



NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday, 25th April, 2019 7.15pm

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO), Rod (Committee member), Margaret (Treasurer and minutes), Ella (Volunteer Co-ordinator for Parks)

Apologies: Fabian (Cllr), Jo, Rich, Judith, Mali

1. Approve February minutes

The February minutes were approved.

2. Projects

- Progress on Access to Nature (paths) – Rob has obtained £62,500 for resurfacing the track from Malvern Road to Troopers Hill and a new path across the Field. This funding has come from two landfill trusts and CIL money. The council are now doing a detailed costing before putting the work out to tender. The costing is needed to ascertain whether the work can be done for this amount as the original bid was for £70,000. If £62,500 is not enough then either we will reduce the scope of the work or try and obtain some more money.

- ParkWork woodland path works – ParkWork have rebuilt the steps from the parking area on Crews Hole Road with money from the Avon and Frome Partnership. They have also cleared bramble, etc, from the edges of the other steps.
The sign at the bottom pointing to the path has come off so Susan will contact Didac about putting this back up.
Action: Susan to speak to Didac
The proposal to improve the parking area on Crews Hole Road has been put forward for CIL funding and has been accepted as a priority for St George. The next step is for Parks to do more pricing of the proposal before it goes before the Area Committee.

- Wild Play, Natural Learners, The Hive and application to the Ninevah Charitable Trust – Susan reported that Natural Learners would like to apply again for a Ninevah Charitable Trust grant to do more work on Troopers Hill with their Wild Play Project. Susan has approved the application which will be submitted in May. Mali now has an allotment and is planning to expand the project to include learning about growing food. Natural Learners were also an important element in our Heritage Fund application as they are using some of this funding to work with people with learning difficulties. The first session took place today with a group from The Hive; the focus of the session was birds and included 'bird bingo', building a giant nest, clay modelling of birds and making a fatball feeder. The next session in June will focus on plants.

- Protecting Nature (fencing and more) – The same Heritage Fund grant is being used to replace the fencing on Troopers Hill Road. The company that

won the tender for the job have made a start but the work has halted due to ill health. Rob reported that they are monitoring the situation and will keep in close contact with the Landscape team at the council. Once the fencing is completed the new dog bin will be installed at the third entrance.

The funding is also covering the cost of a fungi interpretation board at the second entrance. Clare Challice is in the process of designing the board. There needs to be a new noticeboard at the third entrance. Once the fence is in place a decision will be made about whether to have a free standing board or one attached to the fence. Rob mentioned that the new notice boards will no longer display the Parks phone number.

- Defibrillator update – the new defibrillator, on the wall of Didac, which Friends of Troopers Hill helped raised money for, has been stolen. It has been reported to the Police and Didac are considering what to do next.
- Bull Inn – Asset of Community Value – ended 20th November 2018 – progress: the membership of Friends of Troopers Hill were asked whether they wanted to reapply for this. Only two people from one household and a third person, who has now moved away, responded in favour so it has been decided not to apply again.

3. Conservation work on Troopers Hill

- Heritage Fund funded update to Conservation Management Plan: Rupert Higgins has updated the Management Plan. Rob reported that it has been sent to Becky Belfin in the Council and also to Janice Gardiner of Avon Wildlife Trust. Janice suggested including some percentages in our plans, e.g aim to have a percentage of bracken or a percentage of grass in a particular area. She also suggested that we could aim to have a range of ages of gorse, some young and some old, rather than aim to eliminate it totally from an area. Once we have received Becky's comments the draft will be sent back to Rupert to produce the final version.
- Heritage Fund works for summer and the coming winter: based on the new management plan we need to plan the works for the summer and coming winter. Rob said that if the gorse is already regenerating then Green Mantle will be brought in to clear this in the summer, but if not then this work will be done in the winter. This will use the remaining £4,000 from the £10,000 included in the Heritage Fund funding for this work.
- Heritage Fund invertebrate survey: David Gibbs is doing this invertebrate survey at various times over the year, and will be paid for this when he completes the survey in January. On his first visit, in April, he found a moth that has not been recorded in this country for 10 years (*Dasytoma salicella*).
- Volunteer conservation work parties and other works: Rob reported that the work party on Saturday 2nd March cleared an area of broom above the fencing on Troopers Hill Road. The ParkWork work party on 21st March, which included 3 students from the University of Bristol, worked on the top of the hill and in Sally's Glade. On Saturday 6th April there were 9 volunteers clearing bramble and saplings in the gully. ParkWork were not able to come to the

work party on 18th April but Rob and Susan took out some gorse amongst the heather. ParkWork came to work on the hill instead on 25th April.

- Work parties before the next meeting:
Saturdays 4th May and 1st June
Thursdays 16th May and 20th June (with ParkWork)

4. Troopers Hill Young Rangers (Future Proof Parks) – update: Susan reported that 6 young people originally expressed interest in this project, and 3 are still involved. They were planning an event on the hill for Saturday 27th April, linked to the City Nature Challenge, but this may be cancelled due to the bad weather forecast for that date. If so, it will be rearranged to another weekend. We will be talking to them about other projects they may want to do on the hill.

5. Other Troopers Hill issues and news

- Spider survey: Shelley, a former work party volunteer now studying conservation, and currently studying in Zimbabwe, would like to do a spider survey on the hill. Susan has put her in contact with Becky Belfin to discuss this further.
- Replacement dog bin: as reported above, this new dog bin on Troopers Hill Road will be installed once the new fencing is in place.
- Feedback to the Local Plan consultation: Susan explained that, as part of their Local Plan review, the council proposes to designate some green spaces as 'Local Green Spaces', which will have more protection, and Troopers Hill Nature Reserve, Field and Woodland have been given this designation. It is important that as many people as possible respond to the consultation expressing their support for this designation as the plan will be reviewed by government inspectors. Susan has therefore sent an email out to members asking them to do this and has also put it on Facebook. It was agreed that Susan should do a formal response from Friends of Troopers Hill.
Action: Susan to submit formal response
- Entering Troopers Hill for a Pride in Parks award: Susan asked whether she should submit an entry for this award again. The cost would be £20. Troopers Hill has been awarded 5 stars for this award over the last five years and before that was awarded a green flag for several years. It is useful when applying for funding and also, as Rod pointed out, it would look odd if we no longer held this award. It was agreed, therefore, that we should enter for this again.
Action: Susan to submit entry.

6. St George Strollers – Bristol City Council removing support for Walk for Health Bristol:

At the last meeting Susan reported that the council is withdrawing support for the Walking for Health scheme by no longer funding a Walking for Health co-ordinator. The situation has changed slightly in that the council is now supporting groups until the end of June. In the meantime, Susan has been obtaining estimates for insurance and the group has started collecting £1 donations from walkers so that the Strollers will be able to function independently, if necessary, from the end of June. Ella said that there are still discussions going on at the council about this and Rob added that the Parks Foundation are supportive but believe the scheme should

be funded by Public Health. Susan added that the national Walking For Health Scheme is also being scaled down.

Ella suggested that Sustrans might support this type of scheme and asked whether she should make further enquiries. This was agreed.

Action: Ella will make informal enquiries about whether Sustrans might be interested in supporting a Walking for Health scheme in Bristol.

7. Events

- Past event– Star Gazing 14th Feb: Susan reported that this event had gone really well. It had taken place on the last date available and the weather had been good. Rod asked how many had attended. Susan said that the event had been fully booked with 25 people; there had been two people who had not turned up but some of the volunteers who helped at the event were allowed to stay so numbers balanced out. Rod explained that the aim was to have 5 people for each telescope. The dates offered were based partly on availability of people with telescopes and also on the phase of the moon. Stargazing is best done between a crescent moon and half moon as the moon is more interesting then and it does not have as much light as a full moon, making it easier to see surrounding stars. Donations had only amounted to £5. It had been agreed that FOTH and the Astronomical Society would split the donations so Susan handed £2.50 to Rod. Rod will find out who Susan needs to contact about the Bugs and Beasties event, when the Astronomical Society usually bring solar telescopes.

Action: Rod to speak to Chairman to find out who Susan should contact about Bugs and Beasties event.

- Future events – Dawn Chorus – 5am Saturday 27th April. Susan announced that this had been rearranged to 28th April due to the bad weather forecast (wind and rain). Fortunately Ed Drewett was able to offer this date as an alternative. Susan has informed all the people who had signed up for the event, via Eventbrite.
- Avon Valley Walk – 19th May 10.30 am. This is featured in the Walking Festival. It is a guided walk, led by Rob, through a series of green spaces along Avon valley and Brislington Brook.

8. Networking

- Community Fair at St Aidans – Saturday 9th March 11am to 2pm: Friends of Troopers Hill had a stand at this fair. It was useful mainly for networking with other groups.
- St George and Redfield Voice: this publishes an article by Susan every month and we also advertise our events and St George Strollers walks on the events page.
- Parks charity: Rob reported that the Parks Foundation will be launched at the Festival of Nature in Bristol and Bath in June. They are currently recruiting Trustees; there have been about 40 expressions of interest and they are hoping to interview in May. There can be up to 12 trustees but they might recruit 6 now and 6 in 18 months time so that the turnover is staggered. The website will be launched just before the charity in June and a logo is being

produced. Rob commented that they have a very good web design team who have managed to come up with a good web address for the general website (yourpark.org.uk). There is also a corporate website. Rob and others from Bristol and Bath are attending a conference in Leeds next week.

9. The Troopers Hill ‘shopping list’ – are there any more projects we need to plan beyond regular maintenance and conservation work? Susan said that, once all the work funded by the Heritage Fund was completed, we would come to the end of the original list of projects to be done on the hill and so was asking if anyone could think of anything else that needed doing, other than the routine conservation work and regular maintenance. She has sent an email out to the membership about this. Rob suggested that a celebration event be held next year, once the work was finished. Susan added that it would be 25 years next year since Troopers Hill had been designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1995 (22nd June) so it could be a double celebration.

Next meeting

Thursday 27th June 2019

at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road