

Friends of Kings Park Stirling

Annual General Meeting October 2025 - Chair's report for 2024-25

Introduction

Over the past year, the Friends Group has raised its profile, attracted new members and volunteers, delivered many challenging but enjoyable projects, and partnered with other people and organisations.

We have energetically pursued our aim to make the Kings Park a better place for all to enjoy.

Aims for 2024-25

When we decided on our priorities for the year, we put a particular emphasis on

- Partnering youth organisations to encourage young people to learn about the diverse habitats in the park. The P5 class from Allan's Primary School became our focus. Thanks to the hard work of Jane, Lidia and Wendy, I believe we have some enthusiastic new young advocates for the park.
- Promoting the Peace of Mind Garden for mindfulness and well-being. The ongoing work of our volunteers to develop and nurture the garden under guidance from Andrew and Carol has yielded horticultural benefits. We replaced the garden's information board. We are ready to host a promotional event for relevant local groups in the spring next year.
- Raising awareness of the Friends group. We have arranged events in the park, met with partner organisations and installed additional signage to identify the areas of the park we maintain. There is no doubt that the visibility of our project at the fountain parterres by the main gate has drawn lots of attention to our work. New signage and hi-viz vests make our volunteers more noticeable when working in the park.

The garden projects

Most gardening tasks involve our volunteers in the ongoing maintenance of our ever-increasing list of locations in the park. From the Peace of Mind Garden to the community orchard, from the 3-tier planter to the wooden troughs by the play park, our volunteers' hard work has been appreciated by park users every week. The butterfly border had a makeover this year, and we have replanted the area around the Rotary monument with donations of plants.

However, two projects merit a particular mention in this report:

The rebuilding of the pergola in the Peace of Mind Garden turned out to be a bigger task than we anticipated. Thanks to Brian's careful planning, ordering of materials, and a lot of sawing, we have restored this key feature of the garden to its original design. We learnt that gardening requires a lot of water – most of it in the form of perspiration!

This year's project for the fountain parterres was led by Jane who designed a different theme of plants for each parterre: sensory, edible, pollinator and prairie. We erected information signs which have drawn park users into the area to learn about the plants. Many appreciative comments have been received, and we realise that we have set ourselves a high standard to maintain in the future.

Working with others

We liaise regularly with Stirling Council officials, mainly from Land Services, and appreciate their positive responses. These have included dealing with the graffiti issue in the Spring, the provision of compost for our projects and providing paint and brushes for our latest project to refurbish the seats in the Peace of Mind Garden. We are currently working with them on proposals to site a defibrillator in the park.

The formal occupancy agreement for the Friends Group to maintain the fountain parterres provided certainty for both parties and is an approach which we would wish to continue.

After last year's investment in the tennis courts, we have been pleased to liaise with Stirling Council on the replacement of the key features in the children's play area. Further work is ongoing, and we are grateful for the response to issues which we identified over the year. We have provided our views on proposals from Stirling Council to improve pedestrian safety on the roads around the park, and we look forward to delivery.

We will be meeting again soon to discuss how we work together in the coming year and to identify wider issues of maintenance in the face of restricted resources.

Following a very enjoyable networking walk in the park arranged with Dr Murray Cook, Stirling Council Archaeologist, we followed up contacts at Go Forth Stirling (the business improvement district) and at Stirling Heritage Alliance. We will look to build on these for future partnership projects.

We promoted events in the park including an interesting Well-being Writing Workshop with Laura Fyfe, under the Stirling 900 programme, and the archaeology walk in the summer.

We continue to liaise with Kings Park Community Council on matters of mutual interest. We have developed links with the Rotary Club of Stirling and will partner them on a new project – a litter pick in the park later in October. We have engaged in the scoping of a Stirling City wayfinding project and await proposals for improved destination signage.

We have continued to use the advice of Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise provided to local groups through various workshops and have used their Portal to advertise our volunteering opportunities.

Organisation

The Group is managed by a committee of eight volunteers who act as directors and trustees of our charitable company. We welcomed Dora Kiraly as our new secretary following our advertisement on the SVE Portal and have benefited from her organisational skills and advice on many subjects.

We will be losing Marguerite Nugent and Neil Fairweather who are resigning from the committee. We are grateful for their contribution to committee work and general activities over many years; Marguerite has served on the committee for 9 years and Neil for 3 years as Vice Chair.

Recently we were saddened by the death of Tom Wilson, one of our founding members back in 2007. Tom and his wife Dorothy were key influences in the development of the Friends Group and its early successes. Both were active committee members until a few years ago. We offered our condolences to Tom's family.

I am grateful to all committee members for their hard work over the past year.

Financial and other support

A year ago, we launched our donation facility on our website and promoted it to our membership and the wider community. We are grateful for the generous response from a wide group of people. We have used the money raised to support our projects and our ongoing running costs.

We have benefitted from many generous donations of plants for our projects. Thank you for making the park a more attractive and colourful place.

We received grants from two sources. The Stirling Council Community Grants fund provided funds for publicity materials including new signage and hi-viz jackets for our volunteers, as well as children's garden tools. The Clackmannanshire and Stirling Environment Trust provided the funding for our new information sign at the Peace of Mind Garden.

We welcomed casual volunteers via the SVE Portal to support our regular volunteers on Thursday mornings. A group of local staff from Envireauwater, an environmental consultancy, provided extra support through a volunteer-at-work programme to prepare the Rotary Garden for replanting.

Promotion

We have continued to issue a quarterly newsletter to members and partner organisations by email, publishing it on our website and posting it on the park noticeboards. Thanks to Wendy for turning a collection of words and photos into a most attractive and enjoyable read!

Our website and Facebook page have been key channels for promoting our activities. They are also ways through which we receive membership enquiries, volunteer offers and general communications. Our WhatsApp groups provide timely updates to our volunteers and frequent calls for assistance, equipment and advice!

Celebrate volunteering

Our enthusiastic group of volunteers are the backbone of everything we have achieved over the past year. During national volunteering week, Dora, our secretary, published a lovely thank you to our volunteers which described us as "the Heart of the Kings Park". I couldn't do better than that!

We welcome anyone interested to come along on Thursday mornings or get in touch for involvement in other project opportunities.

Thank you all for your support.

David Leslie

Chair