



2023 – RHS Britain in Bloom South West - Parks and Open Spaces - Marking Sheet

NAME OF ENTRY: Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve

LOCATION: Troopers Hill, Bristol

ASSESSOR: David Purkiss **DATE:** 3rd July 2023 Afternoon

WEATHER CONDITIONS: Warm but cloudy with a very strong west/southwest wind and short but heavy rain showers.

SIZE/TYPE – A large local nature reserve set on a hillside covering over 21 acres of acid soil over pennant sandstone rock with acid heath and grassland.

MARKS: Community – Maintenance Environment – TOTAL –

AWARD - 5 STARS

AREAS OF ACHIEVEMENT

COMMUNITY: -

The Friends of Trooper's Hill was formed over 20 years ago in response to a consultation by Bristol City council and local residents. The survey highlighted a wish list of jobs that were a high priority for local residents and became the foundation for the first management plan to be conducted on the site. The friends meet regularly on-site holding work parties, working towards this management plan. A new 10-year management plan was completed in 2019 and the friends are now currently following that.

There is a regular program of events to suit all ages and backgrounds held on site. These are listed on their website and advertised on the notice boards at the various entrances to the nature reserve. Regular emails are sent out to a mailing list of followers and members sharing news and listing up and coming events. Hard copies can be sent out by post if required. They are also on display and posted in the clip frames on the display and information boards around the reserve. All work carried out and events taking place have nature conservation at their core.

Living adjacent to the site, Susan and Rob act as wardens and keep a close eye on things. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience and are both extremely passionate about caring for and preserving this special site.

I really enjoyed my guided visit to this site, walking around meeting and chatting to both regulars and visitors. There was a real sense of pride in what had been achieved here.

MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT: -

Having an enthusiastic and active Friends group is the key to keeping on top of the many varied maintenance tasks at Troopers Hill. After the group completed all the tasks highlighted on the original survey, a new consultation was carried out with local residents in Oct/Nov 2022,

which listed a new set of objectives. As always, keeping the site free of litter and dog fouling were of high priority.

On the afternoon of my visit the paths were clean, free from litter and clear of dog mess. There was some recent graffiti around the base of one of the donated seats, an attempt had already been made to remove it and it had been promptly reported to the council.

All maintenance work now taking place follows the new 10-year management plan which dates from 2019. In accordance with this, any maintenance work aims to balance the use of the site for recreation whilst at the same time protecting its natural beauty and retaining its unique bio diversity.

ENVIRONMENT: -

This site of acidic heathland is unique in the Bristol area, so it is extremely important to protect its natural flora and fauna, much of which you won't find anywhere else in the area.

Keeping the heather heathland free of encroaching brambles, nettles, docks and other pernicious weeds, as well as the self-seeded saplings of birch, ash and sycamore is of high priority to stop the trees and scrubland from establishing and taking over. These tasks are regularly completed during the work parties.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY: -

It is really difficult for me to suggest anything as it is clear, from all the information I received, that engagement with and participation from the local community in collaboration with Bristol City council and other outside bodies is exemplary.

MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT: -

Carry on working through the tasks highlighted in the current management plan. Keep up the good work.

As with other urban sites and projects I have visited, keeping on top of graffiti and vandalism is difficult and a seems like a never-ending task. Engaging with the police, local schools and teenage groups to find the culprits could possibly help, but it seems to be an increasing problem in urban parks and open spaces.

ENVIRONMENT: -

Again, it is really difficult for me to make any comments as this nature reserve is the epitome of a well organized and successfully run project. All I could suggest is that it would be good to share some of your knowledge and experience with other conservation groups around the Bristol area.