

Friends of Hedgemoor Park (HPF)

Final Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Thursday 25th May 2023 at 6.30pm at St Swithin's Church Crypt Meeting Room

Present

Committee members: Graham Groom (Chair), Nigel Pollard (Treasurer), Caroline Groom (Secretary), Edwina Vardey, Clare Rosier, Nick Tobin

Members: Kevin Horne, Patrick Anketell-Jones, Hetty de Rooj, Julie Platt, Stephanie Pollard, Elizabeth Sherriff, Brian Sherriff

Barnes council Parks Department: Jane Robson, Parks Manager

Apologies for absence: John Wayman, Councillor Oli Henman

Welcome

Graham welcomed all to the meeting, and thanked the committee, gardeners and volunteers, and all members for their support during the past year.

Chair's Report

Graham run through events and achievements 2022-23

Membership – last year increase in individual and group memberships. Hoping to continue increasing both

Volunteer hours Core activities amounted to over 1000 hours:

Gardening:

2 sessions per month, 4-8 people each time, 330 volunteer hours. Always looking for more gardeners for this uplifting experience in the open air! This year we were asked, and agreed to take over the plot which had been known as Vegmead in March 2022. Renamed Friend's Garden. Work in progress.

Wildflower areas – meadow below Friend's Garden and roundels all doing well.

Communications:

Posts on HPF website, social media (Twitter, Facebook & Instagram)

Grant award – Successful bid for Wessex Water Environment Fund to enable creation of a rainwater collection system, tool trunk and composter. We are grateful to the Parks Department for topping up award to allow completion of all three projects.

Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award students – Three so far have volunteered and completed their commitment with HPF

Benches – important feature of the park – 22 benches in all, including 2 new memorial benches installed this year. Several different styles and colours overall. Type and condition of all benches audited this year and submitted to Sue Shore at BANES.

Water supply – HPF continue to liaise with Wessex Water and Parks Dept. Hopeful that installation of a standpipe will be possible one day to make use of water supply that exists in park.

Heritage repairs and maintenance – Some work has been completed to repair the retaining wall either side of the bandstand., and a few other areas around the park. Other "listed" infrastructure, such as the London Street entrance railings and the battlement and tower will take longer to complete but will be scheduled.

Green Flag Award – This was achieved for 2022. Judge visited in May and results for coming year will be announced in July.

Queen's Platinum Jubilee – Volunteers from HPF decorated bandstand in the royal colours

IT – Online facility for membership applications and ordering merchandise now in place

Eyes & Ears in the park – Graham describes HPF role in being aware of the way the park is used. Regrettably sometimes there is antisocial behaviour. Good relationship with

Paul Childs, PCSO who cycles through the park most days. Graham reminded those attending that a variety of different problems can be reported via the BANES website using "Fix My Street ". Response is usually prompt.

Overall, HPF fulfil the purpose of a Friends' Group.

Treasurer's Report

Nigel reported credit balance of £1600

Apart from income from membership, there is some income from the sales of the book "The History of Hedgemoor Park" (written by Nigel) and also from artefacts created by local craftsman from pieces of the fallen Holm Oak.

Election of Committee Members

No new expressions of interest. Current committee members all offered to stand for re-election. Chair moved to elect all six en-bloc.

Proposed: Stephanie Pollard

Seconded: Julie Platt and Patrick Anketell-Jones

Vote by show of hand was carried unanimously. The current committee will continue in post for another year.

Proposed Objectives for 2023-24

Trees: Replace the fallen trees at the London Street and Coalbrookdale Gate (Paragon) entrances and replacing the weeping ash which is slowly failing and will inevitably be removed.

There have also been questions from the public about succession planting as many of the trees are now likely reaching the end of their lives. Jane Robson reported back from Denise Hart, the Tree Officer for BANES. There are 85,000 trees in her care. Awaiting decision from the Council Cabinet re development of a new woodland strategy. At present there is no adopted policy for replacing trees. Tree planting will recommence in the autumn, but areas with a lower tree canopy percentage will be prioritised over HP which has a higher than average percentage.

There is now a sponsorship form which can be completed should the HPF wish to fund raise for new trees.

Gardening: Continue with regular gardening sessions for maintenance but also continue to develop wildflower areas to attract pollinators

Infrastructure: Benches – cleaning and reporting maintenance problems to BANES

Accessibility: Parks 4 All discussed in separate agenda item

Graham asked for any other comments and concerns from those present:

Jane Robson asked if HPF might be able/willing to paint railings. Discussed but felt that it was a large job more appropriate for the council to undertake.

The Hedgemoor Park sign at the Lansdown Road entrance is damaged and Jane Robson will pass this on to a contact the council has who has repainted signs in the past. Hopefully work will be carried out in the autumn.

The bandstand needs repairing and repainting. The canopy is affected by sticky deposits from the lime trees and the underside needs painting. Some of the lower horizontal railings have been damaged. Jane will report damage to Properties Department.

Access 4 all

Caroline & Edwina reported on this initiative HPF are working on with Your Parks Bath & Bristol, a charity set up by Rob Acton-Campbell to raise money for park projects. The charity commissioned research to look at accessibility to parks which revealed the many problems people had getting to and around parks in the area.

Your Parks have received a grant to make improvements and have approached friends groups to complete an information pack, including their park's facilities and access points. The resulting Accessibility Guide has a lot of information and will be held on the Hedgemoor Park page on the BANES website.

Plans for HPF website:

- A link to the Accessibility Guide held on the BANES website
- A shortened version of the guide with key information about entrances and most accessible areas of park for people who may have varying degrees of mobility.
- Walks 4 all – suggested short walks from Lansdown Road entrance and Colebrookdale Gate (Paragon) including information about natural and manmade features
- Promotion of the initiative through social media.

Asked for any feedback from those present about using the park. The difficulty of negotiating hills, particularly if unsteady or if using a wheelchair was mentioned by several people.

Also, not to forget that difficulties are not just related to physical mobility – may be related to mental health, e.g. dementia, or problems with sight.

Q & A

Question about Public Liability Insurance the cost of which was included in the Treasurer's Accounts – Graham explained that it covered public activities, e.g. some volunteering and also any public event HPF might hold. Jane Robson confirmed that gardening activities are covered by BANES insurance as it is an agreed activity on their land.

AOB

Jane Robson thanked HPF for the work they do and stressed the importance of Friends' groups to the council.

Meeting closed at 7.42pm