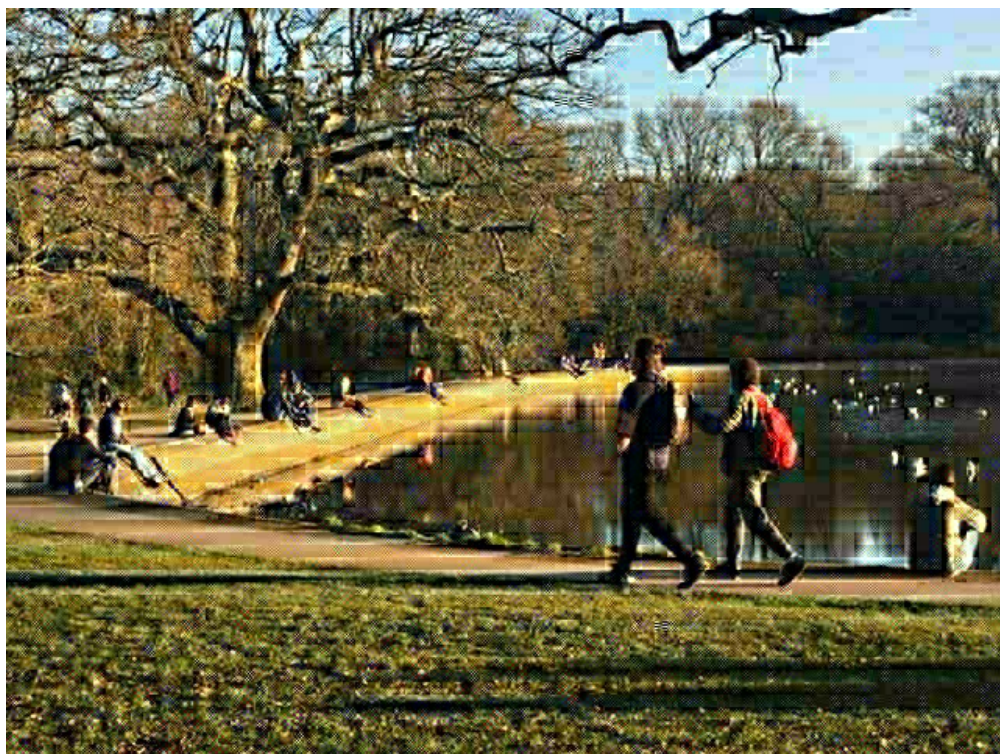




S.C.A.P.P.S.

Spring 2025

***The Newsletter of the
Southampton Commons & Parks Protection Society***



www.scapps.org.uk

Dear Member

Welcome to 2025 and our first Newsletter of the year. Last year we were pleased to welcome several new members to our Committee at the Annual General Meeting. As ever in 2024 there were planning proposals which caused us some concern: - the proposed widening of the Lovers Walk footpath on Southampton Common in order to accommodate pedestrians, scooters, scooter users and cyclists- see more about this in our Secretary's Graham Linecar's article. In 1911 SCAPPS objected to and opposed cycling on Lovers Walk!

This Newsletter is being produced by Steve Haywood who with Rory Hewett has also begun to create a new website for us: www.scapps.org.uk.

Last year we held our AGM in a room at the Issac Watts Memorial Church in Winchester/ Luccombe Road. We were made to feel very welcome and are returning there this year on Monday 2 nd June at 7 for 7.30pm. We welcomed Beatrice Hook, Steve Haywood, Rory Hewett and William Stacey to the committee. Between them, they bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the committee. Sadly, Beatrice had to stand down from the committee for health reasons. We wish her well.

Our Treasurer James Arthur has provided you with our banking arrangements and we hope you are able to continue to support us.

Our Secretary Graham Linecar has as ever been busy representing our interests and concerns as companies and developers seek to use some of the City's green spaces for housing development e.g. St Mary's College Playing Field site. We have many more people living in the City, some in blocks of flats with very limited open space provision – thus dependent on the existing parks and open spaces. Two small pocket parks have been provided in the city centre, one at Arundel Gardens and a few planters blocking off Devonshire Road from Cumberland Place.



Photo:
Kate Martin

Update on Issues and Action from Graham Linecar

A quick run-through news about Southampton's parks, and action we've taken since our AGM.

Mayflower Park: We've agreed with City Council a plan for small improvements. Cars are now blocked from the far end, we look forward to more seats being installed. At Royal Pier, we're looking at ways to mark a pedestrian route across Red Funnel ferry traffic and to install a more secure barrier to stop cars when the Park is closed. Once again, grass had to be re-seeded after being damaged by events; we've lobbied to break this annual cycle. We continue to press for compromise so the Boat Show's requirement for clear space for its temporary marquees doesn't stop some planting to soften the Park's bleak appearance. Planning permission to site a Spitfire Monument in the Park has been renewed. If that goes ahead, more ambitious improvements are needed to give a dignified setting for a national monument attracting visitors to the Park.

City Centre Parks: Government Transforming Cities Fund money paid for road changes, new bus stops in Castle Way and a small new park, Arundel Gardens, just completed. In Hoglands, replacing the skatepark is delayed. We look forward to the refurbishment of the play area in Houndwell.

The Common: A gravel track has been laid across The Flats, intended to reduce damage when events take place there – promoters will be told to keep heavy vehicles to the track. Once again, after Let's Rock, grass needed repair and ruts and holes filled. You'll remember SCAPPS objected to widening the Lovers Walk path. Because it's on registered common, it needs Government approval. The Planning Inspector deciding the application visited in October. A decision should be with us soon. A new issue has just come to our attention. The University proposes student housing on the car parks and landscaped areas at Avenue Campus; we're concerned at the urbanising impact on The Common.

Keeping Southampton 'green': There's a separate article about policies to protect the City's green infrastructure and promote a 'green grid'. SCAPPS has long campaigned to get protection of green areas in planning policies; our intervention secured a policy in the Core Strategy to maintain the quantity of green space – public parks, sports grounds and all undeveloped green areas whether the public has access or not. It was in defence of this matter of principle for SCAPPS that we took part in the Public Inquiry into an appeal against refusal of permission for housing on the former playing fields of St Mary's College, Bitterne.

Woodmill Activities Centre and South Stoneham House: Historic South Stoneham House, owned by Southampton University, has been empty for nearly 20 years and is deteriorating. Capability Brown landscaped the grounds, now split, with City Council owning the part used as the Outdoor Activities Centre. The future of the Activities Centre is uncertain. So too are University plans for House and garden. We'll continue to press to protect both.

The Veny, and Mount Pleasant Rec: At the recent Council Meeting, undertaking was given to find funding to renovate the small park and play area, The Veny, with hope a Friends Group will form to take on some responsibility for its care – there's an unfortunate record of criminal and anti-social behaviour. Less happy news about the long-closed Mount Pleasant Recreation Ground and adjacent footpath which is to be blocked-up following making of a Public Spaces Protection Order. Nothing's been decided to stop both staying derelict. We'll keep campaigning.

Riverside path by Meridian development: Still no news following Inland Homes, the builder of the flats on the old Meridian site, going into administration. The scheme was to include improved riverside walk and public green space. We'll continue to press for this important part of the development to be implemented.

University of Southampton: The University is a major part of Southampton's economy and life. SCAPPS concern is because the University is a major landowner, including sites which have impact on our parks and green spaces. The University has been increasing the number of properties it occupies in the City Centre, near the Central Parks. Its campuses at Highfield, Avenue and Boldrewood are next to The Common. We have concern about intentions for development particularly at Avenue campus where a new proposal for student residences would have visual impact and result in damaging pressures on The Common. The University has not for many years reviewed and revised the policy document, called its Estates Strategy, which assesses future development needs and puts forward plans to meet that need. It includes planning for student halls; some are empty, more need replacement or refurbishing but the University seemingly has no strategy for tackling this. SCAPPS is concerned what might happen at South Stoneham House. The House itself has been unused for 20 years, and is deteriorating. The grounds are a 'Capability' Brown landscape. It is within a conservation area. Part of the former grounds of South Stoneham House are owned by the City Council and used as the Woodmill Outdoor Activities Centre. The City Council is withdrawing its funding from the Centre. Its future is in doubt. SCAPPS will be working hard to press for uses and proposals both on University land and at the Activities Centre which respect the landscape character, enhance at least the spirit of the Brown landscape, and retain public use of the watersport activities.

LATE UPDATE: The Common, Lovers Walk: We've just received the decision on the application to widen Lovers Walk — works on registered commons require Government consent in addition to planning permission. Consent has been granted to widen Lovers Walk north to 3.5m, Lovers Walk south to 2.5m and to tarmac the compacted-gravel path between Winn Road and Westwood Road.

SCAPPS has for many years objected to successive proposals because of damage to landscape appearance and character. The Inspector's report acknowledges widening, particularly of Lovers Walk north, will have a 'modest' detrimental impact and result in harmful urbanising change. However, the report concludes widening is 'necessary and reasonable to accommodate the level of use and would be of benefit to walkers and cyclists who both could be accommodated more amenably. I am satisfied that the benefits to users in terms of public access and related enjoyment of The Common would more than outweigh the modest visual effect'.



Photo: Graham Linecar

Dates for your diary:

**This year's AGM is at the Issac Watts Memorial Church in Winchester/
Luccombe Road on Monday 2nd June at 7 for 7.30pm. All are welcome.**

Events promoting the 'green and the blue', that is our green spaces and water. Southampton National Park City are bringing together events in the week after the late-May Bank Holiday including an event on The Common on Sunday 1 June when SCAPPS will be there promoting our purpose and activity and recruiting members. We're in touch with other 'heritage' groups hoping we might this year revive the Heritage Fayre during the national Heritage Days in September.

SCAPPS and the Southampton Green Grid and Green Infrastructure Strategy

by James Arthur

In 2019 Southampton City Council declared a climate emergency and published its Green City Charter, identifying key priorities to create a cleaner, greener, healthier and more sustainable city. Southampton City Council's Green City Action Plan 2023-2030 seeks to deliver against this charter, and key elements of this Plan draw upon the City's Green Grid and Green Infrastructure Strategy - which align closely with the objectives of SCAPPS.

Southampton's Green Grid and related Green Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan are intended to create a healthier and more resilient city for people and wildlife in Southampton.

This is to be achieved by:

1. Securing resources to support retention and provision of new and improved green infrastructure – through direct city financing, national grants and partnerships with the private sector and NGOs.
2. Ensuring all residents are within 5 minutes' walk of a green space with an area of at least 2 ha. (this standard is currently not achieved in significant parts of Southampton).
3. Increasing the provision of Local Nature Reserves within the city – standard is 1 ha. per 1,000 people meaning the city would need an additional 216 ha of LNRs (current provision 43 ha).
4. Ensuring connectivity of green spaces through green corridors recognised in local plans.
5. Ensuring that the city's green spaces are of good quality and accessible to all.
6. Improving biodiversity and climate change adaptation through additional good quality green space.
7. Protecting green infrastructure from inappropriate development and through appropriate and enhanced management and maintenance.
8. Promoting an improved understanding of the financial value of green infrastructure (through development of a Natural Capital Register and creation and execution of a Natural Capital Plan for the protection of current ecosystem assets and services and provision and creation of enhanced levels of protection).

Under a public consultation initiative linked to the green grid and green infrastructure strategy there were over 2,500 responses. The outcome from this consultation is summarised thus: *An overwhelming number of comments related to*

the need for more green space, better access to nature, the need to restore and help nature in our city and for our outdoor spaces to be somewhere that people could enjoy. There is a concern about the general decline in habitat (quality and extent) for wildlife in the city.

People also said they wanted more green connections, more tree planting, more sensitively designed development (including green roofs/walls) and making the city centre a car-free area (reducing air pollution and improving access for pedestrians). People said there is scope for improvement on the standard of new developments and want them to offer more green infrastructure.

In responding to actions impacting on green spaces in the city, SCAPPS can draw upon these policy and strategy documents and refer to the results of the consultation which support our mission. We could also strengthen our partnerships in this area. Although “National Park City” gets several mentions in the documents as a partner, SCAPPS does not get a mention.



Photo: Kate Martin

Membership fees due:

Dear members, 2025 membership fees are now due for payment. The annual fee remains at £5 for 2025. Payment is most conveniently made through bank transfer to our Santander Account: Account Name: Soton Commons & Parks Protection Soc. Sort Code: 09 06 66; Account Number: 41062362. Please provide your name as “reference” on your transfer. Alternatively, cheques can be made payable to: Soton Commons & Parks Protection Soc. and sent to: Dr J.P Arthur, SCAPPS treasurer, 3, Beech Road, Ashurst, Southampton, SO40 7AY. For your future convenience you may wish to set up a standing order for annual fee payments to SCAPPS. You may also wish to make a donation in addition to your annual fee payment to support the campaigns and activities which SCAPPS is currently pursuing as maintaining our presence with some of the issues can be quite expensive and we are also faced with ever increasing postage costs. Thank you to those who have already made a payment to cover 2025 annual membership fees.

About Southampton Commons and Parks Protection Society - SCAPPS

Southampton Commons and Parks Protection Society (SCAPPS) was founded shortly after the national Commons Preservation Society's fight in the 1860s against enclosures of common land in the London area. SCAPPS has similar aims, which are to protect Southampton's Commons and Parks from damage and encroachment. (It started life under a different name but has used its current title from at least 1960).

The Society brings together a cross section of citizens committed to the well-being of our City's green public spaces which include: Avenue Lands, Bassett Green, Bitterne Common, Central Parks, Hum Hole, Itchen Valley Conservation Area, Lordswood Greenway, Mayfield Park, Mayflower Park, Millbrook Recreation Ground, Millers Pond, Monks Brook Greenway, Pear Tree Green, Portswood Recreation Ground, Queens Park & Vokes Gardens, Riverside Park, Rockstone Place (Little Mongers), Rollesbrook Valley, Shirley Ponds, Shirley Recreation Ground, Shoreburs Greenway, Southampton Common, Sports Centre, Veracity Ground, Weston Lane, Westwood Country Park, and others. We are regularly consulted on, and respond to local planning applications affecting Southampton's green spaces. We liaise with the other local amenity societies over matters of mutual interest.

If you would like to join SCAPPS, please complete the following:

Name

Address

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Tel:

Email:

Return to:
SCAPPS c/o Kate Martin, 83 Dean Road, Bitterne, Southampton, SO18 6AQ.