



KEEPING OUR TOWN SPECIAL

Annual Report 2022



Daffodills at the Grange in March 2023

Picture by Nick Robinson

“Spring drew on...and a greenness grew over those brown beds, which, freshening daily, suggested the thought that Hope traversed them at night, and left each morning brighter traces of her steps.”

Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre

Dear Members of Friends of Lewes

Welcome to the Friends of Lewes Annual Report which I hope you will find interesting and informative.

Even the recent cold weather at the time of writing can't put the spring bulbs off, and when the daffodils are in flower, I think it is safe to say Spring is pretty much here, with all the hope that brings for the warmer weather to come.

The first few pages of our Annual Report let you know who the various committees working on your behalf for the society are, the structure and governance of our society and the goals and objectives being pursued. See pages 3-5 for details.

The next section looks at the achievement and performance against these stated goals by our four sub committees. The section starts with a report from the planning committee including the way that the committee is run and details of the Wenban Smith and Eastgate Street sites and the applications there, and the consultation brief on the Brooks Road area on pages 6-7. Friends of Lewes recently took on the role of Lewes Flood Action and our work in this area follows on page 8. No report from a local society concerned with planning matters would be complete without comment on the current North Street Quarter activities and you can find this on pages 8-9. Our thanks to Roger Maskew and Bronagh Liddicoat for their reports on this.

Audrey Jarvis and the Trees Committee have been as busy as ever, whatever the weather as the pictures in the next section show; thanks must go to Audrey for all her work (pages 9-11) and for the links forged with the other organisations participating in creating the tree and wildflower nursery and in liaising with the Lewes Climate Hub (see page 11).

Friends of Lewes continues to take a leading role in the Heritage Open Days each year and Peter Earl details this on page 11; Peter does a great deal of behind-the-scenes work organising these days which spreads right around the year.

The Membership Services Committee has continued to organise online talks and coffee time events throughout the year on a variety of interesting topics and there are plans to arrange a visit to a new rain garden at Wallands School, please see page 12 for details. Thanks are due to Jane Slater who organises the coffee time talks and to all of our speakers, many of whom you will recognise as being society members (Marcus Taylor, Audrey Jarvis and Di Wilkins all spring to mind here.)

As a society we have been working on getting the message about our works and plans out to people through the website, Facebook and twitter as well as trying to get into print in local newspapers and magazines, and you can find details on page 13 of the report. Thanks are due to Barbara Merchant for the curation of our online presence.

Outgoing Chair of our Membership Services Committee Marcus Taylor will be much missed and has given a great deal of valuable service to the society over the years; we welcome Di Wikins the new Chair of this committee; Di has already proved a very hard-working committee member.

Our report concludes with the Financial Review section on page 14, sent in by Melanie Gregory to whom thanks are due for all her work in this area. Melanie is stepping down and thanks are also due to Colin French who is stepping in.

My own focus towards the society's work on the goals is the seventh one, achieving a broader engagement with other civic societies and Civic Voice. Over the course of the last year, I have been able to attend several Civic Voice talks on planning and heritage matters and have been in touch with societies in Winchester (where I attended a very interesting talk by a local bookbinder), Tunbridge Wells and Farnham. I have also given a talk about Friends of Lewes at a South East regional conference held locally at Kings Church which I was then invited to reprise at a meeting in Eastbourne for a group there. In the coming year I hope to attend meetings of other civic societies and learn more about their work and bring back information for our society.

All of our Executive Committee members work hard for the society and I didn't want to end this piece without also thanking those not mentioned specifically above; our ever patient and cheerful secretary Diana Freestone, who is invaluable in so many ways, and Stephen Catlin whose insights are always a welcome addition to any discussion. Thanks, are also due to the committee members, and to all of you as our members; you *are* the Friends of Lewes.

Finally, as Tolstoy famously remarked in Anna Karenina "Spring is the time of plans and projects." Your executive committee and all the committees look forward to letting you know more about our work in the next newsletter in the Summer.

With all good wishes for the Spring

Ruth

Chair, Friends of Lewes

THE FRIENDS OF LEWES
The Lewes Civic Society
Lewes Town Council Offices, Town Hall, High Street
LEWES, East Sussex BN7 2QS
Registered Charity No 258756

Web site: www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk email address: enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

Personnel on 31st December 2022

President: John Davey

Vice-Presidents: Peter Mettyear & Maria Caulfield MP

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Elected Officers

Chair Ruth O'Keeffe
Vice-Chair Roger Maskew
Secretary Diana Freestone
Treasurer Melanie Gregory

Executive Committee Members

Peter Earl
Audrey Jarvis
Bronagh Liddicoat
Barbara Merchant
Jane Slater

Co-opted Committee Members: Stephen Catlin & Diana Wilkins

The Mayor of Lewes has the right to attend Executive Committee meetings.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Roger Maskew (Acting Chair) *
Bronagh Liddicoat*
Stephen Catlin**
Chris Kneale
Charles Meloy
Carolyn Beckingham (Minutes Secretary)

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES COMMITTEE

Marcus Taylor (Chair)
Michael Bell
Bronagh Liddicoat*
Barbara Merchant*
Jane Slater*
Diana Wilkins**

TREES COMMITTEE

Audrey Jarvis (Chair)*
Chris Bibb
Phil Green
Nick Jarvis
David Saunders
Matthew Stuart
Duncan Armstrong
Dean Bell,
Keith Sacre
Peter Thurman
Jill Yeates

HERITAGE OPEN DAY COMMITTEE

Peter Earl (Chair)*
David Attwood
Sue Berry
Diana Freestone*
David Hutchinson

* Member of the Executive Committee
**Co-opted member of the Executive Committee

Who we are

STRUCTURE GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

The Friends of Lewes, founded in 1952, is the Lewes Civic Society, a registered charity with around 400 members. Membership is open to all, on payment of the relevant subscription. Although wholly independent we are allied to the national organisation, Civic Voice, a national umbrella body for similar groups. The number of members as at 31/12/22 is 398.

Our Mission is to conserve and enhance key aspects of the town: its history, distinctive buildings and the national environment, and its social, cultural and economic well-being – we aim to keep Lewes special.

How we are run

Constitution

The Charity is established for the public benefit to pursue the following in the area comprising the Town of Lewes and its immediate surrounding area

To promote:

- high standards of planning and design in or affecting Lewes and ensure that new development is sensitively sited in relation to the surrounding environment.
- the conservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest, and the physical and natural environment
- enhancement of the built environment in, and the social, cultural and economic well-being.
- free access to the public realm.

To stimulate:

- public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character.

To co-operate:

- with public authorities and other bodies in fulfilling these objectives in the area.

Committees

The members of Friends of Lewes Executive Committee are the Charity Trustees. Officers are elected at the Annual General Meeting each year. Four members can be coopted to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee meets monthly and appoints sub-committees which includes the Planning Committee which examines all planning applications affecting Lewes and surrounding areas, the Trees Committee, Membership Services Committee and Heritage Open Day Committee.

Meetings and talks

In normal times we hold an Annual General Meeting, providing formal opportunity to allow members to put their views forward. In addition, we arrange talks on a wide range of topics relating to Lewes and these events are listed in the Diary. During 2022 the aftermath of the Corona Virus pandemic prevented the physical AGM taking place. Members were advised by email of the Agenda and voting took place via email and post to elect the proposed resolutions. Talks on a range of topics successfully took place thanks to Jane Slater, please see the report of the Membership Services Committee on p 12 for more detail.

Communications

We keep members up to date via our Facebook page as well as the website and regular emails. We publish regular Newsletters and an Annual Report and during 2021 launched a series of successful Zoom Coffee Time Talks.

Our Goals and Objectives

The following are the overall goals pursued by the Executive Committee:

- | |
|---|
| <p>1. To bring further benefits to the town by placing increased emphasis on influencing relevant policy makers at national, regional and local levels (for example on, planning, transport, housing, highways, parking). These policy makers include the South Downs National Park Authority, East Sussex County Council, Lewes District Council, Lewes Town Council and others.</p> |
| <p>2. To work with others to promote and protect the vitality of businesses in and around our High Street, preserve its range of buildings and businesses, and safeguard its community value in the face of commercial change and problematic traffic management.</p> |
| <p>3. To preserve the integrity of the Conservation Areas in Lewes through our vigilance and close liaising with local planning authorities and to be mindful of the impact that developments in surrounding areas can have on Lewes.</p> |
| <p>4. To protect our environment for future generations by encouraging sustainability and the building of climate resilience, whilst adapting to the requirements of a low carbon future.</p> |
| <p>5. To increase tree canopy in Lewes, from the current 11.5% to the minimum recommendation for urban environments of 20%. We will do this by building on our successful projects to date and supporting other local groups with similar aims.</p> |
| <p>6. To improve our environment, increase biodiversity and mitigate the risks resulting from climate change by collaborating with other local groups with such aims.</p> |
| <p>7. To learn, and to seek support for our local efforts, by engaging more broadly with other civic societies and Civic Voice.</p> |
| <p>8. To increase our engagement with FoL Members and the local community so that FoL priorities reflect local concerns and that Members are kept informed of FoL initiatives.</p> |

Updated July 2022

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE AGAINST OUR GOALS

There are four sub committees focused on achieving these goals:

Planning, Heritage Open Days, Trees Committee and Membership Services.

In addition, individual members of the Executive Committee are engaged with other local civic and local organisations to promote the mission of the Friends of Lewes.

The Planning Committee Report

The Friends of Lewes Planning Committee continued the important task of considering development proposals affecting the town. The Committee meets each month to examine planning applications, listed building planning applications and advertisement consent applications submitted to the South Downs National Park Planning Authority (SDNPA). As a result of the relaxing of Covid 19 restrictions, there has been a combination of meetings held on line and the re-introduction of face-to-face meetings during the last year.

Each month a list of the recent planning applications is circulated to the members of the committee, who each review all of the applications on the SDNPA website prior to suggesting a shortlist of applications for discussion at the monthly committee meeting. Taking all of these suggestions into account, a final shortlist is circulated prior to the meeting. During 2022 a total of 250 applications were considered in detail and representations made to the SDNPA as the Planning Authority on 101 projects. The Trees Committee also submit comments on tree works applications via the Planning Committee, which submits representations on their behalf.

The scope of the wide range of activities that is undertaken by the Planning Committee, discussed in more detail in the following text, includes seeking to achieve the objectives defined by Goals 1, 2, 3, & 4, which were detailed in the previous section of this report.

At the last AGM in April 2022, Chris Kneale decided to step down as Chair of the Committee after some ten years of service as Chair, which had been greatly appreciated. Since May 2022, Roger Maskew has been the Acting Chair with continued technical support from Chris Kneale. Regrettably, during the last year, three long standing and valued members of the Committee, Nick Wiseman, Frances Tufnell and John Kennett, left the Committee after many years of service, all of which has been most appreciated.

During 2022, Charles Meloy, a successful architect in private practice and Lewes resident was welcomed to the Committee.

Planning Applications: -

The Planning Committee looks at all applications within the Lewes Town boundary plus those in the surrounding area which may have an impact on the town. Responsibility for determining planning applications falls to the SDNPA, but most applications are determined by Lewes District Council planners under an agency arrangement with the SDNPA. Those applications that may have a significant impact on the town or the wider landscape within the National Park are called in by the SDNPA and determined by their Planning Committee. The Society's Planning Committee comments are submitted via the online planning portal, which records the representations made to each application and notifies the planning officer considering the application. The comments, which are in the public domain, are taken into account when the application is determined by officers, having regard to national, SDNPA and local Neighbourhood Plan policies, including any supplementary design guides that may be relevant.

There were two significant planning applications submitted during the last year as follows: -

(a) In March there was an application for the “Demolition of existing buildings contained within a former woodyard”, formerly owned by Wenban Smith, referred to as “The Whitehouse Eastgate Wharf”. The Society strongly objected to this application on the basis that “Development within the Conservation Area involving the demolition of existing buildings should only proceed if and when replacement buildings or alternative development has been approved”. Fortunately, the application has subsequently been withdrawn.

(b) In June there was an application by the Generator Group to redevelop the former Lewes Bus Station in Eastgate Street. The Society submitted a formal objection to this proposal, (which was detailed in the Society’s Autumn Newsletter) on the following grounds,

- (1) The inappropriateness of the design:
- (2) The bulk and scale of the proposed development:
- (3) A more sympathetic design more appropriate to its important location:
- (4) Insufficient affordable housing was being proposed:
- (5) The Society considers that the relocation of the bus station to be an essential pre-requisite for granting permission:
- (6) The Society considers that the existing bus station should not be demolished until an alternative has been both approved and implemented:
- (7) The proposal does not adequately address climate change and the sustainable use of resources.

The planning application was subsequently refused by the SDNPA’s Planning Committee at its meeting on the 08th September 2022. As yet, no appeal has been lodged by the Generator Group.

The Society continues to be concerned at the loss of commercial sites within the town to residential use, which have not been allocated for housing in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan or the South Downs Local Plan. The Society is also concerned about the loss of the variety of business uses in the High Street and in the wider Conservation Area with several notable commercial premises closing within the last year. In particular a number of Banks have closed including Barclays, and more recently the Halifax and Nat West. Fortunately, there have been a number of planning applications for coffee shops and food outlets, which are to be welcomed as they help to offset the proliferation of vacant premises along key frontages.

Planning Policy Consultations: -

In November, the Society welcomed the opportunity to comment on the SDNPA’s consultation Draft Planning Brief for the Brooks Road area, a significant site in the centre of Lewes and in response submitted the following conclusions: -

- (1) This Brooks Road Planning Brief, although welcomed in principle, should not be approved at this stage.
- (2) A number of basic modifications are required in order to make this Planning Brief “fit for purpose” and as such have a greater chance of success.
- (3) A more detailed appreciation of the current site conditions would make the Planning Brief more relevant.
- (4) A greater understanding of how little land is actually available for future commercial development would help ‘focus’ attention on which sites should be considered a ‘priority’.
- (5) Any planning applications for ‘piecemeal’ development of this site should be refused at this stage.
- (6) Any further housing development should be resisted until the Planning Brief for the whole Brooks Road Area has been agreed.
- (7) The Planning Brief for this area should be able to accommodate any transfer of employment uses from the North Street Quarter site, in order to enable the Local Plan aspirations to be realised on this important brownfield site.

Flood Risk in Lewes: -

The Society took over the role of Lewes Flood Action (LFA) in late 2020 and, in line with our Goal of mitigating risks from climate change, has been supporting measures considered necessary to reduce surface water flooding in Lewes – both fluvial and pluvial. Fluvial flood protection measures were reviewed in 2021 and the Society has also been supporting the local Rain Garden Campaign of The Aquifer Partnership (TAP), see <https://wearetap.org.uk/raingarden-campaign/> A TAP managed Rain Garden project at Wallands School has recently been completed and has reduced local surface water flooding. A full-page insert promoting rain gardens, in a domestic setting, in Lewes News in May 2022 resulted from a working partnership of the Society, TAP and Transition Town Lewes. Rain gardens slow down runoff, filter the pollution in road runoff and reduce localised flooding.

The Flood and Water Management Act was passed in 2010, following serious flooding in 2007 which affected 55,000 properties nationally and led to 13 deaths. However, Schedule 3 of the Act, requiring any new development to include high quality sustainable drainage (SuDS) and removing developers' automatic right to connect to public sewers, **has NOT been implemented** and was 'relaxed' in 2014 by removing the mandatory requirement. This has led to the building of new developments which add to the flow volume of existing surface water drainage systems and, inevitably, to the increase in sewage discharges to water courses during periods of rainfall.

Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) reduce the risk of surface water flooding, pollution and help alleviate the pressures on the traditional drainage and sewerage systems. Their objective is to manage rainfall close to where it falls, whilst also considering amenity and biodiversity. Raingardens can be a key part of sustainable drainage.

Flooding experts have strongly urged the Prime Minister to implement Schedule 3 of the Act, stating that they consider it 'essential to address growing surface water flood risk, tackling the sewage pollution problem, whilst being complementary to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) etc.' In response, the **Government have published a recommendation to implement a 'new' approach to drainage ie Schedule 3, but are mindful 'of the cumulative impact of new regulatory burdens on the development sector'**.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-approach-to-sustainable-drainage-set-to-reduce-flood-risk-and-clean-up-rivers>

The Government, via DEFRA, plan to hold a **public consultation in 2023** which will collect views on impact assessments of the proposed implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The consultation will be available at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk>

North Street Quarter: -

The development by Human Nature on their complex scheme for this site entitled the "Phoenix Project" made steady progress during 2022 and the Society kept in contact with Human Nature and a number of meetings were held both by zoom at in person at their offices in Phoenix House. A key event was the Public Exhibition held in April at which time it was anticipated that there would be a Planning Application submitted by the end of May.

However, in one of Human Nature's newsletters it was explained that the SDNPA acting as the Planning Authority, had requested that further work be undertaken to demonstrate how part of the site would be developed for high density housing accommodation. As a consequence, Human Nature decided to commission architects to carry out detailed architectural design work which would require more time to complete.

On the 18th May, Human Nature briefed the Society's Executive Committee by zoom on the latest position and following this presentation it was anticipated that there would be a further meeting to discuss the proposals in more detail during the autumn. However, although a series of dates had been proposed and for various reasons postponed, a meeting between the Society and Human Nature finally took place on Friday 02nd December in Phoenix House.

At this meeting Human Nature confirmed that it now intended to submit a Planning Application to the SDNPA before the end of January 2023 and that this 'hybrid' application would consist of the following elements: -

- (1) An 'Outline Planning Application' for the whole of the Phoenix Project Site.
- (2) A 'Detailed Planning Application' for all of the proposed flood defences.
- (3) A 'Detailed Planning Application' for one parcel of the proposed development, illustrating how the proposed 'Building Codes' would be implemented.

Human Nature agreed to make a further presentation to the Society in January, prior to the planning application being submitted.

Roger Maskew & Bronagh Liddicoat

Trees Committee Report



Increasing our tree canopy

Our year began with the exciting project of planting native tree whips with the children of Western Road and Southover Primary schools. Over four days, we helped each of the 550 children to plant their own special little tree to make a new hedge around the perimeter of their shared school field and, with the help of their teachers, to find out how the trees are important for wildlife. On a return visit, members of the Trees Committee planted a mature Field Maple and an additional 165 whips to make a copse.

In February we were given a gift of eight Turkish Hazel trees which we were able to plant on sites we had already identified at Jubilee Gardens, St. Pancras Gardens and Timberyard Lane. When the tree planting season began again in November, we were pleased to be able to respond to requests for more trees from residents in Malling by planting twelve trees which were generously sponsored by The Rotary Club of Lewes as their contribution to The Queen's Green Canopy. In Fitzgerald Road, Barn Road and Queen's Road we planted Whitebeams, Alders, a Tulip tree, an Ornamental Pear, a Crab Apple, an Amelanchier, a Judas tree and a Field Maple. On the corner of Prince Charles Road and Church Lane the beautiful Wheatley Elm had recently been felled because of disease, so we chose a disease resistant Elm to plant there as a replacement.



Later in November we planted a wildlife hedge at Saxonbury House, Juggs Road, with members of the community. We returned in December to plant a Liquidambar at the edge of the wildflower meadow we had sown there earlier in the year.

Residents of Ferrers Road were keen to have more trees too, so we were pleased to find seven sites where the services allowed planting of Judas tree, Field Maple, Cockspurthorn and Crab Apple.

On a snowy day in mid-December, we finished the year with planting a Liquidambar on the Winterbourne triangle, (sponsored by The Inner Wheel Club of Lewes), two Field Maples to replace felled trees in Houndean Rise and an Ornamental Pear in Cranedown. Last of all, we planted a Whitebeam in Newton Road which was sponsored by contributions from residents.

We have identified several sites which are suitable for planting trees or hedgerows in 2023 – but we are always pleased to hear ideas from residents, do get in touch via : arboretum@friends-of-lewes.org.uk

You can see all the trees which we have planted so far on this map on the Friends of Lewes website: [Lewes Urban Arboretum: tree planting to date – Google My Maps](#)

Working with other groups to improve our environment

Tree and Wildflower Nursery

In March 2022, members of the Trees Committee oversaw the creation of our tree and wildflower nursery: a collaboration between Wildflower Lewes and the Railway Land. Having cleared the ground in November 2021, a grant from Ouse Valley Climate Action enabled us to pay for a contractor to clear it further, lay a membrane and bark chippings, and build galleried shelving to hold pots of wildflower seeds. A second grant from The Chalk Cliff Trust paid for a large raised bed where we could grow our tree seeds. A collection of 440 native tree seeds was sown in October 2022, which we hope to use in the future to make hedgerows in Lewes! The seeds were collected from Landport Bottom, Lewes Cemetery, Bell Lane and Priory Park and include Oak, Hazel, River Birch, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Rowan, Elm, Dogwood, Wayfaring Tree, Hornbeam, Spindle, Beech and Alder.

Lewes Climate Hub

As affiliates of Lewes Climate Hub, Friends of Lewes is represented at their monthly meetings and on the management team. Thanks to support from Lewes District Council, in late 2022 we were able to share the exciting news that the hub will be moving from the current premises at 2 Fisher Street to Lewes House. The tenancy will be shared with OVESCO and Community Energy South and should provide more space for hosting events and activities organised by all the affiliate groups. It is hoped that the new premises will be open by the end of March 2023 and Friends of Lewes will take part in the opening event. To keep up to date with news of the opening, see the Lewes Climate Hub website: [News & events | Lewes Climate Hub](#)

Audrey Jarvis

Heritage Open Days Report

Lewes Heritage Open Days in 2022 was highly successful attracting over 3,000 visitors to the various venues around the Town. Those taking part visited: the Open Houses, the interesting walks and tours focusing on the Flint in the town, its History, Churches, Clocks, Harvey's Brewery, Industry and Inventions and Quirky Lewes. Half the visitors came from outside of Sussex and some as far away as South Africa and Canada to experience the historical and cultural heritage of the town.

Although the event coincided with the Official Mourning period of the loss of Her Majesty the Queen there were very few cancellations and visitors were able to view how Lewes ceremonially mourned her loss and announced the accession of the new King which took place over the weekend.

Lewes Open Days will continue in 2023 and save the dates of the 8th to 10th September 2023. The Heritage Open Day team are always seeking new venues from the heritage of buildings in the town and members can either put forward their own buildings or businesses to be open for part or all of the weekend, or encourage others to join this national festival. Please contact the secretary at enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk for further information.

Peter Earl

Membership Services Committee

The committee aims to increase our engagement with members and the local community so that FoL priorities reflect local concerns and that members are kept informed of FoL initiatives.

Events

During 2022, we held four online talks focusing on topics that are central to FoL's objectives. These included 'Protecting our precious groundwater – The Aquifer Partnership (TAP)' (Aimee Felus), 'The Crown Inn – Evolution and restoration of a landmark building' (Steven Sparks), a public talk by the journalist Polly Toynbee and 'Lewes Heritage Open Day – a preview of some buildings opening this year' (Marcus Taylor).

In addition, we continued with the online coffee time talks which were introduced during the pandemic to help members keep in touch. These talks are free to attend and a link is sent out to members a few days beforehand. Five of these online events were held in 2022: 'Breaky Bottom Vineyard' (Peter Hall), 'Cockshut and Winterbourne – the streams of western Lewes' (Marcus Taylor), 'Adventures on the London to Brighton veteran car run' (Tam Large & Mike Sewell), 'Supporting swifts in Lewes' (Audrey Jarvis), 'How to use the 1921 census to explore your family history' (Di Wilkins).



The Winterbourne stream, Marcus Taylor's talk

A successful Heritage Open Day was organised by the HOD committee from 9th to 11th September. As part of the event, FoL held an exhibition in Lewes House which included a slide presentation on FoL's many achievements which have benefitted the town, material about the Lewes Urban Arboretum and the history of Lewes House (with the LDC and Reeves Photography). For the first time, there was a FoL marquee in the garden with leaflets to encourage new members to sign up. Over 700 visitors came through Lewes House.

Future Events

There will be a visit for members to the recently constructed Raingarden in the playground at Wallands School on Saturday 22 April (which is also [Earth Day](#)). The Raingarden has been designed and constructed, as part of the Raingarden campaign of [The Aquifer Partnership](#) (TAP), to reduce surface water flooding in the local area. More details about how to join the visit will follow shortly.



Wallands School Raingarden, 2023, photo courtesy of Aimee Felus, The Aquifer Partnership.

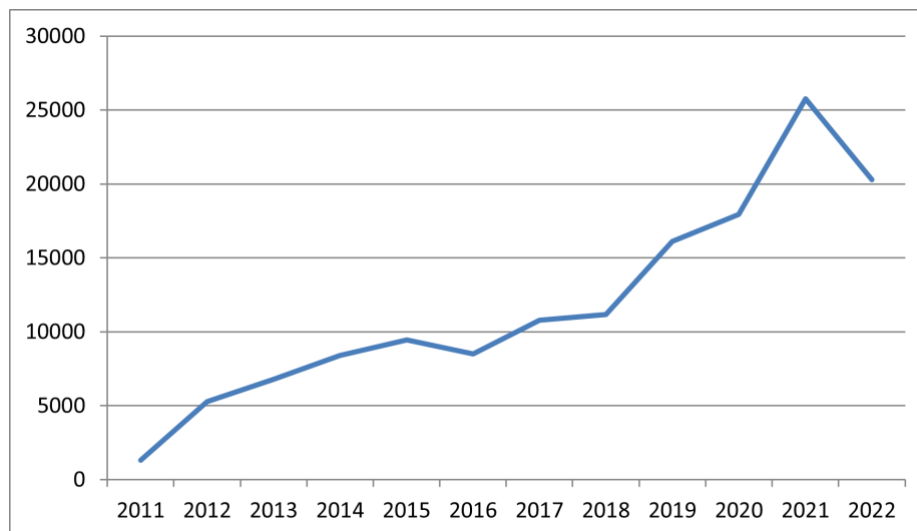
The online coffee time talks will continue during 2023 with Peter Thurman due to talk about 'Designing and Working with trees' on 14 March. We also plan to hold some in-person events during the summer. We also plan to hold some in-person events during the summer. Members and non-members can sign up to receive our news and events by registering their email via our Home page friends-of-lewes.org.uk.

Publicity

We publicised FoL events in three print titles: *Sussex Express*, *Lewes News* and *The Lewesian*, and electronically in *The Lewes List*, *What's On in Lewes*, and Visit Lewes's *What's On*. This is in addition to FoL's Newsletter, and website and social media. There were eight articles published variously in *Sussex Express*, *Lewes News* and *The Lewesian* about FoL's activities such as tree and hedge planting, and Heritage Open Days.

The 2022 website usage figures show a rise from 2020, having dipped back down after 2021's Covid-driven high point (2022: 20,288; 2021: 25,752; 2020: 17,943, 2019: 16,110).

Friends of Lewes Website, views per year:



We are also continuing to grow our online audience:

- Website - 141 News item subscribers (2021: 131; 2020: 100), +8%
- Facebook - 924 following FriendsOfLewes (2021: 637; 2020: 533), +45%
- Facebook - 552 following LewesUrbanArboretum (2021: 460; 2020: 412), +20%
- Twitter – 79 following @lewesfriends (2021: 44, 2020: 9), +80%, 600 following @LewesArboretum

Merchandise

We have raised funds through the sale of [books](#) on topics of local interest as well as a tea towels and cards. These are available via enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk and the Tourist Information Office in Lewes.

Membership

In April 2022, we successfully introduced the new online membership system Membermojo, which has reduced our postal costs as well as the time needed to create and renew memberships. We have also updated our membership leaflet and introduced a Gift membership (available by contacting membership@friends-of-lewes.org.uk).

Membership levels have been broadly stable during 2022, fluctuating around the 400 mark and ending the year at 398. We will be making further efforts to grow our membership during 2023 and would encourage members to consider introducing friends and neighbours to the organisation. There are many ways to get involved through taking part in events online and in person, or by helping out on one of our committees.

Membership Services Committee

At the end of the year, Marcus Taylor stood down as Committee chair and secretary and we would like to sincerely thank him for his many years of supporting the Friends of Lewes in this role and in many other ways. Marcus will remain a member of the Committee which will be chaired by Di Wilkins in future.

Friends of Lewes Accounts & Financial Review 2022

Receipts and Payments

General Fund

There was an overall surplus in 2022 of £100 (2021: £6900), a net change of £6800. At £7100 net receipts increased by £300, adjusting for the exceptional donation of £3,000 from The John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust in 2021.

At £7000, expenditure was £4100 above that for 2021 at £2,900, the increase being almost entirely due to payment of a grant of £4000 to the St Thomas a Becket Tower Access Project. With no remuneration being paid to, nor any benefit obtained from a related entity by any trustee, and with only minimal expenses in the course of the Society's business being reimbursed, the cost of running Friends of Lewes increased slightly to £1,900.

Restricted Trees Fund

Total receipts paid into the Trees Fund (which is restricted to expenditure on tree planting) was £1400 (2021: £2800). A small number of donations were received with the balance from participation in the Lewes District Lottery, income from which currently goes wholly to support tree planting.

The reduced expenditure of £1500 (2021: £7300) resulted in a small deficit of £100 leaving a healthy balance of £5,500 for future planting.

Balance Sheet

At the end of the 2022 financial year, the Society's total monetary assets on the unrestricted funds account remained at £60,000 with £5,500 on the restricted (trees) fund, all of which is held in Charities Aid Foundation bank accounts. Stocks of books and tea towels valued at £2,100 were also held.

Reserves Policy

The Executive Committee considers that the current General Fund cash reserve held is more than appropriate to its needs for the smooth running of the Society in 2023 and beyond. This will allow the Society to support new projects in the coming years.

M J Gregory – Hon Treasurer

A full copy of the Society's accounts will be available on our website from 1st April 2023. If you would like a hard copy posted or emailed to you, after this date, please contact the Secretary