

# FRIENDS OF MONTGOMERY STREET PARK

## ANNUAL REPORT

1 JUNE 2022–31 MARCH 2023



A group of local people dedicated to transforming Montgomery Street Park into a vibrant and well-used community space.

Friends of Montgomery Street Park (FoMSP) have been supporting and developing the park since 2008. This report covers activities and news from 1 June 2022 to 31 March 2023. Note that this is only 10 months; last year's report covered the period until 31 May 2022. The plan going forward is for our Annual Report to align with the financial year: 1 April to 31 March.

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## OUR OBJECTIVES

Our objectives are stated in [our constitution](#). FoMSP aim to:

- promote and encourage the conservation and enhancement of the park
- actively seek the involvement of the relevant departments of the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) so that it performs its statutory responsibility to maintain the park
- engage and involve the surrounding community in the use and development of the park
- promote and encourage the educational value of the park, encouraging interest in its scenic, historical, architectural, landscape and ecological qualities among the surrounding community.

## WHO WE ARE

At our last Annual General Meeting on 31 May 2022, we elected:

Sarah Denniston (Chair), Adam Burgess (Vice-Chair), James Preston (Secretary) and Nick Gardner (Treasurer)

### **Committee Members:**

Rachel Blyth, Liz Clark, Fiona Colville, Karen Hartnup, Simon Preston (lead on the Playpark Subgroup), Mhairi Scott, Ruxandra-Iulia Stoica

Our constitution allows for a maximum of 15 committee members (including office bearers). If you'd like to join, please contact us.

## ACTIVITIES FROM 1 JUNE 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023

The park committee continued to host and support community activities in the park.

Committee members met quarterly throughout the year, alternating between in-person and online meetings. Thank you to Hillside Bowling Club for giving us space for our committee members to meet in December 2022.

## PARK EVENTS

### NEW MURALS

On Saturday 3 September, the two substations in Montgomery Street Park were painted with new murals in collaboration with Colony of Artists and street artists from Vue Art Ltd.



We are so grateful to all the artists involved! They have done an amazing job, going above and beyond what we expected. Thank you as well to funding from Colony of Artists and Arnold Clark Community Fund.

The old murals by Zap Graffiti have been a beautiful part of the park, created 10 years ago. Over the years, there has been tagging on all other sides of the buildings, as well as on the original mural, which encouraged us to consider new art in the park.



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## PARK CLEAN UPS

In September 2021, we cleared paths in the wild area on the east side of the park. There has been a decrease in litter and increase in wildlife in the area.

We held three litter picks between 1 June 2022 – 31 March 2023, which have had a great attendance (over 15 people), and many bags of litter collected. Warm drinks and snacks were provided by Holyrood Church—thank you!

One of our park clean ups included starting to prune the apple trees in the park. Thank you to [Leith Community Growers](#) for inviting us to their Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop at the Children’s Orchard in Leith Links.

We advertise our litter picks on our website, social media and usually with signs in the park noticeboard. If you would like to be more involved in park clean ups, we’d love your help! Please contact us at [contact@montgomerystreetpark.org.uk](mailto:contact@montgomerystreetpark.org.uk)

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## HALLOWEEN PARTY

It was another successful year for the Montgomery Street Park Halloween Party. This event is run entirely by volunteers in the local community. High attendance and huge community support made for a fantastic evening.

From 5pm, the park transformed into a Halloween extravaganza: carved pumpkins twinkling along the steps, light sticks flashing throughout the playground, spooky games for the children, hot chocolate, and cupcakes. This year we held a new event: a Kids Costume Parade. We also officially recognised the turnip in our carving competition with a new ‘Best Neep’ prize category!



A huge thank you to Sarah P, Simon, James, Rachel, and Mhairi for organising and donating to the party! Thanks also go to Cloud 9 for donating prizes to our competition winners! Thank you to Amy Barr, Principal Teacher at Leith Walk Primary School, and Councillor Jack Caldwell for selecting the winners for the competitions! And thank you to Justin for all the designs to advertise the event!

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## MAKE A BIRD FEEDER EVENT

On Sunday 12 February from 12 - 2 pm we (Rachel and Sarah D) spent a morning showing people how to make bird feeders out of pine cones, cardboard rolls / boxes, empty grapefruit skins, seeds, nut butter, veggie shortening. We provided supplies, and taught children and adults how to make your own feeder.



Thank you to a nearby resident who donated some bird seed and nut butter. Thank you to the 12 or so families who came along on the day!

## GARDENING SUBGROUP

In September 2022, the gardening subgroup started plans to create a community garden in the park, with support from the council. Mhairi, Adam and Sarah are getting ready to develop the sandy area in the east end of the park (by the new frog mural). We aim to create a small fence around the wildflowers and apple trees, adding more plants donated from local residents as we go.

Funding for materials has been secured. Now, we're looking for any help with designing and building a low-level wooden fence to mark out the area.

If you have skills with gardening or fence building, please contact us at [contact@montgomerystreetpark.org.uk](mailto:contact@montgomerystreetpark.org.uk)

## PLAYPARK SUBGROUP

The refurbishment of the playpark continues to be a major project undertaken by Friends of Montgomery Street Park.

In 2019 FoMSP [consulted](#) with local communities about how the play park should be improved. One finding was that there was overwhelming support for retaining the helter skelter. In 2020 CEC informed FoMSP that the helter skelter was at the end of its life and would be removed. The FoMSP committee has campaigned against this decision, stating that the helter skelter is an iconic and valued feature of the park.

In January 2022, the helter skelter was fenced off because the CEC consider it to be at the end of its life and want to take it down. With help from local councillors we have persuaded council officials to hold off removal for now.



Efforts to save the helter skelter are not connected to the play park redevelopment project timeline. A full upgrade of the play park is planned for 2023 and the Council hope that contractors will be on site in May. £230,000 funding has been allocated, a new design completed and a contractor appointed.

When these upgrade works begin the Friends will pay for an independent assessment on whether the helter skelter can be refurbished. If it can, we will begin fundraising to do this work, if not the helter skelter will be removed. All updates on the playpark can be found on our Facebook page.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK VISION

The park's long-term vision continues to evolve. The plan on our website (*pictured*) shows some of the ideas collected from the public over the years.



In September 2021, Adam (Committee Member) and Scott (Parks Officer) identified all the trees in the park, including those likely to be cut down due to illness. The [map of trees in the park](#) will help us coordinate planting of species that will bring as much biodiversity into our urban green space.

We also continue to collect comments from the public for the park vision. Adam created and printed a large-scale drawing of the entire park, which is continuously being added to by the public. Here is [a map](#) with some of the ideas collected. The idea for a community garden section of the park came from this vision, with more details in the Gardening Subgroup section below.

## COMMUNICATION

**Noticeboard:** FoMSP use the noticeboard in the park (along with the council) to advertise park news.

**Website:** [www.montgomerystreetpark.org.uk](http://www.montgomerystreetpark.org.uk) Three committee members have admin access to edit the page (James, Justin and Sarah).

**Social Media:** Our main form of public communication is our website and Facebook page:

Facebook [@montgomerystreetpark](https://www.facebook.com/montgomerystreetpark) Twitter [@Fo\\_MSP](https://twitter.com/Fo_MSP) Instagram [@montgomerystreetpark](https://www.instagram.com/montgomerystreetpark)

**Email:** [friendsofmontgomerystpark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmontgomerystpark@gmail.com)

Friends of Montgomery Street Park used to have a newsletter emailed out a few times a year. Due to limited volunteer time, it has taken a hiatus this year. If you would like to help revive this effort, please get in touch. You can still join the mailing list or see previous newsletters on our website.

## COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

The CEC completed a [Park Quality Assessment for Montgomery Street Park](#) in July 2021. This year an annual [Safety Inspection Report](#) was completed in November 2022. These documents are used by the council to inform future planning.

There is an [Edinburgh Green Spaces Forum](#) facilitated by CEC, which invites all 'Friends of' groups to monthly meetings on city-wide park issues. The FoMSP try to send a committee member to these meetings when possible.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

See separate document.

Liability insurance resumed after it lapsed over the pandemic. FoMSP continue to be insured for activities in the park until October 2023.