



Friends of Yeovil Country Park

"Supporting and helping to maintain Yeovil Country Park in conjunction with the Countryside Team"

Reference: FOYCP04042025

Dated: 04 April 2025

Friends of Yeovil Country Park

Trustees Annual Report

for the Year ending

31 December 2024

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Reference and administrative information

The reference and administrative information forms part of this report.

Charity name

Friends of Yeovil Country Park CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

Registered Charity number

Charity No: 1185579 Registered 1 October 2019

Principal and operational address

Yeovil Country Park, Brunswick Street, Yeovil BA20 1QZ

Trustees

The Trustees who served during this period in alphabetical order are as follows:

- Amanda Card - Treasurer
- Gary Cashmore - Chairman
- Nicholas Hill
- Edward Sadler
- Alison Suter

Constitution

Friends of Yeovil Country Park CIO was registered on 1 October 2019. The Constitution for the Friends of Yeovil Country Park CIO has been reviewed and we can confirm that Issue 3 remains the current version, document Reference: FoYCP28042019 Issue 3.

Trustees Report

Friends of Yeovil Country Park report and financial statement as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) for the Charity's fifth period ended 31 December 2024.

We remain a group with five Trustees, and together with the Members successfully managed the organisation over the year. That included a considerable administrative task as a result of the ownership and management of the Country Park changing from a unitary council to a town council.

The Trustees will continue to look for new members with suitable skills that can complement the work that we undertake. We will always consider those with the appropriate experience and qualifications for the role of Trustee in our team.

Our thanks to all of the Trustees, Members and Volunteers who generously gave their time and expertise over the year to achieve the goals of the Charity. They are our most valuable asset.

Over the period we held six meetings and an AGM. Adhoc reviews were also held.

There was much activity in the Country Park and visitor attendance increased notably and may have been stimulated by the completion of the updated children's play zone.

A tree was planted in March in memory of our much appreciated Trustee James (Jim) Fison. He left a generous donation for the Friends and this will be put to good use.

The risk identified in the last report concerning Somerset Unitary Council and the potential impact to the Country Park materialised. Fortunately, Yeovil Town Council stepped in and negotiated a takeover for the Country Park. The implication of this for the Friends was that the agreements and procedures that were in place with Somerset Council had to be revised and agreed with Yeovil Town Council.

As a group we have now completed all the essential changes required and documents and new policies have been set in place. We continue to check and review all our documentation over the year.

The transfer to Yeovil Town Council ownership will provide more localised focus, especially with Yeovil Country Park being in the unique situation of sharing boundaries within the Yeovil Town area.

One of the impacts of the change was that we ended up funding the Green Flag entry as we have been supporting this as a group over many years and wanted to ensure continuity, recognising the value this award brings to the Country Park, Charity and public.

The Park continues to achieve Green Flag recognition status and it was awarded to the Park again in the year. We continue to enter the RHS Pride in Parks award, application in May and judging in September. Over the years we have achieved 5 star recognition and this award recognizes all the work that the Park Rangers achieve but importantly the volunteer base supporting the Park.

Forest School development and promotion: the area has been expanded with help from volunteer days from Yeovilton, with funding from Friends for paths, fencing and security. Forest School activities are a theme the Friends are keen to develop as we are now in a position to engage with more of the community who will benefit from learning about the countryside.

The April Spring Trail was a great day for all involved. The weather wasn't great and there was plenty of mud, but It was brilliant to see some 442 parents and children enjoying themselves. Lots of positive feedback was received from the public. We were able to secure support from local supermarkets Tesco and Morrisons, of donated confectionery which was handed out on completion of the Trail.

We attended and supported the Yeovil Town Super Saturday event held in September, with the aim of advertising the Country Park. We shared a stand with the Countryside Team making bird boxes for children to decorate.

September saw a new event, Autumnal Apples and Somerset Scything in one of the orchards of the Park. This was enjoyed by lots of families.

October witnessed the traditional Hallowe'en Trail, one of our major events. This attracted large numbers of the public, with over 1,500 in attendance and some of the longest queues ever for this yearly event. We received great feedback and some new visitors to the Park as well.

Ninesprings Café, Rangers workshop and office celebrated its 10 years of opening in October, a special occasion as the founder Chairman of the Friends group and the original Country Park volunteer Robin MacKay was able to come along and participate. The Cafe has become the hub of the Country Park and is a base for all the Park volunteers who help keep it in such great condition.

During November a funding opportunity was identified to us by Spark Somerset and we applied for a grant with the Prime Foundation to enhance the Forest School area for teaching experience in the outdoors. Just before our year end we heard that we had been successful in our application. We are very grateful to the Prime Foundation for supporting our cause and we will use the grant to support the Forest School sessions and can now purchase essential materials, safety equipment and a weatherproof canopy, ensuring that the learning and fun can continue uninterrupted, rain or shine.

Friends of Yeovil Country Park remains an active going concern.

Accounts

The accounts are checked at each of the Friends regular meetings and feed the year end position. The final year end statement is reviewed and approved by the Trustees. The detailed Accounts are included below.

We had approximately 10 volunteers, excluding Trustees.

Income and Spending

Accounting period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024 and the financial controls for the period of this report were reviewed by the Members and Trustees at meetings held throughout the year.

The accounts include funds and commitments from 31 December 2023 accounts. These amounted to £17,020.65

Funds generated principal income;

Our two principal events, namely the Spring and Hallowe'en trails, were both successful, with the Spring Trail generating an income of £766.28, an increase of 50% from the previous year due principally to increased numbers attending.

The Hallowe'en Trail generated an income of £2,021.85, an increase of 23% from the previous year and again due to an increased number of attendees.

Friends pencil sales accounted for another £236.50

Public donations received £118.72 and for dog biscuits £277.39, totaling £396.11

There were generous donations from people that had close association with the Friends with legacy donations amounting to £1,110.47

The above together with other sundry items are detailed in the on the accounts sheet.

In total, receipts for the year amounted to £4,946.36

Key spending was for;

The first Lantern and Wassail event incurred set up expenditure of £178.51

Spring Trail expenses amounted to £220.14, for purchase of props and confectionery for handing out to participants. Support was received from our sponsors Asda, Morrisons and Tesco.

Hallowe'en Trail expenses £92.35 were lower this year as last year's expenditure restocked many of the equipment props and we received support with confectionery donations from our sponsors Asda, Morrisons and Tesco who continued to support the local community.


The newly developed and expanded Forest School area has accounted for £1,903.41 of expenditure for materials and equipment.

Google domain name yearly expenditure of £10.00

Miscellaneous items for the year amounted to £929.63 of which costs for some of the larger items included, Friends feather Flag £119.98, Green Flag entry £424.00, RHS Southwest in Bloom entry £30.00 and an Apple Press and Pulper £132.99

Together with other costs the total expenditure for the year amounted to £3,457.16

Accounts summary sheet;

			
Friends of Yeovil Country Park			
Receipts and Payments Account and Statement of Balances for the year ending 31st December 2024			
Receipts		Payments	
Tesco Bags of Help	0.00	Purchases	0.00
Post Code Lottery Award	0.00	SSDC Invoices	0.00
Sales of Knitted/Handmade Items	0.00	Misc Expenses	929.63
Sponsorship	0.00	Spring Trail Expenses	220.14
Public Donations	118.72	Purchases for Park	100.00
Super Saturday	96.99	Calendar Printing	0.00
Pencil Sales	236.50	Activities	0.00
SSDC reimbursements	99.00	Park Yoga	0.00
Grants	0.00	Halloween Expenses	92.35
Dog Biscuits Donations	277.39	Google Domain Cost	10.00
Post Card Sales/Donations	37.60	Wassail Event Event	178.51
Halloween	2,021.85	Pencil Purchases	0.00
Calendar Sales	0.00	Seeds/Plant	0.00
Sale of Photographic Prints	0.00	Bank Payment Charges	23.12
Spring Trail	766.28	Forest School	1,903.41
Wellness Event	0.00		
Wessex Water Grant	0.00		
Asda - Green Giving Tokens	0.00		
Other Grants	0.00		
Wassail Income	107.41		
Legacy	1,110.47		
Other Income	74.15		
Total Receipts	4,946.36	Total Payments	3,457.16
-	-	Excess of Receipts over Payments	1,489.20
	4,946.36		4,946.36
RESERVE FUND		REPRESENTED BY:	
Balance at start of year 1st Jan 2024	17,020.65	Balance at Bank 31/12/24	
		Current Account Old	0.00
		Current Account New	18,270.62
		Deposit Account	0.08
		Cash in hand of Treasurer (Café safe)	40.00
		Credits yet to be on statement	199.15
		Cheques (and Debit Card) not on statement	0.00
Excess of Receipts over Payments	1,489.20		
-	-		
Balance to date	18,509.85		18,509.85
Amanda Card, Honorary Treasurer			

Objectives and activities

Fundraising opportunities. We continue to identify sponsors who we can work with to improve the Park facilities and have applied (November) to the Prime Foundation Trust small grants for outdoor activities delivered to families with vulnerable children.

We applied to Woodward Trust in April for help with delivering Forest School sessions but were unsuccessful in our application.

A key objective going forward is to deliver more educational activities in the Country Park.

We continue to hold regular Friends group meetings to review plans and ideas, matching funds and exploring opportunities to further enhance the facilities and events for the public.

Summary of main achievements during the year

Our main achievements for the year are with the Spring and Hallowe'en trail events. Both attract large numbers of families and continue to be popular events in the local area.

The Forest School has continued to be developed with Friends funding and a generous donation from a member who lost her husband (He was a Trustee of the Friends) and was passionate about getting a facility for children to experience the outdoors with classroom learning experiences. A naming event was held and the area is now known as "Robins Willow" and is being well used by the community.

Key plans for the future

Working with the Countryside Team, we are looking to promote and develop an area of the Park as a growing hub that will engage the local community. The area is currently left to fallow and has seen antisocial behaviour. We will be lending our support to help this initiative;

We will continue in conjunction with the Countryside Team to run the well established key public events, namely the Spring Trail and Hallowe'en Trail;

Establishing a Friends website, mentioned last year had to be put on hold due to all of the administration required for the Park ownership changes;

Review the possibility of getting Park Yoga back at the Park;

Exploring new fundraising and sponsorship opportunities.

Reserves policy

Our reserves policy is to retain a working capital to cover costs incurred prior to income being received; cover unforeseen events; project overrun costs; etc. The amount is set at £2,500 unallocated reserves.

Risk

Funding opportunities are increasingly harder to identify in the current economic climate. We are reliant on help with this funding and delivery of future projects could be impacted.

Inflation continues to be a challenge for family expenditure and the ability to attend events in the Park where a charge is levied, which means there is more pressure on seeking/generating funding in order for events to have a lower charge or be free to attend (for the community).

DBS

This was reviewed over the year and the current roles remain essentially the same. No action was required for this financial year, since the original guidance was obtained from DBS. We currently have no Trustees, Members or Volunteers who are in roles that are eligible.

Report approval

Report approved by the serving Trustees of Friends of Yeovil Country Park.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees;



Gary Cashmore

Position: Trustee - Chairman

Date: 04 April 2025



Amanda Card

Position: Trustee - Treasurer

Date: 04 April 2025