



Annual Review 2023

The Friends of the Pentlands is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC035514) which exists:

- To protect and enhance the natural beauty and upland character of the Pentland Hills, its waters and surrounding countryside
- To protect and enhance the cultural heritage and public amenities of the area
- To promote the quality of life of those who live and work here
- To carry out environmental projects that enhance public access and biodiversity
- To encourage high standards of design in new works undertaken in the area
- To provide an annual programme of activities including walks, talks, etc.
- To promote appropriate planning policies
- To stimulate public involvement by means of publications, exhibitions, appeals, etc.
- To co-operate with other bodies active in the area

The Friends of the Pentlands welcome new members who share our aims.
For more information see our website at www.pentlandfriends.org.uk/membership/

Or contact us through Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Friendsofthepentlands1/>



For more information see our website at www.pentlandfriends.org.uk

Chair's Foreword

Andrew Marsden

The rebound following the pandemic referred to in my report last year has continued throughout 2023 and, as this review indicates, we have had successes in many areas.

There has been a further, reassuring, rise in membership numbers, swelled slightly by the adoption in December 2023 of a digital membership management system allowing sign-ups to happen online and in real time. Once again, the number of conservation volunteers has risen and, with the appointment of more team leaders or leaders with specific responsibilities, the workday norm is now for several small squads to be out tackling different projects on the same workday. This is, in my view, much more efficient than having a dozen volunteers all concentrating on the same task. As in 2022, our work has been supported by parties of corporate groups, outdoor organisations and educational institutions.

As well as the "routine" on-going conservation activities such as litter-picking, tree management, gorse clearance and maintenance of the wildflower meadows and the unrelenting requirements for path surface drainage and restoration (both within the Regional Park and beyond) there have been a number of highly satisfying construction projects in the year. These include the repair and re-commissioning of the bird hide at Harperrig, the repair, resurfacing and re-edging of the steps between Dreghorn and Bonaly and the replacement of the bridge at Boghall which had been demolished as a result of the winter floods. These projects were carried out on behalf of the Regional Park and utilising contributions in grant aid from some of our donors. During 2023, 2893 hours of work were undertaken by The Friends, a gain of 800 hours on the last year.

We have visited and worked on the wildlife reserve at Patieshill - whose stewardship George and Janet Burke have entrusted to us - regularly with tree planting, pond management, path clearance and wildflower meadow planting led by Dennis Smith. The wildflower corridors creation, led by Bob Douglas, has also been carried out in five other sites in the Pentlands as part of his Butterfly Conservation project with the aim of attracting - or re-attracting - some of the rarer species of native butterflies into the hills. Mike Andrew has been active in overseeing tree management at Patieshill and in the Pentlands arboreta.

The Conservation workdays have been very capably managed by Hamish Clark who, though having to leave the Board after completing his period of service, has continued planning, allocating, risk managing and co-ordinating our work. John Surtees is standing down as manager of the assets register - though taking over the editorship of Pentland Post from Peter Moore. Thanks too, to the team leaders and assistant team leaders - Ian Combe, Donald Sandeman, Gordon Cameron, Brian Gallagher, Andrew Gallacher, Mike Andrew, Margaret Lang, Linda Stirling and others who have supervised our work activities.

And thanks to John Hutton for taking on the walks and talks programme - leading varied walks around Edinburgh or the hills most months throughout the year.

I thank our Board of Trustees for their wisdom and support, especially Dennis Smith, our most capable Secretary in completing his last year of office as both Secretary and Membership Secretary, Iain MacLeod for his sound financial stewardship, Douglas Tullis as Planning Officer and Bill Aitken for taking on membership management with the new “Member mojo” system. Also, Bob Cook for developing a plan for involving children and young people and creating a Safeguarding Policy. Thanks to Judy Cantley who retired from the Board in May 2023. After consideration by the Board, a revised GDPR protocol came into force with the publication of a new Privacy Notice on 29 November 2023.

There is always a risk of oversight when listing individuals but there are so many of you that it is impossible to include you all. Please forgive me if you are not cited – the contribution of all our members is fully appreciated.

Acknowledgements

- Andrew and Catherine Barr
- Bavelaw Estate
- Cairns Farm Estate
- Cargilfield School
- Carnethy Hill Running Club
- City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service
- Dalmahoy Estate
- Dry Stone Walling Association S.E.Scotland Branch
- Mrs G. Hamilton, Crosswoodhill Farm
- Folio Trust
- Garvald Home Farm
- Gavin Marshall, Treeline
- George and Janet Burke, Patieshill Farm
- Jacobite Mountain Club
- James and Mary Christie, Ferniehaugh
- Merchiston Castle School
- Midlothian Ranger Service
- Ministry of Defence – Defence Training Estate
- Newhall Estate
- Pentland Land Managers Association
- Pentland Mens Shed
- Raymond Wyper
- Scottish Widows Corporate Volunteers
- Scotways – Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society
- Silverburn Community Association
- SRUC Easter Howgate
- Swanston Farm Ltd
- Water of Leith Conservation Trust
- West Linton & District Historical Association

Our grateful thanks are also due to many individual Skyline runners for their kind donations

Membership Review

Bill Aitken

I was co-opted as a trustee of the Friends of the Pentlands (FoP) in 2022 with the expectation that I would take on the new role of Membership Secretary to run a new membership system for FoP. This would replace the existing system, based largely on Excel spreadsheets successfully developed over the years and maintained largely by Nigel Rose. It was recognised that this was not sustainable in the longer term and that we needed to invest in a proprietary system which would be externally maintained and enhanced to meet new requirements.

An initial working party met in November 2022 to identify broad requirements for the new system. The necessary functionality included:

- Friendly interface with members
- Fully integrated with FoP web-site
- Support for our classes of member (individual, joint, individual life, joint life and corporate)
- Support for our conservation and other work party activities, including flexible mailing lists
- Support for donations and Gift Aid
- Alternative methods of payment (BACS, Stripe and cheques)
- Security of data, to meet GDPR and Privacy Policy requirements

Over the following months this led to the choice of Membermojo (MM) as our preferred system.

Because the annual costs of MM are modest, an early decision was to engage a consultant, recommended by MM, to assist with the implementation. We chose Heather Gale of Mission Masters Ltd. Heather's contribution, based on her intimate knowledge of MM, has been invaluable to the success of our efforts. The first planning session with her, on Zoom, was on 5 June and a 60 day free trial of MM commenced soon after. Due to an unavoidable pause in the trial, it was extended to end-November. In the event, we needed that time and the three months from September were used to get the many details sorted out and the MM configuration adapted to best meet the FoP requirements. The bulk of the work was done by Nigel Rose, Dennis Smith and Heather Gale and it has been through their efforts that MM went live smoothly on 3 December.

The initial emails from MM were sent as planned on 3 December, followed by reminders on 14 December and 2 January. We adopted MM's default procedure for handling renewals but, in retrospect, we could have done better. The timing of pressure to renew promptly over the festive period, and the placing of those who did not do so on an 'expired list' was not ideal. In addition, we decided that, for this first iteration of the new system, we should ask all members, including life members to check and confirm their details as held by MM.

The process was not as clear as it could have been and a few expressed concern that they were either losing their membership or being asked to pay more. These matters were at the margin of what has, overall, been a very successful implementation.

We do recognise that the timing and the wording of our early communications with our members could have been better. We are confident that with minor changes to the details of the renewal process, these difficulties will not recur at the end of 2024. In addition, there will be no need to ask members to check their details again, and life members will have no part in the renewals.

The move from FoP's long standing bespoke membership system to MM has been accomplished with only minor hiccoughs along the way. That this has been achieved has been largely due, as already stated, to the efforts of Nigel, Dennis and Heather. I continue to be comfortable with our choice of MM and have confidence that, going forward, it will serve us well, and that I will be able to fulfil the role of Membership secretary, as is expected by the Board.



Treasurer's Report

Iain MacLeod

The accounts for 2023 show a surplus of £9,147 with funds on hand totalling £66,750 compared to £57,258 at the start of the year. We had expected to run at a deficit during the year but were unable to commence a major path improvement project due to a delay in obtaining the necessary permissions. Further, on two fairly major projects undertaken in the year we were supplying manpower only, with most of the material costs being borne by the Regional Park authority.

In addition, we continued to benefit from the amazing generosity of our members and supporters with donations and grants received totalling in excess of £9,000. The major contributor in this area was the Folio Trust which contributed £5,000, matching its grant of 2022. Despite being unable to obtain permission for the annual hill race, Carnethy Hill Runners got involved in an "unofficial" event and this, together with donations from individual runners, and from smaller events, generated £850 of donations. I am grateful to the many other individual donors, too numerous to name individually, for their support during the year.

For the reasons mentioned in my opening paragraph project costs in the year were £4,664 compared with £17,824 in 2022. Administration costs at £2,066 showed an increase over the previous year, accounted for mainly by some £500 paid in connection with the introduction of the new membership system.

In terms of other income, the 2nd edition of "Pentland Way" continued to sell steadily, producing almost £900 of income. As with previous years calendar sales continued to provide a valuable income stream, producing profit of £1,500, and thanks are once again due to David Syme and his team in this respect. Having placed a substantial portion of our funds on hand in an interest bearing account we received £1,303 in bank interest in the year.

Looking at the year ahead our finances remain in a very healthy state and my main hope is that we can obtain the necessary permissions to proceed on major projects utilising the reserves that have been accumulated in recent years.



Work Parties

Hamish Clark

This year the volunteers in the work parties carried out an impressive amount of work on projects and ongoing maintenance, involving more than 2700 hours (compared with 1900 hours in 2022). Our pool of volunteers has increased and been refreshed with a continued inflow of new volunteers.

They demonstrated and developed their steps and bridge building skills over the summer with the refurbishment of the flight of steps on the path from Dreghorn to Bonaly car park and constructed a new bridge over the Boghall Burn on the access path from Boghall the car park to the Hillend/Castlelaw path

Working with the SE Scotland Dry Stone Walling Association we built a dry stone retaining wall where the Pentland Way passes through Garvald Home Farm - this matched the wall done in 2022. The addition this year of the information board, bed of wildflowers and a bench makes this a fine spot on the Pentland Way.



The birdhide at Harperrig Reservoir was given some badly needed TLC. The rotting timber in the sides was replaced, window flaps rehung, door fastener replaced and the hide repainted to provide a few more years of enjoyable bird watching.

Two other projects involving significant amounts of time were the development of wildflower meadows and further tree planting which are reported in the sections contributed by Mike Andrew and Bob Douglas.

Throughout the year the important regular/recurrent work has continued including:

- Maintaining the drainage, surfacing, signage and guide posts on the Pentland path network, including the Pentland Way
- Early in the year several days were devoted to dealing with the damage caused by the intensive downpour just before New Year - helped with stepping stones, repaired damage to bridges and their footing and in one case retrieved and re-installed a bridge at Harperrig that had been washed some 200 metres downstream



- In the November - March period we cleared extensive areas of gorse that were competing with young trees in Bonaly Country Park. This is part of a Pentland Hills Regional Park 5 year Plan to improve the biodiversity of the Country Park and surrounding area. A bonus for the cold weather and gorse prickles on one of the days was a bonfire lunch of Polish cooked sausages and brownies!

FoP were pleased to be assisted for 5 days by Staff from Scottish Widows and members of Carnethy Hill Running Club. The support and cooperation of the PHRP staff and land managers is much appreciated. Around 75% of the days took place in the PHRP and the others in the remainder of the Pentlands.



As work programme co-ordinator, my thanks to all who organised and came out during the year. I know from the feedback from the FoP Facebook page and other sources that your contribution is appreciated by many users of the Pentlands.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

John Hutton

Talks

Three talks were delivered over the year:

Andrew Miller of Geotours spoke on “The Geology of the Pentlands”,

Charlotte Maddix stepped in at very short notice to speak on “Rewilding” from her advocacy perspective,

Bob Douglas, our own member, brought us up-to-date on “Butterflies in the Pentlands”.

All talks were well attended; in fact, a waiting list had to be established in one case! Each Talk prompted a good Q&A session.



Walks

Eight Walks were led over the year. This was the first full year following the decision to offer walks on a more frequent basis than hitherto.

The two Winter Warmer walks got us off to a good start just after New Year, with 11 walkers setting off in good conditions on each walk from Swanston, returning to The Brasserie – pretty much on schedule - for eats and drinks. We had a reasonable run of weather over the year – not always sunny, but only one cancellation on account of icy underfoot conditions!

The other walks took us to such exotic locations as Queensferry, Harbour Hill, Clubbiedean, Black Hill, Poets Glen, the Innocent Railway and Portobello. One walk was conducted jointly with the Water of Leith Trust. In addition, Andrew Miller led a walk in the Pentlands to follow on from his Talk and this added some practical illustration of the theory.

We have provided a mix of walks relative to the Friends Strenuous/Moderate/Easy grading, ranging from about 2.5 miles with only a little ascent to 8 miles with nearly 2000 feet of ascent. All walks have been accessible by public transport, albeit sometimes at the expense of a little more walking.

On average, 9 Members/guests attended the walks and, happy to report, without injury or “incidents”!



Harlaw Wildlife Garden

Gardening

Margaret Lang

The year in the garden has been, overall, quite successful. The weather was kind to us and we only had to cancel the session once due to inclement weather.

We have had 2 new members, Anne Horrox & Liz Phillips, join the team bringing our numbers up to 9 and we have all worked hard, putting in 163 hours, to get the garden looking ship shape and pleasant for the visitors who like to come and spend time there. My thanks go to all the team for their hard work.



During our Thursday morning sessions we have seen families, photographers and many others come into the garden to relax and enjoy their time there. Indeed some former pupils of Woodlands came during our last session of the season and we were able to show them the compost that came 'magically' from the leaves etc that they had gathered when working in the garden with Woodlands School the previous year.

Some of our non-human visitors include a variety of bees, moths, butterflies such as the Brimstone Moth, Red Admiral, orange tip and large & small white butterflies as well as squirrels, a great variety of birds and even a small newt that had seemingly made a long journey from the pond up to the flower border at the top end of the garden.

Once again this year we were fortunate to have been given a £20 voucher from Tesco which was used towards buying Hyssop, Thyme & other plants. We have also planted heathers, Pink Yarrow, Golden Oregano and more besides, some of which were bought from Redhall Walled garden which is run by The Scottish Association for Mental Health. Their plants are all locally grown and reasonably priced.

Last but not least I would like to say a big thank you to the Work Party team who spent a morning riddling the compost bin that produced 3 huge bags of really good compost and has now been used in the garden.



Educational Support

Linda Stirling

For an hour every Thursday I work with Woodlands School, normally at Harlaw and occasionally at Threipmuir. The pupils are working towards their John Muir Award, a conservation award. Many of the tasks may seem simple but are rewarding for them and include:

- Gathering leaves and learning about composting
- Clearing drains alongside paths
- Clearing firepits around Harlaw Reservoir and learning how fires can cause damage in the woods
- Pruning trees and bushes
- Sowing wildflower seeds in the meadow
- Revamping the "bug hotel"
- Making bird feeders to be hung at Harlaw and in their school garden

We are occasionally asked to help with Dean Park School and have held meetings with the school and the Ranger service to organise a programme. We help in escorting the pupils up Harlaw Road and assist the various groups as they pursue the outdoor elements of the school curriculum.

I would like to record my thanks to all the volunteers who have lent a hand in these activities.



Conservation, Training And Quartermaster's Report

Ian Combe

Quartermaster

It was such great news to hear that we will retain our "Steading" tool store/workshop going forward and that Swanston Farm had offered the use of a large container which would be based very conveniently just over the Bypass by Swanston Farm. Therefore we have been investigating the solar charging and power storage solution for the building and hope to make a decision on this shortly. This will give us more options for storing our ever-increasing stock and tools, and make space for a proper workshop.

Many thanks to Donald Sandeman for the use of his large vehicle, fondly known as "The Beast" which has eased our carrying in and out on many occasions.

Thanks also to Mel Mitchell who donated his trusty and classic trailer.

Andrew Marsden was the recipient of the QM Volunteer's Award, this year for (his) "*Culinary Excellence in the Hills.*" During another weekend, working in conjunction with the Dry Stane Walling Association at Garvald, Andrew prepared and continued to cook again another fine-dining barbecue during a rather heavy and prolonged Pentland shower.



Training

We now have a band of qualified petrol trimmer operators, who can also carry out regular maintenance as and when required.

The Bonaly steps and the Boghall Bridge were two of the largest and most demanding projects that FOP has taken on, working in tandem with the Natural Heritage Officers. Those involved I am sure would agree that there was a steep learning curve for us all. (and a fine curve remains on the Boghall Bridge too).

A second drystone wall was built out at Garvald, incorporating a raised flower bed. This was another opportunity for volunteers to hone their skills with our good friends The Dry Stone Walling Association. The Garvald Farm again providing us with their kind hospitality and excellent campsite.

A big thanks to Gordon Cameron and Brian Gallagher who have both stepped up in a supporting role as Assistant Team Leaders.



Conservation

We now have 3 significant Wildflower Meadows:

At West Linton arboretum, and by the Lyne Water at Baddingsgill – cutting and preparation has just been completed.



At Patieshill more wildflowers were planted. Also 200 young trees: Alder & Willow, Birch & Hazel.....although some emergency fencing repairs were required to keep the local sheep at bay!

At Baddingsgill a meadow has been created by the Lyne water and several thousand seeds and 150 plug plants were sown. Repairs were required to a section of the river bank path damaged by the December storm but our willow weaving again held its ground, so to speak.

Gorse cutting / trimming at Bonaly, Threipmuir, Black Springs and Boghall. Path restoration at the Daisy Dell by Flotterstone.

Wildflower Meadows for Butterflies and Other Pollinators

Bob Douglas

In 2023 we started for real at all of our sites. There are four large sites we are working on at Patieshill, West Linton Arboretum, Baddinsgill and Harlaw. There are a couple of smaller sites at Garvald and Silverburn. In addition I have spoken to the farmer at Stoneypath Farm, just down the Lyne Water from Baddinsgill, where there are reported colonies of the scarce Northern Brown Argus (one of the target species) and he is keen to encourage biodiversity on his land.

Patieshill: We planted several hundred plug plants on a relatively sheltered & sunny hillside where we strimmed the grass and “lifted” the turf (by hand!). There was an initial set back with the drought in June necessitating a number of watering trips, then we discovered a ewe and a couple of plump lambs were feeding here. After they were dealt with, and the rain arrived in July, the plants began to thrive. The intention here and at West Linton is to extend the perimeter of the planted area each year. A second, damper area at Patieshill was planted with several hundred “wetland” plants, and we’ll see how they’ve managed alongside the grass.



West Linton Arboretum (overlooking the Golf Club): We are working in three smallish patches, with the first two planted in the spring and we started planting the third in the autumn.

Baddinsgill: This is the largest site we’re aiming to “meadow” at about 1/3 acre. The farm cut the grass in the autumn and a large work party raked it clear (several tonnes worth!). This is a flood plain of the Lyne Water, so there is sandy soil rather than the layer of thatch we encountered at the previous two sites. Initial trial sowings of a mix of purchased and harvested seed were sown in part of the site, but it will need a large purchase of wildflower seed to cover the whole site.

Harlaw: We finally got the go ahead from PHRP to take on management of the extended site, subject to agreed risk mitigation controls. It was too late in the season to cut the grass to the level desired, but an initial cut and some sowing has been done in the extended area.

All sites will need spring and autumn workdays in 2024 (& beyond). As well as purchasing wildflower meadow seed we aim to increasingly harvest seed from the areas sown, topped up with purchases of specific caterpillar foodplants and nectar sources for the target species.

Publications

Peter Moore

In 2023, the Publications team continued to issue two editions of the PENTLAND POST and the annual CALENDAR, with the valued assistance of several Friends undertaking a variety of supportive tasks.

PENTLAND POST:

The twice yearly Pentland Post has aimed to inform and entertain members with a range of features and photographs. These have tended to be based around the activities of the Friends of the Pentlands, but also reference wider topics and developments which have implications for, or relevance to, the hills. The editor has sought to provide a balance of text, with both longer articles and shorter pieces, and pictorial content. Contributions from members, and others with an interest in the hills, have been appreciated.

The POST is distributed electronically to most Friends, with paper copies also provided to members who rely on reading printed material, and to key “partners”. We are also obliged to lodge copies with the Agency for Legal Deposit Library.

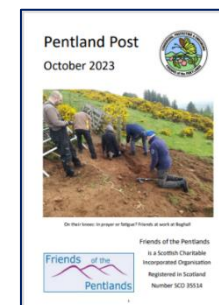
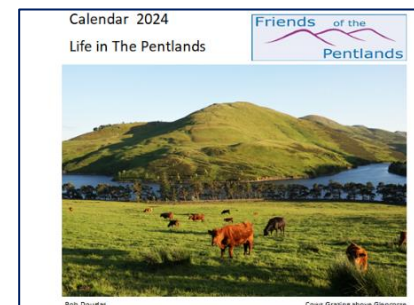
The editorship of the POST is changing, with John Surtees taking over from Peter Moore. Contributions and suggestions for content should now be directed to John at john.surtees@pentlandfriends.org.uk.

CALENDAR:

The 2023 calendar with the theme “At Work and Play in the Pentlands” proved to be a very successful publication, raising a record sum of over £1,500 in profits to support the activities of the Friends of the Pentlands.

Thanks are due to all those who submitted pictures and to the members of the panel who had the hard task of picking out the selection to feature in the calendar. Thanks to everyone who helped distribute calendars to the sales outlets, and looked after stalls at Balerno Farmer’s Market.

Sales of the 2024 calendar, “Life in The Pentlands”, are now underway, and 2025 is already in our sights as we seek submissions of photographs under the theme of “Pentlands through the Seasons”.



Towards the end of the year I visited all five arboreta to monitor progress and overall I'd say the trees are in very good shape. Keeping them protected still has to be our priority and I'm providing below a summary for each site.

Swanston and woodland legacy

Putting tree protectors back around the trees in the woodland legacy has made a huge difference and the trees there and across the path at our own arboretum are in great shape. A thorough cutting back of grass and gorse will be required in the Spring. This is the most visited of all our arboreta and I'm constantly refilling the leaflet holder, which has survived up until now.

Silverburn

This is the jewel in the crown. Again the trees are doing really well and hopefully the wildflowers planted will show up in 2024. Earlier in the year we created a pathway through the arboretum and some kind locals have kept this tidy and well defined.

West Linton

Again the trees are doing really well and the broken pamphlet holder has been replaced by the one from Harperrig as it still had pamphlets in it from the previous year! The wildflower project is in full swing and hopefully we will see results in 2024.



Harperrig

There is still a "No Entry – Tree Felling" attached to the gate here and it was clear to me that nobody has been able to visit this site since our last visit, some eight months ago. The good news is that the landowner has erected fence mesh with large stakes around all of our trees and consequently they are well protected and doing really well.

Carnwath

This is our furthest outpost and, considering the boggy ground, the trees are doing fairly well. However, some of the tree labels have disappeared and the site will require a good tidying in the Spring.

Overall the health of our arboreta is encouraging and hopefully they will continue to grow and prosper.

In terms of our current Action Plan our policy towards planning matters is to:

“Monitor planning applications lodged with Local Authorities or the Scottish Government to ascertain their potential impact on the Friends’ area of interest and, when necessary, to submit an appropriate response.”

Our geographical area of interest involves no fewer than five different authorities - City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, West Lothian, Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire Councils as well as the Scottish Government which handles larger scale energy consents and national transport related issues.

Policy issues:

On the policy front a major development in 2023 has been the promulgation of the **Scottish Government’s National Planning Framework 4**. NPF4 sets out spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy until 2045 and is heavily directed towards future sustainability.

We have also responded to Edinburgh City Council’s consultation in support of its **City Plan 2030** which proposes that development which supports the aims of the Pentland Hills Regional Park will be supported provided it has no unacceptable impact on the landscape character and special qualities of the Park including views to and from it. The relevant aims of the Park are:

- To retain the essential character of the hills as a place for peaceful enjoyment;
- Caring for the hills so that the landscape and habitat are protected and enhanced;
- To encourage responsible public enjoyment of the hills; and
- Coordination of these aims to coexist with farming and other land uses within the Park.

City Plan 2030 aims to ensure that proposals for outdoor recreation activities, while likely to be supported in principle, do not detract from the special rural character of the Park.

The specific planning cases of interest to us include:

MIDLOTHIAN

Wards 01 Penicuik & 04 Midlothian West

Midlothian Snowsports Centre, Hillend - As members will be aware major works are currently in progress at the Snowsports Centre which is to be renamed “Destination Hillend”. This is a major £25M project to revitalise the centre, of which we are supportive, and which should ensure the future of this facility. Completion of the works is planned for 2025.

SCOTTISH BORDERS

Areas of West Linton & Carlops Community Councils

Slipperfield Quarry - Along with the many other objectors to this application, we had a disappointment in the early part of the year when Scottish Ministers upheld the developers appeal against the initial refusal of this application by Scottish Borders Council. The application was for quarrying on a large 35 Ha site north of the A702. It is not yet clear when actual quarrying will commence.

Cloich Windfarm - In 2016 consent was granted after a Public Inquiry for an 18 turbine wind farm with a maximum blade height of 115m. A fresh application has been submitted for the same site for a reduced 12 turbines but with a maximum height of 145m. We have made representations to Scottish Ministers expressing our concerns at the visual impact of the higher turbines particularly from Mendick and Ingraston Hills. Neither Scottish Borders, nor Midlothian Councils have formally objected in the absence of which there is unlikely to be a further Public Inquiry and Ministers’ decision is awaited.

Rutherford Castle Golf Course - This is a long running proposal for the former golf course, first submitted in early 2019, for a development initially comprising 180 lodges and various leisure facilities to which we objected on visual grounds. The scope of the application has been reduced to 100 lodges. There have been issues concerning flood risk, of which an assessment was submitted to Scottish Borders Council in November 2023. The application remains outstanding.

CITY OF EDINBURGH

Wards 02 Pentland Hills & 06 Colinton/Fairmilehead

Edinburgh – proposed speed limits on rural roads - Edinburgh City Council has consulted on a proposal to introduce a 20 mph speed limit on the roads running N/S from Currie and Balerno and a 30 mph limit for those running E/W including Harlaw Road. We responded to the consultation in support of the proposal.

Litter-picking

Andrew Gallacher

The pandemic is now a distant memory and our group has returned to regular operations. The resilience of our members has been a driving force in maintaining our commitment to a cleaner environment.



In 2023 the group adhered to the bi-monthly meeting schedule, beginning in March with our first visit to Hillend, and holding our annual coffee morning at Cobbs. Members persevered despite Hillend being temporarily excluded from the schedule for much of the year due to ongoing construction work.

Unfortunately Dreghorn has been permanently removed from our roster as a result of the Ministry of Defence's decision to close the car park due to ongoing antisocial behaviour.

With the addition of 4 new recruits our group now comprises 21 and together we collected an impressive 88 bags of litter, having invested a total of 186 volunteer hours during the year.

Thanks to the continued support of the Ranger Service we did not encounter any major littering disasters. Their prompt response in clearing camping mess and

litter has been invaluable, ensuring the sustained cleanliness of our local environment.

We anticipate potential visibility in a documentary by Ewan Allinson, addressing the rural/urban divide, which is due to air in January 2024.

In conclusion I express my gratitude to our members and partners for their efforts during a successful 2023. Despite challenges our collective effort continues to make a positive impact on the community.

Friends of the Pentlands people

Office Bearers

Chair	Andrew Marsden
Treasurer	Iain MacLeod
Secretary	Dennis Smith
Membership Secretary	Bill Aitken

Other Board members

Nicola Fryer
Douglas Tullis
Bob Cook
Hamish Clark (until September 2023)
Judy Cantley (until May 2023)

Team leaders

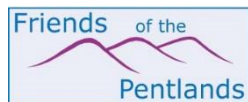
Margaret Lang	Harlaw Garden
Linda Stirling	Harlaw Garden/Educational Support
John Hutton	Walks and Talks coordinator
Andrew Gallacher	Litter-picking coordinator
Douglas Tullis	Planning Officer
Iain MacLeod	Annual Review editor
Ian Combe	Conservation, Training, Quartermaster
Bob Cook	Schools Liaison
John Surtees	Path inspections coordinator
Mike Andrew	Arboreta coordinator
Angus Ogilvy	Liaison with HMP workshop
Peter Moore	Publications editor
Bob Douglas	IT coordinator and Facebook editor
Hamish Clark	Workdays and Corporate Liaison
Donald Sandeman	Work parties
Gordon Cameron	Work parties (assistant)
Brian Gallagher	Work parties (assistant)





Credits

Annual Review Editor: Iain MacLeod
Annual Review Layout: Dorothy Wilkie
Photo Editor: Dennis Smith
Photo Credits: Bob Douglas and various
Friends of Pentlands members.



The Friends of the Pentlands is a Scottish
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