

Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955, www.fombl.org.uk



2022 FOMBL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 24 June 2022

7 till 9pm, Meadows Croquet Club, Leven Terrace (Just off Melville Drive)

Minutes.

Apologies: Iain Black, Martin Howorth, Bridget Stevens.

1. Welcome and introduction from the Convener

Terry Levinthal then chaired the meeting.

2. Review and approval of minutes of 2021 AGM

The Minutes were approved.

3. Presentation of 2022 Annual Report and Financial Accounts (Convener / Treasurer) for discussion and noting.

Trustees' Annual Report 2022

2021/22 was another unusual year for FOMBL. Due to the restrictions, we held no public meetings at all and only had online trustee meetings. However, our volunteers were hard at work all year. Highlights include planting lots of new trees as well as watering and maintaining many other established ones. We also installed several birdboxes and regularly organised litter picking and graffiti removal sessions. We also worked to help maintain the pavilion and its back garden while the future of that building remains uncertain. We continued to seed and maintain some vital wildflower spaces which help insects and birds. Scottish Water plan to build a huge tank just off Marchmont Road and we will seek to ensure that the area is repaired to a high standard.

Improvement projects during the year include the excellent new table tennis table by the tennis courts. A playhouse house and new information boards are in the works. Every project involves a lot of work. We've been told that that the famous Jawbones are too fragile to be re-erected and a replacement of some kind is under discussion. Financially we still have some reserves and are looking for projects to fund.

Some more great news is that the temporary public toilets have been installed for the summer again. This reduces anti-social behaviour a lot

We work hard to communicate through our website, Facebook group and regular newsletter. In this way we outline everything that we do to keep members and local residents informed and involved.

None of the work that FOMBL does would be possible without our members, funders, volunteers and patient local residents. By working together, we are so much more effective in maintaining, protecting and enhancing the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links for current and future generations.

We are always looking for new members, volunteers and trustees to support our endeavours. Trustee meetings take place roughly every two months.

Signed by Jim Orr, Convenor of FOMBL _____

Summary of Accounts for year from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

	2020/2021	2021/2022
Income	£	£
Donations	950.00	210.00
Subscriptions (a)	443.00	681.18
Gift Aid (b)	0.00	205.38
Grants (c)	4,867.00	5,200.00
Total Income	6,260.00	6,296.56
Expenditure		
Hall hire / Zoom	0.00	14.39
Volunteers: equipment	403.44	621.01
Trees/Planting	0.00	1,606.51
Bench renovations	0.00	880.00
Stripe charges (d)	0.21	8.39
MemberMojo Db	75.00	75.00
Website hosting costs	50.26	0.00
Fees: Audit/Speakers	60.00	130.00
Grant special expenditure (e)		3,950.00
Planning fee EDC (f)	0.00	404.00
total Expenditure	588.91	7,689.30

Surplus/(Deficit) for year 5,671.09 (1,392.74)

Cash in bank c/f at year end 12,954.81 11,562.07

Alison Service (Treasurer), Jim Orr (Convener)

Notes 2022:

(a) Subscriptions are the full amount before the Stripe charge

(b) Gift Aid paid this year for last year

(c) Grants: Forbes Nursery (Bruntsfield Links Playhouse) & Aberdeen (Trees). Does not include EDC funded Tennis table.

(d) In previous year, Stripe income was reported net and the charges not reported .

(e) EDC paid for the Table tennis table and FOMBL paid EDC our share ie. Â £3950 (community grant).

(f) The 2 Planning fees are: 1. Tennis table and 2. Playhouse

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3.1. PROJECT UPDATE

1. HISTORY AND INFORMATION PANELS FOR THE MEADOWS

FOMBL have been working for several years with Edinburgh World Heritage and local historian Graeme Cruikshank on this

Funding is in place to install 8 panels which will highlight the history of the park along with the most important monuments and buildings. FOMBL hold some funds in addition to those provided by EWH.

The panels have now been approved by planning, but some work is still needed to finalise text and images. It is hoped that installation can take place before the end of this year.

2. PLAYGROUNDS

Over the years FOMBL have, in liaison with CEC playgrounds officer, instigated the installation of new equipment especially for toddlers. We have pushed for installation of self-closing gates and requested that all playgrounds should have these fitted.

Four new play items have been installed (trampoline, see-saw and two climbing/slide frames).

We raised £8000 from the community fund and Forbes nursery to install a new playhouse and wooden train at the South Links toddler fenced area beside Whithouse Loan.

It is hoped this will be installed in mid-summer.

We have pushed for the repair of the Archimedes screw water feature at the East Playground and pleased to say this will be in working order soon.

A new trampoline has also been proposed.

3. TREE PLANTING AND WATERING

The FOMBL tree group have planted 18 trees this year and carry out regular watering, but due to dry weather several of these may not survive.

A further 20 trees have been approved by the CEC forestry officer to be planted in the autumn at South Links. Suitable water sources is proving to be a huge problem and we are pushing for more accessible water points to be provided.

4. TABLE TENNIS

The installation of a table tennis table adjacent to the east playground has been a huge success and we hope to organise the installation of another one in due course.

5. EXERCISE equipment

Over the years we have, along with CEC parks, instigated the installation of 6 pieces of exercise equipment and due to their popularity hope to augment these in the future.

6. WILDFLOWER MEADOWS, MOWING AND HEDGEROWS.

FOMBL volunteers have worked alongside Buglife and others to create two wildflower meadows.

These are work in progress but is hoped to continue adding Scottish annual and perennial plants / seeds every year. Further unmown areas are being created to encourage pollinators and it is hoped we can work more closely with council officials to devise a longer term agreed mowing plan along with planting of lower bushes and hedgerows.

7. WOODEN BENCHES

FOMBL raised funds to repair one of the few remaining wooden benches which are gradually being replaced by metal benches (which are not so comfortable but need less maintenance)

It is hoped to raise more funds to repair more of these benches.

8. BIRD BOXES

21 high quality bird boxes have been installed on behalf of FOMBL and birds have been observed nesting this spring.

9. NOTICE BOARDS and GRAFFITI

This has become an ongoing problem with volunteers having to clean the surfaces on a regular basis. The surfaces became so damaged that they had to be replaced and we are trying out clear protective film to see if that helps.

10. JAWBONES

With the new council in place, we are waiting for the relevant committee to determine the next stage of a possible replica Jawbone installation. The restored ones can only be kept indoors due to their fragile state preferably, in a public museum but this has not been decided. Options for erecting a suitable replica in a material such as bronze or another material has still to be decided.

Neil Roger

It was noted that:

Several of the bird boxes are being used.

FOMBL was not consulted about the Jawbones.

4. Election of trustees followed by elections for committee positions. FOMBL members who wish to become trustees are welcome to put themselves forward.

This can be done on the night or by emailing convener@fombl.org.uk. There will be a vacancy for the position of Membership Secretary.

All 10 Trustees were re-elected.

5. Talk from Terry Levinthal, Director of the Cockburn Association.

In recent years concerns have been widespread about the impact of the Christmas Market in Princes St Gardens with similar issues in other public spaces across the city.

With this in mind we invited Mr Levinthal to deliver a talk provisionally titled “the use and misuse of public space in Edinburgh”.

Terry Levinthal gave an informative and engaging presentation which was much appreciated by those in attendance.

6. AOCB.

Pressure on the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links.

The issue of potholes.

Jawbone Arch

Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links
AGM, 24th June 2022, in the Meadows Croquet Clubhouse

The first major item on the agenda was the Trustees Annual Report, presented by the Convener, Jim Orr. It included a brief reference to the Jawbone Arch, which we were informed was considered to be “too fragile to be re-erected, and a replacement of some kind is under discussion”. (This opinion had been expressed in articles which appeared in the Edinburgh Evening News earlier in the year, on 31/1/22 and 2/2/22.)

During the discussion which followed, Graeme Cruickshank (FoMBL’s Historian) raised the issue of the City Council’s plans as to what form a replica should take. This lay in the hands of the Culture & Communities Committee, and he explained how he had endeavoured to address their meetings on 1st February and 26th April this year. Although he had attended both meetings virtually, he had not been successful in his efforts to receive permission to speak, despite trying over many weeks by a variety of means to address the second one, being thwarted at every turn.

He had also failed to obtain recognition as a stakeholder, both in his own right as Monument Adopter of the Jawbone Arch (and he had in his possession the City Council certificate to confirm this), or to get FoMBL itself recognised as a stakeholder either. Certain well-placed people had acted contrary to both the spirit and the wording of their own regulations. Some surprise was expressed that others were also not included in the list of stakeholders. What about those, for example, who had been engaged in fund-raising campaigns in support of the Jawbone Arch? Were their efforts not considered worthy of their involvement in deciding the monument’s future?

It would seem that a decision had already been taken – or nearly so – that the replica should be of bronze. Graeme then gave a short discourse on the respective merits of bronze versus fibreglass. The latter had been the Friends’ favoured material when the vote at the AGM of 2013 was over the choice between restoring the original or creating a replica, the latter winning by around a 4 : 1 majority.

Why such strenuous efforts had been made during the intervening years at restoration, when such measures were demonstrably impractical because of the poor condition of what remained of the original bones, was something of a mystery. It proved to have been a hugely expensive and time-consuming exercise ~ three different specialist companies in succession had tried to achieve this, and none had succeeded. Edinburgh World Heritage were in charge of the project for several years, but seem to have ceased their involvement, and handed back control to the City Council. Expenditure was understood to be in the region of £80K to £100K.

While serving on the Edinburgh World Heritage working group on the Jawbone Arch for a period, Graeme had visited a number of replicas, ranging from atop North Berwick Law to Brogar on the west coast of the Isle of Lewis, and fibreglass had been the material selected in each instance. He had also visited the arch at Whitby in Yorkshire to see how fixings had been constructed to support the natural whalebone. They were on their third pair of replacement bones, which were in good condition, while the Edinburgh example was still the original.

While fibreglass is long-lasting and virtually maintenance-free, bronze requires treatment at regular intervals, and is very much more expensive to manufacture. There was some comment that fibreglass could look very similar to actual whalebone, especially after a few years of weathering, whereas bronze had no resemblance whatever to whalebone, and its use would fundamentally change the appearance of the replacement monument compared to what had been there previously.

After further discussion, a show of hands was called for between bronze and fibreglass. (This would in no way be binding, but it would provide a useful indication of the feeling of the membership.) Someone asked if any other material might be suitable, but no-one present knew the answer to that. Responding, the Convener changed the vote to take account of the new situation, the choice now being between bronze and another appropriate material.

There were 21 people in attendance at that moment, and the result of a show of hands was:

in favour of bronze : 0

in favour of some other suitable material : 21.

Graeme undertook to do his best to convey the result of the FoMBL vote to the Culture & Communities Committee.

Graeme
June 2022

Cruickshank