**FRIENDS OF TRENDLEWOOD PARK (FoTP)**

**Annual Report 2024 for AGM on 11th February 2025 (14th)**

## 1. Introduction and context

2024 will be remembered for an earlier than usual Spring, followed by a long period of wet, cool weather. On the park and meadows, this had a dramatic effect on insects. Many insects, and most worryingly, butterfly numbers were significantly down. Mercifully, the late Summer and early Autumn were warmer and lasted longer than usual, giving time for some wildflowers to bloom, and emerging insects to forage and breed. Unfortunately, poor early insect numbers had a negative impact on pollination and bird reproduction, and we were, and remain concerned about the impact. Another noticeable trend was the inexorable advance of ash die back disease, with more affected trees falling during storms, and others shedding branches and debris. The extended period of wet weather, combined with warm temperatures, led to a massive surge in tree and shrub growth into the Autumn, creating more work for contractors and volunteers. On the plus side, the wet Summer meant less antisocial behaviour on the park and meadows. The arrival of powerful ebikes, however, caused significant damage by ripping up the woodland floor.

The FoTP committee shrank to half it's size during the course of the year, but nonetheless, managed to organise workdays, arrange involvement in several public events, and carry out some significant projects. Overall, it was a positive year for the group, with steady increases in membership and volunteer numbers at workdays. The park received a boost from an increase in publicity, and FoTP received glowing praise in the Green Flag report. The park continued to offer a well maintained, beautiful and natural haven, and was used by many for walking and peaceful enjoyment of nature. We recognise that these spaces are more important than ever for our physical and emotional wellbeing, and we receive many positive comments from park users.

## 2. Organisation

- **North Somerset Council** 2024 was the first full year in which NSC contractors carried out work on larger features passed over from FoTP, such as trimming hedges and cutting tall grass areas. The Green Team now comes out to carry out this work independently. Overall, this new arrangement worked well, and will continue, allowing FoTP to concentrate on smaller scale tasks and improvement projects. North Somerset Council continued to experience huge budgetary pressures, but the commitment to it's larger public parks remained high. FoTP received a good level of support and cooperation from the officers in the Natural Environment Team. While Sam Phillips was on maternity leave, Iain MacFarlane covered her work and was supportive. Due to budget constraints, North Somerset Council has been unable to fund non-essential tree works for several years. FoTP paid for some tree works in 2024, and jointly funded provision of 3 new benches. North Somerset Council replaced the play equipment, and provided new rubbish bins on the park. We would like to thank both Sam & Iain for their continued support.
- **Park Patrol** Two members of the committee patrolled the park each month, reporting damage and incidents to NSC. This included damage to park infrastructure, issues from fallen trees and damage by park neighbours. NSC responded quickly in most cases to repair damaged equipment, fell or clear fallen trees. The majority of park neighbours are respectful of the park, but a few carried out insensitive and unauthorised work.
- **Nailsea Town Council & Park Management Committee** The Town Council made a generous grant of £1700 for 2024-5 including an element earmarked for installing benches. The Park Management Committee only met once during the year due to Sam's maternity leave, but it provided an opportunity to promote the work of the group and seek NTC support. The NTC Communications Officer became an ally of FoTP by visiting the

park on a couple of occasions, and produced an eye-catching press release for each season. These were printed in local papers and magazines, and an interview on Radio Bristol took place. Thanks to NTC for it's interest and support.

- **Other funders** Nailsea Lions generously gave a grant of £100 from their Christmas Float appeal. A small sum was generated from sale of merchandise at the Eco Fair.
- **FoTP Committee** met four times during the year. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the committee lost 50% of it's active membership over the course of the year. Nonetheless, the committee was able to deliver workdays, carry out annual meadow management, plan and deliver some substantial projects, including redesign and relaunch of the website, redesign of the FoTP leaflet, commission and arrange installation of 3 new benches around the park, and took part in two public events.
- During the year, some the roles on the committee were discussed and redefined. Simon agreed to take over the workday leadership role from February 2025, thereby relieving the Chair. Rob and Pauline continued to share the Treasurer role on a temporary basis, until a replacement could be found. The Secretary & Publicity Officer roles became vacant, meaning that existing committee members had to take on additional tasks. Heartfelt thanks to the former and current committee members for their support, flexibility and hard work.
- **FoTP website and leaflet** Simon worked hard to redesign and refresh the website in conjunction with Violet Ridge, Website Manager. Simon involved member, Peter Speight, to add dramatic drone sequences, and collaborated with member, Andrew Town, to update the species lists and link species names to photographs. The total number of species listed and photographed, now stands at just over 1000. Member and botanist, Lindsay Moore is helping to compile a tree and shrub species, which will increase the total. Simon made several presentations of the website, and we hope it will be widely used. As ever, we are indebted to Andrew for his wonderful photos, which now circulate to over 80 members. Former committee member, Pauline, redesigned the FoTP leaflet, which had become outdated. She added her own attractive artwork to existing text. This leaflet is now being printed. We appreciate the work that Pauline put into the leaflet and for producing workday posters during the year. Grateful thanks to Simon, Peter and Andrew for their contributions, and to Violet for her ongoing services

**3. Workdays, projects, events**

- **Workdays:** FoTP volunteers carried out a huge variety of tasks to manage and enhance the park and meadows. Over the year, volunteer numbers increased, meaning that more work could be carried out by several, smaller teams.. We greatly appreciate the willing ( and usually cheerful!) support given by volunteers.
  - Number of volunteer workdays = 12 (3rd Tuesday every month)
  - Additional workdays = 4 (Cleared dumped rubbish, dug up invasive three-cornered leek bulbs, cut up branches from pollarding of crack willow, raked meadows)
  - Numbers of volunteers per workday = 6-12.
  - Green Team support: 12 workdays
- **Tree works/woodland paths** In February, contractors carried out an extensive thinning of holly in Nowhere Wood, paid for by FoTP. This was necessary to reduce shading from the evergreen canopy, and to encourage the herb layer. In November, FoTP paid tree surgeons to pollard the ancient and charismatic crack willow tree in an effort to prolong it's life. Woodland paths were kept clear of leaves and debris, and are therefore relatively mud-free. NSC plans to fell several diseased and dying ash trees in Nowhere Wood in the next few weeks. FoTP is saving self-sown saplings to replace woodland trees.
- **Kenn hedge** After a couple of years of growth, Glendale contractors carried out management work, pushing back encroaching shrubs, and cutting the tall grass margin. A North Somerset Bat Survey was carried out along a section of the Kenn hedge for the second time, but in spite of 1000s of recordings (all bush crickets) no bats were detected. Better luck next time!!
- **Gully/Wetland project:** The continuous rain meant that the pond and gully remained full until May. We identified several springs supplying fresh water to the pond. Simon did an excellent job by developing a plan to excavate and line part of the pond area. This will ensure that water is retained for longer, enabling amphibians to reproduce and providing a home for aquatic life and a source of drinking water. It is planned that this project will go ahead in 2025 using grant monies, and with support 'in kind' from NSC with provision of underlay and loan of a digger.

- **Antisocial behaviour and damage:** As in all previous years, volunteers carried out routine litter picks and removed dumped items. We noted an increase in the use of nitrous oxide (laughing gas), supplied in small phials or large cannisters which are dumped on the park. This is a psychoactive drug, and from 8 November 2024 has been classified as a class C drug. Possession for non-legitimate reasons has become a criminal offence. Cannisters cannot be put into the recycling stream and disposal remains an issue.
- **Golden Valley meadows, Nailsea School playing fields** In spite of the unwritten agreement made with the school many years ago, Nailsea School contractors continued to cut grass and margins on the meadows throughout 2023 and 2024. Matters came to a head in late 2024, so a site meeting was arranged with school grounds staff and contractors. The areas of meadow to be managed by FoTP are now agreed & identified, and an agreement, written by Simon, is being formalised.
- **Land between Birdlip and Bibury Close (formerly compartment 4)** As far as we are aware, there has been no change of ownership, and no planning application has been made. FoTP is not permitted work on this area and it is gradually scrubbing over. Unfortunately, the Town Green application made by Nailsea Town Council was unsuccessful due to a legal technicality. However, it is felt that it's designation as former public open space will provide protection should a planning application be made.

**4) Award of the Green Flag - 12th year** The Park was judged on 30th May 2024. The judge was very impressed, and his report commended FoTP as 'A very passionate, knowledgeable and skilled group of volunteers that care and look after the site to a high standard'. The Park was described as … 'a great space across multiple areas with interesting historical and landscaping features'. The award was well publicised in the local press (front page news!!).

**5) Joint working:** FoTP has made efforts to engage the 3 local school over the years, but with limited effect. During 2024, NSC Ranger, Jodie Smith supported the group, by planning to instal a Tree Trail to improve children's knowledge of native trees. FoTP member and former biology teacher, Neil Ingram, has started to work with St. Francis School, and we are hopeful that this relationship will forge stronger ties between the school and park.

**6) Public events** FoTP took part in several events during the year, but was unable to hold a stall at any of the local Farmer's Markets. At an Eco Fair, hosted by Nailsea Methodist Church on 9th March 2024, several new members were recruited. On 22nd September, FoTP held a stall at the first Volunteer's Fair to be organised by Nailsea Town Council. Some useful networking took place, but no new members or volunteers were recruited. A group of willing volunteers helped to hold the FoTP stall at both events, and their support was much appreciated. On 17th September, a small event was held to 'unveil' a bench with an inscribed plaque added to celebrate the contribution made on the FoTP committee by Andrew Town. On 8th October, FoTP held it's annual presentation, when Simon introduced the new website, and Peter Speight gave a fascinating talk about his work with drones. We extend our thanks to both of them. Members were impressed, and enjoyed the event.

**7) Future plans and concerns**:

- As FoTP works closely with North Somerset Council, we are only too aware of the continuing, severe budget constraints on non-statutory services. We must hope that important public open spaces such as Trendlewood Park, which perform so many important functions in the community, will remain adequately funded and maintained. We hope that sufficient officer time will continue to be provided to support volunteer groups.
- New committee members and changes in roles should spread the workload in future. We will continue to promote the park and meadows and their rich wildlife to community groups, schools and the wider public.
- We are encouraged by increased volunteer numbers, and feel that we can help to maintain the park adequately. The transfer of larger routine management of hedges and tall grass margins to NSC has been successful, and has relieved FoTP, giving it scope to develop more projects to increase biodiversity and habitats.
- We would like to continue to create and extend areas of wildflowers and tall grass round the park to increase habitat for insects and small rodents. Such creative projects help to balance some of the more routine work we carry out and give pleasure to park users.
- We hope to have a better working relationship with Nailsea School in respect of the management of Golden Valley meadows as a result of negotiations in late 2024.

Pat Gilbert, Chair – 2.2.25