

# FRIENDS OF BIRKENHEAD PARK

## Volunteer Handbook



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# Welcome



**Welcome** to the Friends of Birkenhead Park (FoBP)! We are excited about your decision to join our team of dedicated volunteers committed to maintaining, preserving and developing Birkenhead Park. By volunteering for FoBP, you will have the opportunity to enhance a

valuable community resource thereby creating a safe, welcoming environment for young, old, families, furry friends and visitors from far and wide.

There are many ways you can contribute your time and talents to FoBP. We are committed to creating an environment that is supportive, appreciative, and rewarding. Regardless of the amount of time you are able to dedicate, please know your efforts as a volunteer make a difference in our organisation and in the communities we serve.

The Friends of Birkenhead Park was established in 1976 and our members have always sought to work with our local community to maintain and improve the park. Together with Wirral Borough Council and all the park staff, we have developed a real partnership over the years, which helped to bring about the park's restoration. It is even more important today at a time of severe budgetary pressures that we all work together to make the most of one of Wirral's important parks, particularly as we seek to secure World Heritage Site status for the first publically funded park in the world.

Thank you for joining us. Volunteers are the heart of our organization and we could not have accomplished all we have since 2004 without volunteers like you.

We look forward to working with you.

**Professor Robert Lee**  
**Chairman of FoBP and Director of Park Roots CIC**

# The History and Role of the Friends



The Friends of Birkenhead Park was established as a response to the neglect of the park and the need for an organisation to represent the wider interests of Britain's first public park. Since its creation, the Friends have campaigned for the park's conservation and restoration under its motto 'That Which is Good Should be Preserved'. At the same time, Birkenhead Park was designated the first conservation area on the Wirral and the Friends play a major role as a key consultative body, providing responses to all planning applications and contributing to the Conservation Area Forum. Members of the Friends have produced leaflets on the history of the park, a quarterly newsletter, and a guide for visitors: they play an important role in leading walks through the Park and in giving talks on various topics.

## Impact

The Friends seek improve the profile of Birkenhead Park in the following ways:

- ❁ By improving awareness of Birkenhead Park's historical and heritage significance.
- ❁ By increasing the extent and range of volunteering.
- ❁ By fostering an enhanced sense of community ownership of the Park.
- ❁ By delivering educational skill-training relating related to the national curriculum.
- ❁ By encouraging the community to care for the Park.

# Friends of Birkenhead Park Committee

Committee (elected annually at the AGM): Pauline Beecham, Sheila Blair, Harvey Cox, Mike Fox, Ian Lea, Robert Lee, Norman Marsh

Officers: President - Doreen Hayes; Secretary/Treasurer – Mike Fox; Vice-Chairman – Ian Lea; Chairman – Robert Lee

Sub-Committees:

Events/Exhibition Committee – focuses on upcoming events that are being held in the park as well as Friends' led events

Development Committee – considers major projects and bids

## Projects:

Since 2007, the Friends (together with its trading arm, Park Roots CiC) have raised almost £1m in support of Birkenhead Park, including a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for 'It's My Park' – a community involvement and heritage education project, together with a wide range of additional grants for specific programmes from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, Positive Futures, Expanding Horizons, the Youth Capital Fund, and Awards for All – Festival of Sport, funding for angling projects from O2 in the Community, Aiming High for Disabled Children, Youth Opportunities Fund, the Association of Wirral Angling Clubs and Get Hooked on Fishing. More recently, a major award from the Local Food Grant has enabled Park Roots CiC to take forward the development of community allotments on the Edward Kemp Community Gardens and Growing Area.



## Achievements:

- education outreach programmes – over 20,000 pupil visits since 2007
- community projects – wide range of activities initiated with high levels of participation
- heritage drama (Active Drama) – The Amazing Mr Park; Stories in the Park; the Birkenhead Park Show; Your Play in the Park Days; Footsteps in the Grass; the Birkenhead Park Mystery Plays
- volunteer programme – now with over 80 registered volunteers
- support for the Transport Festival of Steam (Ian Lea)

## Immediate and medium-term objectives:

- to secure further funding for new projects in the Park
- to work towards achieving World Heritage Status for the Park
- to increase membership of the Friends, particularly amongst young people
- to secure charitable status for the Friends

## Volunteer Membership

As a FoBP volunteer you will automatically be registered as a volunteer member of FoBP and you will receive an electronic version of the Friends newsletter or have access to a hard copy at the Grand Entrance and be invited to the quarterly meetings. You can become a full member of the Friends by paying a small annual fee.

Membership fees, and funds raised, help to support volunteer activity and projects that enhance and improve the park.

The Friends of Birkenhead Park meet quarterly and the meetings are held at 2pm in the function room at Birkenhead Park Visitors Centre. They are normally held in January, April (AGM), July and September.



# Park Roots Community Interest Company

Park Roots CiC is a not for profit company which was set up as the trading arm of the Friends of Birkenhead Park in order to access a wider range of potential funding streams and to strengthen its role as a recognised third-sector organisation. Park Roots is responsible for providing volunteer opportunities, community projects and the Edward Kemp Community Garden and Growing Area.

## Park Roots Board

Name	Position	Responsibilities
Professor Robert Lee	Director	Strategic Lead Communications Project Executive – English Heritage Projects
Sheila Blair	Finance Director	Business Planning Financial Management Line Management Edward Kemp CG & GA
Ian Lea	Company Secretary	Volunteer activities
Pauline Beecham	Director	Operations – Grand Entrance Volunteer liaison
Harvey Cox	Director	Charitable Status



**Professor Robert Lee**



**Sheila Blair**



**Ian Lea**



**Pauline Beecham**



**Harvey Cox**

## Park Roots Employed Staff

Name	Position	Responsibilities
Sally Dobbing	Community Projects Manager	Project Management Health and Safety Edward Kemp Community Garden & Growing Area Volunteer Programme Management
Dr Katy Layton-Jones	Researcher	English Heritage funded research project – home based



**Sally Dobbing**



**Dr Katy Layton-Jones**

### Projects:

Numerous awards, including major funding from a Local Food Grant, Awards for All, Public Health Innovation Fund primarily (but not exclusively) for the development of the Edward Kemp Community Garden and Growing Area and for the delivery of training courses. Recently, a grant was made by English Heritage to undertake a national review of research priorities for urban parks, designed landscapes, and open spaces which is currently being carried out by Dr Katy Layton-Jones.

### Committees:

- Edward Kemp Community Garden and Growing Area Committee

Members of Entrust, Youth Federation and the Association of City Farms & Gardens.



# The Edward Kemp Community Garden & Growing Area

The Edward Kemp Community Garden and Growing Area is funded by the Local Food Grant and is a project that enables a variety of community groups and schools to learn about and grow fruit and vegetables. The land was a disused field and is divided between the Friends of Birkenhead Park, local groups and schools and a garden area. The garden consists of:

A sensory garden with strong smelling and textured plants

A well which pumps water into a reed bed, overflows down the waterfall wall and into the bog garden. The water then flows naturally back to the well.

A patio area, next to the bog garden, which can be used for social occasions.

A quiet area which is set in the centre section of the growing area. Three silver birch trees have been planted around the area, planters have also been built and benches are due to be installed.

Mersey Forest tree growing area where trees will be grown and then planted out in the local area as part of the Wirral Waters project.

A small orchard running alongside the hedging closest to the footpath into the park.

Volunteers meet every Wednesday and plant, maintain, trim, mow, harvest etc. the Friends plot and the garden areas.

*“Volunteering at Birkenhead Park, and specifically at the Edward Kemp Community and Growing Area, as enabled me to get that confidence and self-worth. Working with a wide range of volunteers and Park Roots staff has helped me to resurrect previous skills as well as develop many new skills. Taking on a project the size of Edward Kemp has enabled me to bring to fruition many ideas I have had for a long time and the evidence for this is there for all to see for many years to come”.*

**Sheila Blair - Site Co-ordinator**



# Volunteers - where you fit in

The Friends of Birkenhead Park have over 80 registered volunteers who help in a wide variety of ways such as conservation work, leading guided walks, reception duties in the visitor centre, creating displays, cleaning and administrative tasks.

The relationship between the FoBP and volunteers is based upon the following principles:

- ☼ **Recognition:** Your contribution is invaluable and we will recognise your contribution and share your success
- ☼ **Values and Code of Conduct:** Our values and code of conduct are important to all our employees and volunteers
- ☼ **Equal Opportunities and Diversity:** We encourage volunteers from across the community and where possible our opportunities are accessible to all
- ☼ **Role and Responsibilities:** All volunteers should have clearly defined roles, responsibilities and supervision and these should be reviewed periodically
- ☼ **Recruitment:** We will apply a recruitment and screening procedure to ensure that volunteers are assigned to appropriate roles.
- ☼ **Introduction and Training:** All volunteers will receive appropriate induction and training
- ☼ **Health, Safety and Welfare:** We recognise our duty of care to volunteers and will ensure that volunteers engage in healthy and safe activities and are protected from harm
- ☼ **Confidentiality and Feedback:** We will treat volunteers fairly and handle their personal information confidentially and respond to complaints in a consistent and impartial manner



# FoBP's duties to volunteers

**The Friends of Birkenhead Park have certain obligations to you when you volunteer:**

**Insurance** – For information, FoBP arranges employer's liability insurance to satisfy its legal obligations. This covers legal liability for death, injury or disease suffered by employees and volunteers during the course of their voluntary activity with FoBP, where we have been negligent. By completing the volunteer application form or group registration form and following our procedures and guidance you would be deemed a volunteer.

For your protection, FoBP also arranges Public Liability insurance, covering legal liability for injury to third parties or damage to third party property. This includes such injury or damage caused by employees or volunteers during the course of their voluntary activity with FoBP.

**Health and Safety** – FoBP is committed to ensuring safe methods of work at all times. You will be given a health and safety induction when you start volunteering along with a copy of the health and safety policy. It is important that you should not behave in any way that could endanger the safety of yourself or others.

**Data Protection** – The information that we hold about you is regulated by the Data Protection Act 1998. We follow principles of good practice in the security and processing of data and do not transfer data to third parties. In processing your application for volunteering we will only share your information with those people directly involved with your recruitment and coordination. This is necessary to ensure we find the most suitable volunteering placement for you.

**Equal Opportunities** – FoBP is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. We will not discriminate against you on the basis of your gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability or age.

**Supervising volunteers** – FoBP is responsible for managing you while you volunteer. This starts with matching you to the right role for you, making sure you have all the information you need in advance, and giving you the chance to access training and development where needed.

**Policy documents are available in the Grand Entrance.**

# Volunteer duties to FoBP

The relationship between the FoBP and volunteers is based on trust, respect and confidence and with this comes some obligations to the Friends of Birkenhead Park.

Volunteers agree to:

- Participate to the best of your ability
- Wear protective clothing and uniform as and when required
- Follow instructions and procedures at all times
- Let us know if you cannot attend
- Act in a respectful manner to others including staff, volunteers and the public
- Give us any feedback – good or bad

Alcohol, drugs and smoking – you should not volunteer while under the influence of any substance including alcohol, illegal drugs and/or solvents. If you take medication that could affect your ability to volunteer then please inform us.

Please remember to dispose of any cigarette ends or rubbish in the bins provided or, preferably, take it home.



# Keeping in Touch

Once you have registered with us we will contact you via post or email or text to keep you up to date with volunteering news and any new opportunities that may be of interest.

Social networking – we have set up a twitter account so follow us **@FOBParkRoots** to see exclusive pictures of wildlife, activities and more!

# Evaluation and Suggestions

Your feedback is really helpful in improving FoBP's volunteering opportunities. Please take the opportunity to complete feedback forms after training or volunteering. We also love to hear your individual stories and encourage you to write about your volunteering experience. Please send it to [info@fbp.org.uk](mailto:info@fbp.org.uk) (including a photo if possible too!). With your permission we may use your stories on our publicity material or website as this is a fantastic way to encourage other people to get involved.

# What if something goes wrong?

## Performance and complaints

When a formal complaint is received a standard procedure is followed to ensure that the complaint is handled fairly. All investigations are handled sensitively and in a timely manner.

Complaints will be handled confidentially, with only those involved with the investigation disclosed of the details. Volunteer(s) will be sent a letter outlining the complaint with a request for them to submit a statement. Contextual information may also be gathered about the individual's previous volunteering history for balance. At this stage the complaint and supporting information will be reviewed and a recommendation developed.

The volunteer will be advised of the conclusion of the investigation and, if appropriate, of their right to appeal. Any appeal should be made in writing and a final ruling will be made by the Park Roots Board.

# Partners

The Friends/Park Roots work in partnership with a number of agencies to provide volunteer opportunities and community projects.



**Wirral Borough Council** are a major partner and massive supporter of the Friends of Birkenhead Park. They provide many volunteer opportunities in the park, support with volunteer uniforms and administration support.

According to the Birkenhead Park Manager, Adam King - *“The volunteer programme started five years ago with a monthly cleanup task, but it has now grown to include dozens of opportunities every week for people to contribute to the park. It is a model which is being rolled out to all of Wirral’s Parks, but although many have volunteer programmes, none have been as successful as ours in Birkenhead Park.”*



**Mersey Forest** are providing materials for projects with community groups at the Edward Kemp CG&GA as well as in and around the park as part of a wider tree planting project with Wirral Waters.

**English Heritage** provide funding for research projects that involve Birkenhead Park and other parks nationally.

**Princes Trust Volunteers** regularly complete landscaping and maintenance projects on the Edward Kemp Community Garden and Growing Area.

# Here's what volunteers have said about their experience:

*"I knew very little about gardening and how to grow vegetables. I can now speak with some authority about the timing and propagating."*

*"I enjoy creating things, mostly for children, so this is a good outlet for my ability."*

*"When I moved back to the Wirral I had time on my hands. I loved walking so I started on the health walks and then trained to become a health walk leader which led to other volunteer work I made new friends and it kept me busy."*

*"Working with a team of volunteers has helped feel that I belong and that I am doing something worthwhile."*



*"Gardening has made me more mobile."*

*"It is interesting meeting people of all ages and abilities."*

*"I have gained experience of working on an allotment and it has been good to feel part of a team. It gives me a sense of belonging."*

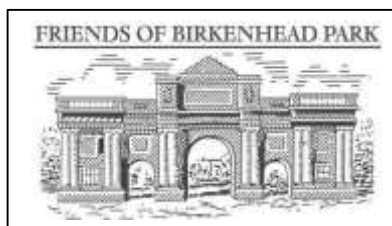
*"I feel honoured to be involved and socially empowered."*

*"Reception work has developed my social skills and I now feel more confident dealing with members of the public than in the past. It has also helped to improve my communication skills."*

*"I love helping people and making a difference. I often suffer with depression and it helps my confidence."*

## CONTACTS AND USEFUL LINKS:

Friends of Birkenhead Park/Park Roots CIC  
C/o Birkenhead Park Visitor Centre  
Park Drive  
Birkenhead  
Merseyside  
CH41 4HY  
0151 653 5697  
[info@fbp.org.uk](mailto:info@fbp.org.uk)  
[www.friendsofbirkenheadpark.org.uk](http://www.friendsofbirkenheadpark.org.uk)



Birkenhead Park Visitor Centre  
Park Drive  
Birkenhead  
Merseyside  
CH41 4HY  
0151 652 5197  
[birkenheadpark@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:birkenheadpark@wirral.gov.uk)  
[www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk)



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We will be happy to provide the information in this booklet in alternative formats upon request