



## **Friends of Troopers Hill AGM 2017**

Thursday, 7th December, 2017 7.15pm – 9.00pm  
Summerhill Methodist Church

Attendees 2017 Committee: Susan, Rob, Norman, Rod, and Margaret  
Others: Fabian, Judith, Carol, Elaine, Keith and May

There were no apologies.

Susan welcomed everyone to the AGM, explaining that this would be a normal business meeting followed by refreshments.

### **1. Approve October Minutes**

The October minutes were approved.

### **2. Issues and thank yous for Parks staff**

- Byelaws notices: Susan reported that there is now a plaque about the byelaws at nearly every entrance to Troopers Hill. Two have already been vandalised and this has been reported. Fortunately we have two spares to replace them. Elaine asked who would be enforcing the byelaws. Susan replied that there had been a delay in the police training due to the retirement of the relevant officer but another police Inspector is now working with the Council on training of officers, which will commence with training Council staff followed by police.
- Winter works: Susan reported that she and Rob will be meeting with Pete Staddon, Operations Manager in Parks, Joe McKenna, ParkWork, and Teija Ahjokoski, our liaison officer in Parks, on 15<sup>th</sup> December to look at winter works. There is less resource available in Parks but it is hoped that, with the help of ParkWork and Community Payback, the work can still be covered.

### **3. Work parties and other works**

- Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October – Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November (with ParkWork): Rob reported that on 19<sup>th</sup> October, despite the wet weather, this work party cleared scrub and saplings from the area below the chimney, and on 16<sup>th</sup> November they made a start on clearing an area near the 'sacrificial stone' on the lower steps.
- Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November – Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December: on 4<sup>th</sup> November scrub was cleared in Sally's Glade and on 2<sup>nd</sup> December the work party carried on clearing the area by the lower steps.
- Next work parties before the next meeting:
  - Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December – 18<sup>th</sup> January (ParkWork)
  - Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January – Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February

Rob commented that it was very helpful having the extra work parties provided by ParkWork, paid for by funds allocated when the St George Neighbourhood Partnership was wound up. They had not attracted as many volunteers as expected but, as payment was per volunteer, this would mean that the work

parties would go on for longer. Rob also asked for any suggestions for work ParkWork could do. He will suggest they work on maintaining the steps at their next work party.

#### 4. Projects

- Troopers Hill Flag: the old flag had disintegrated due to wear and tear and at the last meeting it was agreed that the flag should not be replaced and the flag pole be removed. However, when this was announced on Facebook, a few families responded to say how much they liked the flag and one person, Natasha Collins, offered to crowd fund for two new flags. She quickly raised the £100 needed. Susan thanked Fabian for his contribution of £20. Rob displayed one of the new flags which had been made by a local business. It will be put up before Christmas, hopefully at a time when Natasha is available for a photo shoot.
- Ways to Nature – progress: Susan reminded the meeting that the response to the Heritage Lottery Fund enquiry had been to say that it was unlikely that the tarmac paths would be funded but there was more likelihood of the other requests being met, including new fencing. It was agreed at the last meeting that Susan would pursue the funding application for the fencing, the revised management plan, invertebrate survey and interpretation board, and that other avenues for funding the paths could be pursued at a later date. Susan has been obtaining more detailed quotes for the fencing and has contacted the Council to check their estimate was still correct. Rupert Higgins has sent in his quote for the revised management plan.
- Defibrillator: Susan reminded the meeting that Woodwise Academy (Didac Ltd) had contacted FOTH to say that they would be prepared to part fund a defibrillator if FOTH could match fund. The defibrillator would be in a locked cabinet on the wall of the Didac building alongside the riverside path. At the last meeting we agreed to fund £100 and to help Didac identify other sources of funding. The total cost would be £2600 and Didac would put in £1300. Susan has not been able to identify any grants that would fund this (British Heart Foundation will only fund defibrillators that are not locked up), so the only possible funding would be from individuals. Susan has advertised in the St George Voice and messaged FOTH members but no donations have been made. Susan will check again with Natasha to ask if she would be able to arrange a crowd funding page but it will probably be harder to raise funds for this than it had been for the flag.
- Projects with students: Rob reported that FOTH has been approached by UWE and Bristol University for ideas for projects for students. Susan & Rob had also talked to a group of geology lecturers about Troopers Hill. As a result a geology student, who is going to do a project on the rocks of Troopers Hill, recently attended a work party. Rob also suggested mapping the areas of scrub on the hill, showing how it has changed over the years, and the university thought this might be a good idea for a dissertation so this may happen next year. In addition, UWE are expecting students to do 60 hours of voluntary work each year, and we may possibly be able to benefit from this.

- Woodland: Rob reminded the meeting that Paula Spiers, Avon and Frome Valley officer, has funding to improve the Avon Valley and has agreed to fund work in Troopers Hill woodland, cutting back buddleia that is overgrowing the path, thinning trees and opening up the diagonal path from the woodland to the hill. This work should start next week. There may also be some money available for way marking. Keith commented that it can be hard to follow the route of the new path through the woodland from the layby on Crews Hole Road, so better way marking could be helpful there.

## 5. Troopers Hill Field

- Tree sponsorship (dead ash tree and fallen tree): Susan reported that, following her request, replacements for the two missing trees have now been advertised for sponsorship on the Council website. The ash tree would be replaced by a Scots Pine and the Norway Maple by a Hornbeam. Susan has checked and there is no risk of Scots Pine tree seedlings spreading onto Troopers Hill.
- Tree maintenance (fallen tree removal, tree cages and dead ash tree): Susan is still chasing the Council to replace the two tree cages that were stolen.
- Goal posts: Rod asked what was happening about the goal posts. Dundry Park had been trialling a new type of post.

Action: Susan to find out what is happening about goal posts.

## 6. Events

Last event – Fungi Foray Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November: This went well and raised £46 in donations for the Justin Smith Foundation. The experts who led the walk foray also gave their £100 fee to the Foundation. They were full of praise for the work done preserving the acid heathland on the hill which enabled the fungi to grow.

Next event – Star gazing – February. Rod confirmed that the Bristol Astronomical Society will definitely be available for another stargazing event in February (or March if the weather is not favourable on the dates chosen in February). Susan will start to ask for expressions of interest.

- Other events arranged for 2018:  
24<sup>th</sup> March 5.30 am Dawn Chorus with Ed Drewett  
27<sup>th</sup> May: 10.30 am Avon Valley Walk led by Rob

**7. Parks consultation £2.868m cuts:** Rob explained that there is now a consultation on the Council website asking for views on the Council's proposals on how to meet their target of cutting £2.868m from the Parks budget by April 2019. The consultation is open until 20<sup>th</sup> January. The proposals are about ways of both raising money from parks (e.g events) and saving money by changing the type or amount of work done in parks. Rob and Susan will do a response from FOTH so they asked everyone to look at the consultation document and let them have any comments. They would also suggest individuals make their own response. A pdf version of the consultation is

available on the Parks Forum website: Rob suggested it might be easier to look at this first before responding to the on-line version.

Fabian commented that he thought a lot more parks would need to set up Friends groups and they would need the benefit of the experience of established groups like FOTH. Susan reminded the meeting that Friends groups can raise money for particular projects but cannot raise money for general maintenance of Parks: this still needs to be done by the Council.

Susan has already started to look at the consultation in depth. She will put together some notes for the FOTH response and circulate it.

Action: Susan to circulate her notes on response.

## **8. AGM**

- Accounts for year: The current balance is £3,074.30. Rob explained that this may seem a big drop from last year's balance of £16,928.20 but that figure included £11,000 from Veolia for the new play area which was due to be paid and £1,000 for the geology interpretation board. The current balance includes £703 held on behalf of St George Strollers. It is more useful to compare the general fund at Nov 2017 which is £2370.61, only slightly down on the general fund in 2016 of £2,972.51. There will be slightly less money coming in as we no longer receive a donation from Beese's. The aim is to keep enough money in to cover next year's events and hopefully raise enough money to replace the money spent.
- Elections: Susan was re-elected as Chair for 2017 (Rob nominated, Fabian seconded. All in favour).  
The following committee members were re-elected:  
Rob (work party officer), Norman (Treasurer), Margaret (secretary), and Rod (Stargazing). Susan will check with Rich whether he is still happy to be on the committee. (Susan nominated, Fabian seconded, all in favour).

Action: Susan to contact Rich to ask if happy be on the committee for another year.

## **Next Meeting**

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 7.15 pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road