

Friends of Kings Park Stirling

Annual General Meeting October 2026 - Chair's report for 2025-26

Introduction

It has been another busy year in pursuit of our aim to make the Kings Park a better place for all to enjoy. And it is a credit to our volunteers that we have achieved so much. One of the strengths of the Friends group is the enthusiasm of our volunteers to give their time, skills and creativity to deliver a wide variety of different projects. This is a recurring theme when reviewing the past year.

Aims for 2025-26

Our project list was reviewed in January, and we placed an emphasis on

- Prioritising our gardening projects in the Park
- Progressing some maintenance issues
- Partnering other organisations willing to assist
- Providing social events for our members
- Promoting the Friends group and the Park to a wider audience.

Gardening projects

A lot of volunteers' time this year has focused on a range of gardening projects to improve the Park's amenity. Further work in the Peace of Mind Garden included new planting and footpaths through the deeper beds, improving access to some areas. The Fountain parterres were planted as four themed gardens, with information signs to encourage interest and understanding. The three-tier planter and boxes near the tennis courts provided colourful displays in spring and summer. In the community garden, new planting added interest to the pollinator "butterfly" border, and work began to clear the unmaintained borders. A new apple tree was planted in the community orchard to replace a diseased one, and the orchard produced a good crop of apples this autumn. We are grateful for the many plant donations from members and local people, and for the lorry-load of compost provided by the Council. Thank you to all the lead volunteers who have guided each gardening project.

Maintenance issues

Liaison with Stirling Council officers has included discussions about various maintenance issues. Some longer-term issues such as path drainage are constrained by Council budget restrictions but where possible, the Council has acted on our identified needs. The broken fence at the Peace of Mind Garden was partly replaced in an arrangement with a Council contractor, the leaking water tap in the Garden was repaired, regular ponding of water at one of the pedestrian gates was cleared and graffiti was removed. It is hoped that the installation of CCTV in the Park will deter future cases of vandalism.

Partnerships

We have continued to reach out to local groups to assist us with projects. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have assisted with weed clearance on three occasions this year. The Rotary Club allowed us to borrow their equipment for a litter pick. The Stirling Guides and Beavers groups arranged two different evening visits of their youngsters to enthusiastically wash the mosaics and the park benches. We have liaised on mutual interests with Kings Park Community Council and with Stirling Golf Club.

Social events

We arranged social events for our members throughout the year. A Christmas party at the Pavilion Café, a visit to the Braehead Community Garden in the spring, and a summer outing to Glasgow's King's Park to meet the Friends group in our "sister" park. Also, though a series of informal walks in and around the Kings Park,

we introduced our members to new discoveries. The weekly gathering at the Pavilion Café after gardening on a Thursday morning provides motivation, advice, ideas and good stories!

Promotion

Promoting our work to potential members and highlighting volunteering opportunities in the Friends group is important to ensure our continued existence. We published four quarterly newsletters, updated our website and Facebook page and continued to share information on our WhatsApp groups. We starred (again!) on a Stirling Community Radio show about community volunteering. Following our participation in a Volunteers' Week challenge for local groups, we were pleased to host a visit from Tracy Duff of Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise (SVE) to present badges to our volunteers. We have used the SVE Volunteering Portal to promote our opportunities to the local community.

Signage and walking trails

From an initial assessment of the lack of on-the-ground signage and interpretation material, one of our members developed a project to turn the old information leaflet into an online resource to support new walking trails. Supported by a subgroup of committee members, Kenny Marrit has designed a new website with posters and stickers around the Park to allow access to information via QR codes.

Donations and grants

We have been using an online donation facility for the last two years to help raise money to cover our running costs. It is managed for us by the Charities Aid Foundation. Our members have donated almost £900 in total which is very much appreciated. We received a community grant from of almost £600 from Sutcliffe Play as a condition of their contract with Stirling Council for upgrades to the play area. And we received gardening items from Dobbies as runners up in their local community initiative. We were honoured to be nominated as the beneficiary of the collection in memory of Sue Beach, a former member who passed away last year, which raised £650. And we appreciate the donation made by Dorothy Wilson to cover the cost of a tree planted in memory of Tom, her late husband who was a founder member.

Organisation

The Group is managed by a committee of eight volunteers who act as directors and trustees of our charitable company. It has met on five occasions during the past year. Dora Kiraly will be stepping down from the secretary role after two years and Gordon Campbell will be retiring from the Treasurer role, a position he has held since the charity was formed. We are grateful to both for their support, advice and time. The contribution of all committee members to different aspects of the Friends' work is hugely appreciated by members.

The future 20 years on

Next year will mark 20 years since the Friends group was formed and we intend to celebrate all the great voluntary activities which have supported so many projects over that time.

As always, we welcome anyone interested in volunteering with us to come along on Thursday mornings or get in touch for other project opportunities.

Thank you all for your continued support.

David Leslie, Chair