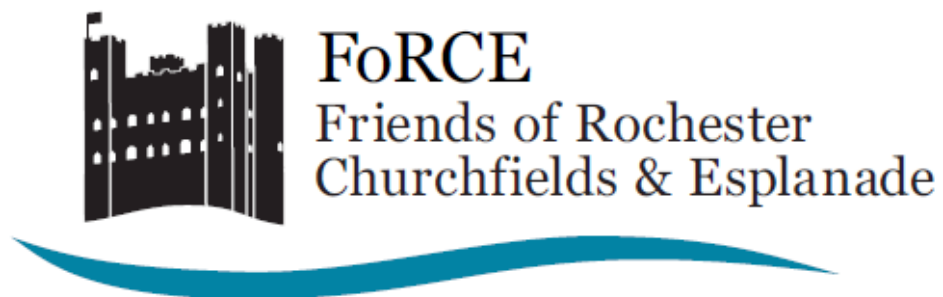


FoRCE 2022 Annual Review



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Foreword

We have now completed our third year since inauguration in January 2020.

This last year has focussed on maturing our committee, expanding our engagement, building our volunteer base, securing funds and growing and using our influence.

Whilst this year has brought its challenges, such as flooding, drought and the collapse of the pier, it has been one of progress. New activities such as our summer picnic and artisan market stall have raised our profile; our sensory garden project has moved on substantially; our volunteers are increasingly experienced and we have even greater insight into our community.

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 third Annual General Meeting in October of 2022 where we (re)elect a committee. The next AGM will be held in autumn 2023.

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
- Resources & Relationships: Fundraising; Partnerships; Engagement, Membership & Volunteers
- Delivery: Projects, Programmes & Events; Comms & Marketing, River, Gardens

In 2022 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 – Jan Webb
- Secretary – Jan Webb
- Treasurer – Stuart Ferris
- Fundraising – vacant
- Partnerships – Terri Zbyszewska
- Engagement – Elizabeth Gilliard
- Membership & Volunteers – Gordon Ames
- Comms & Marketing – Natalie Poulton
- River – Kristian Hansen
- Gardens – vacant
- Without portfolio – Will Kingsland

Strategy & Planning

Our Mission

Friends of Rochester Churchfields and Esplanade (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 2022 Objectives

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

Our 2022 Strategy

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

Building up our front of house activities – focusing on key delivery activities (litter picks, sensory garden project and graffiti reporting) 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, generating interest and insight from engagement activities.

Our Plan

Over the last year we have identified more 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 front of house volunteering activities
- indirectly by influencing our partners to deliver activities

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

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've been aiming to achieve and how we have and gone about it. The following sections will focus on the detail of what we have delivered in the last year and give you a heads-up of what's on the cards in the coming year.

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
- Shared volunteer hours with Medway Council

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 the coming year:

- Update of risk register
- Host AGM event
- Publish Annual Review

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 two more life members and received new and renewed annual subscriptions (more detail in Membership section).
- Nearly quadrupled our expenditure (reflecting our increased activity) but managed to attract donations and subscriptions to nearly that level, such that cash reserves are at almost the same level as this time last year.

Annual FoRCE Financial Report

For Period **28/01/2022 to 28/01/2023**

		<u>Committed</u>	<u>Transacted</u>	
<u>Income</u>				
	Donations			
	Sensory Garden	0.00	0.00	
	Other	3551.00	3551.00	
	Subscriptions			
	Annual	220.00	170.00	
	Life	200.00	200.00	
	TOTAL			3921.00
<u>Expenditure</u>				
	Expenses			
	Transaction Fees	-0.27	-0.27	
	Re-usable equipment	-1185.18	-1185.18	
	One-off (plants, compost, food)	-2999.37	-2999.37	
	TOTAL			-4184.82
<u>Assets</u>				
	Bank Balance carried forward		2585.71	
	Net income		-263.82	
	TOTAL ASSETS		2321.89	

Commentary

- Generous donations were gratefully received from City of Rochester Society (£1500), EY (£1000), Medway Council (£1000), totalling £3500, as well as several other smaller but most welcome donations.
- Expenditure on plants reflects the focus on the well-supported Sensory Garden project. Further re-usable equipment was purchased for gardening-related activity, as well as

materials for promotion of FoRCE's work, recruitment of new members, and attraction of donations.

Next year

Activities identified so far for the coming year:

- To tighten the process around tracking annual subscriptions and their receipt – notably this year we've received £50 less in subscriptions than had been committed by our membership (subject to subscription model being retained).
- To increase the resources at our disposal we will continue to engage with our partners, donors, members and volunteers, as 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

Through the course of the last year, we have:

- Established and deepened some great relationships.
- Maintained our Partnerships tracker to log and actively manage our relationships.

Below is a summary of some of our key relationships.

Medway Council:

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

Clubs, trusts and societies:

- Bridge Trust – working to restore the ornate lights
- City of Rochester Society – our Chair is on their executive board and the society have generously donated funds
- Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists – donating funds and participating in task days
- Other Friends groups – sharing ideas
- Rochester City Centre Forum – offering a stall at the artisan market

Local businesses:

- Design Shack – offering us discounted design and production services
- Purple Pomme – for the donation of materials for new sensory garden signage
- Gardening World – discounting plants for our sensory garden project

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

Next year

Activities identified so far for the coming year:

- Maintaining our existing relationships
- 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:

- Onboarded a new Membership Committee member
- Created updated online membership forms
- Conducted a number of engagement activities to recruit new members, including the artisan market stall and summer picnic
- Updated the membership renewal process

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

Members	Number of people
Member (Annual)	30
Member (Life)	5

Volunteers	Number of people	Total hours
Activity Volunteers	Circa 60	276
Helper Volunteers	2	260
Committee Volunteers	9	1183

Next year

Activities identified so far for the coming year:

- 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’.
- Review of our approach to membership with a view to reducing the number of emails and increasing income.
- We will review a proposal to move from subscription membership to member donations.

Communications & Marketing

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

This year

This year, we have:

- Maintained our channels, delivered high-quality and more interactive content, and built up our followership
- Expanded our local media coverage

Below is a summary of key activities for each of our channels:

- **Mailing list:** We try to send a monthly newsletter with our latest news and upcoming events. Currently we have 217 subscribers, up over 30% since last year.
- **Noticeboard:** Our noticeboard was installed by Medway Council early in 2021 and continues to be used for notices of upcoming events and information about the area and the FoRCE.
- **Public Events:** In April, for International Women's Day, we presented a short talk on the Suffrage Sensory Garden at Gillingham Library. A recording is available to [view on You-Tube](#).
- **Social Media:** Over the past year we have uploaded hundreds of photos, general information, and news posts, plus a couple of videos we produced in-house on the following platforms:
 - **Facebook Page:** A public profile page where we share information, news and events. We have nearly 600 followers – nearly double the number of followers last year.
 - **Facebook Group:** Our historic FoRCE group was replaced by a new **Rochester FoRCE Volunteers Group** where we share local information, news, and events and members can comment or submit their own content, which is moderated. This new group has gained nearly 200 members since it was created in February of this year.
 - **Twitter:** A useful platform for sharing short updates containing text, media content and links. We have over 350 followers on Twitter, up nearly 45% on last year.
 - **Instagram:** A popular platform with a focus on sharing photos and videos, where we currently have over 720 followers, up nearly 15% on last year.
- **Local Media:** We circulate press releases to local media outlets and have featured on local television, with filmed footage and with interviews with committee members. Several articles have also appeared in the Medway Messenger and other local periodicals.
- **Website:** We have a static website with information about the group, a calendar of events, a link to a membership application form and contact form.

Next year

Activities identified so far for the coming year:

- To increase our reach, we will continue to build our channel followers and send a regular pattern of communications to keep them engaged on topical issues.
- If we can get some additional volunteer assistance and expertise, we could improve our overall offering and extend to other platforms including perhaps SnapChat, TikTok and You-Tube.

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) – Monthly litter picks collecting countless bags of litter.
- Sensory Garden (green) – Monthly gardening sessions, where we have cleared and planted bed 1 and almost finished bed 2
- Bulb planting (green) – Continuing to plant a variety of bulbs across the site.
- Artisan Market and Summer Picnic (social) – to raise awareness, recruit new contributors and to better understand the ideas and priorities of residents and visitors.

Activities in flight:

- Graffiti (clean) – We now have a dedicated Helper who regularly walks the site and photographs and reports incidents of graffiti and vandalism (Thank you Corry!). A tracker is maintained to monitor this and has resulted in most vandalism having been removed from our site. (NB: Please don't let this replace others reporting incidents – if you see something, please still report it.)
- Sensory garden (green) – We will soon be starting work on bed 3.
- 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 the coming year include:

- Litter picks (clean) – We will continue to run our really successful monthly litter picks
- 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
- Artisan market – following the success of this year's stall, we will host another stall in the spring
- Further expand our Grand plan using insights from engagement activities, including a stall at the artisan market
- Pier – As our new 'River' portfolio holder, Kristian will set out our vision for a repaired pier

Looking forward

This year has been the continuation of 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/projects 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.

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Email: contact@esplanadefriends.org.uk

