



NOTE OF MEETING

Wednesday, 4 March, 2009 Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Jude (Treas), Kit (Memb Sec), Bryan, Katya (Bristol City Council) Claire (Community Parks Manager), Fabian (Cllr) Liz, David, Margaret, Val, Peter, Roy, John H (Neighbourhood Partnership) Emma, Helen (minutes Sec)

Apologies for absence were received from Norman, Pauline, Maureen and Gillian

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. There was an outstanding decision on whether FOTH would benefit from becoming a registered charity. It was agreed that, given the low financial turnover of the group, any benefits from registering would be outweighed by the administrative burdens, for instance, accounting costs. The meeting thanked Bryan for investigating the position and his report.

Consultation process for play facilities on Troopers Hill Field (THF)

Katya explained that there had been a sharp decline in outside play among children aged 8 – 12. Against this background, THF had been chosen for a financial allocation of £10,000 for play facilities – to be spent by March 2010. It was said that £10,000 might either pay for one piece of structural equipment, or be used to make a 'playful pathway' towards Troopers Hill local nature reserve (LNR) – described as a fantastic playground in its own right. Alternatively, the money could be used as a planning and design fund to develop more ambitious plans for seeking subsequent grants if there were evidence of great local interest in developing a playground. Volunteer watchers could be engaged to address parents' fears of letting their children out of their sight.

The aim of the consultation exercise would be to give the proposals as much publicity as possible. Invitations would be issued to meetings including a joint consultation meeting with the Green Spaces strategy. Katya aimed to invite as many of the closest residents to Troopers Hill as possible, getting people together to present them with proposals and seek feedback. She would provide invitations and posters, etc. Project design and management colleagues would attend and take away the views generated at the meetings. A focus group could be held at a local schools, for instance, Air Balloon Junior School and Summerhill School. It was also suggested that meetings could be held with Brownies, Cubs and Scout troops locally.

Katya outlined the timetable and stages for a two-stage consultation, the second stage, in the summer, would be for input on the design ideas.

The meeting discussed some aspects of the proposals play area, including some of the views previously generated during FOTH's consultation in 2006. Issues identified included

- visibility of the area from nearby houses, and householders' differing views about proximity of play area to their properties.
- The importance of preserving THF as a flat space
- The need for paths around/across the area
- Problems of waterlogging and drainage – clay cap holding water in the topsoil making drainage hard to achieve
- Suitability for football pitches
- Maintenance other than mowing
- The possibility of using section 106 funding (as for the John Deasy memorial playground in St George's Park), maybe for drainage.
- Information on the ages and playing activities of children who currently use THF (including children of primary school age, boys playing football and fewer girls seen since the swings had gone)
- Concerns around gatherings of older children and their drinking
- Agreement that the vandalism and removal of the swings had devalued the site.
- Agreement that appearance was important to deter future vandalism. A large scale play area would be disproportionate in context.

It was suggested that publicity for meeting plans might be arranged via Air Balloon School's weekly newsletter and an article in *The Observer* free paper. Kit was asked to contact Radio Bristol and arrange a press release.

It was decided that Saturday 28 March 2009 would be a suitable date for the meeting. Chair undertook to e-mail the details of possible venues to Katya and provide other contacts as appropriate. FOTH agreed to arrange the hand delivery of invitations and Neighbourhood Partnership information to 400 households (to save postage). It was proposed that a special message should be given to 70 of the respondents to the earlier consultation who had expressed willingness to attend a meeting.

Susan thanked Katya for attending.

Any issues and thank yous on Troopers Hill to be passed to CPM

The winter works included planned removal of trees and brambles. Kit remarked that some negative comments posted on the FOTH website forum should be reflected at the meeting. He summarised the views received, that there had been too much interference and that the LNR should be left to go its own way. The Council had explained their intention to manage the site as a Nature Reserve. The problem arose from having to catch up on past years of neglect. The Council's management plans, informed by FOTH, take account of input from qualified ecologists. It was noted that managing the land for wildlife tends to discourage future building plans. The type of land is unique in the Bristol Area. Rob mentioned the need to balance the heath and broom zones which are both

valuable, but allowing trees to flourish would encroach on both with the loss of both types of vegetation.

Rob reported that the metal benches and wooden tops had been ordered. They would be installed in co-ordination with the replacement fence and gate at Greendown as they were all from the same grant source and the donor would need to inspect them together at one visit. There was no recent news on scheduling the fence and gate works but they needed to be done by May (in time for the Green Flag judging). New entrance signs also been ordered.

Fabian volunteered to follow up the scheduling issues with the project manager.

Bristol Parks Re-organisation

Claire summarised the position. Interviewing was under way and all new jobs were expected to be in place by 1 April. The post of Community Parks Manager would no longer exist. There would be four Area Parks Managers, together with Community Park Officer and Community Park Keepers for presence on site. Susan thanked Claire for all her valuable work with FOTH in recent years.

Work parties

The work party on Saturday 21 February 2009 (postponed from 7 February because of ice and snow) pruned the hedge at Greendown.

The planned activity for Saturday 7 March would be to weed and mulch the hedge.

The candidates for Duke of Edinburgh award (supervised by Chris) would carry out further work on the Doe path on Sunday 8 March. They would also contribute to installing benches.

Kit volunteered to lead the work party on Saturday 2 May in the absence of Susan and Rob.

Events

The events leaflet for 2009 had been prepared and Claire agreed to print at least 200 copies, to be available before the Good Friday Service

- Susan gave a short report on the recent installation of bird and bat boxes in the woodland. The event had included help with a work party on the hill tackling broom invading heather. Claire was awaiting advice on locating owl boxes in Conham/Dundridge.

- Susan reported that an application has been made to Primary Health Care for a grant to pay for open-air Tai Chi classes in the summer on four Sundays during July and August.

- Good Friday Easter Egg Hunt – 10 April

Volunteers would be needed to put up a gazebo, table and display boards from 10.00 onwards in advance of the service. Kit suggested asking the Scouts to assist.

- Barton Hill History Group – Volunteers were needed to maintain a presence at the exhibition on 28 March at Bethesda church on a rota basis between 10am and 4pm.

- Avon Valley Walk. This year's walk would be a springtime event on Sunday 19 April. Interested participants should meet at Conham car park on the bend of the river. The ferry at Beeses, would provide a one-way service. Walkers were advised to wear sturdy shoes, and to bring a picnic and drinks.

Networking

- St George Neighbourhood Partnership would shortly be producing a second issue of their newsletter (Times) and FOTH had offered to assist with delivering copies. Further information available at <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/StGeorgeNP/index.htm>

- Bristol Parks had decided applying for grant for two full time posts to replace Sally Oldfield, the former Local Nature Reserves officer. (source - Access to Nature – Natural England and Lottery funding combined). Their bid was expected to be finalised during summer, the reply and appointment process timescale meant nobody would be in post until at autumn at the earliest. The meeting discussed some of the difficulties associated with local government funding

- Area Green Space Plan consultation. Three meetings had taken place, to introduce the strategy, discuss means of improving parks in St George, and more recently, to identify which of St George's green spaces were regarded as being of 'lesser value', Parks suggested very few of this category and the most controversial was grass verge on the corner of Furber Road and Kingsway, which is much used and identifying its importance was said to have proved the value of that meeting. Green spaces were more plentiful in the south and west of St George than in the north and east. Rob outlined the timescales for future meetings. More information at <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Environment-Planning/Parks-and-open-spaces/bristol-parks-and-green-space-strategy.en>

Newsletter

Kit welcomed any ideas that could be sent to him for the next issue to be published in the middle of March, in time to publicise the 28 March meeting about Troopers Hill Field and to have available for distribution on Good Friday.