

Annual Review 2025

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/>



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I am pleased to introduce our 2025 Annual Review which reports sustained progress across our range of activities.

I assumed the Chair at the time the world was recovering from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, one of the effects of which was that increased numbers of people discovered the beauty and recreational benefits of the Pentland Hills. Our current membership base safely exceeds 500 and the cohort of active volunteers has, again, expanded significantly with the effect, once again, of the norm being that three or four separate teams work in separate locations on the same workday. A notable proportion of our volunteers are from a younger cohort than hitherto and bring with them special skills and experience. Formal work parties were held on 60 days, and with the addition of the work carried out by the litter picking and gardening groups, and the 13 days of corporate volunteers' activity, the total of hours worked reached a new record of 4000, a 16% increase over 2024. Over £20,000 of our funds have been spent on work projects, including environmental activities.

Special projects included bridge reconstruction in the Poet's Glen, over the Loganlea Burn and over the Dean Burn in Bonaly country park. We installed a self-closing gates at Slipperfield and Harlaw, erected boardwalks and cleared the surface on the West Rigg path, made repairs to the bird hides at N Esk and Bavelaw, carried out extensive repairs to several sections of the wall surrounding Harlaw reservoir and installed interpretation panels at N Esk, Rullion Green, Poet's Glen and Baddinsgill.

We carried out tree maintenance across our five arboreta, tree planting at various locations, cared for our butterfly species-specific wildflower meadows across eight sites in the Pentlands and undertook considerable conservation work in the wildlife reserve at Patieshill.

An interesting development in the past year has been a link-up with the Scottish Rural College (SRUC). Students and staff visited Patieshill, FoP attended and spoke to students at the SRUC induction day and we intend to build on this partnership to our mutual benefit as students undertake research and we learn from their findings.

We have hosted groups of schoolchildren, Beaver Scouts, Cubs and Explorer Scouts, all of whom have enjoyed their visits and carried out useful conservation work.

It is fitting at this stage to acknowledge the outstanding contribution to our work programme from Hamish Clark who is winding down this season from his long term ministry as "Clerk of Works". Hamish's painstaking thoroughness has ensured that workday arrangements go to plan, irrespective of how many groups there are and how complex is the task.

It was not all work. Thanks to our social activities co-ordinator, John Hutton, we had a number of interesting walks, a talk and visit to Little Sparta and an engaging programme of talks, the curiosity highlight of which must have been Alfred Drummond-Herdman's account of the microfungi growing on the dung of birds and animals within the hills!

I am grateful to the support I have received from the Board of Trustees for the past three years and thank them for their dedication. But there are many other, non-Board, members who have been active and enthusiastic and, with apologies for any omissions, would like to single out John Surtees, the Pentland Post editor; Bob Douglas for his IT support and Facebook Page administration; Nigel Rose for IT support; Dorothy Wilkie for her editorial assistance; David Syme who has recently concluded a long stint as our calendar sales manager; Margaret Granger for handling our postal sales; Richard Maguire for transforming the layout of our tool store at Hillend; Ian Combe as quartermaster; and Andrew Gallacher as general "factotum": who has maintained our range of power tools and, off his own bat, carried out a number of maintenance tasks to make our volunteering work more straightforward.

As I hand over as Chair to Bob Cook in May 2026 I realise that we yet face many challenges, not least in realising our part in protecting and conserving the degraded Pentlands ridge path and addressing the way all users of the Pentlands can work in harmony with farmers and landowners to the mutual benefit of this wonderful part of our country. I have no doubt that Bob will be a worthy successor and wish him well as he assumes the lead post.

Membership Review

Bill Aitken

Our membership system, Membermojo (MM) has been in operation since December 2023. It is now well through its second round of annual subscription renewals. At the time of writing, we have 511 members, of whom 68 are still on the 'late payers' list.

MM is fully integrated into our web-site and the process of new members joining is clear and covers full collection of relevant personal data. That data is held securely and is only available to the small number of 'administrator' members. Security and GDPR aspects are carefully managed. Each member can view and update only the data we hold about him or her.

In addition to handling subscriptions, MM has been valuable in assisting our Treasurer in managing donations and related Gift Aid issues. For those involved with work parties, it is straightforward to issue circulars to volunteers participating in that important work. The Secretary can send circulars to all members from time to time.

The Membership Secretary's role continues to be supported by valuable input from Nigel Rose and Heather Gale (our external MM consultant).

Acknowledgements

- Andrew and Catherine Barr, Harlaw Farm
- Balerno Guild
- Balerno Ramblers
- John Bartholemew
- Bavelaw Estate
- George and Janet Burke, Patieshill Farm
- Cairns Farm Estate
- Cargilfield School
- Carnethy Hill Running Club
- James and Mary Christie, Ferniehaugh
- City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service
- Currie Scout Hall
- Dalmahoy Estate
- Dry Stone Walling Association S.E.Scotland Branch
- Susan Falconer, our Honorary President
- Folio Trust
- Garvald Home Farm
- Beccy Gibby and members of Carlops Community
- GMP Print Solutions
- Greenbank Womens Guild
- Mrs G Hamilton, Crosswoodhill Farm
- Harmeny Athletic Club
- Hunters Bog Trotters
- Logan Estate and the trustees of the late Alastair Salvesen
- Merchiston Castle School
- Midlothian Ranger Service
- Ministry of Defence – Defence Training Estate
- Newhall Estate
- Niko Asset Management
- Pentland Ladies Probus Club
- Pentland Land Managers Association
- Pentland Mens Shed
- Red Moss Hill Race
- Scottish Widows
- Scotways – Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society
- Silverburn Community Association
- SRUC Farm Easter Howgate
- Sustainable West Linton Group
- Swanston Farm Ltd
- Water of Leith Conservation Trust
- West Linton & District Historical Association





Treasurer's Report

Iain MacLeod

The accounts for 2025 show a small deficit, with funds on hand totalling £63,332 compared to £64,071 at the start of the year. This is despite spending £19,732 on various projects, of which £12,079 was spent on general path maintenance, including our £8,604 contribution towards the Maiden's Cleuch path improvement. The ability to maintain reserves at this level is indicative of the generous donations and grants, totalling £14,555, received during the year. Our grateful thanks are due to all those involved for their continued support in this way.

Administration costs at £2,137 were largely in line with the previous year and well under control.

In terms of other income the "Pentland Way" publication continued to sell well, producing income of £948. The 2025 calendar proved popular and produced profit of £1,438 and thanks are once again due to David Syme and his team for their sales efforts. Bank interest received amounted to £1,741, down from £2,179 in 2024, despite our overall funding remaining similar, an indication of the general fall in interest rates.

Looking to the future, our finances remain in a very healthy state and the Board will shortly be reviewing our reserves policy with a view to determining which projects may be taken forward in 2026 and ensuing years.

If you have visited the garden this year, I'm sure you will agree that, with the wonderful summer we had, the garden was looking spectacular. Instead of buying plants this year a few of our volunteers brought cuttings from their own gardens, which increased the sensory garden and the nectar border areas.



A group of volunteers came to help riddle the compost which was spread over the garden on our last visit.

During the winter months volunteers attend every week to refresh the bird feeders and a wide variety of birds come in providing a great opportunity for photographs.

I'd like to thank all the gardening volunteers who have done 200 hours of work at Harlaw during 2025. A special mention for Rob Melville who has retired from his grass cutting duties, sometimes working at weekends when unable to attend on the regular workdays. Jan Maxwell will be taking over the grass cutting activity in 2026.



In the past 12 months the work parties have continued to carry out a great deal of work in the Pentlands, about 89% of it in the Regional Park. We maintain our close working relationship with the Park staff. This section reports on the routine, recurring jobs and projects together with the contribution from corporate volunteers from companies. The work on wildflower meadow development, Patieshill Nature Reserve, maintenance of the FoP arboretum/tree planting and drystone dyking are covered in other sections.

As ever there were lots of recurring maintenance tasks to keep the path network functioning. Path borders and steps needed to be cleared of encroaching vegetation (grass, bracken, brambles, gorse and branches). This year we worked on at least 13 paths, an increase on previous years largely at the request of PHRP. Drainage and surfacing need attention to reduce path erosion, gates were installed and path edging maintained. Three of the car parks serving the Pentlands were tidied up by removing leaf fall and trimming back surrounding vegetation.

A range of projects were undertaken:

With a corporate group we installed a commemorative bench above the Snowsports Alpine Ride at Hillend - carrying the materials and bench up the hillside to the spot was heavy going. We continued on the multi year project at Bonaly for woodland development and habitat improvements by clearing gorse from a large area adjacent to the alpaca fields. We refurbished a section of fence at Bonaly to keep the livestock in the fields and out of the woods. The other fencing job was building some 100m of fencing on the SW corner of Bavelaw marsh to prevent sheep from coming into the SSSI there.



The North Esk birdhide received its periodic repainting and damage to a shelf and the handrail on the steps were repaired. Five information panels about significant local history and noteworthy flora/fauna were put up on the Thieves Rd beside Baddinsgill reservoir; on the Pentland Way near Stoneypath; at North Esk reservoir; overlooking the Rullion Green battlefield below Turnhouse Hill and at Poets Glen. All of these panels support the FoP objective of informing people about the Pentlands' rich heritage,

The highlights of the year were four bridge jobs. Several sleepers were replaced to maintain the safety of a footbridge over the Logan Burn linking the Glen Rd. (above Glencorse Res.) to a path up to Carnethy Hill. Over the spring and summer 16 new sleeper bridges were built over waterlogged hollows and stretches on the W. Rigg path linking the road past Red Moss and Listonshiels. A rotting bridge over the Dean Burn in Bonaly was replaced with a new one.



In Jan/Feb the decaying lower bridge in Poets Glen was removed and replaced with a new one. It has been a much admired improvement by many of the walkers who use this popular access route for the Pentlands.

We were assisted by corporate volunteers from 9 companies and organisations. Over the year they came out on 15 workdays. I'm pleased to say that they enjoy their day away from the office on all the different tasks they do.

The main prospective project for 2026 is the construction of a considerable length of boardwalk on frequently waterlogged parts of the Thieves Rd. between the Little Vantage car park and Gala Ford. The FoP Board have agreed to make a

financial contribution to this project and we will be working closely with the Park.

All of this work is only possible because of our volunteers and team leaders, with 60 participating in work parties over the year - some occasionally and others regularly. There has been an increase in the number of volunteers available on individual days. This means that regularly 2 or 3 teams (and occasionally as many as 4) do different jobs on a workday. Thanks to their efforts 3,450 hours of work were undertaken.



Talks

Four talks took place during the year.

On 5th March Tim Simon, a member of FoP and also Scotways, talked to us about Scotland's cross country routes. We learned about why such routes came into being and how they are being maintained.

13th May. Charlotte Neary of the Forth Rivers Trust spoke to us about the work of the Trust in general and her own portfolio of work in particular. We learned just how extensive the Forth catchment is, and some of the approaches to land management.

On 16th July, Magnus Linklater, chair of Little Sparta Trust, gave a very personal, and entertaining, account of Ian Hamilton Finlay. We learned about Finlay's interaction with friend and foe alike.

4th November. Andrew Drummond-Hermand described the mushrooms he has discovered growing in the dung of Highland cattle at Swanston. We learned about the stages in the mushroom's life-cycle, well illustrated by the presenter's own time-lapse photography.

Walks

5th January. The Winter Warmer walks had to be cancelled due to icy conditions. About half the full complement did manage to gather though, at the venue, the Currie Chieftains clubhouse at Balerno.

On 18th April we completed the two cancelled walks from 5th January in much more agreeable underfoot conditions.

14th August. We wandered around the Little Sparta site near Dunsyre, individuals and in little groups, following up on the talk given a few weeks before by Magnus Linklater.

24th October. This was a walk we had done before, starting and finishing at the Water of Leith Centre, and taking in both the East and West Craiglockhart Hills as well as Craiglockhart Pond.

On 28th November we started at Bonaly and wound our way round to the Corner Café at Currie. On the route, we stopped to inspect some of the work undertaken by FoP work squads, including the new bridges at Dean Burn and Poet's Glen.



Conservation, Training And Quartermaster's Report

Ian Combe

Conservation

Patieshill - A hawthorn hedge border was planted as a guard against the local sheep and deer and a further extension to the hillside wildflower meadows was planted. Also, we undertook vegetation strimming, established 16 bird boxes and placed taller tubes on trees that were suffering deer damage.

Bonaly - We carried out gorse cutting and burning, erected new fencing, and extended the wildflower meadow. Path clearing and maintenance included the Dreghorn-Bonaly path and the Torduff-Bonaly path. At Bonaly Lower Car Park we recovered parking bays from overgrown shrubs & branches.

Easton Farm - We installed a kissing-gate to assist in sheep control.

Poets Glen - We undertook a major exercise to replace the footbridge on the path here.

West Linton - At the arboretum we extended the wildflower meadow by lifting turf and planting seed and by the Lyne Water we repaired and reinforced the collapsed riverbank by installing gabion baskets.

Harlaw – We removed storm damaged trees and following the drystone walling course referred to above further significant repairs to damaged dry stone walls round the Reservoir, with many gaps of up to 4m in width.

Buckie Brae - Annual path maintenance was carried out here.

Old Pentland Cemetery - We undertook vegetation cut back and tidied up this location.

West Rigg Path - We constructed sleeper bridges on the very boggy part of the path towards Listonshiels, which was cleared of gorse earlier in the year.

Garvald Farm - Carried out repairs to one of the dry stone walls/raised planters which had been hit by a vehicle. By the bridge over the Medwin Water at Garvald we reinforced the riverbank by tidying up the willow spiling that protects it.

North Esk Reservoir - Carried out repairs to the Dulverton Bird Hide.

Silverburn /Lowries Den - Undertook path maintenance work, replacing rotten step.

Loganlea Reservoir - A wildflower strip along the sunny side of the wall, in partnership with Loganlea Fisheries.

Logan Burn in Green Cleuch - Cross-drain clearance and replacement and repairs to sleeper bridge.

Carlops - Carried out trimming the Pentland Way path heading out of village.

Torphin - Undertook path clearance/trimming

Hillend - Overgrown paths cleared up to Alpine Coaster

Fairy Glen - Path that links Harlaw House to Balerno was cleared of overhanging branches.

North of Wester Bavelaw - Undertook an emergency outing with PHRP installing numerous fence posts/wire fence, to keep out sheep about to go swimming in Bavelaw Burn.

By Turnhouse Hill, Flotterstone - We assisted Edinburgh University with their new plantations of native Scottish trees.

And, of course, we are doing our bit by harnessing solar power in our Steading Tool Store.



Quartermaster

Steading Tool Store: The addition this year of a tool rack as designed and built by Richard Maguire has transformed tool storage, giving high profile to the available hand tools, making selection of the correct tools so much easier, and of course we are so spoiled now with our brilliant solar powered motion lights.

With security in mind, we decided to board up two of the weak doors with hardboard and also to replace the external lock which had been failing on occasions. Thanks for this to our resident master-locksmith Andrew Gallacher. Please note that it is important that any requirement for new keys must be referred to Andrew or myself who hold master keys.

We are continuing to build up our stock of tools and equipment to cope with the significant increase of projects and workdays this year particularly, for example, we now have 3 Austrian scythes, new Fiskars Anvil Loppers, non-stick, with a cut of 50mm!. A third brush cutter was kindly donated and has significantly increased the volume of work carried out this year.

The container sited just over the Bypass by Swanston Farm is proving very useful for bulk storage of wood and mortar, with easy access for bulk deliveries.

Training

An Austrian Scythe course was arranged in April and we now have a team of 3 whose new skills have already been on display up in the Patieshill Stell. It is our intention to have a similar course around the same time next year.

We had a very successful Dry Stone Walling beginners' course over 2 fine weather days in July with Richard Love, from the Dry Stone Walling Association, attended by 8 volunteers. Repairs on that day were carried out to 3 large sections of the wall round Harlaw Reservoir.

A Strimmer/Brush Cutter course was held in November and will be organised again next year.

In January and November Team leaders attended their Emergency First Aid Course, which requires to be revisited every three years.

A large group were given training by Andrew Williamson of PHRP installing numerous fence posts / wire fence to keep out sheep about to go swimming in Bavelaw.

Presentation

Friends of the Pentlands Quartermaster's Award November 2025

John Surtees is the recipient of the QM Volunteer's Award this year in recognition of his enthusiasm and dedication to FOP over nearly two decades.

This obsolete fence post maul head weighs in at around 5kg and, of course, was another recycling opportunity!!

I can never forget that day when I was being bestowed by John, the then quartermaster, with the custody of FOP hand tools, which I readily accepted. But the significance of this honour only really became apparent when he and the late John Stirling appeared at my door with not just multiple tools, but a sizeable garden shed to store them in..... which we duly had to lift over my garage. There it stayed in front of our kitchen window for a few years until we procured a container,.....just in time before I was divorced!!



This report covers the 6 arboreta that we look after in the Pentlands hills, together with the woodland legacy opposite our arboretum at Swanston.

Our furthest outpost, Carnwath, is the least well maintained as it is in a fairly poor, very boggy piece of land. 2 years ago the local council planted around 200 trees directly in front of our arboretum which pushed us to the back in terms of light. During an inspection visit last October it was noted that, overall, the trees are doing fine although the site is fairly overgrown and a work party should be scheduled for early in 2026.

Harperrig has no access at the moment due to a fallen tree blocking in entrance. However, I was able to gain access and the trees are doing very well. I spoke with Graham Hamilton and he tells me that they will cut the fallen tree away and make the site available to us early in 2026.

West Linton is doing very well overall, in conjunction with the wildflower meadow project, albeit there is slight concern regarding the health of two of the trees.

Silverburn is doing fairly well and the local gardener continues to create a path within the arboretum on our behalf

Swanston has taken over from West Linton as the jewel in the crown. The trees are all doing really well and in early November we also cleared a huge amount of gorse from the legacy arboretum, so both are looking really tidy. Funnily enough whilst working last week I filled the pamphlet holder with around 30 pamphlets, and 2 hours later it was empty as it is by far the most visited arboretum.

Finally, we planted a further 650 trees/ shrubs at Patieshill in early 2025, so the hedge is now becoming rather long. I'm now in the process of speaking to TCV to hopefully acquire a further 650 !!!

Overall the trees are doing pretty well in all areas.



Wildflower Meadows for Butterflies and Other Pollinators

Bob Douglas

OVERVIEW:

Substantial progress has been made on all sites during 2025 and three new sites have been established at Loganlea Reservoir, Roamers Wood and Hillend. The “turf-lift” sites have been extended and are establishing well. We saw the gradual appearance of wildflowers on the “cut, rake and rattle” sites with Yellow Rattle thriving and providing seed at a couple of sites. We are now beginning to see some of the target species at, or close to, a couple of sites.

TURF-LIFTING SITES:

Patieshill

The hillside meadow was extended to the western limit of the site and there is room for limited further expansion up the hill, possibly with the involvement of corporate groups. Dark Green Fritillaries have been seen on site and future work will be carried out on a couple of damp grass patches/glades.

West Linton Golf Club

The three areas have been expanded and we are close to joining them together. The ground opened up in 2025 will be seeded in Spring 2026.



CUT, RAKE AND RATTLE SITES:

Roamers Wood (3 sites):

The Yellow Rattle sown in the Firepit Meadow in 2024 is now well established.

The central path area has been extended and rattled.

The Loan entrance is a new site in 2025 and an initial patch has been cut and rattled.

Lyne Water Loop

Seed was harvested from the Yellow Rattle established at the western end and spread eastward.

A Northern Brown Argus colony was confirmed 200m downstream and trial planting of Wild Rock Rose, which is a food plant for this species, was undertaken.

Harlaw

Yellow Rattle has established and the cut and rattled area has been extended. Invasive Dockens and Meadowsweet were dug out.

Hillend

Another new site in 2025 with an initial grass cut and ground rattled.

OTHER SITES:

Loganlea Reservoir

This is another site established during 2025, with invasive bracken pulled and initial seeding undertaken. Our grateful thanks are due to Kenny Waugh at Loganlea Fishery for his work on the new site beside the reservoir.

Garvald Home Farm

The wildflower patch was tidied up, grass cut, and ground rattled.



We also wish to record our thanks to the Inch Nursery which is growing on seedlings for us.

Working with Children and Young People

Bob Cook

This year, FoP have played host to a small number of school and children's groups, primarily at and around Swanston farm, where young people have engaged in litter picking, tree guard removal and collection, nature walks, seeing the Highland 'coos', the horses and goats and walking the hills. Groups involved have included Brownies and Cub Scouts at Swanston, Explorer Scouts who cleared drains and pulled young spruce at Bonaly reservoir and Seamab School for trauma affected children, who had a memorable day out at Swanston and did some useful work in the woodlands.

School involvement is limited by the cost of transport to and from the Pentlands, limiting the scope for involving young people in conservation activities, when schools do not have their own vehicles.

A potentially important link has been established at the request of SRUC (Scottish Rural Colleges), King's Buildings campus. Staff and students have visited Patieshill nature reserve to discuss scope for students to engage in research projects and conservation tasks. The students also did some very useful work, lifting turf to enable planting of wildflowers targeting specific species of butterfly. FoP took up an invitation to present at the SRUC induction day and made valuable links with college staff. It is intended to strengthen this link in the coming year.



PENTLAND POST:

The Pentland Post was published as usual in May and October with items and photos covering various activities of the Friends of the Pentlands, as well as current and historical events associated with the Pentland Hills. A big thank you goes to all contributors, regular and occasional, for their articles on a wide range of topics.

We'll continue sending the Post electronically but will also provide paper copies for members who prefer printed material. If you have any suggestions or topics for future issues please contact the Editor, John Surtees, at john.surtees@pentlandfriends.org.uk

CALENDAR:

The 2025 "Pentlands Through The Seasons" calendar was a success, generating a surplus of £1,438 for the Friends. A huge thank you to everyone who submitted photographs, and to the team that selected the best ones for the calendar - a challenging task again!

Also greatly appreciated are the members who helped distribute and sell the calendar, and those who attended stalls at the Balerno Farmers Market and other locations.

The 2026 calendar, theme "Favourite Corners of the Pentlands", has been selling very well. Looking ahead, the theme for the 2027 calendar will be "Our Friends in the Pentlands". If you have any landscape format photographs you'd like to share please submit them to John Surtees at john.surtees@pentlandfriends.org.uk by 30th June 2026.



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 “area of interest” is essentially bounded by the main roads that encircle the Pentlands. We do, however, take an interest in developments which impact on the visual landscape of the Pentland Hills, either when seen from the Pentlands or from their surroundings.

Our monitoring of planning applications involves no fewer than five different authorities - the Edinburgh City, Midlothian, West Lothian, Scottish Borders and North Lanarkshire Councils as well as Scottish Government which processes large scale energy consents, “called in” applications and forestry applications through Forestry & Land Scotland.

Unlike the National Parks, the Pentland Hills Regional Park (operated jointly by Edinburgh, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils) is not itself a planning authority but has relevant aims namely:

- 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
- Co-ordination of these aims to co-exist with farming and other land uses within Park.

Over the past year we have been involved in considering and monitoring a number of specific proposals which include:

Old Pentland Burial Ground, Damhead

We have an informal arrangement which involves us in the maintenance of this historic burial ground which is affected by two separate proposals. There is a fresh proposal for a substantial mixed use commercial and residential development on a 44 hectare site involving some 350 to 400 houses for which a full planning application is still to be submitted. There is also a proposal by Midlothian Council for a new A701 Relief Road. We responded to Midlothian’s preliminary consultation stressing the importance of the site and asking Midlothian to have due regard to it in finalising its proposal. While we do not consider ourselves to be in a position to challenge Midlothian’s decision that the relief road is necessary, we are relieved that the proposed road will pass to the east of the cemetery on the side away from the Pentlands.

Edinburgh - Wester Kinleith Forestry Proposal

This proposal by the Roseberry Estate is for essentially commercial woodland, but with the usual broadleaved component round the margins, on a 152 ha site lying to the S and SE of Harlaw Reservoir between it and Black Springs. We have a neutral position towards the proposal but we did respond to the consultation on two access related issues and are pleased to see that these have been taken into account in the final proposal.

Solar Farm and Battery storage at Kirknewton

There is a proposal for a solar farm with some 86,000 panels on a 76ha site to the south of Kirkliston. We attended a pre-application consultation event in the light of which we are satisfied that there is no basis for objection.

Torfichen Windfarm, Moorfoot Hills

This windfarm proposal, submitted in 2023, was discussed by the Board and at the 2024 AGM, with the view being taken that the visual impact on the Pentland Hills was not sufficient to warrant an objection by us. We were awaiting clarification of the position of Midlothian Council which has, eventually, lodged an objection on grounds unrelated to the visual impact on the Pentlands. The application remains with Scottish Ministers for determination

Cloich Windfarm and transmission lines

In 2016 consent was granted after a Public Inquiry for an 18 turbine wind farm near Eddleston – a proposal to which the Friends did not then object. A fresh application was submitted in 2021 for the same site for a reduced number of larger turbines. At that time we made representations to Scottish Ministers expressing our concerns at the visual impact of the higher turbines particularly from Mendick and Ingraston Hills. That application remains outstanding. In 2024 we responded to the pre-application consultation about the siting of the 132kV overhead power lines linking Cloich to the existing substation at Currie. A formal application is still awaited.

Rutherford Castle Golf Course

This application was originally submitted in 2019 for a leisure and housing development on an 80 hectare site being part of the former golf course. The initial proposal was for 180 lodges with function suite, restaurant, shop and related facilities. We objected on visual grounds. The application has gone through various iterations and was eventually reduced to 79 lodges. On that basis Scottish Borders Council has now approved the application subject to conditions.

Litter-picking

Nicola Fryer

During 2025 we met to pick litter 20 times, at 5 sites across the Pentlands, and have collected a total of 82 bags.

From a pool of around 30 volunteers we recorded 100 volunteer/days giving 167.25 hours.

Andrew Gallacher has had to withdraw from his co-ordinator's role and we wish to record our thanks and appreciation for his efforts over a number of years, and particularly for the administration files he established, such as the statistics spreadsheet, which has proved very useful.

For the future both myself and Ian Kennedy have stepped in as coordinators, and have offered times and dates that work for us, according to our circumstances. Hence the departure from the traditional two Tuesdays a month at 9.30 am. We realise that this may not suit everyone and will be canvassing our pool of volunteers for feedback about the changes, and perhaps to let us know their own preference.

During the January/February break I will review these, and try to come up with a routine that will suit as many as possible.

Many thanks to all the litter pickers for a great, and never ending, job.



Friends of the Pentlands people

Office Bearers

Chair	Andrew Marsden
Treasurer	Iain MacLeod
Secretary	Ian Walford
Membership Secretary	Bill Aitken

Other Board members

Bob Cook
Nicola Fryer
Sam Lockhart
Neil Mackay
Dennis Smith
Douglas Tullis

Team leaders

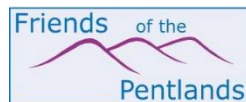
Linda Stirling	Garden Group coordinator
John Hutton	Walks and Talks coordinator
Nicola Fryer & Andrew Gallacher	Litter-picking coordinators
Douglas Tullis	Planning Officer
Iain MacLeod	Annual Review editor
Ian Combe	Conservation, Training, Quartermaster
Bob Cook	Schools Liaison
Hamish Clark	Workdays, Corporate Liaison and Path Inspections coordinator
Mike Andrew	Arboreta coordinator
Angus Ogilvy	Liaison with HMP workshop
John Surtees	Publications editor
Bob Douglas	Wildflower Meadows leader and IT coordinator and Facebook editor
Andrew Marsden	Work Parties
Donald Sandeman	Work Parties
Gordon Cameron	Work Parties
Brian Gallagher	Work Parties
Ian Combe	Work Parties
Iain Wells	Work Parties





Credits

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



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