

# 2002-2022 – Looking after Troopers Hill

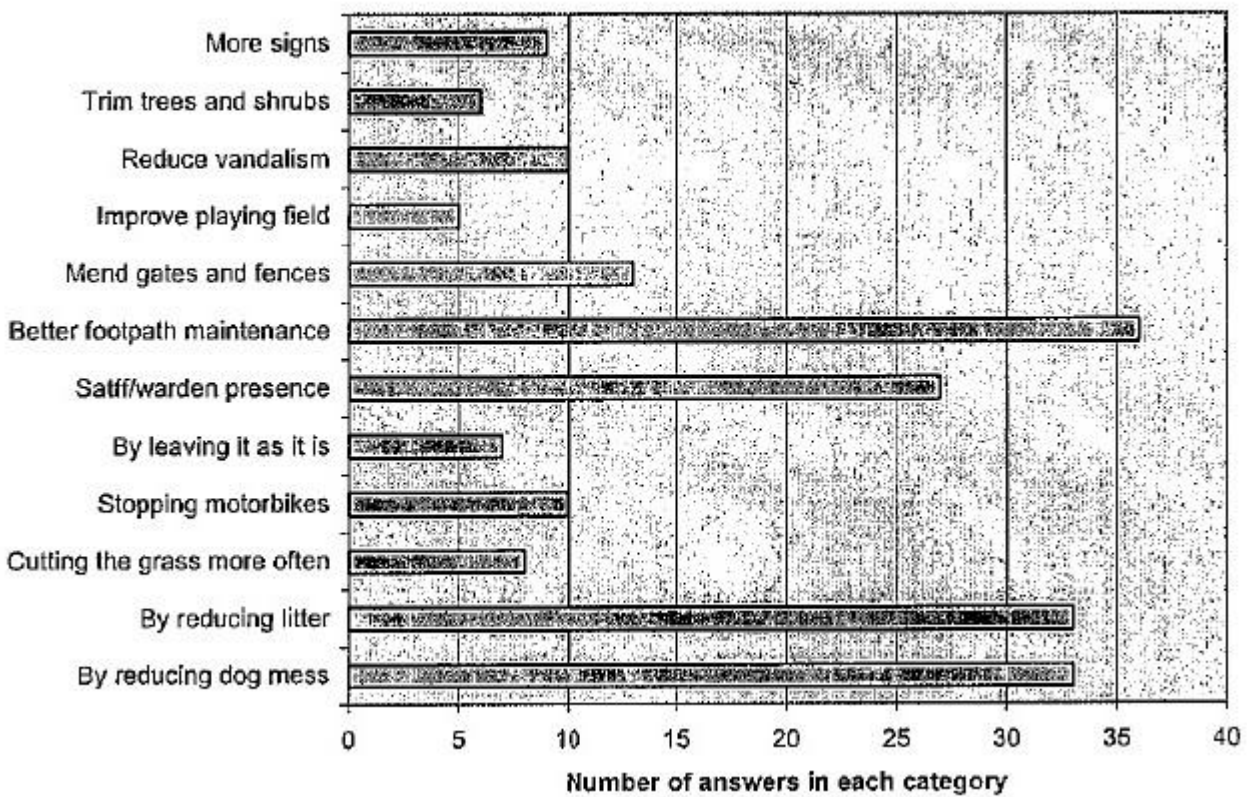
## 1. Introduction

In 2002 a questionnaire was launched asking local people what they thought about Troopers Hill and how they thought Troopers Hill could be better looked after. As a result of the responses local residents formed the volunteer group, Friends of Troopers Hill, in 2003. The group used the responses to guide their actions for the next 20 years.

By 2022 Friends of Troopers Hill had addressed all the issues raised in the initial survey. This report lists the actions taken in response to the 2002 survey.

### Responses in 2002

How do you feel Troopers Hill could be better looked after?



## 2. More signs

There were 2 [out-of-date information boards](#) on Troopers Hill at the time of the survey and nowhere to display notice.

The out-of-date information boards referred to the grayling butterfly that had not been recorded on Troopers Hill since the major fire of 1995.

Friends of Troopers Hill successfully applied for Awards for All funding from the National Lottery in 2004. Part of that grant paid for [information boards](#) to greet visitors to all the Troopers Hill [entrances](#).



This was followed in 2007 by the first of the information boards near the upper Troopers Hill chimney, funded by the [Nature in the City](#) project led by Sally Oldfield, Bristol City Council's Local Nature Reserves officer



Over the years the Friends have raised funds for four welcome signs at entrances and 4 more information boards. They also refreshed the 2007 information board in 2012. Images and description of all these boards can be seen on <http://troopers-hill.org.uk/sundry/board.htm>

### 3. Trim trees and shrubs

In 2002 some paths were completely blocked by bramble; scrub was advancing into the open acid grassland and heathland area that had led to the site's designation, in 1995, as a local nature reserve. A [conservation management plan](#) had been produced for Bristol City Council in 1999 but resources had not been provided to carry out the actions recommended by the management plan.

Rob Acton-Campbell of Friends of Troopers Hill and Sally Oldfield, Local Nature Reserves Officer for Bristol City Council worked together to create an updated management plan. This was published in June 2004 and agreed at a formal ceremony where it was signed by the head of Bristol City Council's Parks department, Peter Wilkinson and Susan Acton-Campbell, Chair of Friends of Troopers Hill.



The quality of the plan plus the work carried out over the next 3 years led Bristol City Council to deem Troopers Hill to have achieved the necessary level to be awarded the national award of a Green Flag. They successfully entered Troopers Hill for this award in

2007 and continued to do so until 2013. Read more on <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/gf.htm>

#### 4. Reduce vandalism, litter, dog mess

Friends of Troopers Hill held their first litterpick with a spring clean in 2004.



By August 2004 Rob Acton-Campbell was interviewed in [this video](#) saying “there actually hasn’t been all that much litter”. Local people took pride in Troopers Hill as it became a more welcoming space and many collect litter on their walks even to the current day. Similarly, although dog fouling is still an issue, people are more conscious of their responsibilities and volunteers and other dog walkers do pick up faeces that have been left by dogs whose owners have not acted responsibly.

There were no bins on Troopers Hill or Field in 2002. There are now 4 bins on Troopers Hill Field and 4 dog bins on Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve. Bristol City Council empties them twice a week and more frequently at peak times such as bank holidays.

Because the Hill became more welcoming there was a greater footfall and vandalism reduced thanks to the deterrent presence of other people. A small amount of tagging and anti-social behaviour still occurs but is infrequent and usually very minor. At worst some cleaning materials, paint or a brush and shovel to pick up glass will deal with current issues.

## 5. Improve playing field

In 2002 [Troopers Hill Field](#) consisted of

- a wide expanse of grass
- a slide
- two swings
- no benches, bins or gates
- a rough track to Troopers Hill
- some trees, mainly planted along the allotment boundary, but also 2 hawthorns and 2 fruit trees on the western side

The safety surfacing around the swings and slide was set on fire on a number of occasions, burning out the seats of the swings. The swings were later removed by Bristol City Council just leaving the slide.

There were no gates to Troopers Hill Field from nearby roads so motorbikes accessed it with impunity and made their way onto Troopers Hill.

The Field was known by the name “Malvern Rd Open Space” to Bristol City Council and by a number of different names to the general public.

There were no surfaced paths, apart from a partial track along the line of the beech hedge on the west of the Field. The partial path remained from when Troopers Hill Woods was Malvern Rd municipal tip. The Field became a quagmire every winter with lying water and mud, due to the clay cap that had been used over the waste buried under the Field. The waste was building rubble from the demolition work done to create the Old Market underpass.

The first steps to improve Troopers Hill Field came in 2004 when Bristol City Council's Parks department funded and installed [two kissing gates and fencing](#), protecting access from motorbikes on Malvern Rd and Troopers Hill Field.

In 2005 one of the Friends of Troopers Hill applied for a grant from his employer Cromadex part of Akzo-Nobel to pay for two red benches on existing concrete pads on Troopers Hill Field.



A survey was launched by Friends of Troopers in 2005 to find out what people wanted in Troopers Hill Field (Malvern Rd Open Space) including what they wanted to call it. This is how it became known by the Council as Troopers Hill Field. The survey gave a [clear steer](#) towards children's play, paths, seating, less dog mess and events.



In 2006 Bristol City Council's Allotments team installed palisade fencing on the boundary between Troopers Hill Field and the Troopers Hill allotments and painted them green.

In 2007 Bristol City Council installed a noticeboard at the Malvern Rd entrance to Troopers Hill Field.

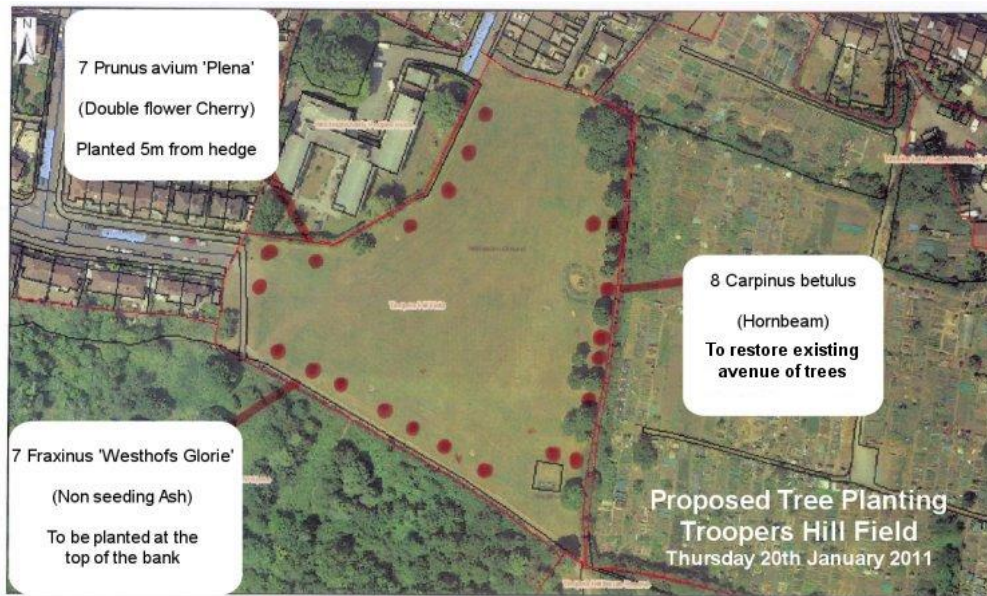


In 2009 Bristol City Council received government funding for the Play Pathfinder project which delivered play areas to a number of Bristol's Parks including St George Park. Because of the evidence for a wish for play equipment in Troopers Hill Field £10,000 was allocated.

After consultation a log trail and climbing structure with earth mounds was created. One of the poplar trees near the new play area was found to be rotting and was felled. Large sections of trunk were left on the field so they could be used as part of a balancing trail but also as seating. Details of the project are on <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/play09.htm>.



In January 2011 more trees were planted on Troopers Hill Field with children coming from local schools to plant them and daffodils on the bank by the track. There is a video of the planting [here](#).



In Friends of Troopers Hill successfully applied for Lottery funding which was awarded in 2012. These funds paid for the “[Welcome to Troopers Hill Field](#)” information board at the Summerhill Terrace entrance and 2 land drains at the wettest part of the Field to try to address the lying water problem. Using the same funds a waymarker for the woodland trail was put near the wooden kissing gate leading from the Field to Troopers Hill Woods.



In 2013 Friends of Troopers Hill were allocated Section 106 (contribution from developers to the Council to offset the impact of developments) funding from the St George Neighbourhood Partnership Environment Sub-group to pay for a path from the Malvern Rd

entrance to the Summerhill Terrace entrance. The funding included the installation of a new bench.



More trees were planted in 2016 and Friends of Troopers Hill raised over £80,000 to have a [play area](#) installed for children under 5 and an activity trail for children up to 12 years old. The project included a path from the Summerhill Terrace entrance to the play area with a spur to the footpath that leads to the milestone on Summerhill Rd. A bin was installed at the junction of the path to the play area and the milestone footpath. This brought the number of bins that had been installed in Troopers Hill Field since 2003 to 4.





In 2019 the much-loved red slide that had been in place since at least 1980 had to be removed for safety reasons, it had rusted so much. Friends of Troopers Hill raised over £1,000 from local donations and applied for the remaining funds from the Ibstock Enover Trust. This was granted. A new slide, of an almost identical design to the old slide, was installed in a good position to be an integral part of the “new” play area.



Friends of Troopers Hill raised funds amounting to approximately £60,000 to finish surfacing paths for the remaining two sides of the Field and celebrated the completion of the works in 2020.



At different stages new benches have been added to Troopers Hill Field, one kindly donated as a memorial bench, others coming from different grants applied for by Friends of Troopers Hill. There are now 3 flat (backless) benches on Troopers Hill Field and 3 with armrests and backs. There is also a very low wooden bench in the children’s play area.

## **6. Mend gates and fences, stop motorbikes**

In 2002 Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve’s boundary was marked by a rotting wooden fence and kissing gates. Over the years Friends of Troopers Hill made many repairs to the fences and gates. In 2006 they planted a hedge on the boundary with Greendown to act

as a barrier when the fence collapsed. Funding for works such as fences was difficult to find as many funders believed this was the local authority's responsibility to fund. There is, in fact, no statutory obligation for councils to maintain or provide parks. Their only obligation is to keep their property safe.

The new metal kissing gates on Troopers Hill Field (see section 5) helped to reduce access by motorbikes but more needed to be done. In 2008 Friends of Troopers Hill obtained funding from [YANSEC Environmental Trust](#) to replace the rotting wooden fencing and install metal estate fencing and a metal kissing gate and contractor's gate on the Greendown boundary.

Finally in July 2019, Friends of Troopers Hill used National Lottery Heritage Fund money, to replace more rotting wooden fencing. Metal estate fencing, a contractor's gate and kissing gates were installed the length of the Troopers Hill Rd boundary except for sections where a combination of a steep slopes and undergrowth would prevent access.



Since then there have been no reports of motorbikes on Troopers Hill.

## **7. Staff/warden presence**

In the economic climate and the funding of councils since 2002 this was not going to happen but thanks to the more welcoming nature of the site and the higher footfall it is rare that nobody is in calling distance. It is unusual for anyone to say they feel unsafe on Troopers Hill and much of the site is overlooked by local housing with occupants who have a keen interest and feeling of ownership of the site.

Any incidents are rapidly reported to police, fire service, Bristol City Council or the Friends of Troopers Hill although the Friends do point out that the first 3 contacts are the better option as volunteers do go away on holiday and do not cover phones, emails and social media 24 hours a day.

## **8. By leaving it as it is**

This is in fact the aim of the nature conservation management plan for Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve. Work is done to maintain a mosaic of habitats and prevent the loss of the acid heathland and grassland to scrub. Most visitors do not even notice the work done by volunteers or Bristol City Council but if nothing had been done since 2002 all of Troopers Hill would be young scrub woodland by now and none of the paths would be passable.

## **9. Cutting the grass more often**

This action did not specify whether this should be done on the Local Nature Reserve or the Field. On the Field Bristol City Council have a regularly cutting regime so the middle of the Field can be used for children's ball games but the edges are left to grow longer to increase biodiversity.

On Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve the soil is too poor in most areas for grass to grow long but there is an annual meadow cut, with the cuttings removal to keep the soil poor and encourage the growth of wild flowers, on the area near the Greendown boundary where the ground conditions differ to the rest of Troopers Hill

## **10. Better footpath maintenance**

In 2002 footpaths were disappearing on Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve. Bristol City Council now cut back the edges by 2 metres, where they can, in winter, when birdnesting will not be disturbed. The re-growth is then such that usually only one visit is needed in the growing season to cut back the edges.

In 2006 funds were awarded from YANSEC to create a [wheelchair access path](#) at the top of Troopers Hill. These [paths were rebuilt](#) by Bristol City Council in 2022.

In 2012 Friends of Troopers Hill were awarded [funds from the Community Spaces](#) programme. Part of these funds was used to rebuilt steps and paths around Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve. Since the Friends have funded timber for repairs of steps with the work being carried out by [ParkWork](#) and Bristol City Council have provided stone for topping up steps.

Volunteers, ParkWork and sometimes corporate volunteers dig away the build up of grass and soil from the front of steps when they can.

## **11. Conclusion**

Since 2002 Friends of Troopers Hill have raised over £300,000 for [projects](#) and [activities](#) on Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve, the Field and the Woods. They have spent thousands of hours working on [conservation work parties](#), including litterpicking and carrying out maintenance. Bristol City Council have worked in partnership with the Friends and are the main contributors to the work carried out on Troopers Hill from bin emptying bins, cutting back paths, hedge cuts, grass cuts, winter and summer conservation work, repairs and more.

Troopers Hill continues to receive [awards](#) and is used as an example of successful [urban conservation](#) for university and 'A' level students. Surveys show a good level of biodiversity is being maintained.

Having addressed all the issues raised in the 2002 consultation Friends of Troopers Hill initiated a further consultation in 2022 using the same questions, so a [comparison](#) could be made and any new priorities addressed.

Thanks to the overwhelming support of local people Troopers Hill is as we see it today, a welcoming, accessible green space, loved and used by many, even when they can only admire it as part of their view.