

Friends of Hedgemead Park (HPF)

Minutes of the Social and Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday April 21st at 6.30pm at Honey Café St Swithin's Walcot

Number of attendees: 23

1. Introductions

Graham Groom, Chair of the Friends of Hedgemead Park (HPF) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked St Swithin's Church, and Karolina at The Honey Café for staying open to accommodate the meeting and provide refreshments.

Graham introduced the Committee, and guest speaker Sarah Skeels, organiser of the Lambridge and Walcot Community Haven.

Mali Kedward, Volunteer Liaison Officer for BANES parks sent apologies, but had hoped to attend.

2. Chair's Report

Review of the year ending 31st March 2026

113 members, 104 individual and 9 groups. The joining fee, plus optional donation, provides valuable working capital and is a good barometer of how the community feel about this important local resource. Bank reserves up by £296 from last year, despite outlay on tools.

Volunteer time spent on collective activities - gardening, litter picking, admin, emails, promotion, mailbox drop - totalled over 900 hours.

Gardening

Active part of the HPF role

10 regular gardeners plus several others who join when they can.

21 scheduled sessions completed - 5 rained off

12 unscheduled additional sessions

Focal points - Friends' Garden, Wildflower meadow, now hosting about 25 different flower species, and much insect activity, Wildflower roundels. Several Pyramidal orchids now appearing since some areas of grass left unmown.

Also gradually planting raised beds around the park with ferns, hellebores, spring bulbs, etc.

Spend some time clearing walls to prevent overgrowth of vigorous plants, particularly green alkanet.

Maintain good working relationship with the Park Grounds Team. Important as HPF are volunteers on BANES land.

Highlights

- Awards - Bath in Bloom Silver-Gilt, plus RHS In Your Neighbourhood Level 5 Outstanding, highest achievement.
- Contribution to Green Flag Award demonstrating engagement with the community
- Planted 3 new trees
- Supported two DoE Bronze Award students
- Maintain Green Spaces Friends Network

Aspirations for the future

- Further tree planting
- Tree trail refresh & asset update
- Painted nature doors for children
- Picnic event (7th June 2026)
- Stumpery and fern garden
- Solitary bee hotel - proposed location at far end of meadow - area not visited by the public
- Insect survey in the meadow
- Metal edging for remaining two roundel flower beds, having completed one this year.

Infrastructure News

One of the large planters currently in London Road is due to be transferred to Hedgemoor Park. We understand from Councillor Oli Henman that there is no other suitable site. Extensive surveys and logistical planning have taken place. HPF committee has had input in planning location and how the planter should be positioned, and have submitted suggested plan. No date for transfer yet, but we plan to plant it as a sensory bed because it is of suitable height and can be positioned with access to all sides.

3. Treasurer's Report

Nigel Pollard presented accounts for year ending 31st March 2026

Current bank balance of £3,400.

Increase in revenue from HPF subscriptions to £770, and optional donations to £567 for the year.

HPF subject to banking expenses which totalled £61. Lloyds Bank have now introduced a service charge for charitable groups, and there is a charge for using Cardnet and SumUp.

Other annual expenses include Public Liability Insurance and website maintenance.

Other notes:

One off grant from Bathscape for tools £74

Last two History of Hedgemoor Park books sold, with no plan for further printing. Profit from overall sales = £171.

Overall loss to date of £68 on Holm Oak artefacts.

Accounts approved by meeting attendees.

Full financial report will be available to view on HPF website.

4. Election of Committee

Graham confirmed that the current officers and committee members were all standing for re-election for another year:

Graham Groom - Chair

Nigel Pollard - Treasurer

Caroline Groom - Secretary

Edwina Vardey

Clare Rosier

Lily Hughes

John Wayman

Proposer: Stephanie Pollard

Seconder: Patrick Rotheram

Re-election agreed unanimously by show of hands.

5. Hedgemoor Park's Trees - Edwina Vardey

There are about 280 trees in the park. Many planted at the same time. Edwina highlighted a few of the trees, discussed losses and plans for succession planting.

The large copper beech by the playground about 130 years old - the exposed fanned out roots was a Victorian custom; the roots being scraped as they grew.

The lost Holm Oak was likely about 250 years old when it fell in 2021. A monkey puzzle tree was planted in its place in 2024, a popular tree in Victorian times. Edwina informed us that they were on the planet 200 million years ago and can grow for 1000 years, so to a huge size. Endangered now in China due to logging.

A Tree of Heaven fell in 2019, and the Weeping Ash sadly succumbed to die back and was felled this year. Its striking architectural shape had been created by grafting, the Weeping Ash branches growing in different directions until settling on to the rootstock.

The large Coral Bark Willow near the playground scheduled for vigorous pruning this year, and unfortunately the Carolina Popular, a County Champion tree at the other side of the park is diseased will need to be felled in the near future.

Succession planting is not easy as with so many trees there is little available space. Choice of tree influenced by soil type, tolerance to climate change, importance to insects and birds, and visually pleasing. HPF committee members visited Park with personnel from the Council's Parks and Tree Teams. Agreed we would plant x 3 Paul's Scarlet Hawthorns this year. The Tree Team have planted a donated Lime tree by the driveway.

Planting for late 2026 early 2027:

Hopefully a Weeping Birch near the site of the felled ash tree.

A Continus Royal Purple - Smoke Bush - opposite the playground

An Amelanchier - Snowy mesilus - close to the exit on to Lower Hedgemoor Road.

6. Teasels Project - John Wayman

John Wayman gave an interesting talk on a plan to grow some teasels in association with the Stroudwater Textile Trust.

Teasels were used in the 19th century to comb up the nap on textiles before shaving it off. The Textile Trust has old frames that they load up with teasels to show how they would have been used but the supply of teasels from the Somerset Levels has dried up. Appealing for people to grow teasels! Only certain types of teasels fit the frames, and John discussed a plan to grow some in the Friends' Garden. However, they are biannual so seed sown this year will be for harvest next year.

Further information about the project on the website:

www.stroudtextiletrust.org.uk

7. Guest Speaker - Sarah Skeels

Lambridge and Walcot Community Nature Haven

Sarah introduced her project, aiming to create an urban nature reserve, made up of all the green spaces in our area, including parks such as HP, private gardens, church grounds, schools etc. With the aim of increasing biodiversity, to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis, and building community. We have a lot of green spaces in Bath and we can all play a part in prioritising, protecting and encouraging all wildlife. For more information visit L&W Community Nature Haven:

<https://communitynaturehaven.org.uk>

Sarah is taking part in the Festival of Nature in Bath in June, the theme this year being trees. She is planning a creative community picnic in Hedgemoor Park on June 7th 1.30-4pm, supported by HPF. Activities will include willow weaving, drawing and collective poetry writing. Free tickets available via: <https://buytickets.at/communitynaturehaven>

8. Q&A

A local resident asked if there was anything to be done to reduce the amount of laurel in the park and try for more diversity. Discussion about weeding out new ones as they appear to restrict spread. Also can mix other shrubs alongside laurel. Good examples at Stourhead for instance. For further discussion.

Some interest in how Sarah links the green spaces/gardens - she adds all new sign-ups to her project to a map, hoping to join up more green spaces visually.

Sarah asked if the teasels could be left for the birds to feed on the seed before they were lifted. John said he would find out, but anyway we could grow some specifically to leave.

With reference to proposed bug count this year, Bathscape are offering bug counting kits which might be useful. Caroline to follow up.

9. AOB

Caroline mentioned an initiative by Your Park Bristol and Bath to invite disabled people or carers to lead a walk in their local park. Caroline & Graham met up with Miranda to walk the park and discuss the initiative, including the rather challenging hills and uneven steps in HP. There are posters in the noticeboards with contact details.

The meeting ended at 8pm. Graham thanked all for attending and the speakers for interesting talks