



**Note of Meeting Thursday, 12th May, 2011  
Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd**

Present: Susan (Chair), Norman (Treas) Rob (WPO) Kit (Memb Sec) Clare (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee), Bryan (Cttee), Jude (Cttee), Dave (BCC) Liz R, Jackie, Roy, Elaine, Helen (minutes)

Apologies Jules (BCC)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendments.

**Issues and thank yous for our Community Park Keeper, Community Parks Officer,**

Susan congratulated the Parks employees, Jules in particular, for continued excellent maintenance on the Hill particularly instant responses to vandalism, reports of fires and broken fences.

It was noted that screws had been found undone on the bench at the top of Troopers Hill. In addition, the geotextile membrane underlying the path near the Greendown entrance required attention as it had become a trip hazard. There were reports of evidence that disposable barbecues had been used near the chimney.

Rob told the meeting that the Green Flag judges would pay an anonymous visit to the nature reserve. The management plan was due for a five-yearly review and Rob would liaise with Ollie Roberts (Parks Department) for the purpose.

Susan introduced a questionnaire from Parks about park keepers' hours. Rob and Dave explained the background in relation to visibility of park keepers at work. After a short discussion the meeting agreed that the current arrangements work exceedingly well and there were no changes required to Jules' hours. The response to the questionnaire should welcome routine visits from Police Community Support Officers on summer evenings and weekends.

Action: Rob to draft a response and circulate for member's comments [has been done and response sent].

**Work parties**

completed since the last meeting: 5th March, in Sally 's Glade; on 2nd April a small group worked in Sally's Glade; the party on Saturday 7th May was rained off.

Rob proposed an evening sapling cutting party, the meeting chose Thursday 26 May at 7.00. [The work party lasted an hour, after which the participants relaxed with drinks at the top of the Hill].

Saturday 4th June. Kit expressed concern at the extent of the low-lying bramble in Sally's Glade.

Action Rob/Susan to ask either Steve or Norman to lead the party because of unavailability of competent persons.

Saturday 2nd July: to be arranged.

## **St George Strollers Walking for Health update**

Clare reported on the very good launch walk on 11th May in which 19 walkers (and a well behaved dog) had participated. The walkers had a wide range of different abilities. Susan had been walk leader, and helpers had come from Horfield and Lockleaze. The walk had started at St George Labour Club, through St George Park, with a group photograph taken at the bandstand, and a longer option via Avon View Cemetery (passing by Handel Cossham's and William Butler's graves). Refreshments were provided at the end of the walk. Feedback from the event suggested that many would prefer longer walks. Clare distributed posters to volunteers for various locations. The next walk would be at Magpie Bottom on 23 May, refreshments would be provided. Thereafter, the routes of future walks would include an opportunity for walkers to purchase refreshments on the way or at the end.

Clare mentioned the free training for walk leaders and the need for extra ones. She also referred to a proposal that the Department of Health would become the future sponsor of Walking for Health instead of Natural England.

An Avon Amble Walk for Health had been arranged to coincide with the River Festival on 20th July (see minutes of last meeting) using a boat to travel from Netham Lock to Beeses the Conham ferry. Susan has secured St George Neighbourhood Partnership funding for this walk.

## **Events**

The St Aidan's Community Fair on Saturday 26th March had gone well and the Friends' stall had attracted many comments on the Stepping Forward grant proposals.

The Dawn Chorus walk led by Ed Drewitt on Saturday 9th April had been informative and good fun. The birds heard and identified had included woodpeckers, blackcaps and robins.

The Good Friday event on 22nd April had been ably managed by Kit and more Friends than expected had volunteered their assistance.

The forthcoming Avon Valley Walk on Sunday 22nd May still had 18 places available as a number of people had cancelled their booking. Jude mentioned that the answering arrangements for booking the Avon Valley Walk would have to be altered during her absence.

Saturday 25th June would be the date for Music on the Hill, featuring the Gasworks Singers. The event would be compered by Kit. Insurance cover for this event has been arranged via a Bristol City Council Park Permit (instead of a licence) intended for smaller events of up to 200 people. Friends would take a collection in the interval.

Forest Schools. A teacher at Horfield had sought advice from FOTH on running a Forest School for a small number of primary school children in the summer holidays. She was fully trained in holding these activities but would need volunteers, it was proposed that these would ideally be parents of the participating children. In principle Friends had no objection to facilitating the programme provided that it involved no great responsibility for making it work.

The meeting learned that Crofts End band who practice at Hanham Tabernacle would like to play in the open air. Future options for an event including band entertainment in the open air were discussed.

## **Funding**

- progress on the "Stepping Forward" grant

The survey questionnaire had closed on 8th May. 467 responses had been generated (75 online) from 1900 questionnaires, representing just over 20% response. The meeting expressed thanks to Margaret for keying in 392 responses, to Jude and Bryan for

supplying envelopes and to everyone who had folded questionnaires, stuck labels on envelopes and delivered questionnaires.

Susan outlined the preliminary analysis of the responses. She reported that 95% people supported improving existing paths and steps. Rob also mentioned the ecological impact survey undertaken by Rupert Higgins, the results and interim report had been generally helpful to the grant project. More information is at <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/steppingforward/>

The Project team and the Council were working on designs and estimates for tender process, to be finalised by the end September. There was potential for a sustainability grant to be available on completion of the project.

- the Awards for All grant application been turned down because it had been perceived as too similar to previous applications and as relating to heritage rather than wildlife.
- Possible Co-Op grant application. Helen drew Friends' attention to the community grants offered by the Co-Operative society. Kit mentioned that making the newsletter available in audio download might be a candidate for grant-funding. Roy commented that it might be worth approaching Calibre, and a possible contact at Bristol University was suggested.
- A cheque had been received from the Bristol City Community Festival and Event Fund which will fund this year's Family Fun Picnic which was cancelled last year because of poor weather conditions.

It had been suggested that Brislington residents with a good view of Troopers Hill might wish to donate to FOTH via some form of street collection. Members were generally not in favour of collecting donations in such circumstances.

## **Networking**

An update on progress relating to the Area Green Space Plan gave news that meetings would be held during June and July to discuss investment in green spaces in St George via the St George Neighbourhood Partnership and its environment sub group. It was possible that s106 funding and other resources could be used to set up and develop the ideas arising from the summer 2010 consultation exercise, having regard to local priorities.

Jackie proposed developing a **Facebook** page for Friends of Troopers Hill. She explained the value of Facebook for community groups and the usefulness of linking into other local activities. It could be a mechanism for attracting comments, publicising events etc. She volunteered to keep the page up to date by editing, keeping open lines of communication with the existing FOTH group, with back up from Liz R. Members expressed reservations about the use of the page, in particular, care would be needed to avoid a sudden influx of visitors or exacerbating local parking difficulties. Bryan struck a note of particular caution. With thanks to Jackie, it was agreed that a Facebook page should be set up on a trial basis. [The Facebook page became available in mid-June].

Pride of Place – Following Susan's explanation of the exhibition planned for the M Shed museum, it was agreed to lend FOTH's folding display boards to St George Neighbourhood Partnership for presentation purposes.

## **Newsletter**

The meeting welcomed the last issue and gave positive comments on the articles. Kit reminded members that ideas for future issues were always welcome. The idea of recording podcasts of the newsletter had been explored earlier in the meeting. The next edition would be produced before the Music on the Hill event.

## **Next Meeting**

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July 7.15pm Summerhill Methodist Church.