



Note of FoTH meeting Thursday, 30 May 2013 Summerhill Methodist Church

Present: Susan (Chair) Norman (Treas) Rob (Work Party Organiser) Kit (Memb Sec) Jude (Cttee) Bryan (Cttee) Margaret (Cttee), Jules (BCC) Steve (B) Roy, Helen (minutes)

Apologies: Fabian, Clare

The notes of the previous meeting were approved without amendments.

Troopers Hill issues and expressions of thanks to our Community Parks Management team

The meeting discussed the Council responsibility to maintain the refurbished steps for five years after the Stepping Forward was completed. A meeting had been arranged with Area Parks Manager to talk about the management of this responsibility but unfortunately he had to cancel the meeting.

Action - RA-C to arrange a new meeting

It had been noticed that the waste bins had become full on a couple of occasions which was unusual. It was suggested that additional cover was needed to empty them twice a week to cover for the park keeper's absence. Jules had expressed gratitude to people who pick up rubbish as they pass by and put it in the bin.

Jude had noticed a lot of rubbish on the Field recently, but it was generally accepted that the Hill itself was not badly littered by comparison with other parts of the city.

Kit had passed on a received a message regarding a fault in the gate at the Malvern Road entrance, the council effected a speedy temporary repair the day after it was reported.

Troopers Hill Field

The ground under the football posts had suffered wear. It was suggested that as the council is planning to refurbish playing field surfaces (end of football season) it would be appropriate to enquire of Dave Cambridge whether the Field could be included in the programme.

Since the last FoTH meeting, contractors had completed the new tarmac path joining the Avenue entrance with the Malvern Road gate.

The suggestion that the slide needed a coat of paint was considered. Rob explained that painting the slide could not be given a high priority, but providing funds allowed for buying suitable paint (eg Hammerite) it could be done at an evening work party.

Tree Bristol had planted another hornbeam tree as a replacement for the recently fallen tree. This is a memorial tree.

Top Chimney

Susan gave an account of events since steeplejacks had identified a risk of falling masonry inside the chimney. Eventually an unobtrusive metal screen had been installed. Susan proposed to withdraw her recent application for funding for artwork to decorate the boarding that had preceded the metal grille. Jules suggested a design for a metal gate (permanently shut) to allow visual check and an updraught, while screening off the

litter. FOTH members were very clear that once access is safe the chimney entrance should once more be opened for the enjoyment of children and adults. The condition of the chimney would continue to be monitored with a view to a full assessment in due course. While the leaning of the chimney was not thought by attendees at the meeting to be a cause for concern, there were questions over the stability of the ground beneath it. Options for repairing and strengthening the chimney were discussed, for example, installing metal interior hoops, and infilling the chimney with concrete. All look forward to the result of Bristol City Council's investigations and viewing any recommendations for necessary work.

Lower Stack

Currently, maintenance work was under way, taking a minimum of two weeks. Road traffic barriers and warning signs had been put in place at the junction of Troopers Hill Road and Crews Hole Road. A stretch of road opposite the chimney had no-parking cones. The meeting welcomed the council's expenditure on its obligation to maintain this historic structure.

"Stepping Forward" grant and Co-op grant

Tree Trail – The tree marking had almost been completed apart from a few labels. It was proposed to post a map of the tree trail (with descriptions) on the FOTH web site.

Fun learning trail – This was intended to be a valuable learning resource enabling school teachers to manage visits for their classes without assistance from Friends or Council employees. The educational information pack for schools was also available for use by families and other groups. A few marker plates had been vandalised, and for the most part had been replaced, and it would be possible to use laminated replica plates for the purpose. Classes from Summerhill Academy had twice re-visited the trail. The teachers had invited another school to visit in August.

Audio Trail - Kit reported that he had contacted and recorded some but not all of the contributors. He aimed to have the trail complete and the web page & QR code operational by the time of the Bugs and Beasties event in August. Friends thanked Kit for his expertise in contributing to the success of the trails.

Representation at St George Neighbourhood Partnership meetings

The meeting confirmed that Friends were content for Rob to represent FOTH during Partnership business, and offered thanks to Rob for doing so. It was established that any Friend could represent the group in his absence – anyone wishing to become a deputy could attend Meetings as an observer in advance. Steve expressed an interest in attending the September meeting.

Action: Susan to provide next years' NP dates to interested persons

Work parties

completed since the last meeting: Participants in the 'Good Gym Bristol' scheme had joined the April work party controlling vegetation along the path above the lower chimney. Kit had supervised the May work party, including two new volunteers, in Sally's Glade.

before the next meeting: June and July, more work to be done in Sally's Glade. There would be an evening work party on Wednesday 17th July between 7 and 8 pm 'Good Gym' had confirmed they would be interested in attending again in future. Margaret's advert in the Observer had produced at least one expression of interest but the person had not yet attended a work party.

Corporate Volunteering

Jules mentioned the availability of up to 40 corporate volunteers on a weekday. Comments acknowledged the numbers would be difficult for Friends to manage and suggesting suitable work would be a problem. Susan proposed that 10 in a group would be a maximum and they should be advised that the site offered hard physical work, frequently on slopes. Groups in future would be asked for a £100 deposit (returnable on attendance). Kit said the 'Lloyds Bank' approach would be worth bearing in mind for the future. A web page with volunteering opportunities and points to consider would provide a useful resource for potential volunteers. The meeting discussed the possible provision of comfort trailers.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

The current programme was said to be going very well. The Strollers had completed 49 walks in just over 2 years, Kit's walk from Snuff Mills to the Beehive being the latest. An application to First Group for grant funding had been unsuccessful and it was likely that charging for walks would become necessary from the end of June (£2 or £3 per walk depending on whether special trips were provided, in addition to publicity and expenses). The walk leaders might approach St George Neighbourhood Partnership for a grant, if successful, charging for walks might be suspended. It would be important to establish clarity about charges that are additional to any bus/train travel fares.

Events since the last meeting

Saturday 9th March: St Aidan's Community Fair: Friends thanked Kit, Norman and Helen for taking charge of the FOTH stall. Kit reported briefly on the numbers and levels of interest shown by those attending the Fair.

Sunday 17th March: The Dawn Chorus walk led by Ed Drewitt, was described as 'enjoyable and informative'.

Friday 29th March: the Good Friday Service had been cancelled because of cold weather.

Sunday 26th May: The Tree Gazing Walk had been attended by 18 people. Tony Titchen had been a knowledgeable and interesting walk leader, and it was suggested that a future Tree Gazing event should last for a longer time.

The Bristol 99 mini Bio Blitz, led by the Bristol Natural History Consortium, had not been particularly well attended, but the participants had been enthusiastic. A naturalist, Tony Smith, from BNHC, had offered FOTH a free plant survey at some convenient time.

Three of BNHC's volunteers had not been to the Hill previously, and the event had drawn the LNR to the attention of professional naturalists and others.

Rob mentioned that Troopers Hill was featured as 'Site of the Month' on the RIGGS blog. FOTH had established contact with a Portaloo provider.

Action: Rob to give Jules the number of the company.

Events before the next meeting

Music on the Hill - Saturday 22nd June, 6pm-8pm [note: cancelled because of poor weather]. Routes for the Ambling Band, in and out of the picnic areas, remained to be arranged. Timing for volunteer attendance was discussed along with providing picnic food for the band (numbers to be confirmed nearer the time). In addition to the usual publicity, Margaret would place a Bristol Observer advertisement and the event would be advertised at the forthcoming in addition to the usual publicity arrangements. Publicity would be displayed at the Festival of Nature. It was agreed that a leaflet drop would be too labour-intensive and possibly unnecessary.

Green Flag

Rob explained the judging arrangements, and that Troopers Hill LNR would not be formally judged this year. A 'mystery shopper' would visit the site, probably not before July.

Historic Documents.

Mr George Elliott, a local historian specialising in the history of Hanham, had contacted FOTH via a participant in the recent geology walk. As he was disposing of his research materials, he had given FOTH those of his records which pertained to Crews Hole and the vicinity. The records included photographs, slides, framed pictures (circulated at meeting), plus documents and notes. Bryan volunteered to scan the slides for electronic storage. The meeting expressed gratitude to Mr Elliott for his generosity.

Action: Chair to write letter of thanks.

Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob reported that Facebook 'Friends' numbered over 250. Thanks were expressed to Liz and Kit for responding to messages in Rob and Susan's absence. Troopers Hill had over 100 followers on Twitter. The mobile web site (optimised for viewing on a mobile phone) was still under development.

Newsletter

The next issue of the newsletter would appear in the last week of June, after Music on the Hill, and other than photographs of the concert, other contributions could include an account of George Elliott's donation, a précis of other Friends' groups newsletters (where appropriate), contribution from another LNR; the Mayor's proposed visit to St George in July, and Red Fest.

Actions: Editor to consider inviting another LNR to provide a guest column. Rob to approach the Chair of the Friends of St George Park.