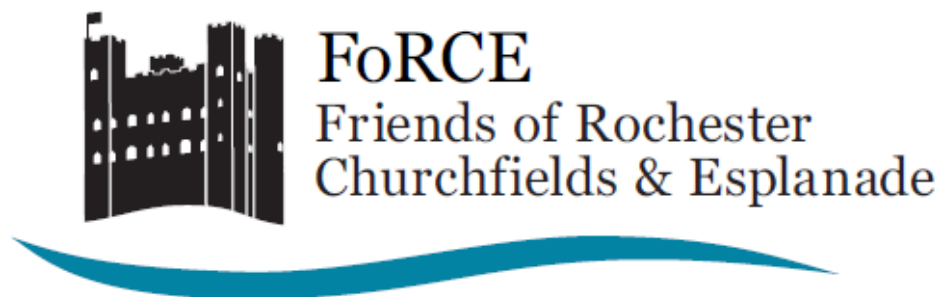


# FoRCE 2021 Annual Review



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## **Foreword**

We have now completed our second year since inauguration in January 2020. Whilst 2021 has continued to pose obstacles posed by the pandemic, we have learned to work with the ongoing challenges. Our focus this last year has been to grow our volunteers, funds and influence and expand our activities.

You'll find in this report details about how we're run, our objectives and strategy, finances, a snapshot of our activities for the year gone by and a heads-up on the year ahead.

I couldn't be more proud of what we've achieved to date and I'm sure we can continue to grow as *a FoRCE for good*.

**Terry Clennell**

**Chair**

**Friends of Rochester Churchfields and Esplanade**

## **Structure & Governance**

### **AGM**

We held our second Annual General Meeting in September of 2021 where we (re)elected a committee. The AGM originally scheduled for January 2021 though postponed due to the pandemic. The next AGM will be held in autumn 2022.

### **Constitution**

Our constitution is the bedrock of the group. It sets out the governance and establishes our purpose. [Read our constitution](#)

### **Committee**

Our committee is made up entirely of volunteers. In order to run most effectively, the committee requires a mixture of portfolios/roles, which can be grouped as follows:

- Leadership: Chair; Vice Chair
- Management: Secretary; Treasurer; Strategy & Planning
- Resources & Relationships: Fundraising; Partnerships; Membership & Volunteers
- Delivery: Projects, Programmes & Events; Comms & Marketing

In 2021 not all of these roles have been occupied, though we're very proud to have recruited some great additional committee volunteers this last year.

Our current committee is:

- Chair – Terry Clennell
- Vice Chair – Elizabeth Gilliard
- Secretary – Jan Webb
- Treasurer – Stuart Ferris
- Strategy & Planning – vacant
- Fundraising – vacant
- Partnerships – Terri Zbyszewska
- Membership & Volunteers – Kristian Hansen
- Sensory Garden Project – Louise Worrell
- Comms & Marketing – Natalie Poulton

## **Strategy & Planning**

### **Our Mission**

Friends of Rochester Esplanade and Churchfields (FoRCE) helps to protect, conserve and enhance the green space and river walks of the Esplanade and Churchfields for the good of our community and more widely.

### **Our 2021 Objectives**

1. Expand and establish our committee and 'back of house' operations
2. Build up 'front of house' volunteering activities
3. Grow and use our influence to achieve our aims

### **Our 2021 Strategy**

Maturing our operations and committee – codifying and organising our back of house, making it more effective. Recruiting committee members from volunteer base and introducing non-committee 'Helpers' to assist in smaller committee tasks.

Long term, targeted volunteering – focusing on two key activities (litter picks and sensory garden project) to build up volunteer task knowledge, efficiency and commitment and to maximise our impact, avoiding spreading ourselves too thinly.

Connecting and influencing – Deepening partnerships with organisations and businesses, building awareness and impact, in particular with Medway Council and Norse.

### **Our Plan**

Over the last two years we have identified many opportunities to make improvements on our patch. We have built these into our long-term plan, our Grand Plan as we call it, which enables us to express confidently what we think should be happening on-site well into the future, based directly on feedback from our members and 'friends'.

There are two ways we work to get improvements done:

- directly through our volunteering activities
- indirectly by influencing our partners to deliver activities

For those activities we undertake directly we created an outline activity plan for 2021 and will do so again in 2022 to address the key themes identified (green, clean, social, wildlife and wellbeing), subject to covid.

Improvements to our back of house operations, such as our approach to data protection or setting up online payments, are put forward by committee members, discussed and agreed at committee and led by the relevant committee member.

### **Deliverables**

The above sets out what we're trying to achieve and how we have and will go about it. The following sections will focus on what we have delivered in 2021 and give you a heads-up of what's on the cards in 2022.

## **Secretariat**

Secretariat is the running of the committee and the mechanics of the group.

### **This year**

This year we have:

- Held monthly committee meetings, taking minutes and logging actions
- Established better business continuity management
- Hosted an AGM
- Published the Annual Review
- Created an Asset Register

Some of these things we do are only used or seen by the committee but they are crucial to our long-term success as they help with the efficient running of the group and ensure transparency, accountability and continuity.

### **Next year**

Activities identified so far for 2022:

- Host in-person membership or AGM event
- Publish Annual Review 2022

## Treasury

Treasury is the management of resources, such as donated monies, goods and services; their budgeting, handling and accounting.

### **This year**

This year we have:

- Secured more life members and received new and renewed annual subscriptions, although this is down on our peak membership (more detail in Membership section)
- Spent £1160.69 in total and still managed to slightly increase our reserves for future work over the course of the year.

### **Annual Financial Report** (Period: 28/01/2021 to 08/01/2022)

		<u>Committed</u>	<u>Transacted</u>
<b><u>Income</u></b>			
<b>Donations</b>			
	Sensory Garden	642.45	642.45
	Other	354.39	354.39
<b>Subscriptions</b>			
	Annual	145.00	145.00
	Life	300.00	300.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1441.84</b>

### **Expenditure**

#### **Expenses**

	Transaction Fees	-1.71	-1.71
	Re-usable equipment	-479.84	-479.84
	One-off (plants, compost)	-605.75	-605.75
	One-off (fliers)	-65.00	-65.00
	Website costs	-8.39	-8.39
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1160.69</b>

### **Assets**

<b>Bank Balance carried forward</b>	2304.56
<b>Net income</b>	281.15
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>2585.71</b>

### **Commentary**

- Generous donations were gratefully received from Anne Skinner, Café Nucleus, Councillor Jo Howcroft Scott and the SI Medway and Maidstone, totalling £939.
- Expenditure was lower than it might have been without contributions from members and friends. However, it has increased from last year but with good reason: the vast bulk being for plants and materials for the Sensory Garden (£605.75), with the next largest sum (£479.84) being for related expenditure on re-usable tools. This latter figure represents a substantial investment that should ease similar expenditure in future.

**Next year**

Activities identified so far for 2022:

- To improve our resource management, we will further automate the collection of subscriptions from new members and renewing members.
- To increase the resources at our disposal we will undertake a number of projects with our partnerships, donors, members and volunteers, outlined further below.



## **Partnerships**

These relationships help us to achieve our aims. Establishing them, building mutual understanding, influencing and supporting them are all facets of these partnerships.

### **This year**

We're very pleased to welcome Terri as our new Partnerships committee member.

Through the course of the last year, we have:

- Established and deepened some great relationships.
- Created a new Partnerships tracker to log and actively manage our relationships with a committee member allocated to each partnership.

Below is a summary of these relationships.

Medway Council:

- Councillors, particularly Stuart Tranter and Alex Paterson
- Officers, particularly Marion Phillips and Fiona Leadley and the greenspaces team, particularly working to develop a plan to deploy 'Section 106' monies
- Medway Urban Green Spaces Forum, especially Simon Curry, connecting us with other Friends groups
- Norse, the council's contractor

Clubs, trusts and societies:

- Bridge Trust – we hope to announce our first joint project soon!
- City of Rochester Society – our Chair has recently joined their executive board
- Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists – donation of funds and a rose for Sensory Garden project and participation in task days
- Medway Swale Estuary Partnership – advising on waterside activities
- Other Friends groups – sharing ideas
- Rochester City Centre Forum – offering a stall at the artisan market
- Rotary club – donating and planting crocus bulbs

Local businesses:

- Café Nucleus – donated monies

We're hugely grateful for the support, advice and assistance provided by all. Thank you!

### **Next year**

Activities identified so far for 2022:

- Artisan market stall
- Implementing a system to publicly acknowledge our partners
- Extending our partnerships to work with more local groups and businesses

## **Membership & Volunteers**

This is the recruitment and management of our most important asset – the fantastic people who kindly give us their valuable time and/or donations.

We recognise there are different forms of engagement:

- Friends – people who are on our mailing list but not yet members (see communications section)
- Members – people who have signed up for Annual or Life memberships
- Activity Volunteer – people who give their time, but who are not yet Members
- Helper Volunteer – people who take on small behind the scenes tasks
- Committee Volunteer – people who are actively involved in the running of the group

### **This year**

This year we have:

- Created online new and renewal membership forms
- Recruited two new ‘Helpers’, one of whom has organised some bulb planting and another who is acting as a site monitor – thank you Sarah and Corry!

Our recruitment numbers are counted both in number of people and the total number of hours volunteered.

<b>Members</b>	<b>Number of people</b>
Member (Annual)	30
Member (Life)	4

<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Number of people</b>	<b>Total hours</b>
Activity Volunteers	Circa 50	416
Helper Volunteers	2	40
Committee Volunteers	8	844

### **Next year**

Activities identified so far for 2022:

- To grow our volunteers and members by harnessing our network, communications and events.
- To fill our vacant committee roles by creating a pathway of small and specific taster activities completed by ‘Helpers’.
- Attempting to increase member interactivity with the committee and each other through day-to-day engagement.
- Review of the pricing structure for membership.

## **Communications & Marketing**

This is the means by which we make people aware, gather feedback and garner support through our broadcast media channels.

### **This year**

This year we have:

- Increased our following on a number of communication channels:
  - Social media:
    - [Instagram](#) (659 followers, up 81% on previous year)
    - [Facebook page](#) (263 likes, up 132%, and 145 followers, up 133% on previous year)
    - Facebook private group (165 members, up 108% on previous year) *This group has been deactivated and has now been superseded by:*
    - [Facebook FoRCE Volunteers Group](#) (54 members)
    - [Twitter](#) (256 followers, up 98% on previous year)
  - [Website](#)
  - Email:
    - Created email addresses for each committee role
    - Created a distribution list of volunteers and members (91 members)
    - Set up a mailshot account
  - Newsletters
  - Posters and flyers
  - Press: Compiled a list of contacts for press releases
  - On-site noticeboard

Using these communication channels, we have broadcast:

- Regular comms to update on activities and build engagement:
  - Newsletter briefings (approximately bi-monthly)
  - Social media posts
- Campaigns in support of our agenda, projects and events:
  - Tackling anti-social behaviour, littering and graffiti
  - Promoting our Litter pick event
  - Ideas Harvest to gather feedback and ideas for our future activities
  - Membership drive

We have also featured in numerous publications, including:

- City of Rochester Society Newsletter
- It's the Biz for Medway magazine
- Medway Messenger
- The Net magazine
- Rochester, Frindsbury & Strood Community Magazine

The FoRCE was a finalist in the Rochester #LocalHero awards (Best Grass Roots organisation category)

### **Next year**

Activities identified so far for 2022:

- Further advancements of our website.
- To increase our reach, we will continue to build our channel followers/subscriptions and send a regular patter of communications to keep them engaged on topical issues.

## **Projects, Programmes & Events**

These are the 'front of house' activities we undertake to achieve our aims. Indicated in brackets are the key themes the activity supports: green, clean, social, wildlife and wellbeing.

### **This year**

Activities we completed:

- Litter pick (clean) – We have established monthly litter picks, with volunteers collecting countless bags of litter.
- Sensory Garden (green) – We have also undertaken monthly gardening sessions and have cleared and replanted the first of three beds.
- Crocus and daffodil planting (green) – Working with the Rotary Club and one of our helpers to plant crocus corms in Churchfields Park in support of the Rotary Club Polio campaign and daffodils in Esplanade Park.
- Ideas Harvest analysis to understand the priorities of residents and visitors for the Esplanade and Churchfields.

Activities in flight:

- Graffiti (clean) – We now have a dedicated Helper who regularly walks the site and photographs and reports incidents of graffiti/vandalism. A new tracker has been created to monitor reports made and resolutions. This has resulted in most vandalism having been removed from our site and will continue indefinitely. (NB: Please don't let this replace others reporting incidents – if you see something, please still report it.)
- Sensory garden (green) – We have now started work clearing the second bed in readiness for planting in early 2022.
- Planning our influence on the deployment of funds for the Esplanade which are due from Rochester Riverside.

Deferred:

- Walking/Running club (wellbeing) – We mentioned in last year's report a desire to start this activity, but we just didn't have capacity to arrange it. It may be something we come back to.
- Lights (clean) – We're working with Rochester Bridge Trust to restore the dilapidated ornate lights at the entrance of the Esplanade Park.

### **Next year**

As well as those activities already in flight, projects identified so far for 2022 include:

- Litter picks (clean) – We will continue to run our really successful monthly litter picks
- Sensory Garden (green) – in addition to finishing bed 2, we will also complete bed 3
- Hathaway Hedge (green & wildlife) – our next gardening project will be to plant a new hedgerow to prevent antisocial behaviour and create animal habitats and food sources
- Bulb planting (green) – We aim to plant more spring bulbs in the autumn of 2022
- Summer picnic (social) – We hope to be able to have a summer picnic on site
- Further expand our Grand plan using insights from engagement activities, including a stall at the artisan market

## **Looking forward**

This year has been the start of our realising our ambition – making a difference to our community and environment.

Our objectives for the next year in support of our mission will be to:

- build out our long-term Grand Plan
- finesse committee operations
- grow our resources
- build new and deeper partnerships
- deliver local projects that meet the identified local needs
- increase our volunteer base and expand the opportunities for them to get involved
- extend the reach of communications
- deliver activities/project that meet identified local needs and aligned with our themes

Scheduled events will be announced in our communications and appear on our [events calendar](#).

Thank you for taking the time to read our Annual Report. We hope you've found us *a FoRCE for good*.

## **Contact us**

To find out more about FoRCE, you can visit our website or get in touch with us via email.

Website: [www.esplanadefriends.org.uk](http://www.esplanadefriends.org.uk)

Email: [contact@esplanadefriends.org.uk](mailto:contact@esplanadefriends.org.uk)

