

## Chair's Report - The work of the Friends of Rowntree Park, 2020-2021

As a registered charity (number 1183948), our aims are to:

- Conserve, protect and improve the physical space/environment of the park
- Offer educational opportunities related to history, biodiversity and other aspects
- Provide opportunities for education, recreation and other leisure interests
- Promote civic responsibility, volunteering, health and wellbeing.

It's difficult to express briefly the huge range of activities that the Friends have been doing, all of which contribute to one or more of our aims. As ever, there's been a particular focus on family/children's activities (e.g. Forest School, Very Young Friends, Very Young Friends) and on gardening (e.g. the Sensory garden, the long borders, pollinator garden, wildlife areas). Walks, poetry/art projects, craft and nature sessions have all contributed to our work on mental health and wellbeing. Other activity areas include litter-picking, the craft group and the lodge project. New this year, we took on the booking and co-ordination of events held in the park by external bodies - this kept the park vibrant and interesting, and raised the profile of the charity. We continue to work closely with the council to report issues and suggest improvements.

There are around 50 regular volunteers, organised by team leaders for each area of activity; together, they contribute more than 600 volunteer hours a year, making a visible and valued impact on the park.

Members pay a small annual membership fee and they are kept in touch with all the different areas of the Friends work with a monthly newsletter, as well as by our comprehensive website and lively social media presence.

This year, for the first time, the charity had a paid charity manager, Abigail Gaines; she works part-time to look after the admin related to the growing number of members and the increasing quantity and range of our activities. Some volunteer co-ordination work has also been paid for, from grant money. Those leading the Forest School and gardening strands receive payment for some of their work.

As a charity, our trustees have the job of overseeing the work of the Friends, making sure that we are working in a legal and responsible way. This year, we recruited six new trustees and said 'goodbye and thanks' to two of our original trustees (Ruth Philips and Dave Rowsell), as well as to Abigail who resigned in order to become our charity manager; a list of our current trustees is on the website.

Next year, we will continue to offer our regular activities, particularly the family/children's activities, and our gardening projects will extend to cover areas which have a more wildlife/environmental focus. It will also be important to find a practical solution for taking over management and use of the flat above the café.

Full financial details will be made available in our report to the Charity Commission. In brief, the charity had an income of £37,542, mainly from membership, forest school and events, but also including £17,193 of restricted funds (grants and donations for specific projects). Over the year, the Friends spent £16,236, mainly on grant spending, events, projects and charity management. Our unrestricted reserves now stand at £22,354 with an additional £15,002 of remaining grant money (restricted funds) in the bank. This is higher than last year; as a result there are sufficient funds to continue paying our charity manager, and to invest in some purchases/projects which aim to streamline our financial admin and to increase active volunteering.

We're proud of the work we've done in the park, especially in this year that had so many challenges.

To find out more, check out our website [rowntreepark.org.uk](http://rowntreepark.org.uk) or contact us via email: [hello@rowntreepark.org.uk](mailto:hello@rowntreepark.org.uk)