

Southampton Commons and Parks Protection Society May 2024 Newsheet

Dear Member

This letter comes to you with the minutes and formal Notice of our AGM on 3rd June. The venue this year is at the Isaac Watts Church in Winchester Road Southampton SO16 6TS when we hope the weather will be both a little drier and a little warmer.

As ever, our AGM provides both members and the Committee with the opportunity for discussion about our parks and open spaces: how we enjoy using them and being in them as well as possible improvements that could be made.

Even if you are unable to attend the AGM, please send us your thoughts and ideas of how we can maintain our presence and remain effective.

SCAPPS has a long and successful record as a campaigning group, representing the views, and protecting the interests, of those who use and enjoy the City's parks and green open spaces.

Work on the printed map continues as there have of course been a few changes since we thought that we had completed not just the map but the accompanying words.

In the past, printed maps were made freely available by Southampton City Council. The map we worked on is available online through the city council website and we look forward to being able to distribute the printed version to our members and to a wider public.

As a registered Charity, we are obliged to make an annual return to The Charity Commission which was done in October 2023.

Felicity Irons-Smith and our Treasurer Pat O'Dell have resigned from the Committee. Pat had worked tirelessly with the bank because we needed to update the signatories and had hoped to be able to use a bank card as well as changing signatories. Every time she visited the bank, the goalposts were moved. Pat wrote letters, completed forms, arranged for special Committee minutes, made telephone calls. We are sad that she has left us as she had worked hard for the Committee. Felicity took up a post dear to her heart and local to where she lives. We miss her, but remain in contact with matters to do with ecology, the environment, local green spaces and the map.

We look forward to seeing you on 3rd June

Kate Martin

When we perceive threats, SCAPPS intervenes, always seeking improvements to Southampton's commons, parks and green spaces. At the moment your committee is small and we welcome new people with fresh ideas. More Newsletters are emailed to members than hand delivered. We no longer need to type formal responses in full letter format, but fresh faces with an interest in the City's parks and open spaces and working alongside other like-minded people are welcome to join us. A broader group of new committee members who can reflect and decide on the best action the Society can take on matters affecting parks and green spaces.

Our constitutional purpose is to protect commons, parks and green space from loss and damage and promoting their public appreciation and enjoyment. We are so pleased that there's now wider public and political appreciation of the importance of caring for green spaces. What distinguishes us from individual parks' friends groups and other action groups is our work in influencing overall strategic policy.

Mayflower Park

Mayflower Park continues to be high on our list of concern. We hope the long-running planning-policy-blight, which has held back spending on Park improvement, has been lifted; the new Local Plan will specify it should remain as it is, a park. Our Secretary will bring us up to date on progress at the AGM.

A small new park at Albion Place

With bus stops next to the Castle Bailey Wall, a new public open space will be created replacing the car park. Sadly, we were unsuccessful in preventing the felling of a mature lime tree, prominent in street views. New developments add to the number of homes and therefore people in the city centre and this has not been matched by more green space, resulting in pressure on Central Parks in particular. This is a tiny step in the right direction: the new park will be “tiny and not very green”!

Central Parks

We supported proposals for a less visually-intrusive replacement skatepark in Hoglands and we hope work can begin later this year. The work in Cumberland and Brunswick Terraces provides better quality paving against the Park boundary. We successfully pressed for work in East Park Terrace to include the removal of an ugly traffic sign and the realignment of the fence to restore a vista through the horse-chestnut avenue to the Cenotaph.

The Common, Lovers Walk

An application to Government for Commons Act section 38 consent to widen Lovers Walk is yet to be determined. Lovers Walk needs repair and we support improvement, but not wholesale widening. We objected to the landscape impact of more tarmac. Near doubling the width of Lovers Walk north damages the landscape character of a part of The Common which ‘feels’ less busy, more natural and unspoilt by urban intrusion. Widening Lovers Walk south is unnecessary as there is now a dedicated cycle lane on The Avenue. Lovers Walk north from Highfield Ave to the University steps also has a parallel - Furzedown Road.

Outdoor Sports Centre

The City Council secured £20m from Government to upgrade the centre. Planning permission was granted. We objected to scale of car parking and had concern too much building would damage the landscape setting. Plans are to be revised to keep in budget; we await the new planning application. Although it seems there’ll be less building, but parking is not being reduced. Landscaping and tree planting is to be included.

The waterfront

One of our aims is improved public access to the waterfront. We contributed to the City Council’s scrutiny review of the River Itchen. Adopted recommendations include stronger resolution in requiring developments to include public access to the waterfront, tidying-up publicly-owned land alongside the Itchen and signage to improve public awareness.

Planning permission for the former Meridian site (upstream from Northam Bridge) required provision of an improved riverside path with green space. We’re concerned Inland Homes has gone into administration without that work being completed.

Green Grid and Green Infrastructure policy

The City Council has adopted Strategies on Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity. We’re keen to be involved in defining a Green Grid. The idea is to define ‘green corridors’ linking existing green spaces, and to ‘green’ some of the city’s principal roads. Thank goodness many years ago the “greenways” in the city were protected as they are indeed “green corridors”

Other matters of interest

A planning application to build on St Mary’s College former sports field in Bitterne was refused. We objected because planning policy requires no net loss of green space, and no replacement land was proposed.

An ambitious planning application has been submitted to completely redevelop Town Quay showing public walkways around the marina and next to the hotel but no new green space, putting pressure on nearby parks. We’re not sure how it will look in views from Queen’s Park, Town Quay Park and Mayflower Park.

We’ve objected to Public Spaces Protection Orders in Newtown closing a small play space, The Veny, and a footpath next to the derelict Mount Pleasant Recreation Ground. Neglected areas always attract anti-social behaviour; we favour neighbouring Schools taking over the land with agreements allowing regulated community access and use.