

Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955, www.fombl.org.uk



Trustees' Annual Report 2022/23

It was with great sadness that we learned that our trustee Alec Mann passed away, far too young, in Autumn of 2022. Alec was most recently our membership secretary but he was involved in all sorts of groups and activities. He will be greatly missed.

On a happier note, 2022/23 has been a return to normal for FoMBL. After all the restrictions we trustees finally returned to occasional in-person meetings.

Our main contact for council business, Mike Shields, retired from the council during the year. He was a very good friend of FoMBL and we all wish him, well. His replacement, David Kyles, has made a promising start and has worked well with us. For example, there has been an increase in unmown areas which has made a significant difference to insect habitat and increase in low level flowering.

As always, our volunteers were hard at work all year. We planted new trees as well as watered and maintained many other established ones (although not enough for some which died). We organised litter picking and graffiti removal sessions and our birdboxes are doing well. We also worked to help maintain the pavilion and its back garden while the future of that building remains uncertain. We continued to seed and maintain some vital wildflower spaces which help insects and birds.

As well as trees, we are constantly engaged in new projects from installations of playpark improvements and gym equipment, to improved signage/information and bench restoration. Financially we still have some reserves and are always looking for feedback to help us decide which projects to fund.

Maintaining the quality of the grass remains a challenge. The Underbelly structures have just left and the grass needs time to recover. Also, the re-instigated torchlit procession will start in the Meadows for the first time (on 29th December) and numbers of participants may exceed 10,000. The plan is for most of the fun and games to happen on the Meadows at the start rather than at the end (Johnston Terrace). We'll have to keep a close eye on wear and tear.

Touching on the saga of the jawbones, at a meeting of the culture and communities committee in August 2023 it was made clear by FoMBL that a

bronze replacement would not necessarily be welcomed by the local community (to put it mildly) and the council agreed to engage properly in discussions with stakeholders like us before any final decision is taken. It was also an opportunity to inform the councillors of issues such as the condition of the pavilion and our top priority which is new toilets. On this subject, the temporary public toilets have been installed for the summer (albeit without much signage). There have been reports from the council that a permanent new toilet block in the Meadows may be on the way.

Scottish Water works to instal a huge overflow tank just off Marchmont Road are ongoing and we have engaged with them a lot. They have indicated that some funding for local projects may be available.

We work hard to communicate through our website, Facebook group and regular newsletter. In this way we outline everything that we do to keep members and local residents informed and involved.

None of the work that FOMBL does would be possible without our members, funders, volunteers and patient local residents. By working together we are much more effective in maintaining, protecting and enhancing the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links for current and future generations. We are always looking for new members, volunteers and trustees to support our endeavours. Trustee meetings take place roughly every two months.

Jim Orr, Convenor of FOMBL, September 2023