

NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday April 29th 7.15 – 9pm

Online Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Adam, Rod, Freya, Margaret, Rob, Elaine, Susan, Rosie, Alex

Apologies: Fabian, Richard, Siobhan

1. Approve February Minutes

The February minutes were approved.

2. Projects

a. Informal layby on Crews Hole Rd (east of Lamb Hill opposite the Woodwise Academy)

Rob shared details of two alternate plans proposed for the layby along Crew's Hole Road.

Compared to the council's plans, which have 10 parking spaces, Rob's include an extended pavement, cycle parking, a better crossing point to the river, parallel parking spaces and new fencing (the same as used around Troopers Hill). One version has 4 parking spaces and the other 6.

Susan has shared the plans with Didac and residents Siobhan and Richard who live near the layby. All were in support of the plan. Siobhan did not want to encourage people using the parking for visiting and preferred the 4-parking space version.

From the meeting, the group support a layby, rather than a parking area. Rob has shared the alternate plans with the Council who will need decide and do more consultation.

Friends of Troopers Hill had 10 years ago supported a car park in place of the layby. However, with the ecological emergency, we would prefer it kept as a layby with Rob's plans, so as not to encourage visitors coming by car.

b. Troopers Hill Red Slide

The fundraiser for the slide has raised over £11,000 including a grant from Enovert trust for £9,847. The new slide has been ordered and position agreed by existing play area in Troopers Hill field. Delivery is expected by mid-June and it's hoped it will be installed and ready to use in July.

3. Nature Conservation work on Troopers Hill

a. Bristol Parks winter works

Bristol Parks have continued to do great work. They have pushed back paths through the woodland and removed areas of overgrowth from the conservation plan.

There has been combined working, with volunteers supplementing their work.

b. Winter works funded by Friends of Troopers Hill

Green Mantle cleared gorse in the first week of March, removing a full skip and more which required an extra trailer and use of the compost areas on the hill.

The areas which have now been cleared for 3 years running are looking very green, meaning the gorse is weakening and other things are growing.

This also reduces the fire risk and meets the objectives of part of the Troopers Hill's conservation management plan.

c. Winter works by volunteers

Conservation work parties by volunteers were not permitted until the end of March, four sessions have been completed since then (see below)

d. Litter picking

Lots of litter picking has been done.

Elaine reported that she thinks the amount of litter has reduced with the lockdown restrictions lifting and people having other places to go.

A few weeks ago, Elaine found a lot of gas canisters which she reported to the police.

Susan is still getting emails from people wanting to do litter picking as part of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

e. Steps

The ParkWork team are soon due to replace some of the rotten steps.

They have been working with City of Bristol College who like to do a range of work with them.

ParkWork have recently dug out some roots of dogwood and put some edging on the

path by the allotments fence coming onto Troopers Hill from the Field.

f. Nature conservation work parties

We have been able to complete 4 work parties since the start of this month (twice as many as usual) which have been very productive. Two have been led by Adam and one by Neil. The main work has been removing of saplings along the gully and paths.

New volunteers are still contacting, signing up and joining work parties.

4. Troopers Hill Woods/Field

a. Kissing gate post

The gate post to Lamb Hill from the path behind Malvern Road has been rotting for some time and the gap in the gate has been getting smaller and smaller due to the gate dropping.

Rob reported it via the form on the council website. Within two weeks, the council have been to fix it.

It's good to see the form working on the website and the council's quick response.

b. Litter

Susan had recently found several areas with litter in the woodland area. She made notes of the locations, collected, and moved it to the layby on Crews Hole road so the council could collect during a visit to remove fly tipping from the layby.

People have been offering to litter pick in the woods if Friends of Troopers Hill can supply litter pickers. The group agreed this is a good idea and are in support. Susan will look into organising.

c. Tree Trail

A volunteer had offer to update the tree trail through the woodland. The idea was to use the app Go Jauntly. Nothing has been heard from the volunteer recently, who had some initial difficulties with the app. Susan to re-engage.

5. Progress of follow up of anti-social behaviour of the night of 4th November

In response to the incident last year, four 15-year-old girls were found by the police to be responsible for the graffiti and vandalism to the paths, furniture, walls and trees.

The police did home visits to talk with the girls and the plan was for the girls to do some

conservation work on the hill to learn about the impact of their actions.

Lockdown prevented this so it was decided that Susan and Claire Coates (neighbourhood police constable) would do a Zoom call with each of the girls to explain the impact and cost of cleaning up.

Three of the girls agreed to the online call, two apologized. Claire visited the 4th girl at home the day after to run through the details.

Susan very pleased with the efforts by the police and Claire.

6. Events

a. Poetry 6th April

A poetry event was held as part of the Bristol poetry sessions. Beth Calverley ran a small session with 5 people on Zoom taking about Troopers Hill while creating a poem on her typewriter.

The poem is on the website on the Troopers hill 'be inspired' page alongside the BBC Radio 4 'Cricketts of Troopers Hill' recording - www.troopers-hill.org.uk/BeInspired

b. Bristol WalkFest - May

The event has been published which includes a wildflower walk on Troopers Hill.

Like last year, the event will be run virtually. Susan will post pictures of where the flowers are along with a 'What3Words' location reference so that people can find them.

c. Other events

City Nature challenge – A competition starting Apr 30th between cities around the world using iNaturalist app to go out and record what you see. The app helps you identify what you are looking at. The Friends of Troopers Hill website has a link to iNaturalist map for TH.

Red Slide – When the red slide is installed, a small event will be held to celebrate. Susan said there should be about £300 to spend and asked the group for ideas.

7. Networking

a. Social media and website

Rob has updated the 'be inspired' page on the website.

There have been some enquiries from a group of volunteers who are trying to save another chimney. They asked how much it costs to maintain the chimney on Troopers Hill. Rob shared information from the council who maintain it.

Rob is doing an historical talk on Troopers Hill to the Keynsham and Saltford history group in November and leading a walk for the Avon Wildlife Trust, Keynsham in July.

While Susan & Rob were away, Freya covered responding to Facebook messages and sought some help from Richard when she had some technical issues replying to messages.

b. Bristol and Bath Parks Foundation

There has been some publicity about the wildflower planting recently completed at College Green.

There has also been work done at Netham park on the mounds between the play area and the pavilion. Work clearing those and planting is happening over the coming weeks.

Last week, the 'big give' campaign started, a fund which park groups can apply for. Friends of Troopers Hill be able to apply for grants.

c. RHS (Royal Horticultural Society)

The RHS have been excellent at keeping us in the loop about what they are changing the information on their website around weedkillers, pesticides and herbicides in response to the group's request.

The latest RHS email states:

I am pleased to say that the RHS has decided to take a much stronger public stance on pesticides. We will be asking people to avoid using them whenever possible to reduce risks to ecosystems and will be issuing press-releases to that effect. This public clarity feels fitting for an organisation like ours that has so much influence on people's gardening practice.

We are updating all the pages of our website to say that pesticides should only be used as a method of last resort when no other options available, and that if they must be used it should be in a highly targeted way such as to tackle non-native invasive species.

d. Duke of Edinburgh

As mentioned in section 3d, people have been enquiring about doing litter picking on

the hill for their Duke of Edinburgh award.

e. Planning application

The appeal against a planning application to remove trees from a property behind Troopers Hill road was rejected.

Susan suggested if something like this happens again, she will instead talk directly to the house holder.

f. BBC Radio 4

Covered in section 6a.

g. Didac ltd

Didac have acquired money from WECA (West England Combined Authority) to run free training courses which enhance woodworking skills for people who are over 19, unemployed and living in south Gloucestershire.

Susan has helped to publicize this through the group's social media accounts.

8. AOB

Path up to the chimney from the turning area on the hill – path repairs.

The council have committed to spending money, to repair some potholes on the path to the chimney. It should happen in the summer. This was originally planned to be part of the works on Troopers Hill Field completed last year.

Contacted by someone interested in memorial bench

Susan has passed on details and costs for them to have a think about

Marks and Spencer

Susan shared details about a campaign started by Marks and Spencer, to increase the Bee population by 300 million, and send up-to 1000 hives to farms across England to produce more honey.

She is concerned about whether the negative impacts have been considered in relation to the hectares of wildflowers needed to support that quantity of Bee increase.

Similar concerns have been raised by Bug Life and the Bumble Bee Conservation society.

Susan has sent an email to Marks and Spencer to ask what actions they are taking to combat any negative impacts.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held from 7.15pm-9pm on Thursday 24th June 2021.