

The Friends of Cotgrave Country Park



Charity registration number: 1199132

Trustees' Annual Report for the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023

Introduction by Alan Holmes, chair of Friends of Cotgrave Country Park

The Friends of Cotgrave Country Park is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This is the first full year of its operation.

As I look back on 2023, I regard it as a year of strength, stability and growth for the Friends Group. With our first year of effective management under existing Trustees we have delivered good governance and sound financial control, as well as supporting new initiatives to enhance the park and those that enjoy using it – both human and wildlife!

We have fostered a close working relationship with Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) one of our key stakeholders, that has allowed us to work collaboratively together to place a storage container for joint use in the park, as well as advanced ongoing plans for “Community Green Shelters” and other infrastructure intended to be built in the next 12 months.

Our communication out-reach, to those who want to know what we are doing, has been hugely expanded with a plan of weekly engaging FaceBook posts, website updates, monthly blogs and not forgetting colourful Park noticeboard content all being delivered.

We have continued to win bids for funding for projects and activities in the park and I am immensely thankful for the involvement of many in ideas creation and costing, submitting bids and supporting the delivery phase. It has enabled the building of two kingfisher nesting banks, another successful Fun Day and will see the construction of a range of information boards in the coming year.

We have again run a programme of events and activities which takes significant coordination from within our group as well as the support of other charity groups and NCC. This brings into the park many people from the local community, both adults and young persons, to experience the beauty of nature, and to learn from “experts” about local habitat and its wildlife.

The group has continued to support the maintenance and development of the park, which is a core aim, with many task days and nature surveys.

We are all doing what we do, to look after and conserve the wild nature of the park for future generations and it has been heartening to hear of many sightings of wildlife over this last year. Long may this continue.

The work of the CIO depends on the tremendous efforts of people who generously give their time to ensure it can continue to operate so successfully. The role of volunteers is vital, and the group is always looking for others to get involved. Volunteers are not just needed to conduct tasks on the park on volunteer task days but also to help carry out the everyday running of the organisation. I would welcome anyone who feels they could help support our work. Perhaps you have a skill that you could put to use in support of the group.

In particular, I would like to record that Sharon Broadbent, who has been our Treasurer for the last 3 years, wishes to step down. Currently no one has come forward to take up the role. Sharon has overseen a transition of accounts as a result of the establishment of the CIO and maintained the organisation's account with efficiency and integrity. There is a future vacancy arising for the post of treasurer and I would be grateful to hear from anyone who would be interested in helping out in this area.

Alan Holmes, Chair

"This year has again seen a lot of good, positive and enthusiastic work carried out by the volunteers of the FOCCP. I am always impressed by their initiative, commitment and enthusiasm in their many roles, ranging from identifying and obtaining grant funding opportunities, organising community events including the very popular and successful Fun Day in the summer, and arranging and managing working groups to look after the country park."

Councillor Richard Butler

Objectives and Activities

The object of the charity is to provide or assist in the provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure time by the preservation, promotion, support, assistance and improvement of Cotgrave Country Park.

The Friends have delivered a range of educational nature-based walks and activities including a Family Fun Day open to the local community for adults and children.

This year saw 20 years since the Friends of Cotgrave Country Park was established. A celebratory picnic of this anniversary took place in August with portions of cake given out to park users who were entertained by the music of the Loxley Saxophone Ensemble.



Events

Fun Day apart, we have put on ten activities in the park. These have covered many aspects of nature: wildflowers, butterflies and moths, fungi, pond life and bats. All have been educational and informative, and enjoyed and appreciated by the attendees.

Leaders and helpers on these activities have given their time and expertise freely and generously. Our thanks to them all.

“Bat walk very informative and enjoyable.”

“It was great, so much to do and everyone was so friendly, interesting and informative.”

“Great events with engaging volunteers who are happy to discuss any aspect of the event.”

“Great events run by knowledgeable people. I did a wildflower walk this year and fungi walk last year.”

Comments from participants.

See Appendix I for a full list of events.

Tree Planting

In April we supported the 9th West Bridgford (Holy Spirit) Cub pack to plant 107 trees on the Toe area of the park. The Cubs chose tree planting as one of their community projects. The trees were supplied by the Woodland Trust and consisted of a wildlife-friendly mix of hawthorn, blackthorn, sessile oak, rowan and hazel. The mix will provide food and shelter for birds, invertebrates and mammals, as well as strengthening the boundary and providing colour and interest.

Tree Guards

On Sunday 5th November, volunteers from FoCCP and Plastic Free Cotgrave met to remove some of the many plastic tree guards that can be found in the Country Park. In a two hours session, 25 large bags of tree guards were removed from hawthorns and other small trees around the Hollygate Lane Car Park areas. Initially used to protect young saplings, most of the tree guards have now outlived their usefulness and are in danger of breaking down into unwanted microplastics in the environment.



“It was a very successful event at which a magnificent amount of work that was achieved. It was such a positive experience for all concerned and made a massive difference in removing a great deal of unwanted plastic that was already turning very brittle and starting to break down into the environment as microplastics.” Brenda Ainsley, Plastic Free Cotgrave

Fun Day

The Fun Day was once again a significant success. This was the third year that we have been able to put on this event. The children's activities were fun, enjoyable and educational. All coming to the event had the opportunity to wander nature related information stalls, with volunteers freely giving time and effort to help inform the public.

Thanks to all organisers and contributors working hard to put on this free event. We believe the event has been important in raising awareness amongst local communities of the great opportunities for education, relaxation and leisure that the park provides.

The day involved a tremendous amount of planning and help from many on the day. It was great to see so many willing to help with all aspects on the day and their help once again ensured its success.

Contribution made by volunteers

During 2023 members of the Friends of Cotgrave Country Park and others associated with the Group attended 37 task days on the park. The work carried out throughout the year represented some 211 work hours (1050 hours).

The range of work undertaken included work on the den-building and forest school areas, habitat management on the Toe area, bird-box maintenance, and scrub clearance on the paths and around Heron Lake. Working with a group from AEON two kingfisher nesting banks were constructed along the Rill stream and an event with Plastic Free Cotgrave succeeded in removing a large quantity of redundant plastic from the Country Park.

Other tasks included maintenance of the car park, path surface and drainage improvements and repairs to signage and other furniture.

The unseen 'behind the scenes' contribution of volunteers is the work done by Trustees and others who have helped in the organisation of events, producing education and informational materials about the park, managing our website, and communicating with the Public. The input of ideas and comments at meetings are also valuable in ensuring that the group have been able to deliver so much this year. Over 650 hours of meetings, organisation and administration have been recorded.

"May I take this opportunity to thank all those involved for all their help in managing and improving the Park and the experience of our visitors."

Lee Scudder, Land Management Officer, Nottinghamshire County Council.

Achievements and Performance

The work of the Friends is to keep the park in great condition for the public that use it for recreation and relaxation as well as the nature that inhabits it. There have been reports of Bittern on the park, Kingfishers have been sighted and Nottinghamshire Bat Group found evidence of pipistrelle bats in bat boxes previously erected by the group and FoCCP. Kestrel nesting boxes have also been erected.

The events described in the previous section have ensured that people from the area have been able to enjoy the park and find out more about the fauna and flora that can be found there.



Following on from last year's redesign of the Friends of Cotgrave Country Park website (www.cotgravecountrypark.co.uk) the park and the group have expanded its profile and reached more people through the efforts of Rachel Ollerenshaw managing a Facebook page with fresh and interesting content.

A storage unit, enabling the friends and Nottinghamshire County Council to store equipment used on the park and relieving the need for members of the group to use their own garages, was established on the park.

Further Development

Work is underway to design and construct a number of information boards to be placed at various points of interest around the park. This has resulted from the funds raised by Paul Phillips that have then been matched by NCC.

Another grant will be used to carry out a woodland bulb planting project.

"Nottinghamshire County Council, as owners and managers of Cotgrave Country Park, recognise and value the huge amount of time and effort that the Friends put into the park, including assisting with volunteer tasks, developing projects and funding bids, and running events such as their successful summer Fun Day - all of which helps to make the park a better place for the local community, and for wildlife that makes the park home".

Nick Crouch, Natural Environment Manager, Nottinghamshire County Council

Financial Review

The audited statement of accounts can be found at Appendix II.

The savings of the group are held in a single charity bank account and use of these funds are determined by Trustees.

Fundraising

The charity's principal sources of funds have come from grants, supplemented by membership fees which provide an assured income totalling over £800 this year.

Bids for funding have included:

- Rushcliffe Bio-Diversity Fund. Last year's successful bid for £750 funding was received allowing the construction of two kingfisher nesting banks.



- Nottinghamshire County Council Local Community Fund. A successful bid was made for £4592 towards producing 8 information boards around the park. This will cover half of the costs and the rest has been raised from NCC. This was supplemented by a £500 donation from Councillor Richard Butler, Rushcliffe Borough Council.
- The cost of running the annual Fun Day was met from a £1720 grant from the National Lottery Community Fund.
- A crowd funding exercise run through Aviva Community Fund has resulted in raising £1791.14 towards the planned woodland planting expected to be conducted this winter.

We are currently one of the causes chosen to receive support from the Co-Op Community Fund. The distribution between the chosen causes is decided by shoppers. The final amount raised will be known in October 2024, but will be at least £1,000. It is planned to use the funds for plants, materials and equipment for use by volunteers.

Structure, Governance and Management

The charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). It is governed by a constitution adopted on 27 May 2022.

3 Trustees are ex-officio office holders of the charity (Chair, Treasurer and Secretary). Others can be elected by the membership. There are currently 5 Trustees.

Nottinghamshire County Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council and Cotgrave Town Council may each appoint one charity trustee, although there are no council Trustees at present.

The charity trustees will make available to each new charity trustee, on or before his or her first appointment a copy of the constitution and any amendments made to it and a copy of the CIO's latest trustees' annual report and statement of accounts.

The charity's elected officials are Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Fundraising Lead, Activities and Events Lead.

In addition to the above the Trustees have appointed Rachel Ollerenshaw as Environmental and Conservation Lead. This is a personal appointment which brings Rachel's expertise and enthusiasm to the group.

Nottinghamshire County Council own Cotgrave Country Park and allow the Friends to conduct agreed activities in the park under guidance and supervision. Regular meetings are held between the Friends group and the County Council Park management.

The Friends liaise and network with Rushcliffe Borough Council and Cotgrave Town Council, both of which have representatives attend the group's meetings. Both councils continue to be supportive of the group.

Public Benefit

The Trustees have a legal duty to have regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit when they exercise their powers or duties. This means that they must be aware of the guidance, take it into account when making a decision to which the guidance is relevant and if they have decided to depart from the guidance, they have good reasons for doing so.

The purpose of the charity is to provide an environment that is of benefit to the public and does not limit access to that environment in any way. The Trustees have been provided with copies of the Commission's guidance and all decisions are made with the purpose and guidance in mind.

The stated aims of the charity are specifically designed to bring benefit to the public by enhancing the experience of all who use the park.

Reference and Administrative details

Friends of Cotgrave Country Park
Charity registration number 1199132
7 Vine Farm Close
Cotgrave
Nottingham

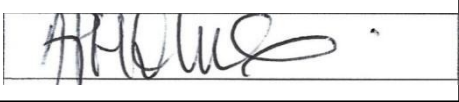
Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Alan Holmes	Chair
Trevor Chapman	Secretary
Sharon Broadbent	Treasurer
Paul Phillips	Fund Raising

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Alan Holmes	Trevor Chapman
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Chair	Secretary
Date	2 April 2024	

Appendix I

Month	Date	Park/ Social activities 2023
April		Tree Planting (with 9 th West Bridgford (Holy Spirit) Cubs
May	13.05.2023	Early Morning Birdsong walk
June	06.06.2023	Bird Identification walk
	11.06.2023	Wildflowers and Butterflies
July	16.07.2023	Wildflowers and Butterflies
	28.07.2023	Guided walk (with Keyworth U3A)
August	08.08.2023	Pond Dipping
	13.08.2023	Teddy Bear's Picnic/20th Anniversary
	20.08.2023	Family Fun Day
September	15.09.2023	Bat Detectors
October	22.10.2023	Fungi Fun
November	05.11.2023	Tree Guard & Litter Pick (with Plastic Free Cotgrave)

Appendix II

Accounts 1st January 2023 – 31st December 2023

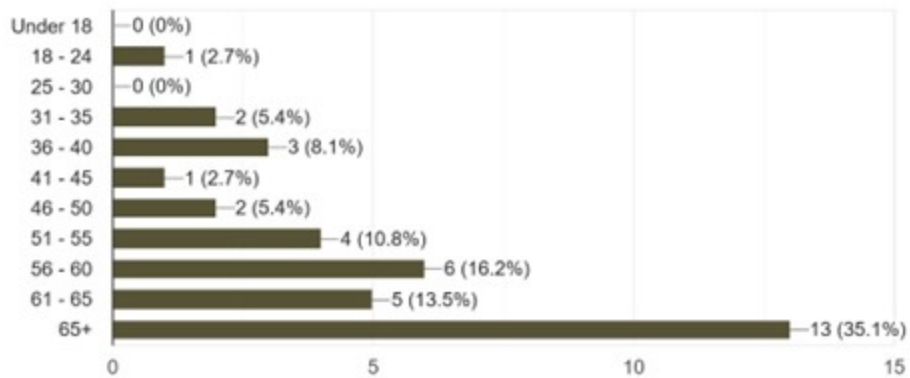
Income		Expenditure	
Balance brought forward 1/1/2023	£8372.49		
Membership	£ 813.00	Falcon Box	£ 360.00
Ticket Sales	£ 189.20	B&B kingfisher boxes	£ 768.00
Rushcliffe Borough Council (Kingfisher tunnels)	£ 750.00	NHBS kingfisher boxes	£ 271.83
Notts County Council (Signage)	£3444.00	Zurich insurance	£ 189.00
Crowd Funding (bulbs)	£1791.14	Funday	£ 1840.69
Misc, donations	£ 66.16	Misc expenses	£ 124.29
Lottery Grant	£1720.00	Balance at Bank	£14092.18
Rushcliffe Borough Council	£ 500.00		
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	£17645.99		£17645.99

Appendix III

Cotgrave Country Park community survey

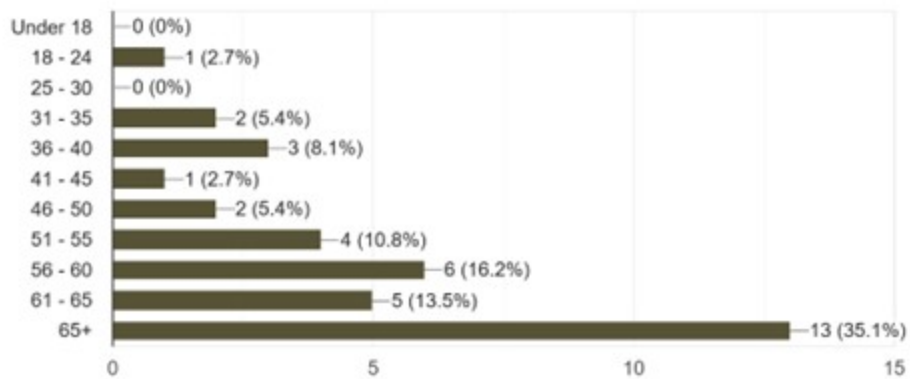
What age range group do you fit into from the following?

37 responses



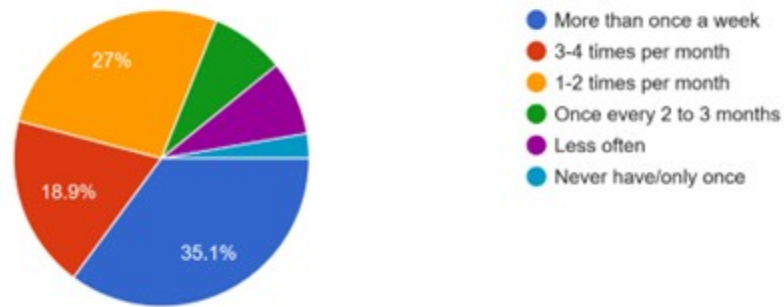
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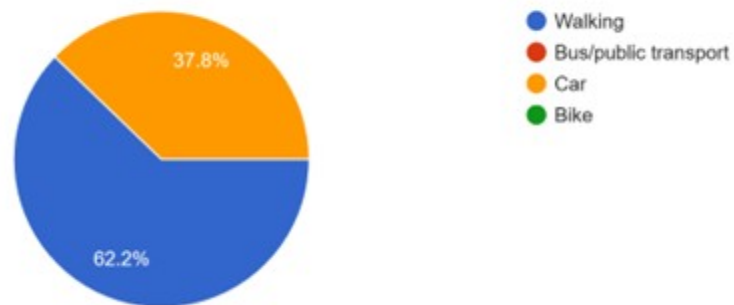
In the last 12 months, how often on average have you visited The Cotgrave Country Park?

37 responses



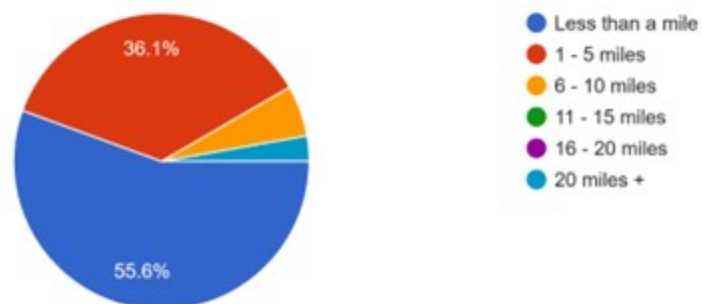
If you do visit, how do you most often travel to the Cotgrave Country Park?

37 responses



If you do travel to visit the Cotgrave Country Park, how far do you travel to arrive?

36 responses



FRIENDS OF COTRGRAVE COUNTRY PARK
ACCOUNTS 1ST JANUARY 2023 – 31ST DECEMBER 2023

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Balance brought forward 1/1/2023	£ 8372.49		
Membership	£ 813.00	Falcon Box	£ 360.00
Ticket Sales	£ 189.20	B & B kingfisher boxes	£ 768.00
RBC (Kingfisher tunnels)	£ 750.00	NHBS kingfisher boxes	£ 271.83
N.C.C (Signage)	£ 3444.00	Zurich Insurance	£ 189.00
Crowd Funding (bulbs)	£ 1791.14	Funday	£ 1840.69
Misc., Donations	£ 66.16	Misc. Expenses	£ 124.29
Lottery Grant	£ 1720.00	Balance at Bank	£14092.18
RBC	£ 500.00		
	£17645.99		£17645.99

Accounts checked and Audited.....

Signed 

Karen Knight MAAT

Dated 16 Jan 2024