

Friends of Parkwood Springs

our country park in the city

Joint Chairs' report to the AGM held on 8th November 2022

The last AGM was held way back on 23rd May 2019. We were starting to plan the 2020 meeting when Covid struck, and all the restrictions and limitations that came with that. So this report aims to give a sense of what has happened since May 2019, and where we are now.

The initial impact of Covid on the Friends Group was dramatic. On the one hand, we had to stop all our Group activities, whether indoors or outside. On the other, when people were allowed to exercise alone or in family groups for short periods near their homes there was a dramatic increase in the number of people using Parkwood Springs. If anything good came out of Covid for us, it was that lots of new people, from all sorts of backgrounds, found their way to Parkwood Springs and began to appreciate what a wonderful place it is.

As restrictions began to ease we gradually re-started activities, initially in groups of no more than six people outside and socially distancing. We worked within the spirit and the letter of the Council's advice to groups like ours.

In October 2021 we held a Lantern Festival – not the usual Procession, because of concern about people bunching in narrow and closed-in areas, but very much welcomed by people as an opportunity to gather together after all the restrictions. That was probably the largest event we have ever held, with an estimated 700 people attending.

Since then we have got back to a normal programme of activities on site, primarily conservation and Forest Garden sessions and guided walks. The Dawn Chorus walk continues to be very popular indeed, with good numbers also on the walks linked with Heritage Open Days and the Sheffield Walking Festival. In October this year we were able to hold once more a Lantern Procession – arguably the best yet. Overall the Friends Group is a lively and active Group, which we can all feel proud to be part of. We are always trying new things – most recently the 'Tree of the Month', encouraging people to learn about the trees on Parkwood Springs.

The committee got back into its stride as restrictions allowed, initially doing business by email and on Zoom. We have now returned to face-to-face meetings.

A lot of the committee's business has been to try to influence the developments that are being considered for Parkwood Springs – the Places to Ride project, the restoration of the closed Landfill site, and the possible redevelopment of the old Ski Village site. This is a lot of work, done largely behind the scenes, but we think that it is some of the most important. We set out to work constructively with the Council and other stakeholders. However, it is only if we keep a sharp eye on what is

proposed and are able to make an effective input that Parkwood Springs will deliver on its potential – for people and for wildlife.

We set out to work with other groups such as the Friends of Wardsend Cemetery, the Friends of Hillsborough Park, the Upper Don Trail Trust and KINCA (the Kelham Island and Neepsend Community Alliance).

The committee is grateful for the incredible support of Jon Dallow, and the Council's Rangers and Tree teams. We have continued to enjoy the support of Burngreave Ward Councillors, but have also worked with a growing number of City Councillors from other Wards, both adjoining the site and further afield. We appreciate their interest, and willingness when necessary to take up points on our behalf.

Finally, as Joint Chairs we are grateful for the support of the committee, which has continued to work together really well, in a friendly and constructive way. Our colleagues have been a pleasure to work with.

Louise Bull
Neill Schofield

November 2022.