

Minutes of Friends of Troopers Hill Meeting
Thursday 3 September 2026 7.15pm at Wesley Memorial Church Hall

Attendees: Susan, Margaret, Rob, Cllr Fabian Breckels, Stéphanie, Elaine and Rosie
Apologies: Fran, Neil, William, Jill, Rod, Fay and Liv

1. **Approval of Minutes from 7 May meeting**

These were approved

2. **Nature Conservation Work on Troopers Hill**

- Nature Conservation Work Parties
- Recent

Rob reported that there had been several since the last meeting (see list on website www.troopers-hill.org.uk/workp), two had been foreshortened and another two cancelled because of the heat. Most of the work had been pulling bracken. The turnout had been good and lots of new people had been volunteering which was very positive.

- Upcoming

There were another eight to the end of the year which were on Eventbrite and the team leaders will agree which areas and what type of work is to be done. There had been a couple of BBQs but several had been stopped by the intervention of the public. There had been 15 fires in Bristol parks this summer. It was noted that Chinese lanterns were banned on Bristol CC land although helium balloons were not.

- Photo Survey 2026

This is a photo survey of the hill and area - 36 photos, the maximum number of prints that could be taken on a roll of film! - undertaken by Rupert Higgins of Wessex Ecological Consultancy every 5 years which he had started in 1994. He had carried one out last week. We do not expect to receive the photos and report until winter.

3. **Funds/Projects**

- Information Board for Troopers Hill Woods by layby entrance

Susan had organised a walk through the woods to thank the main donors who helped fund this. The BCC workers who had been involved also joined the walk.

- Funding Winter Works 2026/27

Susan had put together a funding application on behalf of BCC (the landowners) which had been sent to SUEZ. The huge amount of work this had entailed was acknowledged with gratitude.

- Funding repairs to the steps in the Woods and deciding on priority
- £2021.56 had been raised already independently for these repairs so there were sufficient funds to carry out work on two of the four sets of steps. After some discussion it was decided to start on Little Elizabeth's Steps followed by the steps from Crews Hole layby. A paper/diagram was tabled. Work will only start after the grant decision.

- Birch Collective, Woodland Management / BCC Woodland Management Plan
- A Management Plan had been drafted. Most of the trees with the orange dot on them would be cut but this would be over a 5-year period so would not be as drastic as it appeared. There might also be changes during that period. Susan had also identified some "interesting" trees e.g. an oak with a diameter of over 3 metres. She has passed this information to BCC.

- Merchandise

A work party volunteer had asked if we had or wanted to have TH merchandise e.g. t-shirts, mugs etc. After some discussion it was thought that it was not an idea we would take up at

the moment. There were issues of marketing, ethics/sustainability, storing and whether there was even a market.

4. Maintenance and Projects – Hill, Field and Wood

- Items from meeting with BCC in February (notes of 5 March meeting, item 4)
 - The saddle net of the climbing frame in the playground had been very worn due to extensive use by children. BCC had now replaced it.
 - BCC had also installed some retaining timbers along the fence at the Greendown entrance.
 - The cages at the Malvern Road entrance were getting stuck and needed a padlock. Susan had “fashioned” a long-handled tool (a piece of wood and a spoon) and had managed to dig out all the mud and debris in the hole in the ground so that one section of gate could go into the hole and lie flush with the other side. It was very successful. A new padlock had been requested.
 - At the same entrance the swinging gate was dragging on the ground. This had been reported via FixMyStreet.
 - The rusted and disintegrating legs on the information board at the Summerhill Terrace entrance to the playground had been repaired by BCC by welding new metal sleeves over the legs. This was a satisfactory and cost-effective repair.
 - The same request had been made for the rusting leg on the sign at the Greendown entrance.
 - Susan had spent time and energy on cleaning the paint and graffiti from the Crews Hole wooden posts and Little Elizabeth’s carvings with a non-toxic anti-graffiti paste.
 - The board which showed wheelchair access was becoming very worn and the information was peeling off. Susan had requested a quote for a replacement from Vinyl Graphics.
- Pictures were tabled of all these areas and issues.
It was noted that the maintenance work was a very effective joint endeavour between FoTH and BCC.

5. **Future Events**

Monday 12 September 2016 was the date when work started on the play area, although the official opening had been on 22 October. The 10th anniversary therefore was coming up. It was also the 5th anniversary of when the slide was installed (August 2021) with the official opening taking place on 24 October 2021. At that time all the art competition entries had been hung around the play area on the railings. Susan and Rob wondered whether the same should be done to celebrate this anniversary. This was agreed. Susan would be at the area on Saturday (5th) at 10am and asked for volunteers to join her. Rob and Rosie would and possibly Stéphanie and Margaret would join them. Susan would also put a request out on the website and by email.

- Autumn woodland walk

Susan was organising a second woodland walk as a thank you to the more major donors towards the recent fundraising. There would be about 7-8 but the maximum number was 15; she was wondering whether to open it to the general public. After some discussion it was decided to invite specific work-party volunteers. Susan would select some and invite them.

- Planning Meeting 2027

It was decided to leave a decision on this date until William and Jill could be present, perhaps in January. Susan, Margaret, William and Jill were meeting in the meantime to discuss the roles of Chair and Treasurer and initiate the handover.

- Hosting School Visits

William and Katy were keen to take this over and had the relevant skills and experience.

6. Networking

- UoB Soil sampling project

This was the project undertaken by 2nd year geography students via Prof Ros Death. There had been a draft report but no sign of the final version. Susan had chased this week.

- CIL Funds / Community Meetings

On 13 September between 3pm and 5pm three local councillors, including Fabian, would be at a gazebo in St George Park to meet local people.

- History talks and walks

Rob and Susan had been invited by a ladies' church group to speak about Friends of Troopers Hill and St George Strollers.

Rob would be leading a talk and walk for the Avon Local History Association in October.

Elaine asked if there were any developments on the reptile survey as she had noticed that the mats were still in place. Susan reported that the mats were down for the second survey. They had not been removed at the end of the first survey.

There was a current consultation on the Dog Control Order. A discussion followed on whether dogs should be off the lead along the River Avon Trail and what sort of legal permissions/obligations official dog walkers had and should adhere to. Susan would send the link to the consultation paper to all.

7. Friends of Troopers Hill

- Posters

Fay was designing the new posters, producing them and putting them up at no charge. They looked great and we were very grateful.

- Website

We had not heard anything further from the person who had offered to update the website. Rob would carry on as usual.

- Email addresses

The email address "chair@" will be deleted so from then on there will be "Susan@" and "William@". This will stop the crossover with personal emails to Susan on "chair@".

- Committee Roles from January 2027

Jill will be Treasurer and William the Chair dependent on election at the AGM.

- Handbook

Rosie had wondered if some sort of information booklet would be helpful once Susan and Rob had taken a step back. She had drafted a list of subjects taken from past emails and agenda items and had put them under rough headings. Based on this Susan had started writing a more structured handbook – three pages to date. Before she continued, she wanted the Committee's opinion on this. She would send the draft papers to all for comment. Susan thanked Rosie and Rosie apologised to Susan for the extra work she had caused her!

8. Meeting closed at 8.35pm.

- Next meeting, the AGM, to be held on Thursday 3 December 2026 7.15pm at Wesley Memorial Church Hall. (William has already sent his apologies).