

FRIENDS OF HEDGEMEAD PARK

Chairman's Statement

Year ending 31st March 2020



Graham Groom
HPF Chair

As the Chairman of the Friends of Hedgemead Park (HPF) I am writing this report at an extraordinary time for all of us, with each of us having our own experience of a life impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. On behalf of the HPF Committee, I extend our best wishes and hope that you and your family are keeping safe and well.

Given the Government's social distancing guidelines, the HPF Committee has decided to replace the 2019-20 AGM (planned for April 2020) with a 'virtual AGM', where key information is disseminated electronically or on paper. Although not ideal we believe this to be a reasonable substitute for a normal face-to-face meeting.

Our First Year

The Friends of Hedgemead Park came into existence on 24th April 2019 and, by the end of March 2020, we had 34 individual members, and 6 group members. Our Group Members consist of three resident's associations, two churches and one local business. Taken in the round, our membership represents the interests of quite a wide section of the local community.

So, I'd like to thank you all for your support, in particular those who have engaged with our various initiatives or given their time as volunteers. Your energy and commitment has been invaluable in getting the Friends off to such a great start.

I would also like to acknowledge the B&NES Parks Team with whom we have established a very positive and constructive working relationship. They have continued to devote considerable effort on maintaining the park despite challenging financial constraints.

Looking back over the year, it's gratifying to see what we've managed to achieve. Our work, along with that of the excellent gardening team from B&NES Parks Dept, has greatly improved the appearance of Hedgemead Park. And with regular ad-hoc litter picks, it's clear to everyone that the park is being well looked after. I think we can all be justly proud of this wonderful community asset.

There were many achievements in the year but highlights include:

- Holding a very successful Summer Fete to celebrate the 130th anniversary of the opening of Hedgemead Park in 1889
- Supporting an application by B&NES Parks Dept, which resulted in Hedgemead Park winning a coveted Green Flag Award
- Winning a National Lottery 25 Community Fund award to enable the development of a 'tree trail' celebrating Hedgemead Park's beautiful trees

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- Being awarded money from the Ward Councillor's Empowerment Fund (WCEF) to purchase a dedicated HPF notice board, to be installed in a prominent position in the park
- Forging links with other Park Friends Groups in Bath and joining the Steering Group of the newly established Bristol & Bath Parks Foundation
- Developing and publishing a web site and blog post dedicated to Hedgemead Park and the work of HPF (www.hedgemead.org); establishing a social media presence on Twitter (@HedgemeadPark) and Facebook (@hedgemead)
- Attending a Civic Reception hosted by the Mayor of Bath, Councillor Gerry Curran, in recognition of HPF's achievements
- Starting volunteer gardening sessions, working in collaboration with the Parks Team

On the debit side, regrettably we lost a large tree (Ailanthus Altissima, Tree of Heaven) in the lower south-eastern corner of the Park, which fell over unexpectedly just before Christmas causing much damage to the lovely Victorian Railings adjacent to the Coalbrookdale Gates in The Paragon.

And of course, the Coronavirus pandemic meant that all volunteer activity stopped in March and the social distancing restrictions have cast a large cloud over what we might be able to achieve in 2020. However, I do hope we'll be able to resume our good work when the Government Guidelines are relaxed later this year.

As soon as this happens, two interrupted initiatives will quickly resume:

- Installation of our new Friends notice board, courtesy of the recent WCEF award
- Rescheduling the opening date for an installation at the Museum of Bath at Work entitled 'A Green Lung for Bath', which is dedicated to Hedgemead Park

Treasurer's Report

HPF's Honorary Treasurer, Nigel Pollard, has compiled HPF's Financial Report for the year ending 31st March 2020. The report is attached.

HPF Committee

The Committee of seven elected into office a year ago have all offered to stand again for the year 2020-21. They are:

Officers:

Graham Groom – Chairman
Nigel Pollard – Treasurer
Caroline Groom – Secretary

Committee Members without specific responsibilities:

Nick Tobin
Edwina Vardey
Joan Rotheram
Julia Sherwen

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Given the circumstances, I propose to deviate from the usual election process involving a seconder and a show of hands. Unless there are any substantive objections received from the Membership within two weeks of receiving this document, I propose that the Committee be re-elected 'en bloc'.

2020-21 Objectives

HPF's objectives for 2020-21 are available on our web site [here](#).

There is much to be done but regrettably our work is currently on hold until the Government Coronavirus guidelines are changed. Depending on how the restrictions are relaxed we hope to restart later this year.

Membership

It's so important to our mission that we continue to build strong representation across our area. The Coronavirus pandemic has reinforced the vital importance of parks and green spaces for the health and wellbeing of whole communities. In addition, it is obvious now that there will be huge budgetary pressures on Local Government services (such as maintaining parks) as the UK adjusts to the economic shock of recovering from the pandemic. Parks will need Friends Groups like HPF as never before.

So, if you value Hedgemead Park, please either:

- 1) renew your Membership for the year 2020-21, or
- 2) become a new Member

Application forms can be found on our web site [here](#).

Suggestions and Feedback

Our constitution makes it clear that HPF exists to represent the interests of its Membership. As we're not holding a normal AGM this year I would encourage Members and non-Members alike to let me have any thoughts or suggestions on items for consideration by the HPF Committee. You can do this by emailing me at admin@hedgemead.org or submitting the 'Getting In Touch' form on the [Contact](#) page of our web site.

Finally, although Coronavirus is understandably dominating our lives at present, let's also remember how lucky we are to have such a leafy oasis to enjoy. Hedgemead Park is a jewel that must be cherished, for it will remain relevant long after the current crisis is a distant memory. Meanwhile, stay safe.