

FoRCE AGM Minutes

Tuesday 16th September 2025
at the Rochester Community Hub

1. **Welcome:**

FoRCE Chair, Terry Clennell, welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked committee members, Medway Greenspaces team, and local councillors for their continued support.

He reported that FoRCE has enjoyed a very successful year, fostering community spirit and wellbeing. Terry expressed his gratitude to the volunteers and looked forward to continuing their valuable work and branching out into new projects, including creating hedgerows, carrying out maintenance initiatives, and sustaining the Suffrage Sensory Garden

2. **Committee Updates:**

- a. Treasury: Income from grants, membership subscriptions, and other sources continued to exceed expenditure, and the bank balance currently stands at over £6,000. 2024 was a very successful year for FoRCE with net income of £3,915.77. On 31st December 2024 we had a bank balance of £5,014.69. Income of £7,202.53 came from grants and donations, subscriptions of £540 of which £400 was for life membership. Total expenditure was £3,826.76 the bulk of which, £3,541.06 was on plants, compost etc for the garden. [See the 2024 Accounts at the end of this document.]
- b. River: Kristian reported that several foreshore litter picks had taken place during the year, including a joint event with the Friends of the River Medway. These events were well attended and incident-free. Safe-tide dates for the coming year have been identified and will be added to the events calendar shortly.

- c. Pier: Kristian noted the excellent progress made by volunteers - principally Aileen and Will – in maintaining and improving hard surfaces. Access to the pier remains closed for safety reasons, but Medway Council has confirmed funding for a survey, and an update would follow once the survey is complete.
 - d. Technology: Kristian reported that the new website launched earlier this year and will continue to be improved over the coming months. The aim is to move away from commercial email software for newsletters and membership administration, and to merge the members' database into a single system fully compliant with GDPR.
 - e. Membership: Jacques reported steady membership applications and renewals year-on-year, including three new life members. He welcomed proposed changes to the membership system which will simplify management and provide online banking access. There has also been a positive influx of volunteers, notably the Kent Police Cadets, whose enthusiasm has been greatly appreciated.
 - f. Events: Jo, recently appointed to the Events portfolio, reported that, although work on the pier is paused, maintenance of the sensory garden – planting and weeding - would continue alongside regular litter picks. Subject to local permissions, new-member recruitment sessions (such as leafleting commuters at Rochester station) and member meet-ups are planned. A yearly events calendar is in development to avoid clashes with other local activities.
3. Elections (Officiated by Peter Garrett Greenspace and Access Programme Manager, Medway Council) were conducted and the following people were duly elected:

<i>Position</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Chair</i>	<i>Terry Clennell</i>
<i>Vice Chair</i>	<i>Natalie Poulton</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Jean Skilling</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Courtney Wilson</i>

<i>Membership</i>	<i>Jacques Parker</i>
<i>Events</i>	<i>Jo Summers</i>
<i>Partnerships</i>	<i>Terri Zbyszewska</i>
<i>Technology</i>	<i>Kristian Hansen</i>
<i>Communications</i>	<i>Natalie Poulton</i>
<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>Aileen Smith</i>
<i>River and Pier</i>	<i>Kristian Hansen</i>
<i>Without portfolio</i>	<i>Will Kingsland</i>

4. Interactive Session 1 – Reflections on the Past Year:

- Terry highlighted the continued success of the Suffrage Sensory Garden, which remains popular with both the local community and visitors and serves as a hub for new members.
- Volunteers have made significant improvements to Rochester Pier. Although it is no longer suitable for river access, FoRCE hopes it can reopen for public recreational use and serve as a volunteer hub and small event space with storage facilities, reducing the group's carbon footprint. Members shared ideas for repurposing the pier and agreed it remains an important community asset.
- Litter-picking efforts on the foreshore, park areas, and surrounding spaces have expanded, and prompt reporting of graffiti and vandalism has helped Medway Council resolve issues quickly.

5. Interactive Session 2 – Looking Forwards:

Plans include a pilot project to plant and develop hedgerows. It is hoped that agreement between the Rochester Bridge Trust and Medway Council will soon allow the ornate lights at the entrance to the Esplanade Gardens to be reinstated. Progress also continues on redeveloping the children's play area using Section 106 funding; consultants HTA will shortly present proposals to the FoRCE Committee before a final stage of public consultation.

6. Questions and Updates:

- Asian Hornet monitoring:** Volunteers may take part, and Emma will circulate details by email.

- b. **Planting Plans:** James from Norse confirmed that this autumn will see the final seasonal bedding planting, to be replaced by sustainable shrubs and grasses next year. Planting plans will be agreed by Norse, FoRCE, and HTA. Grass-cutting will be reduced to create more manageable 'wild areas', with schedules to be confirmed. Terry agreed to send James FoRCE's concept.
- c. **Medway Council Update:** Peter outlined positive changes bringing sport, greenspaces, and climate resilience initiatives together under a single 'nature and enjoyment of nature'.

7. **Close:**

Terry thanked everyone for their hard work and looked forward to continuing and new initiatives, including:

- Restoration and painting of local metalwork
- Regular litter picks and foreshore clean-ups
- Ongoing planting and weeding in the sensory garden
- Establishment of new hedgerows to benefit wildlife and deter anti-social behaviour
- Strengthening ties with the City of Rochester Society ('City FoRCE')
- Welcoming new committee members and volunteers to build a healthy, connected community.

The meeting closed with thanks to all attendees.

FoRCE Annual Accounts 2024

		2024	2023
		£	£
<u>Income</u>			
Donations		7,202.53	1,528.00
Subscriptions	Annual	140.00	
	Life	400.00	200.00
TOTAL		7,742.53	1,728.00
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Expenses			
	Plants, compost and equipment	3,541.06	2,546.59
	Website	124.86	84.00
	Printing , insurance and other costs	160.84	290.38
TOTAL		3,826.76	2,920.97
	Net income/expenditure to date	3,915.77	(1,192.97)
	Bank Balance brought forward	1,098.92	2,291.89
BANK BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD		5,014.69	1,098.92