with, but became busier towards the balloon launch. The meeting decided that any balloon fiesta related event next year should start later in the afternoon/early evening while waiting for news of the evening balloon flight.

- On a recent Sunday morning a hot air balloon had landed on the Hill (see newsletter article). The pilot had requested for the occasional use of the Field for launches, and was communicating with Bristol Parks regarding arrangements. FOTH took the view that the applicant should write to local residents to gauge whether there was any opposition.

- The elected Mayor of Bristol, Mr George Ferguson, had visited St George recently. Rob had met him for a short tour of Troopers Hill. The Mayor 'Tweeted' that Troopers Hill had been a highlight of his visit.
- The Fungi Foray was planned for Sunday 3 November 2013.
- There would be a meeting on 7 November (provisional date) at 3 Corkers Hill at 7.15 pm to plan next year's events. [meeting actually took place on 31 October]
- The Christmas social/ 10th anniversary celebration would be held on 13 December

Progress on scanning historical research from George Elliott

Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the meeting to Steve and Bryan for scanning the slides and documents.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

Friends of Troopers Hill now have 311 Facebook 'friends' and 163 Twitter 'followers', some of whom are the administrators for organisations such as Areas of Outstanding National Beauty.

Newsletter

Kit gave out copies of the newly-printed Autumn issue for distribution.