



Friends of Portswood Rec

Co-Chairs' Annual Report for AGM 2026

As Co-Chairs we have been in post for more than two years and now need to step back. What the Friends of Portswood Rec (FoPR) will be able to achieve and participate in over the next twelve months will depend on whether or not there continues to be a fully functioning Committee after the AGM, with the continuing commitment from sufficient working volunteers to fulfil our current aims and develop new initiatives. We have a core of very committed people who will no doubt want our amazing work to continue. All Officers and Committee members will be up for election at the AGM.

Over this period we have enjoyed a strong Friends base and Committee, although sadly our Secretary Pauline Prentki resigned in June after several years in the role. Currently our Secretary, Events, and Communications Coordinator roles remain unfilled. Although we have not been able to recruit an Events Coordinator, we are delighted that Tony Ridley became our Children's Activities Coordinator. We would like to say a big thank you to our hard-working Committee, Working Volunteers, our Friends group and supporters, and to colleagues from Southampton City Council. Together we have achieved so much.

We have been able to fundraise and attract grants to support our work, and together with subscriptions and donations from the Friends we continue to have sufficient monies to support our day-to-day work. Throughout the year we have continued to garden, help maintain and develop the Rec, and host events and activities for the community in line with the Southampton City Council 2024 to 2029 Management Plan which we contribute to.

Without duplicating the reports of the Officers and Committee members, we would like to highlight some notable achievements over the last year. After the tremendous fundraising Initiative by Bev Pearce and the Play Park Sub Group, over £11,000 was raised by the local community towards the replacement of the life expired play equipment. We were able to contribute roughly 10% of the total project costs for the purchase and installation of the new equipment the remaining costs were met by Southampton City Council. The Play Park was officially reopened at a public launch by the Lord Mayor and other dignitaries on 9 May 2025. Everyone was delighted with the finished product, especially local children who had waited so long. Considerable use has been made of the new equipment since its installation.

We held our Annual Quiz at Trago Lounge in April which was again well supported and we raised just under £300 for the general fund. The quiz was kindly created by



our Quiz Masters, Nick and Patrick Pritchard and there were over 50 attendees. Again thanks to all those who contributed prizes for the Raffle including Trago Lounge and International Stores. It really puts us on the map and it was a great success.

We have also received grants in 2025 from the UK Prosperity Fund and West Solent Solar Co-operative which has enabled us to purchase some essential items, whilst also supporting our day to day running costs. Items have included amongst other things: new compost bins, gardening equipment, children's games, a gazebo, and first aid courses for some of our working volunteers. We are indebted to these organisations, to our Friends Group, and to the local community for their ongoing support which truly enables us to continue to make improvements to the Rec and make it a great safe place for everyone to enjoy.

We have continued to maintain and develop the gardens with nature in mind and contributed to the Southampton Park City 2025 Urban Wild initiative on the Common in May. Our own contribution was the 'Wild Wonders - Bee's, Bugs and Beasties' event held during May half term which attracted over 200 children to the Rec, Activities included bug hunts and identification, quizzes, trails, colouring, face painting and a fantastic puppet display by our friends Puppet Back Up. Although the weather was bad, we were able to use the Scout Hut with the kind permission of the 29th Portswood Immaculata Scout Group. The Scouts are very supportive of the Friends and have joined us in various activities including bulb planting over the years. As well as weekly gardening activities from March to December we also held the Annual Park Tidy where we encourage Friends and the wider community to get involved, and as usual this December get together to put the Rec to bed was well supported.

Our group of gardening volunteers remains healthy and we were thrilled that the gardeners were Highly Commended for 'Collective Action for Nature' at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Awards in October. This is one of a number of awards that are given to groups that are working to conserve and restore nature. The park also has also maintained its prestigious Green Flag status. Sadly, current weather patterns have seemed to increase the amount of surface water and mud in winter at the top corner of the Rec. With drought conditions prevailing in summer, there appears to be no easy solution. This has led to the loss of some plants and trees, although 9 new trees were planted this Autumn by Southampton City Council. From our grants we have been able to purchase a water bowser to help irrigate areas beyond our hose run.

Tony Ridley and a small working group hosted several summer Saturday activity sessions known as FoPR Kids for pre-school and early school children. These were a great success attracting 10 to 20 children and parents to each session. It is hoped



to run further sessions in 2026 subject to having sufficient volunteers. We would ask everyone to help support this important initiative.

We have continued to reach out and engage with the local community through our events and public meetings, and have hosted well-received guided visits to the Rec for the Green Network and also Highfield Residents Association members as part of their 50th Anniversary year. We have developed a wide communications network that include our website, Facebook and currently X, and we also make use of various WhatsApp Groups to communicate with our working volunteers and wider community. We produce Newsletters and publish monthly Nature Notes on the web. We also make use of wider media opportunities, for example volunteers Garth Long, Pam Campbell and Natalia Trujillo participated in a live radio show on Fiesta FM to talk about what they had achieved from volunteering at the Rec.

We work closely with, and are well supported by our local Councillors, colleagues from Southampton City Council, and organisations such as Southampton Voluntary Services, Green Network and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. Currently we are attempting to reestablish our previously good links with Southampton University. It is pleasing to know that we are well thought of as a community group and are considered to 'punch well above our weight'!

With so much happening and yet to happen, we have been honoured to have held the position as Co-Chairs for the Friends over the last two years. However what has been achieved has only been made possible through the fantastic collective action of our Friends, working volunteers, supporters and other stakeholders. We sincerely hope that FoPR will continue to go from strength to strength as there is so much to be done. Thank you all.

Garth Long & Linnet Evans Co-Chairs, Friends of Portswood Rec

27 February 2026