



**Note of Meeting Thursday, 29 March 2012  
Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd**

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO) Kit (Memb Sec), Margaret (Cttee), Jude (Cttee), Jackie (Facebook), Denise (BCC), Steve (P) (candidate for election to Council); Roy, Keith, May, Steve (B), Helen (minutes)

Apologies Fabian, Bryan, Clare, Jules.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendments.

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

Chair thanked the team for the continued excellent maintenance on the Hill, and mentioned that their work had been supplemented by regular litter picking on the part of FOTH members and others.

Works to remove the Leylandii growing on the Nature Reserve close to the boundary of Mama Bear's Day Nursery was halted when the nursery staff had objected on the day (contrary to earlier indication). Denise circulated a report from Jan Walters, Bristol City Council's Conservation Officer for and checked that Friends were happy with it and a draft letter to Mama Bear's.

It was acknowledged that given the size of the hedge at Greendown, its future maintenance would present problems for volunteers. The current management contract covers a mechanical flail cut with subsequent neatening by hand. Susan and Jan Walters had discussed agricultural cut and the possibility of managing the growth into an A shape, flailing the hedge on the field side only with volunteers cutting the Greendown side. Discussion followed about the practicability of ideas for future management including trimming the hedge inside the fence or allowing it to grow through. The slope of the bank outside the fence on the Greendown roadside would seem to make cutting the hedge flush with the fence impracticable.

Action: Susan to ask for a meeting with a/the flail driver to discuss what is possible.

Steve (B) mentioned that the cast iron road name signs on the lower stack (corner of Crew's Hole Rd and Troopers Hill Rd) had deteriorated and need painting. It was suggested that the signs should be renovated as part of a larger project to address the overall chimney work. The risk that they might deteriorate beyond repair in the meantime was recognised but would have to be borne.

**Troopers Hill clean up campaign**

Susan outlined the progress so far. Denise explained that the problem was increasing across the city. A dog warden had already visited the Hill and two further enforcement visits were planned for Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> April from 8.30 to 9.30 and at an earlier hour on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April. She commented that some parks officials other than dog wardens, have powers to issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling.

During the discussions that followed, some FOTH members advocated keeping dogs on leads in the LNR while others emphasised the exercise needs of dogs.

Action: Rob to highlight the need for more dog wardens in Bristol, at the Parks Forum.

**Progress on the "Stepping Forward" grant**

Rob stated that all the timber work had been done on the steps, but a spell of wetter weather would be needed before the stone compacting could be completed. It was expected that British Trust for Conservation Volunteers would start work on the DoE path steps into the woodland in the following week, and finish after Easter.

Community Payback had completed 11 visits including cutting back in the woodland paths and clearing gorse. Rob displayed photographs showing where gorse had been cut down.

Susan reminded members of the woodland trail workshops to take place on Easter Sunday. The new sign for the Malvern Road entrance to The Field was displayed. There would be an interpretation board with two A4 panel clip frames installed on the Field at the Summerhill Terrace entrance. Rob requested suggestions for condensing the wording on the board to 250 words to be submitted to the designer in two weeks' time.

The meeting suggested that the plaque commemorating the works should be fixed to the concrete at the base of the flagpole near the Greendown entrance.

A session of Committee members had recently discussed a prospective application for a £3500 sustainability grant. The meeting contributed thoughts on the design and distribution of a new leaflet, the scope for another interpretation board at the lower chimney (the stack) or re-design of the existing interpretation boards. In light of the increasing willingness of teachers to become involved, an event to include the participation of schoolchildren attracted support from FOTH members.

It was proposed that any grant money should be stretched to include a project for participation by a local school/s, interpretation board redesign and leaflet production.

Chair read out a note from Jean Walker expressing appreciation of FOTH's improvement activities.

### **Work parties**

- completed since the last meeting

The Saturday, 4th February and Saturday, 3rd March work parties had been spent cutting bramble by the oak tree near Greendown and by the steps to Troopers Hill Road.

- Work parties before the next meeting

Saturday, 7th April – Removal of saplings and bramble at the western end of Sally's Glade].

Monday 16th April – A Defra Biodiversity team would be spending the day doing voluntary work on Troopers Hill. David Read, Susan and Kit were expected to supervise the tasks whose main aim would be clearing saplings.

Saturday, 5th May Steve (B) agreed to lead the work party given the unavailability of other 'competent persons'

### **Parks Forum Park Clean Up Day - Sat 19th- Sunday 20th May**

Rob invited FOTH volunteers to join a litter pick in Nightingale Valley with perhaps a walk along the river and St Anne's Wood (tbc).

Action: Rob to discuss arrangements with Rowan.

### **Management Plan update**

Rob reminded the meeting that the Troopers Hill Management plan for the next 5 years has been published and is on the web site. Kit remarked on the usefulness of the plan for rebutting any complaints that we hear about works on the hill, which are all fully in accordance with the plan.

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

The Strollers had completed a range of walks each attracting up to 32 participants. The end of the current grant funding was approaching and the activities needed about £1500 support per year, so the group would be applying for a Community First grant. It was possible that the application might include provision for the next dog show.

### **Events**

- Since our last meeting:

The Forest School arranged for Saturday 4th February had to be cancelled because of illness. Susan was hoping to find out more about Summerhill School's requirements. Kit asked to be involved in the project.

Susan thanked everyone who had helped with the FOTH presence at St Aidan's Community Fair on Saturday 24th March.

- Before our next meeting

The Good Friday Service taking place on Friday 6th April would need FOTH to open gates and it was proposed to set up a gazebo and display boards.

The Family "Walk"shops on Sunday 8th April (Easter Sunday) would entail 4 gazebos, tables, tea & coffee etc between 9.00 am and late afternoon.

A Dawn Chorus Walk had been arranged for Saturday 14th April at 6.00 am (booking only).

Tony Titchen would be leading a Tree Gazing Walk on Sunday 20th May

Action: Susan to organise a FOTH team for a quiz night at Beeses'.

### **Funding**

Friends' third successive bid for Community Festival and Events Funding had not been granted this year, which was no great surprise. A bid for St George West Community First Neighbourhood Match Fund Programme money will be made to fund a further year of the Walking for Health group the St George Strollers and the Family Fun Dog Show, which aims to encourage responsible dog ownership.

Denise suggested that it might be possible to host field study events and charge for them as a means of raising funds.

### **Facebook update**

The Friends' page was almost up to 100 likes, a few visitors from further afield included one from Barnsley and one from Lincolnshire. Apparently a geography text book has a case study on Troopers Hill as an example site. An undergraduate had contacted Friends to seek permission to collect soil samples for study.

Action: Denise to kindly provide the student with a letter proving that she has Council permission to take samples.

### **Newsletter**

The meeting thanked Kit for another wonderful newsletter (Spring Issue) which attracted particular praise. There was discussion about the imminent rise in postage costs for the 25- 30 copies which are mailed each quarter, and whether discounted stamps should be bought in advance. It was suggested that next time postal recipients should be asked to confirm whether they wish to continue receiving the newsletter. Jude offered to frank the letters.

Action: Kit to consider and implement appropriate postal arrangements

Finally, the meeting congratulated Denise on being confirmed in her permanent post.

### **Next meeting**

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 7.15pm Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd.