

## Friends of Dollar Park - Chairman's Report Annual General Meeting 22 July 2014

It seems to be the norm in such reports to state that the past year has been a busy one, this has been true for us but unfortunately it has been a mixture of limited success and progress on the one hand and delays and considerable frustration on the other.

### Toilet Plans

- At our first meeting after the AGM I stated that this was a make or break year with regards to obtaining even basic toilet facilities within the park. With a view to making savings a fresh architectural assessment of the block was made by the Vice Chair Morris Robb. He produced plans in September for the development of a ladies, gents and disabled toilet block to cost £30k.

### Falkirk Council

- The committee met with Provost Pat Reid to discuss the revised toilet block proposals, resulting in the decision to seek more funding from the Common Good Fund alongside an application to the Falkirk Environmental Trust. Following a meeting and submissions to Arthur Berg of FET unfortunately our application was not put forward to their Board as we were unable to have a maintenance regime in place. These avenues may still be open for the future.
- Last year the Council appointed a new Estates Manager David Crighton who comes with a parks and horticultural background. The committee and I have had a number of valuable meetings with David on site to formulate the way forward, resulting in an ideas/features plan (a copy circulated with the agenda) that gives us a vision to aim for and will help direct areas/projects to be developed and progressed. The Friends' opinions are to be canvassed.
- In February permission was granted for the development of the former Castings Social Club as housing, with community compensation of £40k from the developer for loss of sports provision. It was debated that this be used for improvements to the Dollar Park tennis courts, to possibly include a changing block and toilets, but the Planning Committee ultimately directed that the funds are to be used more locally.

### Falkirk Criminal Justice

- The committee met this time last year with Criminal Justice in the Walled Garden to update on its progress there, which was to pick up in the months to follow. They also suggested that the Cyrenians of Edinburgh may be a possible source of funding and help, and offered to set up a meeting (see below).
- In the New Year we queried progress and learnt that factors beyond anyone's control had delayed work in the Walled Garden. This has however now been overcome and a new revised schedule recently drawn up, with the majority of the outstanding work hopefully to be completed by September 2014.
- The idea has been suggested that the service, within the scope of unpaid work community payback orders, may be able to provide suitable manpower to maintain the toilets once they are eventually developed. Advice and opinion is to be sought.

### Cyrenians

- *“an independent Scottish Charity with an outstanding track record in pioneering creative solutions to the contemporary problems faced by people on the margins of society ... also has an environmental brief, seeing the connection between valuing people and valuing our planet as part of the solution to a sustainable and happy future for society.”*
- We met with the Cyrenians in mid October. They had already prepared a very comprehensive Feasibility Plan for the Walled Garden which considered the viability of them managing everything over an initial three year period (fully detailed in the 22nd October 2013 minutes).
- Given their remit above they seemed an ideal partner, however despite initial enthusiasm for reasons not fully relayed unfortunately they decided not to go ahead. Clarification is to be sought about this and whether there is anything we can do to make it viable for them.

### Falkirk Association for Mental Health

- I have also recently had a meeting with Angela Price of the above who would like to make use of Arnotdale and is seeking the views of the Friends.

In conclusion, another year has come and gone and still no option for the toilet block has come to fruition. Our cheaper £30k plan has no takers at the moment. We can be encouraged however that the Walled Garden work now appears to be on track, and the vision of the larger park infrastructure is looking promising. However, going forward we must make a decision on where best to direct our efforts for tangible results.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their support over the year, to all the Friends of Dollar Park, and last but certainly not least to Jessica our secretary for her hard work and enthusiasm over all the years, who has stepped down to take up a post as Estates Development Officer with Falkirk Council.

*Leslie Pryde*

*Chairman of Friends of Dollar Park*