

**Friends of Braidburn Valley Park Committee Meeting
November 8th 2023, by Zoom**

1. Present: BS, SA, AB, MB, PB

Apologies : BB, AT, LF, AF

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising: Most issues are dealt with below, other than:

- Rowan Tree Bridge: David Kyles, Parks Officer, advises that he will seek estimates for repairs should further deterioration occur. He cautions that in several ways the structure is in poor condition, and that as there is alternative access over the Burn, the Council are unlikely to see repairs as a priority expense. He will however support the Friends if they make a strong case.
- 'Prescribing' of gardening: the local GP practices approached had not proved interested in this. Query as to how any volunteers recruited this way could be co-ordinated and deployed. MB advised that ELGT have groups formed for outdoor activities focused on wellbeing: she will approach ELGT.

3. Tea in the Park: CJ was congratulated in her absence on the organization of a very successful event. Attendance was estimated at around 500.

Based on this year's experience, it was noted that the ice-cream stall needs scoops fit for purpose; either from Luca's, or we purchase our own. Also that bigger floats are needed – some stalls ran out of change. The idea of tokens had been raised; those involved felt use of cash had not been an issue with the attendees.

4. Play Equipment: The next steps are in the hands of Alan Grevers, Council Play Officer. His plan of two multi-use structures, one for pre-school children (near the Willow Dome), one for the area south of the theatre on the east side of the burn for older children, is to go forward, we understand. BS will try to clarify with him the timescale for installation. A picnic bench, same as the existing ones, has now been ordered, using the £500 Tesco grant plus our own funds (total cost £1390.) To be installed near the willow dome.

5. Treasurer's report: SA reported substantial profit from Tea in the Park, £1500.

The payment to the Council for the picnic bench had been 'a narrow squeak' to meet the deadline for using the Tesco funding!

Accounts will be audited; committee agreed to raise the fee for the auditor to £100 (from £80) as it had remained the same for many years.

6. Volunteering: BS reported that the Duke of Edinburgh volunteers are continuing on a weekly basis, RH employing them once a month for work on the Burn.

He is drawing up forward plans focused on the tasks arising from factors identified by the Green Flag and Parks Quality Assessment reports. He suggests regular contact with David Kyles to agree the tasks ahead, which to be carried out by Friends/Council.

PB raised the issue of branches overhanging the boundary fence along Comiston Rd and encroaching on the pavement – cutting back would need heavy duty loppers, so may be beyond our scope.

7. Parks Quality Assessment: PB had contacted the Council officer responsible for this process to suggest strongly that our park still merits Grade A, thus avoiding downgrading.

BS noted mention of the state of the path down from the Pentland Terrace bus stop; it needs to be resurfaced – any work done by the Friends in trying to keep grass back is insufficient.

Erosion of the banks of the Burn was mentioned as an action point: AF had worked on planting willow whips in one area, but they have vanished, possibly taken by dogs which run down the banks in this area. BS suggested we advise park users why these had been planted so any replacements are more likely to survive.

8. Green Flag report: One recommendation is to allow another area to grow wild; questions arise of how large an area, and consideration that it would still need some form of maintenance lest it end up being just overgrown/unsightly. Also that walkers do need safe footing, and that dog fouling becomes more likely in long grass.

AB queried how the PQA and GF assessments and reports relate to each other, and to the management plan which is now out of date. PB advised that the PQA has to be completed annually before the Green Flag assessment, and that David Kyles plans to work through park management plans gradually, several parks' plans being out of date.

9. Maintenance: cross trainer, tram shelter, overgrown bed outside the main gate:

- Despite many reminders, the repair to the cross trainer has not been carried out – issues at council workshop seem to have delayed it.
- The tram shelter has railings round it so cannot be accessed for clearing weeds and litter which gather there – noted by a member as unsightly. SA queried how the professional painters paid by the Friends had accessed it last year; it seems they used ladders to do so. PB to ask about a gate and access for FOBVP.
- A member had contacted to say the bed outside the main gate is unsightly and lets the park down. The Council ceased seasonal planting several years ago, and cleared the bed, laying a weed-proof membrane then planting some herbaceous/evergreen plants. Problems: the bed is invaded by few-flowered leek in the Spring, hard or impossible to eradicate; the depth of soil above the membrane is shallow, so it is hard to replant; weeds now grow above the membrane. If a group could take this on, it could be cleared, more compost laid and new hardy plants and bulbs planted. PB to consult David Kyles on a plan.

10. Grass cutting schedule: the intervals between cuttings had been too long, especially given the warm, wet weather. PB had had to urge the Council several times. Plans to monitor the intervals next year.

11. Dog signs in the park: signs depicting a dog in a red rectangle appeared on some posts recently; no indication who is responsible or what the intention is.

12. Date of next meeting: Wednesday January 10th, on Zoom.

13. AGM: Sunday 25th February 2024 suggested; PB will check whether the church is available.