



**Note of FOTH meeting Tuesday 28 February 2006
7.15pm Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill**

Present:

Susan Acton-Campbell (Chair), Rob Acton-Campbell, Sally, Val, Alan, Gillian, Helen, Liz R, Roy

Apologies: Liz W, Kit, Caroline, Claire.

Approve previous minutes and Outstanding Actions from Previous minutes (AGM and October)

The previous minutes were approved. Most of the actions had been completed or would be discussed in the current agenda, except for:

Action: Chair to contact the Dogs Trust

Action: Chair or Work Party Organizer to contact Kelston Precision Gears regarding funding issues and ownership of Lamb Inn

A decision was taken to put on record that FOTH would accept no more second-hand books and the existing stock could be donated to charity.

Feedback

Hedge Planting

The hedge planting event had been carried out smoothly. There had been a good response to the call for volunteers and most of the work was completed during the morning session. The Forest of Avon had offered to retrospectively fund some of the plants through their carbon footprint calculation scheme. FOTH members were given the relevant forms.

Action: All to complete and post the form to meet the 10 March deadline.

Bird Box Bonanza

The event had attracted 60 people who had built 34 bird boxes of which 10 had been placed on the Hill and in Crews Hole woodland (though it was reported that one box placed low down to attract robins had already been destroyed). The crafts had been a popular success. Rob circulated photographs of the event.

Events Leaflet

Volunteers had successfully delivered leaflets to all residents within the agreed range. Rob planned to adapt the leaflet in June without the earlier events and re-launch it to publicise the brass band event on 1 July.

Action: Gill to communicate events programme to the Observer free newspaper.

Any issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to/ discussed with Caroline/Claire

Rob presented Caroline and Claire's written responses to the actions from the last meeting.

Lower Chimney Stack Repairs: a risk assessment had been carried out on the chimney and repair works are due to take place in the next financial year.

Dog Wardens: Wardens had agreed to visit the site regularly and keep an eye on the situation. Rob confirmed that for the purpose of enforcing the laws relating to dogs, Troopers Hill counted as a 'designated area'. He demonstrated some leaflets, including one from Soundwell Council that might provide a useful model, and posters which were suitable for inclusion on FOTH's exhibition boards.

Clearance of area at top of Greendown: The triangle between the LNR and the top house had been cleared by contractors by agreement as part of their work programme, though it was noted that certain Greendown residents had different opinions on whether its clearance was advisable.

Contractors' Work Programme 2006: similar to that for 2005. Contractors to complete a minimum of two litter picks a year with regular clearance of paths and emptying dog bins, with the addition of stripping out bracken areas as and when required. Work to be carried out according to conservation maps to ensure areas are cut correctly.

Puddle at entrance to Troopers Hill Field from Malvern Road: The Council were willing to provide chippings, but FOTH thought tarmac would be more appropriate and proposed that it should be included within the works to provide wheelchair access that would be funded by YANSEC. Gill reported having seen welding alterations to the gate to improve vehicular access, and Liz R reported that a hiker had experienced difficulty in opening the gate.

Motorcycles: there had been a report of damage to grass from vehicle use, and another instance of motorcycle access was reported (the cycle had probably been lifted over the gate).

Other: Someone had planted a Christmas tree on the Hill near the steps leading from Troopers Hill Road. FOTH planned to remove the tree and if possible, explain to the person responsible about the undesirability of deliberately introducing non-native species to the LNR.

Action: WPO to make informal enquiries as to the identity of the person.

FOTH's position on tree felling in Crews Hole woodland.

Chair introduced the issues with reference to the correspondence that had accompanied the issue of the agenda. Kit's suggestion of clearing trees and shrubs between Troopers Hill and the Field attracted comment. Liz R requested, in particular, preservation of the trees sheltering her house from strong winds. Roy deplored the condition of the Crews Hole woodland while acknowledging it was not practicable to manage within FOTH's resources. The FOTH position was established, unchanged, as preferring in general to leave trees alone except where felling a very small number would greatly enhance the view for the wider benefit of the general public. Roy made some pertinent points about the practical aspects of tree felling, namely, the need to consider the potentially unstable ground, and the loss of protection from the wind that may result from removal of trees.

Action: Chair to communicate FOTH's unchanged position on tree felling.

Rob circulated photographs of proposed sites for benches, trees to be removed and the creation of a grassy glade at Troopers Hill Field. Both the existing concrete bases could carry benches and a further bench could be sited by the poplar trees. Roy mentioned the quality of a bench by the side of the Avon locally. It was clarified that the benches envisaged for Troopers Hill would have no backs to enable users to face in any direction. Alan's employer, Akzo Nobel, had potentially offered funding for the works concerned at a rate of £850 a year over three years, although the transaction details were still to be confirmed.

Action: Chair to speak to Richard Ennion regarding the availability of funds and timing of the work (winter 2006-7). Sally to ask Caroline about Bristol City Council's usual bench suppliers.

Feedback and plans for work parties

Rob reported that the January and February work parties had each attracted 13 people, including four new volunteers. They had cleared a significant area of bramble from amongst some broom. He circulated copies of photographs (also on the web site). 18 volunteers had participated in the hedge planting at Green Down on Saturday 21 January and the cumulative total of volunteer time expended on the LNR now exceeded 500 hours.

The next work party would cut back more brambles, from amongst broom in the area near the lower chimney stack last attended to in February 2005 (where the undergrowth was not so dense as to conceal nesting birds), and from an area of heather bordering on Troopers Hill Road. The area cleared during early 2006 might be revisited for a tidy-up.

David B had arranged a team-building exercise by MOD employees to carry out remedial works to the steps leading from Troopers Hill Road, using tools lent by FOTH and the Council, following an introductory guided tour by Sally and under supervision from Caroline. Where the infill had sunk, the steps would be lowered to remove the trip hazard. FOTH would supply the wood and reclaim the cost from the Council. The wood that Gill had offered could then be used for building additional steps higher up.

Events planning

Parks Forum Celebration Event 11 March

Action: Chair to send FOTH's apologies for absence

Troopers Hill Exhibition 18 March: The event would last from 1400 to 1700 and would include exhibition of historical material and books, a display of proposals for the YANSEC grant funding (path creation and bench making), as well as photographs of work parties.

Action: Volunteers to start setting up at 1100 to allow a lunch break before the exhibition opens.

Barton Hill History Exhibition 25 March: Alan and Liz, Phyll and Vernon and Liz R to set up a FOTH table display between 1000 and 1600.

Action: Liz R to liaise with Pauline on the detailed arrangements.

Riversway Nursing Home 2 April

Action: Susan, Rob, Liz and Alan to attend and give a talk to the residents.

Royate Hill early April

Action: Sally to advise date of video showing.

Good Friday Service 14 April

Action: Kit, Helen and others to put up one gazebo and a table display and maintain a presence during the service. Susan to arrange hand over of the gate key for access by band and vehicles.

Dawn Chorus Walk 7 May

It was mentioned that 7 May is International Dawn Chorus Day and John Tully would be giving a preliminary talk on 18 April at Bishopsworth.

Music Event 1 July

Susan reported that FOTH would be able to borrow toilet tents from the Scouts. Sally confirmed that even though it was a Council approved event, FOTH would need an Events licence @ £21.

Living Rivers Walk in September

Item deferred to next meeting.

Update on LNR project

Sally reminded the meeting that funding for the project, and her post, did not extend past July and that in its absence FOTH would cease to receive the extra Council support, particularly in relation to events, that the Friends currently enjoy. Accordingly she was applying for finance for the project from sources that included the Heritage Lottery Fund (Your Heritage). She confirmed that Troopers Hill LNR was one of six sites identified for a Nature in the City funding application focusing on working with community representatives to hold events that would involve school children and aim for greater inclusion of minority and disadvantaged groups.

Action: Chair to write a letter of support for Sally's post.

Liz R mentioned a scheme to assist refugees and asylum seekers in getting to know the area where they had come to settle. It was suggested that they might benefit from trips to see Troopers Hill and noted that the contact point for invitations would be through St Nicholas of Tolentino church in Lawford's Gate.

Money

Accounting information was circulated and discussed. Sally had offered the grasses expert a £40 fee in connection with the Purple Prowl and suggested that this would cover a preliminary assessment to see whether a grasses survey would be worthwhile.

A decision on hiring an entertainer for the Balloon Fiesta event was deferred to the next meeting.

Plans for a kite flying event were still tentative. Sally had found a template for creating a butterfly shaped kite which might prove useful as a contribution to the event.

Sally confirmed that her grant bid would include financing two leaflets with history and ecology information (but not geomorphology) of the LNR.

Action: Chair to continue to seek out further potential sources of grant funding.

Rob confirmed that three wooden benches were being planned, two to be made on the first weekend in May and the third by a youth group at another time. Potential sites for the benches were discussed.

Action: Sally to provide a breakdown of bench costings from Touchwood

Other suggestions for expenditure included some more loppers, spares for signs, stationery, computer and printer consumables, stamps, a cash float, and balloons to be tied at the entrances to the Hill to attract attention to ongoing FOTH events.

Action: Val to investigate sources of custom balloons.

Next Newsletter

No more items were required for the newsletter due to be issued in early March.