

AGM 25th February 2024

AGM standing business

Present: Paul Bailey, Steve Ambler, Arthur Trew, Alan Fleming, Alastair Bruce, Margaret Bruce, plus 8 non-committee members.

Apologies: Brian Barron, Brian Smith, Robin Harper, Hugh Cowan.

The meeting was quorate.

Minutes of the AGM of 2023 and matters arising:

PB raised three items from the minutes, with updates:

- The pétanque court had proved too expensive for funds; it would require drainage and preparation of the site before adding the court. The Parks Officer advises a bid to 'Place-based investments' to revitalise the site, maybe with a fixed table tennis table.
- The idea of the theatre's being used as a fringe venue would require too much oversight and administration, so the Committee will not pursue it.
- The annual sum paid to Greenbank Church is now recorded as a payment, rather than a donation.

The 2023 minutes were accepted.

Committee:

The following committee members were reaffirmed for 2024, noting any specific roles:

- Paul Bailey - Chair
- Margaret Bruce – Minutes Secretary
- Alastair Bruce – Membership
- Steve Ambler - Treasurer
- Claire Jellema - Tea in the Park coordinator
- Alan Fleming - Tree warden
- Robin Harper - Burn
- Brian Smith - Volunteering
- Arthur Trew

Thanks were expressed to two committee members who wish to step down:

- Alice Nelson, who has produced many attractive issues of Valley Voice
- Lucy Frankel, who wishes to step back from the Committee, but will take over Valley Voice.

Both will continue to take a keen interest in the Park.

Two new Committee members were proposed and approved:

- Barbara Richardson
- Ian Vandeppear.

Local organisations' representatives on the Management Committee

- Brian Barron – Greenbank Church

Chair's report

Paul Bailey reported that it had been a good year, with recognition of our efforts:

- Green Flag: this was awarded for the 17th year.
- Parks Quality Assessment: PB had engaged with the process to point out some aspects of our work that had been overlooked; as a result the park was upgraded to A, and is ranked the 4th best park in the City. He attributes this to the ongoing work of volunteers.

A group working towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award carry out work most weekends under supervision, recently spreading manure on the orchard and cleaning and weeding the tram shelter. Paving slabs have been laid for a shed which will hold tools for them and gardeners.

We plan to revive the flowerbed outside the main entrance, with bushes at the back and lower-growing perennials and bulbs towards the front.

The Rowan Tree Bridge has been condemned as irreparable, but remains there meantime.

Bookstore: thanks to the efforts of two volunteers, there is an attractive bookstore outside the main entrance, well used. After one incidence of vandalism it was restored.

Tea in the Park was a great success, thanks to Claire Jellema's organisation and the efforts of many volunteers – an enjoyable day.

The park provides exercise opportunities: Macfit holds exercise classes for adults at 8 a.m. most weekdays, and South Morningside Primary School pupils use it for a pre-school run on Wednesdays. The latter are also involved in park maintenance e.g. raking the Wildflower Meadow.

Future projects: We explored natural play equipment: the parks' play officer seems confident of securing government funding for two play structures, one for pre-school children near the willow dome (where FOBVP have used Tesco funding for a picnic bench to be sited nearby) and one for older children South of the theatre on the East side of the burn.

Finance

Steve Ambler, treasurer, presented the report, noting that it had been a quiet year with no major projects, and our funds slightly up on the previous year, around £10,000. Tea in the Park made a profit of around £1500, and just as importantly was enjoyed. Events were cash only; use of a token system is being considered for next year.

Suggestions for spending were welcomed; one member suggested the committee work on a 3-5 year plan to make forward planning and use of our assets more effective.

The Financial Report was approved, and Margaret Walsh was reaffirmed as the Independent Examiner for the FoBVP's accounts.

Membership report

Alastair Bruce reported that we had gained 15 new members, most around the time of Tea in the Park, but had lost around the same; currently we have 224 members. More are now paying their subscriptions by standing order rather than cash, which helps administration and makes it easier to repeat membership. Also, more email addresses are being given. He urged members to encourage people to join the Friends – simple following the link on the website. Our website explains both how to join and how the money is used.

Tea in the Park

Again this was low-budget for both the Committee and partakers, an approach which had proved suitable the previous year. A member queried why the church halls are no longer used for back-up: this is because they are very heavily-used on Saturdays, not because of any unwillingness on the part of the church, who could not have been more helpful when adverse weather last required it. As backup, a rain date is set in case the weather makes the event not feasible.

Tree Warden's Report

Alan Fleming stated that his role under this title has become wider, as he oversees biodiversity and the Wildflower Meadow, with volunteers joining in a number of projects. The wildflower meadow is now scythed in the Spring as well as Autumn, and a path has been laid through it. Japanese Butterbur has been cleared in areas near the burn, allowing for more biodiversity, and there has been tree-planting near the burn and up near Comiston Road. Robin Harper and Andrew Swann had tried to stake the 'dog runs' into the burn, and deter access to dogs with woven willow, then planted willows, but these had disappeared. Work in the orchard is ongoing, with a good crop last year.

Future projects with some help from The Conservation Volunteers as well as our members include:

- Expansion of the wildflower meadow, and planting of wildflowers on the banks of the burn.
- Willow planting beside the burn.
- Maintenance of the banks near the Oxfangs end, to stabilise the banks and add wildflowers.

The state of the path from the SE corner to the Cherry Tree Bridge was raised: after wet weather this has water running over and down it. It was reported that the D of E volunteers work on maintaining the ditches to help drainage beside rather than on the path.

Future projects

Barbara Richardson suggested an insect survey, which has not been done before; she will contact the University to suggest it as a student project.

The meeting was closed, with thanks to all who attended.