



Annual Report 2023

**The Friends of Sandall Park
Registered Charity 1120679**

Annual Report, January 2023 to December 2023

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Introduction

2023 has seen some large changes within the Friends of Sandall Park (FoSP), and probably the most significant since the charity began some 20 years or so ago.

The New Year saw a new Chairperson, Mark Hudson, taking over from Sandra Crabtree. Sandra's dedication, reassuring guidance and dogged determination has made FoSP what it is today, and her commitment and 'can-do' attitude has encouraged the group to achieve huge amounts. The group will always be indebted to Sandra and Don for their dedication over the last two decades.

The FoSP team have once again contributed massively to the park as well as to the wider community, hosting a number of successful events throughout the Spring and Summer.

The FoSP members have shown true commitment during 2023, with the wet summer causing the event field to be saturated during the spring and autumn, the lake being fenced off for several months in the summer for the edging work to be completed, and most recently the flooding on the paths around the lake.

Volunteers

Sustainability is key to any group, and one of our key aims for 2024 will be to attract new members. We need people who can spend time in the park to maintain the excellent facility that it is. Volunteers are fundamental to the success of FoSP moving forward.

The volunteers are our eyes and ears, they are in the park daily, reporting things that need addressing, keeping the public informed and ensuring the park is developed and nurtured to a high standard.

We also have several local residents who visit the park regularly and inform us of anything that requires attention. They too take remedial action where they are able. We have the added advantage of many members of the public becoming involved by doing litter picks and reporting issues. So, in addition to our group members, we have 'unofficial' volunteers and supporters.

Our volunteers, whether members of FoSP or local residents, are what makes Sandall Park the thriving place that it is, and we thank and appreciate them all.

Volunteers have contributed approximately 2,500 hours in time this year.

Events

Two FoSP volunteers continued to organise all our events together and the success of these events is testament to the exceptional job they do, and to the hundreds of hours they put in. Amongst the events we have organised and delivered during 2023 are;

- Easter Egg Hunt & Hook-a-Duck in April.
- Bank Holiday Family Fun Day, over 3 days in May.
- Far, Far, Away Fun Day in June.
- Multicultural Fun Day & Food Fest in July.
- Princess & Superheroes Day in August.

Additionally, other events took place in the park during the summer, including;

- Fake Festival in April.
- Tuby's Fair in August.

The park continues to host a number of other events, including;

- parkrun on Saturday mornings each week.
- junior parkrun on Sunday mornings each week.
- free cycle training, held twice per week.

It is worth mentioning that the lake edging work, and the closure of the main car park, that was carried out during the summer months, and overran by some two months, severely hampered the events that could be put on, and caused for a number of events to be cancelled. As an example, we were unable to put on any Guided Bat Walks this year.

The Junior Rangers

As with other activities within the park during 2023, coupled with the Head Junior Ranger being busy with examinations, the Junior Rangers activities have been limited during 2023. However, where they have organised events and activities, these have been very popular and well received.

Our aim for the coming year, 2024, is to focus on the Junior Rangers and look to strengthen this group.

Lake Edging Works

City of Doncaster Council undertook a huge project during the summer to install edging around the lake to stop the erosion and collapsing of the lake edge into the lake. This work cost in excess of £350,000 and a superb job was completed, albeit 2 months late. This work required the main car park to be closed for nearly 6 months, especially disappointing as this included the 6-weeks school holiday period. Additionally, the paths around the lake were also closed, meaning it was impossible to access a substantial part of the park.

Changing Place

One very exciting achievement worthy of mention is the installation of a Changing Place within the park. Changing Places are purpose-built toilet and appropriate changing facilities for children and adults with disabilities. Having a Changing Place will make Sandall Park **THE** place to go to for a day out for families with disabilities.

FoSP facilitated the raising of nearly £11,000 towards the cost of this facility, and each person and organisation that contributed to this has been recognised on our 'Love Grows Here' sponsors tree which will adorn one of the internal walls. The Changing Place is now built and expected to open in January 2024.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

In the greater scheme of things Sandall Park suffers minor crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in comparison to other areas, but it is always acted upon immediately when it occurs. Our volunteers address any instances of damage, and where necessary, inform the council, who complete repairs that the volunteers cannot undertake. All incidents and crimes are reported to the police and the council.

FoSP uniquely has its own Crime Reduction Strategy, based on the targeting of all our resources on the three main elements of crime and Anti-Social behaviour: protecting locations, informing victims, and targeting offenders. This strategy is not new to us and has been the backbone of all our work for 18 years.

We passionately believe that the presence of our volunteers and members of the public who are willing to challenge unacceptable behaviour goes a long way to preventing offending in the park. The visitors themselves police the park and our volunteers always wear Hi Viz vests which shows a presence.

The Management Plan

The Management Plan was developed over five years ago in partnership with the Green Space Officer and Stronger Communities Team, to facilitate an application for Green Flag status. It sets the parameters for the maintenance and development of the park by both the council and FoSP, and is a living document - designed to ensure that the park reaches its full potential and is sustainable for the future. Both FoSP and City of Doncaster council have signed up to it, and all our plans for the park are developed in line with this.

A meeting is already arranged for early January 2024 to review the plan and update it accordingly.

Our own Business Plan is a living document which aims to take the park forward over the course of the ensuing five years, it is revisited every year and was updated in December 2023.

The park was again awarded Green Flag Status, a superb achievement and a reflection on the excellent relationship between ourselves and the council.

Finances

- The charity closed the year with a balance of just over £5,000. This is a reduction in previous years but is a reflection of an increase of volunteers undertaking planting and other projects in the park. The new expenses policy will ensure that spending of funds is properly planned and accounted for in a timely manner.
- The 100 club continues to raise funds for the charity, with 77 members.
- The treasurer continues to complete the returns required by the City of Doncaster Council in relation to the 100 club, which is categorised as a small society lottery and requires us to have a license.
- The charity used separate savings bank accounts for the various grants and events. This has increased the amount of bank interest earned but does not affect the reporting.
- The charity is insured for its activities and the policy is administered by the Treasurer.
- The charity is registered with the Information Commissioner's office as a data holder, mainly in relation to the 100 club which requires a database of personal details.

- An independent examiner, who produces a formal report, is used for the accounts when required by the Charity Commission. This was required in 2022 due to the high levels of income but it is not anticipated this will be required for the 2023 accounts when completed (due by October 2024).
- The financial history of Friends of Sandall Park is publicly available on the Charity commission website and the 2023 report will be available on the same page once it has been approved by the Trustees and submitted to the Charity Commission. The annual report is also filed there when required.

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4032828/financial-history>.

- The 2022 account are showing as currently late. This is incorrect and due to significant internal issues at the Charity Commission following their introduction of a new version of their electronic filing system. The Treasurer hold emails confirming that this inaccuracy will be corrected once the Charity Commission is up to date with its internal processing.
- Amazon smile, which previously contributed to fundraising has been discontinued by Amazon.

Grants and Donations;

1. Ready Steady Store provide an in-kind donation of storage space at their facility for all our equipment.
2. Donations from the resident ice cream man.
3. Donations from resident Inflatable Zone man.
4. Donation from Fake Festivals.
5. Donations from 100 club members in the form of instructing us they do not wish to claim their winnings.
6. Many donations of plants trees and shrubs: all planted by our volunteers.
7. Multicultural Festival Grant from Voluntary Action Doncaster.
8. Donation from Roger Tuby.

A summary from the Chair.

2023 has proved to be a significant year of upheaval for the Friends of Sandall Park, as well as for Sandall park itself.

The park remains a significant 'jewel in the crown' for local people; it is everyone's back garden.

2023 has proved frustrating at times, with the work around the lake taking longer than expected, the paths and car park being inaccessible for a significant period, the heavy rain causing access issues on the event field and, later in the year, serious flooding on some of the footpaths.

However, there have been some extremely exciting and positive developments too. The lake edging looks absolutely superb and I am positive that come the warmer weather in the Spring of 2024 we will start to see the improvements and the benefits this work was designed to bring.

The Changing Place installation is a game-changer and will give families with disabled adults and children a superb facility that will mean the difference between coming to the park for an hour as opposed to allowing them to enjoy a full day out.

Our emphasis for 2024 is to reestablish some of the activities we were unable to do during 2023, for example, the Guided Bat Walks and the Santa Dash. We will continue to support and encourage existing, regular activities such as parkrun, as well as look to encourage other groups to set-up in the park, where appropriate.

We already have a number of events planned for 2024, including the ever-popular East Egg Hunt & Hook-a-Duck, the Princess and Superheroes Day, etc.

Of course, none of this would be possible without our incredible volunteers at friends of Sandall Park, who work tirelessly to make Sandall Park the premier park in our city. Their dedication and tireless work is very much appreciated by all park users and the wider community.

Mark Hudson
Chair, Friends of Sandall Park
December 2023.

Appendix

Current FoSP Committee Members

Mark Hudson* (Chair)

Vacancy (Vice Chair)

Kristen Rawson* (Treasurer)

Victoria Stokoe* (Secretary)

Carin Stoddart*

Sarah Stokes* Ron Ketley*

Mairaid Smith*

Barbara Senior*

Colwyn Pugh

Eva Hughes

Frank Woolley

Margaret Richards

Clare Simpson (SCT)

Brian Greathead

Matthew Pickering

Aimee Pickering

Emma Pickering

Katie Pickering

Daniel Barwell

Non-Committee FoSP Members

Wendy Barclay

Les Jones

Derrick Bewell

Marianne Downing

Peter Poppy

Emma Muddiman-Rawlings (Cllr)

Yetunde Elebuibon (Cllr)

Jane Kidd (Cllr)

International FoSP

Noelle Finn (Westville New Jersey, USA)

Ester Schrijent (The Netherlands)

Kimberley Van Cleve (Fort Lauderdale Florida USA)

Amanda Browning (Fredericksburg, Virginia USA)

Tabitha Fenton (Wagga Wagga, Australia)

*= Trustees

SCT = Stronger Communities Team

Cllr = Councillor