



Present Susan (Chair), Rob, Kit, Roger, Gill, Maureen, Anne, Phyll, Vernon, Jude, Roy, Pauline, Liz, Alan, Fabian Breckels (Cllr) John Threadgold (BCC) Richard Fletcher (BCC) Helen (minutes).

Apologies

Val, Pete Crawford, Julian

Any outstanding actions from the previous minutes would be covered by the agenda items. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved

Issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to John

- the lower chimney: This is not currently included in the council's list of monuments, but FOTH hope this will be rectified. John was seeking quotations but even minimal remedial work involving scaffolding would use £20k of Bristol Parks' budget. He was therefore considering the potential for using a steeplejack or cherry-picker to reduce cost and make it safe. The meeting noted that the cast iron road signs needed restoration.

- replacement of steps: one of the steps up from lowest entrance is rotting and the bottom step at Greendown was missing. It was reported that Julian had found the latter and would be looking into restoring it.

- fencing on Greendown John undertook to examine it.

- bramble growth on cleared areas It was said that Julian had already suggested a mechanical flail but had spotted some wild flowers growing there, which introduced the question of the best time to do the work. It might be possible to use herbicides to keep down the cleared areas.

- On site composting: Rob and John had been considering areas suitable for composting cut material on site so as to reduce the need to transport it off site. It was noted that damp and shaded areas, preferably away from the road, should be selected so as to minimise any fire hazard. It was recognised that convenience as well as safety would be a factor in choosing the composting areas.

- John reported that everyone was in agreement about allocating a contractor to look after Troopers Hill for around two days a week. The final arrangements would depend on transport considerations between Troopers Hill, Eastwood Farm and Callington Road. The conservation needs of the nature reserves all tend to peak at the same time and the presence would take account of this.

- John presented a grid map of the site, for clear location and communication of problems, for example, to contractors. John agreed to a revision of the map to show the paths for greater accuracy.

- It was reported that there was a burnt-out motorbike on the lower path through the woodland. (Note: This was removed by Bristol Parks the following week).

- Weather permitting, the hay cut might take place in the week following the meeting [Note, this has now been done].

It was generally agreed that attracting more people to the Hill discourages vandalism and any problems currently occurring were minor.

Roy circulated a set of photos to show the hill is better now than it has ever been. They also showed the site of the former mine on Troopers Hill Road.

Dog Issues

Bristol Parks were intending to put dog/litter combined bins soon.

Rob reported that Wooforz (see minutes of meetings in August, September and November 2006) have withdrawn from the area.)

Arrangements for announcing the result of Green Flag application

The result was due to be announced on Tuesday 17 July at 9.00. Rob circulated the revised Council management plan, and remarked that the Hill was looking well for the judges' visit. In the event of success, Bristol Parks would put an announcement on the forum and Kit would update the front page of the website and some signs on the Hill later in the week.

Work parties

The previous work party had attracted eight volunteers who engaged in cutting bracken, oak, holm oak, cherry, and hawthorn. The weather for the evening work party on 21 June had been wet,

The success of evening work parties was discussed and it was debated whether to plan another one during August.

Rob would try to find a suitable date.

Leaflets

Rob reminded the meeting of the availability of the new Troopers Hill general information leaflet. "Contact Us" information inserts were available to accompany the leaflets.

Discussions had taken place to fix the content and appearance of the History and Geology leaflets. Rob demonstrated the proposed design of the leaflets and passed round the latest versions. A draft would be sent to the artist in the next few days and the next version would be available for comment by the beginning of August.

Feedback on events

Music on the Hill had been cancelled in advance, in view of a very poor weather forecast. Radio Bristol had mentioned the event, and the cancellation, several times on the morning of the day. The meeting agreed to make a donation to the South Gloucester Youth Jazz Orchestra in lieu of a cancellation fee. The band had been booked for an event on 28 June 2008. Chair reported that raffle prizes that had been donated included a first prize of two hot air balloon tickets, courtesy of Somerfield. The raffle would be carried forward to the Balloon Fiesta weekend.

The meeting discussed licensing issues, including whether it would be worthwhile for Bristol Council to seek an annual licence, permitting up to six events per year on the Hill.

Richard agreed to look into an annual licence, and whether they run from January – December, for the financial year, or can start on any date.

BRERC workshops

- plants: Rob said that he has used lottery funding to buy two copies of flora identification books.
- invertebrates: was a fascinating meeting that generated some very positive feedback – Rob has bought some nets and pots.
- the birds event had been postponed.

Next Events

Saturday 11th August- Family Fun Picnic – Raffle prizes brought forward from the concert. Tickets would be on sale before the event, advertised through the newsletter. Rupert Higgins had been booked to lead the Bugs & Beasties event for children. Crafts activities would be available from 16.00 onwards but Friends were asked to arrive earlier for setting-up from 14.30 onwards.

Actions: Kit to print and distribute raffle tickets with newsletters. Jude to sell raffle tickets at ModelMania. Friends to sell tickets wherever possible.

Rob to make posters for shops, and to put up display boards in St George Library if possible.

Chair suggested putting up a Gazebo on Troopers Hill on the previous evening (Friday 10th August at 18.00) to encourage those viewing the Balloon Fiesta evening flight to buy raffle tickets.

Richard: to contact Rupert Higgins concerning the risk assessment.

Friends had been invited to mount an exhibition at Wesley Memorial Hall on Saturday 18th August alongside a craft fair for the church anniversary. Friends were asked to attend from 10.00 am for short periods on a rota basis.

The remaining BRERC workshops were birds (date tba) heathland (July), reptiles and amphibians (August at Eastwood Farm). [Note: all sessions since rescheduled by BRERC to dates in late August].

Beeses Bar and Tea Gardens announced their Beer Festival 14 to 16 September. www.beeses.co.uk. The proprietors had very kindly offered to share the half of the proceeds of ticket sales between Friends of Eastwood Farm and Friends of Troopers Hill.

There was discussion or arrangements for Troopers Hill Discovery Day 22nd: September 2007. Forest of Avon had offered to lend FOTH a suitable tent to put up alongside the FOTH gazebos on Troopers Hill Field.

Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (PGSS)

Richard Fletcher announced the PGSS Public consultation would begin on 23 July 2007 and extend for ten weeks until 28 September 2007. The consultation document would appear on the Council website www.bristol.gov.uk/parks. It would include the introduction of enforceable standards for green spaces, and outline an investment programme over 20 years. Bristol Core Strategy Issues and Options paper was linked to Bristol Development Framework. The Council would be interested to have FOTH's response. . The next Parks Forum meeting on 15 September 2007, would discuss the Strategy. Copies of the document could be obtained from 9223719. Susan to obtain a copy for use by FOTH members.

Newsletter

The next issue would be published at some time in the next two weeks. Kit said that he was expecting an article from Rob on the Green Flag result, one from Malago Valley and one about the PGSS strategy [Note: Newsletters were published last weekend in July].

Road Safety

The meeting discussed the potential impact of the Showcase bus route leading to increased road traffic on Troopers Hill Road. Chair and others outlined the safety concerns associated with traffic on Troopers Hill road and entrances to the Nature Reserve being on the side of the road where there was no footway. There were problems with the speed of traffic particularly at the junction with Crews Hole Road. Solutions for slowing down the traffic were suggested. Crews Hole Road was described as an ongoing problem. The traffic survey undertaken by the Council had been during the school holidays so was unrepresentative.

Cllr Breckels said he understands FOTH's concerns but it was unlikely that bus priority measures would have a significant impact. He had raised the issue with the responsible officials at the council and agreed to post the e-mail response on the Friends' Forum (since done).

He encouraged local residents to observe peak time traffic and let him know if it indicated Council monitoring in order to estimate whether there is a hazard. He would feed the information to the relevant officers and seek a new traffic survey for

Troopers Hill/Crews Hole Road during term time. He would ask traffic officers to visit to assess parking on the footways.

Actions: Friends to write to Chair who would summarise and pass on the comments to Fabian

Fabian to attend FOTH meetings from time to time.

Work on steps between Troopers Hill Rd and Firtree Lane

The meeting expressed thanks to Chris Dooley for posting on the forum saying that work is going on. Completion of the work the dangerous wall at the top end of the steps is awaiting estimates from the owner of the property.

Financial position

Rob reported that £6790 of Breathing Places money has already been spent, and a large chunk of the remainder would go towards the two leaflets currently being developed. The ongoing invertebrate survey was costing £800, (not yet paid for). Having bought one expanding gazebo, it might be possible to buy another similar to line up with the initial one to provide greater room and flexibility.

Chair reported the next proposed grant application would be made to YANSEC to buy replacement benches following the successful completion of the wheelchair path. Friends would also seek Lottery funding for improvements to the entrances to Troopers Hill. The design work would proceed in collaboration between FOTH and Bristol Parks.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 22 August 2007 .