

Friends of Hedgemead Park (HPF)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday May 14th at 6.30pm In the crypt meeting room, St Swithin's Church

Present: Graham Groom (Chair), Caroline Groom (secretary), Clare Rosier (committee member), Malcolm Barton, John Wayman, Kevan Horne, Ruth Levy, Michael Levy, Di Bruce, Angela Wood, Hetty de Rooij, Paul Pearce, Oli Henman (attended for part of meeting).

Apologies: Patrick Rotheram, Joan Rotheram, Nigel Pollard, Edwina Vardey, Nick Tobin.

1. Graham welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Introduction and background

Graham introduced Paul Pearce, Head of Projects, BANES Parks Department; Caroline Groom, secretary of HPF; Clare Rosier, committee member.

Graham introduced Oli Henman, councillor for Walcot, who also is the Cabinet Project Lead for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Transport.

HPF set up 5 years ago as a constituted group to help ensure park is looked after for the present and future generations, and to give it an identity.

HPF have a good working relationship with the grounds team who do a fantastic job maintaining the park with limited resources. Not a statutory service, and therefore with financial constraints on all councils, funding may be at risk. Voluntary groups like HPF will be increasingly important.

Hedgemead Park is legally owned by BANES and so HPF work under licence from the council, abiding by Health and Safety regulations, working alongside the grounds team and respecting the park.

3. Chairs' Report

Membership: year ending March 31st 2024 HPF had 82 members - 71 individuals, and 11 group members examples of which are The Bell Pub, St Swithin's Church and Walcot Chapel, 4 resident associations, local businesses, e.g. T R Hayes.

Volunteer activities: More than 800 volunteer hours

Committee: 3 committee meetings as per constitution

Volunteer Core activities:

Gardening - 2 sessions per month. The gardening group carried out 23 scheduled sessions with average of 5 people per session, plus 15 'adhoc' sessions, amounting to approx. 330 volunteer hours

The bed previously known as Vegmead is now the Friends' Garden. Some fruit trees and bushes have been retained in the top part, the lower part currently has wallflowers and has been planted up with chard and wildflower seed.

A further wildflower area is developing well along the London Street edge/railings, and 4 wildflower roundels in the area opposite St Swithin's Church are in their third year now.

The bluebells the HPF planted under the tower are present but somewhat swamped by wild garlic!

Litter picking – twice a week, usually shared between 2 people

Communications – important to keep people updated via website, emails to membership, paper fliers/letters posted through letter boxes, and social media

Infrastructure monitoring

Benches – Have logged and photographed all benches in the park. Report any damage to council

Rustic shelter – clean this and clear weeds from trellis

Fountain – cleaned periodically

Graffiti – remove some, or report to Graffiti Team via Fix My Street

Eyes and Ears in the park – Report Fly tipping, overflowing bins, antisocial behaviour, tree/infrastructure damage

Year in the Park

Graham ran through events of the year. Highlights:

Hedgemoor Park receiving Green Flag Award for 2023/24, Bath in Bloom helping HPF with a gardening session and funding a battery-operated strimmer, HPF supporting bronze level D of E students volunteering in the park, HPF receiving Special Mention from Your Parks Bristol & Bath for their contribution, repairs to the Grade II listed tower and the Margaret Hill entrance gates and railings.

A HPF membership drive in March with a letter box drop to hundreds of local residents has increased membership for coming year and also resulted in some offer of help including a kind offer to transfer HPF website and email service to a new server. This has been done and will save more than £150 per year.

Accessibility

Last year HPF had just started to work on an accessibility project initiated by Your Park Bristol and Bath. This has been completed with a comprehensive guide about the park facilities, designed to be available on the BANES Hedgemoor Park webpage. The HPF website now has a drop-down menu of information about accessing the park, and a short walk for people of all abilities with information about natural and manmade features.

4. Treasurer's Report

Graham apologised that the HPF Treasurer was not at the meeting but went through the accounts and answered questions.

The Treasurer's Report will be available on the HPF website.

5. Election of committee members

All 6 members have agreed to stand again for the year 2024 to 2025.

Unfortunately, 3 members were absent from the AGM but the current committee members are:

Graham Groom (Chair)

Nigel Pollard (Treasurer)

Caroline Groom (Secretary)

Edwina Vardey

Clare Rosier

Nick Tobin

Re-election of committee:

Proposer: John Wayman

Seconder: Paul Pearce

No objection from the floor, and therefore all 6 re-elected

Graham would be happy for any expressions of interest to join the committee.

6. Plans for the year ahead

Tree planting – many trees in HP but most of them are now old. Anticipate that the weeping ash will have to be removed this year, so hope to be able to plant something in its place.

Lansdown Road entrance sign – in need of refurbishment. HPF have had an offer to help with this so hopefully will be achieved this year

Lansdown Road gate and railings – listed structures, and in need of repainting but lengthy job requiring expertise.

Discussion opened to floor –

Trees

Particular interest in trees. Oli Henman and Paul Pearce able to inform and answer questions.

Key facts:

- Oli Henman will be providing strategic plans for tree planting in Bath as well as outlying areas. This is separate from the national tree planting scheme
- Strict guidelines for tree planting – “right tree, right place”. Paul Pearce stated that the council’s tree planting activities are subject to monitoring by Defra so sourcing and planting of trees must follow due process.
- There is a tree sponsorship form in BANES but it is unclear how this works in practice
- Discussion about saving seeds from trees and have a planting workshop with children. The charitable organisation More Trees Banes already do this and are very active in the area.
- HPF committee would like to consider planting some smaller trees in the park, perhaps with some autumn colour. For instance, one to replace the fallen Tree of Heaven at the Paragon
- Trees do have a role in stabilising land which is key in HP given landslide in the past

Bandstand

- Could the bandstand be used more for music?
- Perhaps inviting people to rehearse informally in the bandstand?
- Need to consider purpose of this – to give musicians a space? Or to provide informal free entertainment? Or both?
- Would need some agreed guidelines on how to use the space respectfully
- How would local residents feel?

A lot to consider - HPF committee will discuss at next meeting

BBQ's

- Not currently permitted in HP but disposable BBQ's are being used in the park and cause risk as no safe disposal bin
- Would probably need picnic tables for BBQ's as in Victoria Park and limited places in HP with flat ground to accommodate this and a safe disposal bin.

Little support from the attendees, but HPF committee will discuss.

7. Q&A

Covered in above item

8. AOB

No further business. Graham thanked all for attending. Meeting closed at 8pm.