

NOTE OF MEETING

**Tuesday 27 June 2006 7.15pm
Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill**



Present:

Susan (Chair,) Sally (BCC), Caroline (BCC), Claire (BCC), Julian (BCS), Rob, Kit, Liz & Alan, Nick (BRERC), Maureen, Gill, Roy, Helen.
Apologies: Val, Liz R, Phyll, Vernon.

Outstanding actions from the previous minutes

(Carried over) Susan to contact the Dogs Trust. The previous minutes were approved.

Feedback on recent events and activities

- **Bench making:** Participants reported their immense enjoyment of the event and their appreciation of the opportunity to be creative with natural materials. Rob expressed gratitude for the help he had received with the concrete and described how the benches had been installed consecutively at three sites on the LNR: 1) below the top chimney near the "bomb crater" – made and installed by a youth group from Barton Hill; 2) at "Virginia's View" near the path to Crew's Hole woods via "Sally's Glade"; 3) in the woods just outside the entrance to the LNR.

- **YANSEC inspection:** Susan said that the YANSEC representative would visit to inspect the benches at 8.00 pm on 28 June and if all was found satisfactory, would approve the release of funds.

- **Visit to Manor Woods:** Susan and Rob attended on behalf of FOTH. Manor Woods (aka Bluebell Woods) in the Malago Valley was well worth a visit. Sally reported its features included a wildflower meadow with orchids, moorhens on the pond and the curiously-named marsh plant "corky-fruited water dropwort".

- **Bristol Festival of Nature.** The FOTH presence at the Festival had proved an excellent publicity opportunity for the LNR and the group, backed up by the Bristol Parks display. Around 500 Events leaflets had been distributed, and on Friday the display had attracted a visit from David Cameron MP, Leader of the Opposition. Valuable contacts had been made - including a contact for a possible dog show event. In response to queries about how to reach the LNR by public transport, Rob had posted bus directions on the web site. It was reported that Bristol Ramblers had used a photo of the Hill on their leaflet, South Bristol Circular Walk. Kit suggested an event touring the Bristol LNRs by bus and on foot.

The need for better signage for Troopers Hill was recognised and discussed.

- **Barton Hill History Group:** Rob reported that he had given a talk to the BHHG at an event, including a strawberry tea, on the Hill recently. The History Group had expressed great interest in the Hill and accepted suggestions for amending their record of the location of the engine house illustrated in their book (half way up Troopers Hill Road, rather than at the junction with Crews Hole Road). Rob displayed a reprint of the 1830 OS map of the locality, showing the earliest recorded use of the name Troopers Hill. The area covered by the map also included Eastwood Farm.

- **Bath House :** Rob had been in contact with Avon Industrial Buildings Trust and Avon Gardens Trust about restoring the bath house (belonging to the Padfields) and part of the gardens in front of it (owned by the nursing home). Everyone appeared to be in agreement and the next step would be a grant application.

Action: Rob to update the group on progress of grant application.

Issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to Caroline/Claire

Caroline introduced Julian, a representative from BCS contractors. She also re-introduced herself and Claire for the benefit of members who had not been at earlier meetings. Caroline, with Claire as her assistant, is covering the Community Parks Manager role that Gary Ratcliffe fulfilled until his departure on a sabbatical last year. Gary is expected to resume Bristol Parks duties in September 2006. She suggested clarifying the council's contractual programme commitments and FOTH's expectations by means of a written agreement.

Action: Rob, Susan and Kit to form a sub-group to review and clarify terms of agreement with Caroline (Monday 3 July).

Feedback from Parks Forum: Caroline updated the group on recent developments as follows

- Comments on the Council's re-letting of the maintenance contract and service improvement plan
- Concern that the Forum was unproductive – individuals already involved in a community group were unlikely to have additional time available for Forum activities.
- The need to adopt a partnership approach.
- Concern about the funds returned to Parks following sale of former park land (recommended that 80% of the proceeds should be returned). It was recognised that although ideally no park land should be sold, there were certain small areas that were better disposed of for the overall benefit. In particular, areas formerly designated as “pocket parks” were becoming vulnerable as brownfield sites for housing development.

Action: Rob to forward Caroline a copy of his input to the Forum. Chair to express concerns to Council over sale of green space land.

(For further information: <http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk/ccm/content/Environment-Planning/Parks-and-open-spaces/get-involved.en>)

Caroline confirmed that the lower chimney repairs were still within the programme.

It was reported that the fence posts had not been delivered as agreed to Liz R's house.

Action: Caroline to follow up.

Julian confirmed that the contractors had just finished clearing paths on the Hill and the work would continue every six to seven weeks. The group acknowledged that clarity over the requirements had enhanced the contractors' ability to maintain the Hill appropriately. Rob highlighted the need to cut the bracken on the road side of the fence at the second lowest entrance on Troopers Hill Road, for visibility and safety.

Caroline said that the optimal time for the hay cut of the grassland near Green Down would be in the second half of July. Two other sites took priority but Troopers Hill would be the third to receive a hay cut during that period. She had asked for strimming to be carried out alongside the newly planted hedge to distinguish it from the grass to be mown.

Area at top of Green Down: it had been agreed with the adjoining resident that the area would be cleared of bramble, however the clearance exposed large amounts of rubble and it would be preferable to allow the bramble habitat to prevail.

Action: Caroline to investigate and recommend a solution.

Caroline had noticed a security fence being constructed around the allotments adjoining the Field and was concerned a) that it might not be appropriate b) that no-one had consulted either the Bristol Parks or FOTH. During the contractors' visit, some motor cyclists had gained access to the Field through the open gate. The meeting was reminded that requests from contractors or others requiring the gate to be unlocked for access to the Field should be referred to Caroline.

Action : Caroline to speak to Allotments Dept and assess the impact of the security fencing for the Local Nature Reserve. FOTH to let Caroline have views on the suitability of the fence.

Sally reported that the “viewpoint” trees had been felled in the previous week, observing protocol to ensure nesting birds were not disturbed. Action: Council to invoice FOTH. Funding was in place (from Cromadex and a contribution from the Somerfield Casual Dress day) for two new RE150 benches on the concrete slabs at Troopers Hill Field, one opposite the new viewpoint.

Action: Caroline to go ahead with ordering the benches

Construction of the access path from the Field to the top chimney would begin soon (in the next couple of weeks) at the cost agreed, to include supply of geotextiles. As no tarmac would be used in the project, the tarmac needed for the gate to the Field would have to be obtained separately.

Action: Caroline to establish the details

Green Flag award

Caroline said that the Council had agreed to support an application by Troopers Hill for Green Flag designation (for parks and green spaces that demonstrate appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for many sectors of the community). The site would be judged against eight criteria:

- A Welcoming Place
- Clean & Well Maintained
- Conservation & Heritage

- Marketing
- Healthy, Safe & Secure
- Sustainability
- Community Involvement
- Management.

She said that a few (limited) additions to the management plan would be needed in order to qualify for the scheme, perhaps in conjunction with some adjustments of the way that contractors work. The likely submission date was December 2006. In preparation, there would be a mock judging some time in July to identify areas for improvement. The award, once one, would be up for renewal annually. There was some concern about the time and resources available for the application, and recognition that the first attempt might not succeed; nevertheless it would provide a basis for building on in successive years. Award winners are entitled to fly a green flag and use the logo for the year. Achievement of the award would be good publicity for the Hill, and LNRs in Bristol. (For further information www.greenflagaward.org.uk)

Breathing Places Grant Application

Rob invited comments (by Monday 3 July) on the draft bid he had made for the Breathing Places Grant offered in conjunction with the BBC's Breathing Places initiative. The deadline for entries was very short. The provisional bid for a value of just under £10,000 included:

- Training sessions on plant identification and similar topics
- Surveys of invertebrates, bird nesting, and similar
- Encouraging greater involvement by individuals, tools for work parties etc
- Equipment for events such as collection of bugs and beasties by children
- Exhibition materials, gazebos, display boards
- Leaflets, maps, and other publicity and educational material.

Roy recommended a local printer at reasonable rates.

Music on the Hill – Saturday 1 July

Susan outlined the probable sequence of events and said that any decision to use St Aidan's Hall instead would be taken as early as possible on the day. Helpers would be needed from 2.45 pm onwards. The morning work party would concentrate on litter picking and tidying the concert site. FOTH would be setting up three gazebos and display boards, selling snacks and drinks. The band concert would start at 6.00 and finish at 8.00 pm. She explained the system for collecting donations and securing wrist bands, retaining the counterfoil for the prize draw. The prize draw announcement would be made before the last number. In addition to the Somerfield hot air balloon flight, there were 2 tickets for future Arts at St Aidans Concerts, an English Nature "goodies" bag from Sally and a birdbox. Arrangements were made to fix balloons and direction signs at conspicuous places.

Action: All to attend and assist. Anyone requiring a FOTH name badge to contact Kit.

Contents and Timing of next Newsletter

Kit said that the next Newsletter would be issued in the later half of July, in time to publicise the Balloon Fiesta event. He was commissioning articles from a number of members. Nick's article on flowering plants would be linked from the electronic version. Since it needed to be in colour it would be available on request only in printed form. Nick had produced a limited supply of grid map of Troopers Hill for use in recoding wildlife sightings. He provided a leaflet explaining how to read OS grid references, and introduced the group to the BRERC recording forms, He encouraged FOTH members to report sightings, especially of birds and unusual plants. A link to BRERC exists on the Troopers Hill web site.

Update on Nature in the City

Sally's news that the grant application had been successful and had attracted two years' funding, beginning in August, received an enthusiastic welcome. The money would enable Sally to continue working with groups in Bristol albeit on a slightly different basis (including the Northern Slopes at Novers Hill in Knowle, and Narrowways in St Werburghs) but excluding sites where English Nature were involved and where, for the most part, there was no community group. The increased budget would be focused mainly on events, education and involving schools in the natural environment.

Meeting Adjourned to Troopers Hill to visit the three new benches.