



Friends of Newlands Park

Annual Report

June 2024 to Sept 2025

Introduction

Friends of Newlands Park (FoNP) has seen several positive outcomes in the Park in the 15 months that this report covers, though we are sad to see the impact of winter and summer storms on some of its most iconic trees.

The highlight of the year is definitely the reopening of the pond, after almost 3 years of closure. Repair of the perimeter path is the responsibility of the Council and, although there was a budget set aside for the work, it took the frequent interventions of FoNP committee member George Frier to ensure it happened. George discussed the requirements, monitored the work of the contractors whilst the work was in progress and reported back to the Council on the 'snagging issues' until the path was completed to an adequate standard. Contractors also installed the new bench and the wildlife sign that were funded by FoNP.

In 2024, the Council reduced grass cutting in Newlands Park to promote biodiversity, which upset many regular park users. Friends of Newlands Park gathered feedback and suggested leaving only peripheral areas uncut. For 2025, the Council adjusted the schedule to cut more grass more often, balancing biodiversity goals with community needs. A compromise was reached, though differing opinions remain.

Gardening volunteers continue to work hard on maintaining Newlands Park. The Wednesday group meet all year round, keeping the flower beds tidy. Their work is supplemented by occasional hit squads, either responding to specific seasonal

Saturday challenges or as part of corporate volunteering initiatives. What a difference these bigger squads can make in just a few hours!

In 2024–25, Newlands Park Community Tennis Centre grew to over 500 members, held its first competitions, and applied for floodlights to extend winter play. The club won Scottish Parks Venue of the Year, celebrated with a visit from local MP Gordon McKee, and raised £360 for Friends of Newlands Park during the club championship, strengthening collaboration between both groups.

We were delighted that a new community group with strong links to the Scouts and Guides took on the running of the Fête. This much loved annual event took place in September 2025 and was a great success.

We have applied for planning permission and funding to install a pétanque area, following consultation with park goers who demonstrated a clear interest in such a facility.

Looking ahead, FoNP are working in consultation with the local community, to develop a clear, inclusive vision and strategy to sustain and enhance Newlands Park, considering the needs of ALL park-goers, now and into the future.

As always, we need additional volunteers, supporters and followers to help us develop new initiatives and help with park maintenance. Join us!

If you're involved already, many thanks for all your efforts - read on to see what we've achieved this year!

Dave McLeod, Chair, 2024-2025



2024 – 2025 Year at a Glance



	2024-2025
Horticulture and biodiversity activities	<p>Invested £755 in plants and bedding materials</p> <p>Continued to refurbish flower beds with new sensory/biodiversity planting</p> <p>Weekly (summer) butterfly transect observations</p> <p>Created a bug hotel</p>
Volunteering	<p>15 regular volunteers & 1,378 hours of volunteering Apr '24 to Aug '25 (recorded monthly). This consisted of 1,000 hours of gardening and 378 hours of other volunteering.</p>
Infrastructure	<p>Application submitted for new pétanque (boules) area beside tennis courts.</p> <p>Ensured that tree stumps left after Storm Eowyn were left as informal climbing structures</p> <p>GlenBugles bug hotel built</p>
Events and social benefits	<p>Supported the fête organised by local scouts and guides, in September 2025</p> <p>Ran activities sessions for children: 'Map the Dens' and 'Build a Bug Hotel'</p> <p>Held volunteers' summer lunch & Christmas dinner</p> <p>Hosted a public consultation event</p>
Facebook private group members	<p>1,190 at Sept 2025, with around 17 posts/month</p>
Email followers	<p>151 subscribers</p>
Social media/web	<p>FoNP Facebook page (225 followers); website (4,300 visitors); Instagram (231 followers)</p>
Pond	<p>Now fully reopened. New, wheelchair and pram accessible path constructed, bench and wildlife information sign installed.</p>
Fundraising	<p>Individual donations received totalling £655.25</p>

Volunteering

Gardening

Gardening volunteers come under three main groups; the regular Wednesday Group (see following section), ad hoc Saturday volunteering, and corporate (CSR) volunteering often obtained through the www.volunteerglasgow.org portal. The constant challenge for Friends of Newlands Park is our reliance on a small number of volunteers...but many hands make light work!

We have had a couple of successful **Saturday morning** sessions which were attended by people unable to help midweek, and we hope to continue with this into the autumn. The challenge as ever is the demands on people's time to organise and attend these.

We have had occasional support from corporate volunteering groups. We send grateful thanks to those individuals who have taken part and, and most recently, a group of 8 from **Keppie Design** who assisted with cutting back overgrown bushes and the clearance of the maze area as part of our efforts to ensure this is safe, interesting and navigable for children and adults.

Gardening volunteering has continued throughout the year but numbers are down from last year and we are missing the young people who volunteered on Saturdays as their service activity for their D of E award. From April 2023 to March 2024 we recorded 1171 hours of volunteering hours, whereas from April 2024 to March 2025 we recorded 588 hours, almost half the number of the previous 12 months. This was partly due to a poor summer but also to a reduction in the number of volunteers. From April 2025 to August 2025 we recorded 412 hours. Some of our

volunteers have been collecting their pensions for decades but what they lack in agility and energy they make up for in enthusiasm and loyalty. We are grateful to our younger volunteers who work extremely hard to help us keep the park as we would like it. As always if anybody is interested in helping to maintain the park we meet on Wednesday mornings and always welcome new members.

Wednesday Gardeners



It wasn't an easy year from April 2024 to March 2025 for the volunteers as the weather rained us off more often than it bestowed dry, sunny weather on us, however we did our best to maintain the park as best we could.

The Bee Friendly bed certainly lives up to its name and hosts a multitude of bees and butterflies most of the day! The volunteers had a fund raising lunch and collected enough money to replace the buddleia and the heathers which were lost last year. The replacement plants have been purchased and have now been planted.

Storm Eowyn in January sadly brought down 3 of our mature trees to the north of the main path and one to the south as well as bringing down branches and twigs of other trees. A concerted effort was made by many volunteers to tidy the park afterwards and relatively quickly the park looked tidier albeit without 4 mature trees.

We have been gifted two new trees by a local neighbour so many thanks to George Frier and Dave McLeod for planting and securing them in November, in horrendous weather.

Other Volunteering Tasks

Non-gardening volunteering is equally important and is the much-needed hidden resource which keeps FoNP running smoothly. Led by Treasurer & Communications volunteer Fiona Godsman this included the very important consultation exercise and survey to shape the future of your park, on which see the separate report below.

Non-gardening volunteering hours came to a total of 378 hours between our last AGM in April 2024 and August 2025.

These hours include: correspondence and meetings between FoNP committee members and other organisations, including Glasgow City Council; social media and other promotional activities; strategic consultations and report writing; and event/project planning and management.

Park Maintenance

Grass cutting in Newlands Park is the responsibility of the Council, and it has to be one of the most hotly debated topics on this Facebook group.

In 2024, the Council reduced their cutting schedule and also started leaving large parts of the park uncut, to encourage biodiversity. This decision was not a popular one amongst park regulars, though people were generally supportive of efforts to support biodiversity.

Friends of Newlands Park fed back people's views to the Council and worked with them to discuss how people use the park, where they play, where they sit in the sun, where the

dogs run. We also suggested areas that could be left uncut, mainly around the peripheries of the park. We were delighted that the grass cutting schedule for 2025 took these needs into account and, as a result, much more of the grass was cut, more frequently.

Of course, there will always be people that want perfectly manicured grass everywhere, and others that love the wild areas. And we all know that the Council's resources are stretched and they can't do as much as they used to do. As the Newlands Park Friends Group we try to reflect all views, and work towards reaching a successful compromise.

Trees: Impact of 2025 Storms

The single beech tree to the south of the main path which was blown down was attended to by contractors who chipped the trunk and fired the chips straight in to the magnificent rhododendron bed and virtually choked them to death. We asked the Parks' department for help to clear it but in their absence the volunteers have gradually attempted to clear some off the chips and allow the shrubs to survive.



The three tree stumps left on the north of the main path are still in position. They have been assessed as being secure and stable and are already proving popular as a new children's climbing feature. We have secured the services of a chain saw artist who is planning to carve them into something fun. This work cannot be undertaken,

however, until the Council have filled in some of the holes that resulted beside the trunks when the trees fell. We continue to press the appropriate personnel at the Council to ensure that this is actioned.

In September the Park experienced the tragic loss, following storm damage, of the fine willow tree by the pond. Although only one major limb was lost, it was of such size and significance that the whole tree was unbalanced and at risk in the next (all too frequent) storms. Sadly, the remainder was felled on 9 September.

On a more positive note, we have met with Andy Murray the GCC Parks' Department arborealist who has inspected our trees and suggested our park could be in line to be gifted more trees. We await more information on this.

Pond Path Renovation

After more than 5 years of persistent lobbying to the Council, we were pleased to see the new path on the western side of the pond in the Spring. It was designed to be accessible to all and the new surface is attractive and, we hope, hard wearing. A new bench funded by FoNP and installed by the pond is understandably popular, as is the new wildlife information sign.



Thanks to George Frier for his persistence and patience!

Some people asked about the remainder of the path, and over the first

weekend in September two volunteers started the process of clearing the overgrowth and exposing the original flagstones where still in place. Further clearance work was carried out during September using corporate volunteers from Keppie Design.

Improving Facilities for Children's Play

The sub-committee set up for this has made slower progress than we had hoped for, as significant funding would be required for the installation of new play equipment. It's possible that funding might be available from Glasgow City Council, as part of their plans for improving play facilities across the city, but they are working to a long timescale.

In the meantime, FoNP has taken advice from an outdoor play specialist from Play Scotland and from the Council's Park Rangers. These conversations helped us to look at the park as a whole, and gave us some valuable insights based on what makes Newlands Park special for children.

One of the most obvious finding is that children love to explore the whole park, finding trees to climb, dens to play in, and paths to wander along in 'the maze'. Seeing children clambering over the tree stumps left after the storm, the outdoor play specialist recommended that they be left *in situ* and turned into natural climbing equipment.

We have created worksheets featuring maps of the park, and children have had great fun exploring with the maps, marking down their favourite dens.

The Park Rangers have offered to help us run nature focused activities, such as the pond dipping session they ran at the

fête. We hope to run other activities such as building bird boxes.

George Frier has constructed a luxurious 5* bug hotel called Glenbugles Hotel which is in position in the coniferous bed opposite the maze. The hotel was 'furnished' with twigs and leaves by children attending the fete and there is already a waiting list for accommodation from bugs, bees and butterflies.



We plan to develop a “fairy grotto” area over time, like a smaller version of the one near the walled garden in Pollok Park. We have made a start on identifying areas of the maze for local faeries to construct their own little houses and progress on that will appear on social media.

Pétanque Piste Development

Prior to the tennis courts being refurbished, a small group of regulars played pétanque (aka boules) on the red blaes. Whilst it was not a good surface for tennis, the uneven surface wasn't an issue for playing pétanque. Once the access to the courts became for tennis only, they played on the grass nearby, but it wasn't ideal. Therefore, they approached Friends of Newlands Park to see if it might be possible to create a new area in the park, specifically for pétanque.

We conducted a survey to see how much interest there would be, and we were overwhelmed with the response. Over 200 people completed the survey, all very much in favour of a new facility that would benefit everyone, young and old, to play informally or in regular sessions.

With the help of the pétanque regulars, we scoped out requirements, identified potential funding and approached Glasgow City Council to discuss our proposal. An application has been made for the necessary funding for the (fairly modest) groundscape works needed. Feedback from the Council has been very positive and we hope that the pétanque piste will become a reality soon.

Newlands Park Community Tennis Centre (NPCTC)

Although the NPCTC is now run by a separate not-for-profit organisation, it continues to work closely with FoNP, and indeed the tennis courts are now recognised as an integral part of the Park.

The past year has seen further growth and popularity in NPCTC with membership peaking at over 500. The first annual competitions and matches with other clubs was also held.

In order to extend opportunities to play over the winter months, an application for floodlights is underway with the LTA and GCC.

Earlier in 2025 the tennis courts were delighted to be awarded the Scottish Parks Venue of the year by Scottish Tennis. In celebration, they were pleased to welcome local MP Gordon McKee for a visit, and he even had a wee knock around with members.

At the recent tennis club champion competition, over £360 was raised for FoNP and both groups will continue our close collaboration in sharing resources together for the overall benefit of Newlands Park.

Newlands Summer Fête

This annual community event held in Newlands Park took place on 6th September, bringing people together for a fun-filled day, while raising funds for charity and community youth groups. It was led by a group of community volunteers ably supported by the local Scotus and Guides groups and featured for the first time a Bake Off (judged by James Morton & Dandelion Café) as well as the ever popular fire engine and police car.

Communications

Facebook Group “Friends of Newlands Park”

The group now has 1190 members.

This is a private group that people must apply to join. FoNP committee members administer the group, ensuring that only people with a genuine interest in the park can join. Any member can post, and there are around 17 new posts every month, with most posts getting between 200 and 700 views.

Newlands Park is a safe and welcoming green space for all of us to enjoy and, as group administrators, we try to ensure this Facebook group reflects that. It has clear rules that members of the group are expected to follow, including keeping posts relevant to the park, being kind and courteous, keeping contributions positive and recognising the limitations of the FoNP volunteers.

We also have some guidelines for the administrators, as not everything is perfect and we recognise that people like to have a little grumble from time to time. Usually, these are for issues that are beyond our control as a Friends group. Unfortunately it's harder to walk away from these conversations than it is in real life. Very occasionally, therefore, we turn off further commenting on a post, usually after 24-48 hours. Rarely, we delete a comment that we deem to be unnecessary or potentially hurtful.

We are grateful to everyone that posts, comments or simply visits the Facebook group, helping us to create a sense of community and belonging.

E-newsletter

Launched in Aug 2025, the monthly email newsletter already has 150 subscribers. Sign up via our website.

Our Website

www.friendsofnewlandspark.org is a comprehensive source of information about the park. It has details of volunteering activities and also has sections on the plants and wildlife, including a comprehensive guide to the trees in the park. Since launching in 2023, the website has had over 4,300 visitors and over 10,000 views.

Other Social Media Accounts

These public accounts are used for sharing information about the park.

Facebook.com/friendsofnewlandspark:
225 followers

Instagram @newlandsparkg43: 231 followers

The Newlands Park Community Tennis Centre has its own social media accounts on Instagram (@newlandsparkctc) and Facebook facebook.com/newlandsparkctc



A Vision for the Future of Newlands Park

Friends of Newlands Park acknowledge that it is not realistic to maintain the park as it was in years gone by. The resources simply are not available to sustain the status quo, and the needs and interests of the local community are constantly evolving.

We, as a community group, are therefore working to develop a clear, inclusive vision and strategy to sustain and enhance Newlands Park, considering the needs of ALL park-goers, now and into the future.

We want to know how people currently use the park, what it's important for us to maintain, how they might use it in the future, and what ideas they have for the park of the future.

Starting Point for Our Future Vision

We have been gathering feedback via questions presented to new Facebook group members since Aug 2021 and have a wealth of data. A survey on play facilities has provided us with many suggestions on ways in which the park could be improved for children. We also conducted a survey on potential interest for a pétanque pitch, which also explored how people use the park for exercise.

Developing the Vision

In July 2025 we started a consultation process which included an on-line survey as well as face to face discussions. Our survey got 275 responses which provided us with valuable information on park-goers priorities. As expected, the survey participants provided us with a wide variety of views, and careful planning will be required in order to balance the needs of different park-goers.

Taking account of all the information gathered, we are now starting to scope out an action plan, looking at short term and longer-term projects. Fundamental to this is getting buy-in and support from the Council as well as exploring funding options. We cannot progress any of this without recruiting more volunteers with a diversity of backgrounds, skills and knowledge to implement and maintain these projects.

The figures below show the top priorities for park-goers as well as a matrix that illustrates funding needs and complexity of potential projects.

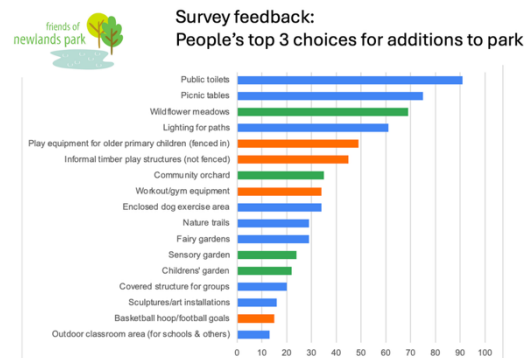


Figure 1: Top choices for additions to the Park

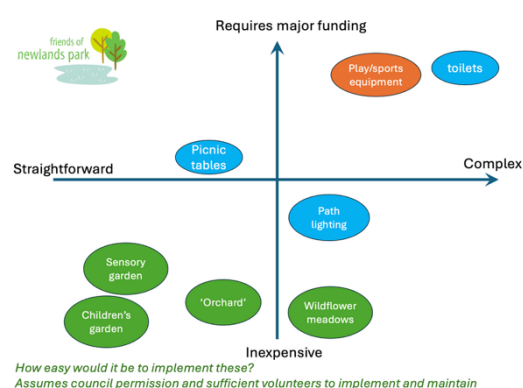


Figure 2: Matrix of funding & complexity of projects

Treasurer's Report

For the Financial Year 6th April 2024 – 5th April, 2025.

These accounts were kindly examined and reviewed for accuracy by Iain Webster, CA

This year, we were grateful to receive £655.25 in donations from members of the public. This was down considerably from the £1345.19 donated last year, but 23/24 included a generous public response to our request for funds to replace the new shed and replant the rose garden.

Our main expenditure was for:

- £2,242 for gardening equipment (inc. new shed £1,878). The cost of the shed was covered by an insurance payout from the old shed destroyed in 2024 winter storms, a grant from GCC and a 50% contribution from the tennis centre.
- £755 for plants etc
- £1,170 for new bench by pond
- £196 for insurance (for equipment and for volunteers/public liability)

Friends of Newlands Park Accounts		
Financial Year 6 th April 2024 to 5 th April 2025		
Income		Notes
Donations	£655.25	From individuals, by cash, cheques, or PayPal on-line donations
Other receipts	£998.00	From Newlands Park Community Tennis Centre, to cover 50% of cost of new shared shed.
Total Income	£1,653.25	
Expenditure		
Equipment	£2,242.41	Container shed, hedge trimmer, replacement parts
Environment/conservation	£755.19	New plants, slate for flower beds
Sports & recreation facilities	£1,170.00	FoNP bench for beside pond
Publicity	£23.93	website domain renewal
Insurance	£196.38	
Other payments	£54.25	Glasgow Tree Lovers membership (2024 & 2025)
Total Expenditure	£4,442.16	
Balance		
Funds carried forward from last year	£5,429.87	Inc. receipts of £500 from GCC for new shed (Mar '24), & insurance claim from the destruction of the old shed (Feb '24)
Funds received in year	£1,653.25	
Funds spent in year	£4,442.16	
Current balance	£2,640.96	



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