

## Trustees' Annual Report 2024/25

### Volunteers are at the heart of what we do

Volunteering continued throughout the year to keep Gosforth Central Park in good condition, attractive to visitors and attractive to wildlife. From a pool of about forty regular volunteers, Monday morning attendance averaged out at 24. There were 23 Monday mornings with 25 or more volunteers attending.

The lowest attendance of 13 was on Easter Monday when we held our Easter Event with an Egg Hunt, Magician, and the like; not a regular working session. Our highest turnout of volunteers was 31 on 21 October when we had a visiting group of school children.

Additionally, a number of volunteers worked in and for the Park outside the main Monday sessions making a significant and substantial contribution to Park maintenance and the administration of the charity.

### Urban Green Newcastle

Over the year, we have had excellent and reliable support from UGN's Rangers and Community Gardeners. Among other things they have taken away vast quantities of brash and supplied the Park with lots of plants - grown in their own nurseries or raised by Scotswood Community Garden.

While UGN have responsibility for the Children's Playground and its maintenance, two FOGCP volunteers have been trained by UGN to carry out regular inspections.

### The Park and the Community

The Hut on the Green, which opened in September in the former Ladies Bowling Pavilion, has become a valuable and instantly successful addition to the Park offering art and craft courses. FOGCP sponsored two places for our gardening team on their Horticulture Course. Over the weeks following the fire that deprived us of a serviceable base, Hut on the Green provided Monday morning refreshment space, including the annual Volunteers' Thank You in December.

Earlier in the year, the tennis courts were refurbished and reopened on a chargeable basis. They are well used, but not as well used as the basketball court, which is in great need of resurfacing.

Gosforth Shopping Centre (GSC) continue to be strong supporters of the Park and of the Friends. Their role in bringing the monthly market to the Park and Shopping Centre is a great benefit to Gosforth. Again this year GSC

sponsored the open air Royalty Cinema and, in December, hosted our wreath making event on a busy Saturday. Their sponsored caterpillar of decorated pebbles and rocks has been a great success. Some of their cinema profits were used to install a defibrillator on the Shopping Centre wall in the Park. In conjunction with UGN, with money raised through their Park activities, GSC have established a fund with a view to supporting improvements to the Children's Playground and other infrastructure.

The Remembrance Sunday parade and service - organised by local churches - was very well attended.

In October 60 children and staff from Archibald First School visited the Park to plant daffodil bulbs and rake up autumn leaves. The bulbs were donated by Sainsbury's.

### **Our supporters**

FOGCP are grateful to those who support the Park and the Friends through donations including by gift aided standing order, the EasyFundRaising scheme, cash in our flowerpot and lots of cakes and biscuits. In these times of poor public funding, we rely on such generosity.

We have also received some quite substantial donations of shrubs, trees and plants including, from time to time, Sainsbury's discarded pot plants and bulbs, many of which we are able to rescue.

In December we received a donation of £2500 from a charitable foundation. While the foundation has not specified how we use their contribution, its objectives focus on community and improving the natural environment - criteria we certainly meet.

### **FOGCP Events**

We view our two annual events as providing a community service rather than profitable undertakings; we accept donations but make no charge. However, donations at the Easter Event were considerably down on previous years - seemingly because people are less likely to carry cash. The purchase of a card reader in advance of the Christmas Wreath Making made a worthwhile difference.

### **Keeping the Park looking good**

In January, a new tree line was planted on the south east lawn in anticipation of the eventual loss of the row of Whitebeams lining the path on the south west lawn. Indeed, two more succumbed to disease during 2024, and were removed. Several other trees around the Park which presented a hazard were also felled.

In 2024 FOGCP invested in a new lawn mower, and a battery hedge trimmer. The mower is a more industrial model which is able to cope with the heavy use required in the Park. The hedge trimmer will reduce the need for maintenance, and reduce our use of petrol. We have also made a start on replacing wheelbarrow wheels with solid tyres which will reduce the need for ongoing tyre and inner tube replacements.

Bird nest box maintenance and monitoring was again supported this year by one of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust's expert staff. Roughly half the boxes showed signs of use, mainly by Blue tits. Surprisingly, at least one box was observed to be occupied by Tree sparrows. The nest box replacement programme continued this year with some minor modifications intended to attract a greater variety of birds.

In other areas - especially in the Quiet Area and the Wildlife Area - differentiated grass cutting, hedge maintenance and other measures seek to make the Park nature friendly.

FOGCP takes care that the flower beds and grass around the War Memorial look good all year round - especially for Remembrance Sunday.

Once again this year our achievements were recognised with an "Outstanding" award by the Royal Horticultural Society's It's Your Neighbourhood scheme. As well as Gardening Achievement, the scheme assesses Community Participation and Environmental Responsibility.

### **A few problems**

On Tuesday 22 October a fire, which started on the flat roofed extension, along with resultant smoke and water damage, put our base hut out of use. The hut itself is the property of Urban Green Newcastle (UGN) and is insured by them. The contents, however, largely belong to the Friends of Gosforth Central Park (FOGCP) and were not insured - though little of value was lost. While the hut was being rebuilt we were temporarily housed in the former Mens Bowling Pavilion.

Managing the balance between park users, including dogs, and flower bed maintenance and wildlife conservation is a continuing problem. Dog walkers feature as a sizeable proportion of Park users and, for the best part, act responsibly and appreciate the work of FOGCP volunteers. However, a small number of anti-social dog owners don't bother to pick up their dogs' faeces, don't prevent them damaging planted beds, and persist in exercising them in the Quiet Area. Those not keeping their dogs under control present a significant problem for young children and others frightened or cautious of

dogs. UGN has introduced a Canine Policy. However, with so many parks across the city, this is difficult to police.

The perennial problems of wheelie bin fires and graffiti have been dealt with promptly which, we believe, helps keep such incidents to a minimum.

### **Looking forward**

In March 2025 the city's parks will be taken back under the control of Newcastle City Council. The nature of the FOGCP relationship with the Council is unclear.

Despite the temporary loss of our hut and other difficulties, it has been a successful year for Gosforth Central Park. And as ever, we volunteers benefit greatly from the pleasure of working there, and the voiced and unvoiced appreciation of park users.

**Allan Gillard**

**Chair of Trustees**

**24 February 2025**

**FRIENDS OF GOSFORTH CENTRAL PARK.  
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 21.01.24 TO 20.01.25**

2024 £	2024 £	RECEIPTS	2025 £	2025 £		2024 £	2024 £	PAYMENTS	2025 £	2025 £
	462.00	Standing Orders		588.00			2479.78	Equipment and Maintenance		1791.14
	1098.11	Small Donations incl flowerpot		647.22			1563.08	Plants Group		280.81
		Large Donations:					29.99	Wildlife Group		135.26
		Massarella Café	50.00							
		J Hamilton	200.00							
		Esme Fairburn Foundation	2,500.00							
		D Crawford	50.00							
		L Mc Manus	134.22					Other:		
		C Weatherall	150.00			162.70		Insurance	201.43	
		Newcastle Council re Plaquare	80.00			642.61		Shopping Centre Plants		
2050.00		Newcastle Council Ward Grant				316.13		Easter Event	312.13	
230.83		HMRC Gift Aid	357.23			185.63		Refreshments	251.56	
		HMRC Small Donations Scheme	293.95					Plaques	230.00	
90.00		Womens ' Institute						Wreath Making	30.13	
40.84		Jesmond Ice Cream Co						Presentation Lunch Tickets	26.00	
40.00		Sainsburys				144.95		Willow		
25.21		Amazon Smile Scheme				83.72		Miscellaneous		
19.34		Easy Fundraising Scheme	30.71				1535.74			1051.25
	2496.22			3846.11						
		Other Receipts:					5608.59	Total Payments		
1140.00		Individual Donors								
643.11		Shopping Centre Donation					736.38	Surplus of Receipts less Payments		2030.63
430.43		Bank Interest	207.76							
75.10		Credits on Purchases made								
	2288.64			207.76						
	6344.97	Total		5289.09			6344.97	Total		5289.09
		BANK BALANCE MOVEMENT PER RECORDS:								
			£	£						

**FRIENDS OF GOSFORTH CENTRAL PARK.**  
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