



29 JANUARY 2025

## Dear Friends of the Park

It has been too long since we last emailed an update for everyone! We have been busy focusing on a couple of issues in the Park, plus Christmas, winter bugs and, for the Friends Treasurer, a new baby! Congratulations Tommy.

## Here is a round up of news and events over the next two months or so:

We are having some indoor meetings to plan for the better weather, **see dates below**.

In the meantime there is **coppicing** with Joe McKenna **every Friday** until the end of February. We are starting to make a real difference around the stream leading to the ornamental ponds.

**Meet at 1pm at the Kiosk.**

We will also start to run **regular work parties** on the **last Sunday of the month**. The next one will be litter picking and a Park tidy up on **Sunday the 23rd February, meet at 10am at the Kiosk**.

## News

### Defibrillator

After much hard work we have been successful in obtaining a defibrillator from Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) and council agreement to install it on the side of the Kiosk toilets next to the sports field. The job is now with the council team - and we are following up to try to make sure it is installed sooner rather than later. Four Friends have volunteered as Defibrillator Guardians and we are awaiting some training from GWAAC. So far you have made donations of over £200, enough to keep the defibrillator going for at least three pad changes! Thank you all so much. The council will also install a 'bleed kit- - emergency help for anyone who is bleeding heavily - at the same location. The Friends Group does not need to maintain this as Avon and Somerset Police will replace the contents for free.

### Play Area

We understand that things are moving slowly with the play area refurbishment. Tenders to undertake the work are due back in February 2025 with work hoped to start in 'late Spring / early Summer'. This is making us all nervous that the play area will be closed over the sunniest time of year including the summer holidays. We have made verbal representations to the council and will now follow up in writing.

## The Depot

Many of you will have taken part in the council led 'conversations' in the depot last year and may have had an update email from the council. Things to note:

The council has not yet identified a partner to be in the depot, this will ensure a presence in the depot as well as some investment. We will know more soon - and will update you.

But we are told initial works will start soon - including

- Demolition of the extension on the main building to the left of the entrance (this is to make the site safer as well as making way for a compliant toilet facility.)
- Replacement of the roof on the main building.
- Rebuild and fix the fallen historic wall next to the smaller building (on the woodland path).

We believe that the Pavilion will be demolished too around the same time - but the services will be left intact should there be plans and funds to rebuild in the future.

The council are undertaking extensive nature surveys in the depot between April and September 2025 - as you can imagine, a site that has been derelict for some time will be happily taken over by nature! Any developments that take place in the depot will need to take account of the ecology already there.

## Managing for Nature

Oldbury Court Estate/Vassalls Park is one of the sites chosen for the council led Managing for Nature project, funded jointly by the council and the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). Initially there will be a new pond in the Park off the beaten trail where small creatures can thrive away from dogs and us humans. Wildlife-friendly grass-cutting regimes are planned for March whilst habitat surveys and interventions will begin in 2025 on the river and streams. We are told that a conservation volunteering programme is being developed by the council/WECA and will share any information we get about this.

## Wildflower meadow

We are hoping to see some flowers later in the year in the area currently roped off with the yellow and black tape along the path behind the Pavilion. Many meadows take two years to get going but we still hope ours will blossom earlier. We still have some money left over from the Wessex Water Grant so we will extend the meadow this year. The days spent planting and sowing seeds last year were wonderful, lots of families joined in and sharing the work made it all so much fun. We also discovered that the Park crows love Bourbon biscuits and will steal them when they can. **Look out for the dates for a Spring sowing!**

**Events** - there is lots going on in the next few months, below are some important meeting dates but there will be more to come, keep looking out for emails!

## Meetings

**Come to a Friends of the Park social event!** We have not had much time to talk together about how our work in the Park is going, what we could do next year, or even catch up with how everyone is! **Turn up at Grounded between 6.30 and 9pm on Monday February 10th** for a good catch up. Everyone is welcome.

**Sunday 16th February** - meeting up to talk about the draft **Spirit of Place report for Oldbury Court** - what next? You may not have been involved in the original discussions but still have something to say. Let us know if you are interested and we will forward the draft report to you.  
**Meet at the Vassall Centre Community Hub on Sunday 16th Feb from 10.30am to 12 noon.**

**Sunday 9th March** - meeting up to **plan our work** this year to support nature in the Park, this may involve coppicing, tackling invasive species (a joyous summer of Himalayan Balsam pulling!), extending the wildflower meadow and much more! We are also happy to be in partnership with Fishponds Nature Alliance, supporting nature beyond the Park: look out for the posters in the Park notice board and local shops. We can talk about this more on the 9th March, plus have a look at the useful information in the council commissioned Conservation Management Plan for Oldbury Court.  
**Meet at the Vassall Centre Community Hub from 10.30 -12.30.**

Our third **Annual General Meeting** will be on the **30th March 2- 4.30pm** at the **Vassall Centre**.

**Nordic Walking** - a free 8 week course for people local to the Park **will start again in April**. The walks were incredibly successful last year with a total of 40 people learning how to Nordic Walk. We have also raised £340 toward buying poles for local people to borrow. The poles are very expensive, so we have not got a full Library yet, watch this space.

## How you can help?

We are a small band of local people determined to support our beautiful Park and everyone who uses it. BUT it is hard going. As we learn more about the history of the Park we find good will and initiatives that could not keep going. In 1994 the Oldbury Court Wildlife Group was formed (maybe you were an original member - let us know!), repaired one of the Pond walls and set about clearing the Ponds - whilst at the same time holding a barbecue! They were tough in those days. But seriously, so many groups have come and gone because it is difficult to keep going when there are only a few core members. We are looking for people who understand websites, can create art, want to work toward leading small work parties or can advise us on good communication with members and the wider public (we are very hit and miss). It may only be a couple of hours for you, but it will mean so much to us! Do email us at [admin@oldburycourtpark.org.uk](mailto:admin@oldburycourtpark.org.uk) if you would like to know more.

See you in the Park soon!

Kate