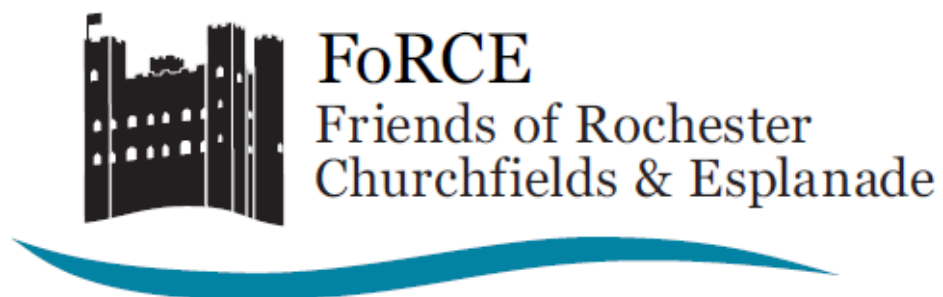


FoRCE 2023 Annual Review



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Foreword

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

This last year has built upon previous success: maturing our committee, expanding our engagement, building our volunteer base, securing funds and growing and using our influence.

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 September of 2023 where we (re)lected a committee. The next AGM will be held in autumn 2024.

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, Tech, River

Not all of these roles have been occupied, though we're very proud to have recruited some great additional committee volunteers this last year, as well as bidding farewell to some as they roll off to pastures new.

Our current committee is:

- Chair – Terry Clennell
- Vice Chair – Natalie Poulton
- Secretary – vacant
- Treasurer – Jean Skilling
- Fundraising – vacant
- Partnerships – Terri Zbyszewska
- Engagement – Elizabeth Gilliard
- Membership & Volunteers – Aileen Smith
- Projects, Programmes & Events - vacant
- Comms & Marketing – Natalie Poulton
- Tech – Kristian Hansen
- River – Kristian Hansen
- Without portfolio – Will Kingsland

A number of our committee roles are currently vacant. If you're interested in finding out more about helping out with the committee, please do get in touch.

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.

Our 2023 Objectives and strategy

1. **Mature our committee and ‘back of house’ operations** – Recruiting and training committee members and expanding non-committee ‘Helpers’ to assist in smaller committee tasks.
2. **Build up ‘front of house’ activities through long term, targeted volunteering that align to our identified key themes (green, clean, social, wildlife and wellbeing)** – Focusing on two key activities (litter picks and the sensory garden project) to build up volunteer task knowledge, efficiency and commitment and to maximise our impact, avoiding spreading ourselves too thinly. Preparing for our next projects – the Hathaway Hedgerow and Rochester pier.
3. **Grow and use our influence to achieve our aims** – Deepening partnerships with organisations and businesses, building awareness and impact, generating interest and insight from engagement activities, engendering support.

Our Plan

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 activity plan for the year, and have done so again for the coming year, to address our key themes (green, clean, social, wildlife and wellbeing).

Improvements to our back of house operations, such as the development of a new website, 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 this 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, setting agendas, taking minutes and logging actions
- Established better business continuity management
- Hosted our AGM
- Published the Annual Review

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.

Our special thanks go to Jan Webb who acted as our Secretary until last year. She gave us a great deal of her time, skills and experience and she will be sorely missed by the team.

Next year

Activities identified so far for the coming year:

- Host AGM event
- Publish Annual Review 2024

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 funds through new and renewed annual and life memberships (more detail in Membership section) and benefitted from Ward Improvement Funds.
- Directed most of our spending toward our projects, such as plants and tools for the sensory garden, though we have also spent some funds to promote the society and generate new volunteers.

Annual Receipts and Payments 2023 (Period: 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023)

	2023	2022
	£	£
<u>Income</u>		
Donations		
Sensory Garden	-	-
Other donations	1,393.00	3,551.00
Subscriptions		
Annual	135.00	140.00
Life	200.00	200.00
TOTAL INCOME	1,728.00	3,891.00
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Expenses		
Equipment	307.46	1,185.18
Plants, compost, etc.	2,239.13	2,999.37
Website	84.00	
Printing	182.00	
Insurance	98.50	
Other costs	8.02	
Transaction Fees	1.86	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,920.97	4,184.82
NET EXPENDITURE	(£1,192.97)	(£293.82)
<u>Assets</u>		
Bank Balance brought forward	2,291.89	2,585.71
Net expenditure	(£1,192.97)	(£293.82)
BANK BALANCE 31/12/2023	1,098.92	2,291.89

Next year

Activities identified so far for the coming year:

- Improve our income from memberships we will improve our membership process for new and renewing members.
- Work closely with Ward Councillors to secure more Ward Improvement Funding, and seek other grant funding, where available.
- Seek to secure a new trade plant supplier to reduce costs further.
- Further 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 managed our relationships.

Below is a summary of these relationships.

Medway Council:

- Councillors
- Officers, particularly the greenspaces team
- 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 donated funds
- Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists – participation in task days
- Other Friends groups – sharing ideas and developing the new Rochester Trail
- Rochester City Centre Forum – offering a stall at the artisan market
- Medway towns Rowing Club – planning a joint foreshore litter pick

Local businesses:

- 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:

- Artisan market stalls
- 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 skills.

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
- Conducted a number of engagement activities to recruit new members, including a stall at the artisan market, a talk at the Rochester City Centre Forum and a leaflet drop to all the residents in the area
- Shared time volunteered data with Medway Council

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

Members	Number of people
Member (Annual)	22
Member (Life)	8

Volunteers	Number of people	Total hours
Activity Volunteers	Circa 60	575
Helper Volunteers	2	35
Committee Volunteers	8	900

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.

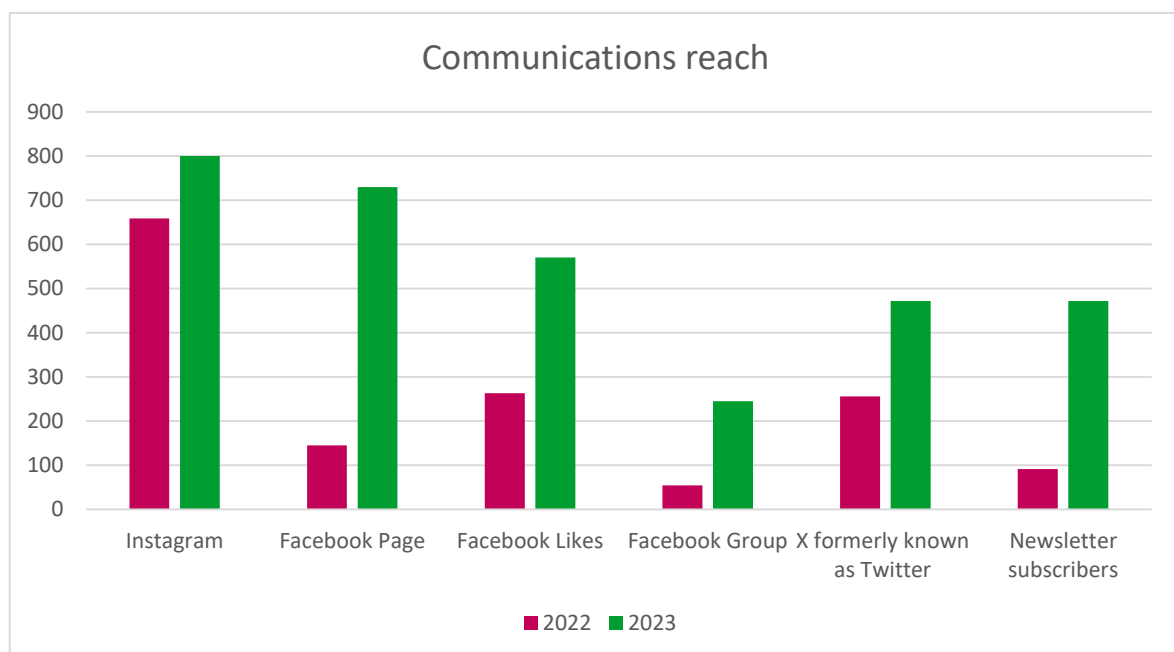
Communications & Marketing

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

This year

This year we have:

- Increased our following on a number of communication channels:
 - Social media:
 - [Instagram](#) (800 followers, up 21%)
 - [Facebook page](#) (570 likes, up 117%, and 730 followers, up 403% on previous year)
 - [Facebook FoRCE Volunteers Group](#) (245 members, up 354% on previous year)
 - [X formerly known as Twitter](#) (473 followers, up 84% on previous year)
 - Newsletters:
 - Members, Friends, and Volunteers: (274 subscribers, up 419% on previous year)
 - [Website](#)
 - 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:
 - A regular monthly newsletter to all subscribers
 - Social media posts
 - Campaigns in support of our agenda, projects and events:
 - Tackling anti-social behaviour, littering and graffiti
 - Promoting our Litter pick and Foreshore Litter Pick events

Next year

Activities identified so far for the coming year:

- Relaunch of our website with increased interactivity
- 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 primary theme the activity supports: green, clean, social, wildlife and wellbeing.)

This year

Activities undertaken this year and in flight for next year:

- Litter picks (clean) – Regular litter picks collecting countless bags of litter.
- Foreshore Litter picks (clean) – A new regular event for us, currently running half-yearly.
- Sensory Garden (green & wildlife) – Regular gardening sessions, where we have now cleared and planted bed 2 and we're working on bed 3 and hope to finish it this year.
- Bulb planting (green & wildlife) – Continuing to plant a variety of bulbs across the site.
- Tree survey (green) – we have this year mapped our tree population, including their health, so to aid better management of it.
- Graffiti (clean) – We now have a new dedicated Helper (Sarah) who regularly walks the site and photographs and reports incidents of graffiti/vandalism. Until recently this role was undertaken by Corry who has done a fantastic job for us, resulting 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.)
- Artisan Market (social) – to raise awareness, recruit new contributors and to better understand the ideas and priorities of residents and visitors.
- Lights (clean) – We're working with Rochester Bridge Trust who are restoring the dilapidated ornate lights at the entrance of the Esplanade Park.
- Rochester Trail (wellbeing) – We've very pleased to have contributed to the creation and launch of the trail this year, including a new info board by the pier and a route guide.
- Balustrade and coping stones (clean) – We have for some time been encouraging the council to repair these items and work on both have been undertaken this year. There is more to do with the balustrade, but it has been partially repaired and made safe.

Next year

As well as all of the activities already in flight above, projects identified so far for the coming year include:

- Foreshore Litter picks (clean) – in addition to our autumn event, we have arranged a new joint foreshore litter pick with the Medway Towns Rowing Club this year, based from their site; a new venture for us.
- Hathaway Hedge (green, clean & wildlife) – our next gardening project will be to plant a new hedgerow to prevent antisocial behaviour and create animal habitats and food sources.
- Pier (social & clean) – As our new 'River' portfolio holder, Kristian has set out our vision for a repaired pier

Looking forward

This year has been the continuation 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:

- further our long-term Grand Plan
- finesse committee operations
- grow our resources
- build new and deeper partnerships
- 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.

Website: www.esplanadefriends.org.uk

Email: contact@esplanadefriends.org.uk

