

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday 27th June 7.15 – 9pm

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd

Present: Rob (WPO), Susan (Chair), Fabian (Cllr), Rod (Committee), Elaine, Freya, Amy (Future Proof Parks), Richard, Margaret (Treasurer), Jo (Secretary)

Apologies: Adam

1. Approve April minutes and introductions

The April minutes were approved. The group introduced themselves to Freya who came along tonight after attending a work party recently and has more spare time since finishing her GCSE exams.

2. Projects

- Troopers Hill Young Rangers (Future Proof Parks): Amy reported back on the progress of this project so far and described her role. The purpose of the project which has funding until June 2021 is to increase the engagement and involvement of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 in the future of our parks. The project is working with 4 parks in Bristol.
- Friends of Troopers Hill is one of the first park groups they have worked with. In May, the group of Young Rangers ran a scavenger hunt on the hill. Susan and Rob commented how pleased they were with the success of the activity. In recent months the Young Rangers have been learning new skills via the training course which Amy and her team have run. Amy commented how the project has improved the Young Rangers confidence and skills. Over the summer they will look to recruit a new intake of Young Rangers but this time they will train each park group separately as opposed to all together as they had done last time. Amy proposed the 7th- 9th August as a date to run the next training session. Rob and Susan will check their availability and will also check with Arielle and Mali although it is not necessary for everyone to come along as they can just dip in and out dependant on when they are free. Once the dates are set, Amy will start promoting the project again. It was suggested that we could ask if the work party volunteers would like to walk the new rangers around the hill.
- Susan asked for help with the technology side of things such as pod casts. Amy reported that one of the members of her team has good skills in this area.
- Amy has some available time coming up and will also be doing a lot of work with Manor Woods and Eastville Park. She asked the group if they had any ideas of groups of the community the project could focus on setting up events for. Freya suggested contacting local girl guides and scouting groups. Her own Brownie group uses the hill for activities about once a term and it is a more secluded than other parks so is an ideal location for the type of activities they do. Susan mentioned the activity she did with a Brownie group last summer and reported how well it worked. Freya suggested asking St Aidan's Brownie group who might be interested as they do not have any outdoor space at their base.

ACTION – Rob and Susan to check availability for date to be set

Amy also informed the group about a Crowd Funding training event on the 1st October 1-6pm. The session will teach how to get the best from Crowd Funding for anyone who is looking to learn more about this method of fund raising.

- Progress on Access to Nature: Rob reported that he had a recent meeting with Bristol Parks and was told that the funding they have should be enough to cover the work we would like done. This will improve access to the hill by improving existing paths and installing a new path to the play area. A site visit has been done and this work should start in the next few weeks. Susan asked if the funds will be released to our account or whether it will go directly to the council. Rob will check but thinks it will go directly to the council.
- ParkWork woodland path works: Rob reported that the funding we received from Avon & Frome will be used to repair the steps leading up to the field from Crew's Hole road. They will also tidy up the area near to the bottom by adding some additional steps.
- Wild Play, Natural Learners, The Hive and application to the Nineveh Charitable Trust: Mali and her team have been continuing to run sessions with the Hive and have two more sessions to run. A recent session focusing on Birds can be found on You Tube and Susan commented on how successful it had been. The funding received also covers hire of community transport to bring the group to and from the centre in St George. Susan reported that unfortunately Nineveh Charitable Trust have turned down Mali's new funding application but has suggested it may be worth Mali contacting John James, another charity which may be willing to help instead. Funding from John James would last 3 years instead of one and therefore take away the extra work of having to reapply every year.

ACTION – Susan to speak to Mali about other potential funder

- Protecting Nature: Susan reported that the new fences have been installed and there is just a small amount of work left to improve the bases of 3 fence posts where the ground level dipped. She commented that Bristol City Council had done well to find a local business who could undertake this work as it meant storage costs were not needed for the new fencing as their base was close by and so the cost was kept down. The council are to get a quote on ripping out the old fencing. Rob explained how initially we did not think funds would stretch to removing the old fencing. It is rotting and restricting efficient verge cutting so it is a good time to remove it. This is the old fencing at sections of Troopers Hill road which can be removed without the need to replace as the areas are covered in bramble and woodland which naturally stops motorbike access. Susan has already checked with the Heritage Lottery funding that they are happy for the money to be used for this additional work.
A replacement dog bin was installed by Bristol City Council as the old one had been attached to the old fence and was of poor design. The new one is freestanding and is the same preferred design as all other bins around the hill.
Susan announced that she has arranged for a new fungi interpretation board to be installed next to the second entrance from the bottom of Troopers Hill Rd. Of the £44,800 of the funding from the Heritage Lottery we have now spent approximately half and when the final invoice is in Susan will apply to release another 40%. The 10% which will then be left over will be set on until she has written up a report on the project.
- Defibrillator update: FoTH helped Didac raise the funds for a defibrillator but it was stolen shortly after its installation earlier this year. Didac have now claimed on their insurance policy and a new one has been installed along with a security camera which will hopefully prevent it happening again.
- Celebration event: Susan asked for ideas of what we could do to celebrate the completion of the Protecting Nature project which we have £247 left from the funding pot to use for. She was thinking along the lines of an event close to where the new fungi interpretation board will be at the second entrance and asked the group for any ideas. She also added that she was going to ask Jane Memmott or Rupert Higgins to lead a walk.

Richard Fletcher will be signing off our new conservation management plan over the summer, therefore Susan was thinking of arranging this event in early September depending on when others are available. Susan also hopes to also ask natural Learners to lay on some activities. The group suggested an unveiling event at the bottom and possibly a gathering at the top. This is an idea we can start from but more work on this is needed.

ACTION – Group to work on plans for celebration event

3. Conservation work on Troopers Hill

- Heritage Fund and update to Conservation Management Plan: The management plan was discussed 19th June with Becky and Teija but there is still more work to be done.
- Heritage Fund works for summer and coming winter: The work which was of high priority has been done and there is £4,000 left. Rob doesn't think the gorse will need anymore strimming back in summer so the rest of this funding is likely to be used for winter works. Rob pointed out that keeping the gorse under control helps the heather re-establish but it cannot be a job for work party volunteers so funding will need to be set aside for this. He will chat to the Green Mantle contractors about the best plan of action. Another possibility is to arrange for the goats from Street Goat next door to visit the hill to eat some of it. If this did happen, they could be kept under control on leads.
Rob suggested it would also be a good idea for him to chat to Green Mantle about removal of the brambles next to the lower chimney to open up more space along the entrance path.
- Heritage Fund invertebrates survey: 2 survey visits have taken place so far, more will be done later this year. Entomologist, David Gibbs, well known in conservation circles, is carrying out the survey.
- Volunteer conservation work parties and other works: Susan reported it was a lovely sunny morning for the work party on 4th May when volunteers finished up work from the April work party. During the Thursday work party on 17th May ParkWork were also in attendance using Mental Health Awareness Week to promote their work and stayed on into the afternoon. Saturday 1st June was a hot and sunny day and we cleared the bracken where it grows into the heather. Luckily on the 20th June the rain stopped just as the work party started. ParkWork were on the hill again removing Cherry tree saplings and our volunteers worked on removing bramble. Susan commented how these work parties have been a good opportunity to spot any new wildlife on the hill.
Our new volunteer Freya found us via a volunteering website and put herself forward to design some new posters to promote our work parties and upcoming the Bugs 'n' Beasties event. These will go up on the hill tomorrow and will hopefully attract more attention than the old design which has been used for some time and seem to get walked past. Freya included some photos on her posters to show how Troopers Hill looked in 1946 compared to now. Fabian pointed out how much the hill has changed as much more of it is now covered by trees and if the grasslands becomes any smaller we will lose populations of wildlife. Hopeful the posters will demonstrate how important our work parties are to prevent this happening.
The next work parties before the next meeting in October will be Saturday 6th July, 3rd August, 7th September and Thursday 18th July, 15th August, 19th September.
On the 28th May, a group from Lloyds Bank came to work on the hill and tidied steps, removed some saplings and broom in the gully. Street Goat made use of some Oak saplings and bramble which was included in the waste pile. Lloyds bank staff had previously helped out 5 years ago and it had been suggested by one of the team they came back again. They also

kindly gave us and Summerhill Methodist Church a cash donation (the church had agreed to let them have use of their toilet facilities for the day).

- Possible visits from volunteer groups: The Environmental Agency are yet to confirm if they will be coming in October. Fabian will ask his workplace whether they might be interested in volunteering. Another organisation has contacted us about volunteering in September however Rob and Susan are not available. ParkWork have offered to help manage the visit for us. There is a fair amount of work involved in managing these events and work parties. Rob suggested that it would be a good idea to look for more volunteers who would be willing to be trained up as work party leaders.

ACTION – Rob to speak to Green Mantle about removing bramble

4. Other Troopers Hill issues and news

- Spider survey: Shelley McMann is sorting out her insurance so she can come to the hill to do this survey.
- Preparing for Troopers Hill Pride in Parks and It's Your Neighbourhood assessments: Susan announced that on 11th July, Jane Pagano, an assessor will visit the hill to write a report of all the work that has been done over the year. She will send a draft out to the members of the committee and to anyone else who is interested. Jane will be assessing for both of these awards on the same visit.
- Secretary: Jo is unable to continue her role as Secretary from the Autumn as will be starting an Open University Course and will therefore have less spare time on top of other commitments. Adam, a work party volunteer and local resident has agreed to take on the role. He could not be present tonight but will take over taking the minutes at our meetings from October. The group thanked Jo for all her work since last October.

5. St George Strollers

As discussed at previous meetings, Bristol City Council are removing support for this walking group and the other 20 plus groups throughout Bristol. There are 12 St George Stroller volunteers. Each walk covers a maximum of 3 miles and there are two walks per month. The walks are open to anyone who wants to join. Fabian pointed out how the council had needed to cut the support due to cuts to government funding. Susan, who is one of the volunteers, had previously thought we would need to become an independent walking group but the national Walking for Health organisation has decided to take over offering the support instead. There is a meeting to discuss this in the next week. St George Strollers had recently started asking for a small voluntary donation from each of its walkers to cover the future costs of keeping the group running would entail, such as bus fares and insurance. Until now Bristol City Council have been funding the running costs. It may not be necessary to keep asking for these donations depending on the outcome of the meeting.

6. Events

- Past events: The annual Dawn Chorus walk went ahead in April despite having to be delayed a day due to the arrival of 'Storm Hannah'. The sightings of birds were used to enter the City Nature Challenge which was happening the same weekend.

- The Avon Valley Walk, led by Rob in May, started off with good weather until the group got to Beese's Tea Gardens at which point it hammered down with heavy rain. Half of the group stayed at Beese's and got taxis home and the other half of the group carried on in the rain to finish in sunshine back at Troopers Hill.
- Future events: The Bug 'n' Beasties event will be held on the 10th August. Rupert Higgins and his wife will be there to identify bugs for families. Volunteers are needed to come along before the event starts to help set up the gazebo and Margaret offered help with this. There will also be a scavenger hunt which the Young Rangers will be running and Natural Learners will be there to lead a hunt for invertebrates. There will also be a solar observation by Bristol Astronomical Society.

7. Networking

- St George & Redfield Voice: Susan continues to write articles for this local publication which gets delivered to 7,500 households. Unfortunately, it misses a lot of households in the catchment which Fabian pointed out is down to funding, however bundles do get delivered to public places such as the Dark Horse pub where a copy can be taken home. The publication is also available online and FOTH use their page to share the link to the articles. Rob reminded the group that anyone could write an article on behalf of FOTH if they wish to.
- Parks Charity: Rob has been involved in this new charity and reported that the trustees have now been appointed and will be announced shortly. A launch of the charity is planned for the Festival of Nature and the website address is yourpark.org.uk. Another new initiative is the Future Parks project to which £900,000 has been allocated to use for making things happen in our parks such as health activities. Bristol is one of 81 places which got awarded funding and we seem to be leading the way with this work at the moment!
- Talks by Rob: Rob did a talk about Troopers Hill for Redcatch Local History Group. About 50 people attended and he received some good feedback at the end. One person was astonished by the amount of things Rob had to say about the hill. The donations raised from Rob's talks go to FOTH.
- Walk for Meet Up on Saturday 6th July: Susan has completed a risk assessment for this upcoming walk when she will lead a walking group around Troopers Hill.
- Supporting studies by students: A UWE student approached us to do some research on pollinator success on edges of woodland. Susan recently showed the student around the hill and pointed her in the right direction of people to ask for to get permission, tips and insurance, etc.
- Festival of Nature: Susan reported that during this event the gazebo got soaking wet. It was a while before the weather dried up and they could put it out to dry but it is ready for use again.
- Manor Woods Valley group: Susan and Rob explained how they took this group around the hill. During the walk one of the members of the group noticed a problem with Phylis's memorial bench. After reporting the issue the Fix-It team were out making repairs just a week later. Rob pointed out how efficient the service is if you report any issues via the website rather than using email as the problem will then get to the relevant person quicker. Richard asked if there are any signs on the hill letting people know this procedure and Rob reported that there are signs which display the website address. Fabian asked anyone who reports an issue which is not rectified to let him know. Susan pointed out that the online method for reporting tree issues requires a phone call. Susan used the number to report a willow tree which had fire damage, which simply resulting in advice to write an email. This did resolve the

issue but the online system could be enhanced by supplying the email address if the tree is not presenting an immediate danger.

8. 2020 – A 25 year celebration event of being a local Nature Reserve

Susan asked for any ideas about having an event next year to celebrate the 25 years which Troopers Hill has been a nature reserve. Rob suggested the main event possibly being held on 22nd June although it would be a good idea to plan a series of events not to put lots of effort into one day and have it pour down with rain. Ideas which were put forward included; a family picnic, kite flying, music, school bands and a talent contest. Rob suggested it could be a year long event and Freya suggested getting local primary schools involved. Fabian suggested a celebratory flag. Right now we need to start thinking about funding and these are all ideas we can build on.

Next meeting

Thursday 3rd October 2019 7.15 – 9pm, in the back room of Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road, St George, BS5 8LB