

A letter from Adam Wheeler,
Chair, Southampton Common Forum

February 2017



Dear Friend,

Thank you for attending the recent meeting of the Southampton Common Forum (SCF) at Tauntons College. It is a pleasure and honour to be elected by you as its first Chair. My aim is to establish the SCF as a positive and effective voice for the improvement of the Common for the benefit of the citizens of Southampton in a way that works imaginatively and constructively with all its stakeholders.

We have now formally established the SCF and, I, along with the other members of the newly elected Management Committee recently. We felt that the Tauntons meeting went very well with good attendance and engagement on the key areas.

The Management Committee co-opted Simon Hill for his detailed expertise and knowledge of the Common. However, the Committee is very concerned that it represents and draws on the wide diversity of users of the Common and decided to leave the remaining places empty for the time being so they could be filled in due course with this in mind. The Committee strongly encourages applications to join it especially from women, young people and the City's ethnic communities.

The Management Committee reaffirmed the Forum's commitment to the three themes discussed at the Tauntons meeting and began to put in place actions for their implementation:

1. **Richer Engagement:** This area will be led by Dave Johnson (Secretary). At the Tauntons meeting Councillor Kaur emphasised that it was vital to the success of the SCF that it is fully engaged with and is representative of the wide range of users of the Common. The Committee fully concurred with this and consider this to be the Forum's top priority in the months ahead. In the first instance the Committee agreed that, over the coming months, we will approach users directly on the Common to introduce them to the Forum, solicit their views and hopefully recruit new members. Actions are in hand to develop the necessary materials. If you are able to help out with this it would be most helpful. Further details will be circulated in due course.

The Committee also considered a range of other ideas including social media, website development, information boards, local businesses and organisations, national organisations to promote the SCF more widely. These will form part of an engagement and communication strategy that will be developed in the coming weeks.

In regard to the Council, I along with Roger Brown, will be meeting Councillor Kaur and her colleagues in early February to discuss a range of matters, including the commitment made by the Leader of the Council at the June meeting last year to ensure a proportion of the surpluses from Common events are ploughed back into the Common, the development of an options appraisal for operating the Common, the development of a realistic and sustainable plan for the Common, as well as a range of other matters.

2. **A Plan for the Common:** This will be led by Simon Hill, supported by Roger Brown. It will be undertaken in partnership with the Council and will be done bottom up drawing on the views of the users of the Common. The Committee took the view that a good starting point

would to consider Hawthorns which is clearly not fulfilling its potential and is an area where the Forum might be able to make a strong case for external funding (e.g., from the Heritage Lottery Fund). Simon plans to runs one or more workshops in the next couple of months. Further information will be circulated in due course.

3. **Operating Models:** This will be led by Adam Wheeler. The first action here be to understand how this fits in with the work being undertaken by the City Council and will be part of the discussion at the upcoming meeting with Councillor Kaur.

I plan to regularly update you on progress. Information will also be posted on our Facebook page and the website which should be up and running in the next month. We plan that the next public meeting of the SCF will be in the early summer where we will review progress. The date has yet to be finalised but will likely be in June.

In the meantime please do not hesitate to contact me by email at southamptoncommonforum@gmail.com

Best regards,

Adam Wheeler

Chair, Southampton Common Forum