

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024

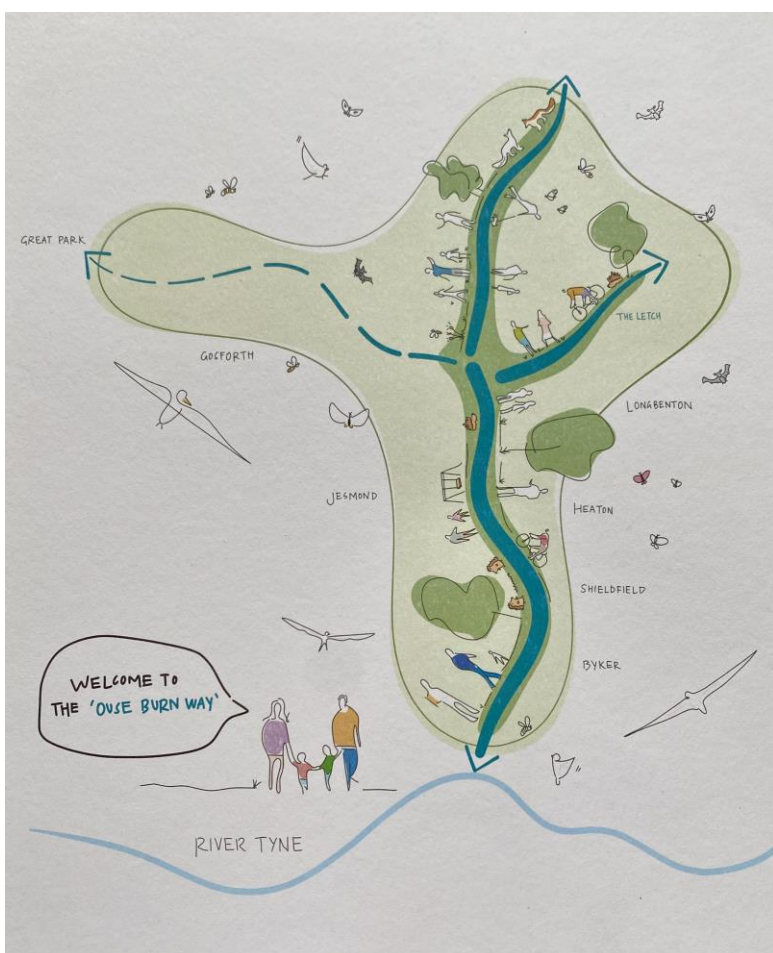
NUMBER: 93

PATRON – JOHN GRUNDY

Reg Charity no: 702260



THE OUSE BURN WAY THROUGH JESMOND DENE



See 'A Vision for the Ouse Burn Valley' on page 3

THIS ISSUE

Annual General Meeting
Page 2

A Vision for the Ouse Burn Valley
By Anne Reece
Page 3

Armstrong Mitchel Crane at The Arsenale -
Page 6

Landslip in the Quarry
Page 9

Fencing around Banqueting Hall
Page 10

FOJD Events for Jesmond Community Festival
Page 11

Evening Chronicle Article and Urban Green
Page 12

FOJD offer to pay for repairs to the Pavilion
Roof
Page 13

Fundraising Poster
Page 14

Volunteer Rangers Update
By Dave Poste
Page 15

Contact addresses and Membership
Information
Page 18

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held on Sunday, 19th May 2024 at 14.00 hrs at Millfield House courtesy of the Risi family.

All members will be sent the agenda and minutes of the last meeting (2024). Officers will need to be proposed, seconded and elected.

If you have any proposals for the officer posts, or want to become a Committee member please email: friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com

Chair	current Clive Gerrard
Treasurer	current Jacki Holmes
Secretary	current acting – Yvonne Shannon

Elected committee members: Geoffrey Carter, John Blakemore, John Telfer. Sarah Capes will be the co-opted representative from Urban Green Newcastle.

Geoffrey Carter is our Independent examiner for the annual accounts.

Patron: - **John Grundy**

Thank you to all our members for the donations and subscriptions, with your help The FOJD have been able to fund projects to help maintain and improve the Dene. This year we are hoping to fund urgent repair work on The Pavilion. See page 12.

We urgently need more people to join the committee so we can safeguard the future of the FOJD. Our Membership Secretary has been forced to retire due to ill health which leaves a vacant post. The small group of current committee members cannot take on all the tasks associated with running the FOJD indefinitely. If you feel you could help, please get in touch with friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com or my personal email yvonne@thepriorys.co.uk

All members are welcome to attend COMMITTEE meetings Next one is on 22nd April at 14.00 Millfield House. – come and see!

A VISION FOR THE OUSE BURN VALLEY

The Ouseburn Valley stretches from the River Tyne to the Northumbrian countryside north of Gosforth Park, with branches to the west past the airport and to the east along the Letch tributary into Forest Hall. It is a link between inner city and green space with the unique Jesmond Dene at its centre.

The vision of the Reece Foundation is that the Ouse Burn Way will run the length of this valley providing a safe green route for cycling and walking. This seven-mile trail will connect communities with nature bringing long-term benefits to both wellbeing and wildlife.

The vision combines environmental and green initiatives with inner-city living alongside a plan to improve the poor water quality and the wildlife in the area. This will provide a safe, enjoyable and healthy means to travel by improving links throughout the area and into Northumberland, whilst offering development opportunities to support education, skills, employment and business.



Photograph of Anne Reece at the official launch of the Ouse Burn Way

The Ouse Burn Way vision will aim to:

- Achieve a significant reduction in the pollution of the Ouse Burn and its tributaries.
- Develop and extend a wildlife corridor to improve the ecology and biodiversity of the Ouse Burn and its tributaries.
- Achieve improvements in the linkages between the various sections and overall access.
- Encourage development opportunities consistent with planning policies.
- Enable good pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and enhance visitor attractions.
- Improve health, wellbeing, education and heritage with initiatives.
- Seek opportunities to actively contribute to the mitigation of Climate Change, for example through improved sequestering of carbon, improved opportunities to walk or cycle, reducing flood risk, and creation of more resilient habitats

In approximately 10 years, the Ouse Burn will be a valley with abundant wildlife, cycle paths and walkways for recreation and environmentally friendly commuting. Linking to sustainable transport routes throughout the region.

The restored heritage will provide access to the history of Newcastle. Derelict buildings will be brought back to life as a resource for heritage, employment and education. And the many communities who value the valley will have been empowered to have their say, supported by funding to bring about the changes they identified.

This will improve the lives of so many residents, enhance nature and enable us to make the most of this unique and wonderful part of Newcastle, as well as improving the ecology of the area and creating a vibrant corridor for wildlife.

In recent years, the Valley and its constituent parks have become degraded. Water quality has reduced as increased pollution through human sewage plus agricultural and urban runoff has had a major impact. After heavy rainfall, the Ouseburn is smelly, unpleasant, nasty colour. Recent research has shown it is currently a health hazard after rainfall in Jesmond Dene, a park used by many families.

A clean water strategy will be a key part of the project. Northumbrian Water who are responsible for the sewage discharge have pledged to seek rapid solutions to this issue. This will enable the Ouse Burn to become a nicer, healthier, more pleasant environment and to support a wider variety of wildlife.

The Reece Foundation has already funded research by Newcastle University to conduct water quality analysis of the Ouseburn because we were concerned that the reduction in water quality and specifically pollution from human sewage was having a very detrimental effect on the Ouseburn Valley and its ecology.

The Foundation has also pledged an initial sum of £1 million to fund initiatives to improve the Valley brought forward by local groups and by the Friends of the various Parks which lie along the Valley. It is hoped that this pledge will provide the leverage to unlock further funding for key improvements.

The Reece Foundation is a Newcastle based charity which funds northeast engineering, manufacturing and environmental initiatives to support sustainable prosperity in the region.

Anne Reece, Chair of the Reece Foundation said: “We are very aware of the crucial role access to nature and the protection of wild places have on the well-being of the region.

“Cities generally lack opportunities to access nature that is more than a small urban park. The Ouseburn Valley can improve access to nature which is so important for the well-being of Newcastle and North Tyneside.

“Our ambition is to make the Ouse Burn a national exemplar of how the pollution of similar degraded urban rivers across the country can be mitigated. Water will be significantly cleaner, as clean as water can be in an urban environment and as the valley regenerates it will become a significant cooling space for the city, especially important for climate change.



Diagrammatic map showing the route of the Ouse burn.

“We are supporting it by creating a fund of £1m to leverage the support this project will require to help realise its potential as a major recreational resource.

The Reece Foundation is collaborating with partners including Northumbrian Water, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and the Environment Agency. Together they will work closely with local communities on the project’s evolution.

The Reece Foundation want to empower the local community to have their say and has created a website www.TheOuseBurnWay.co.uk where you can find out more, share your thoughts about the project and put forward your ideas and request funding for projects. Why not take a look and have your say.

ANNE REECE of the Reece Foundation

ARMSTRONG'S LEGACY IN VENICE

Henrietta Heald, the author of *Magician of the North*, a biography of William Armstrong, sends good news on the restoration of the Armstrong Mitchell Crane at the Arsenale in Venice. The restoration is headed by Ursola Rimbotti, Director, Venice in Peril Fund CIO.



Postcard showing the Armstrong Mitchell Crane in Venice (from Venice in Peril)

Although the Arsenale dates from the 12C and is unique in the world, it wasn't until the unification of Italy in 1860 that the Italian navy commissioned one of Armstrong Mitchells innovative hydraulic cranes for the new ironclad battleships.

Ursola writes that the restoration of the crane has been taken on by the Biennale as part of a major intervention on the entire site (i.e., the Arsenale) funded with recovery grants from Italy's national recovery and resilience plan, from which the Biennale has received 16m Euro. As these funds are time-limited, the work must be completed by 2026. (The Venice Biennale was founded in 1894 and is an internationally renowned wide-ranging exhibition).

Ursola mentions how extensive investigations have recently been undertaken on the crane and its site, including underwater work. Although the project is still at the feasibility stage it should be approved in a couple of months. The restoration project will entail the removal of the temporary bracings strapped around the counter-weight box, (which Venice in Peril funded), and the replacement of the loose ballast materials in the counter-weight box with consolidated material, so as to eliminate the pressure which is forcing it to split open. The crane's base and the embankment on which it stands are relatively sound.

It was originally hoped that the crane could be rendered mobile and used for demonstration purposes but, sadly this will probably not now be the case.

Venice in Peril have fought for restoration of the crane for several years . They write in their brochure how:-

'The Armstrong Mitchel crane is a masterpiece of British 19 century engineering at the centre of the most famous historic dockyard in the world – The Arsenale in Venice'.



They also describe the problem posed by corrosion :-

'Soaring over the Arsenale, the crane revolved on a fixed plate with a boiler room and hydraulic pumping machinery below. Corrosion of rollers, rails, rotation platform and ballast box has left the crane badly degraded'



The Armstrong Mitchell hydraulic crane at the Arsenale in Venice

The FOJD are delighted that the work of William Armstrong and Charles Mitchell are recognised for the masterpieces of engineering that they are by people all over the world – and how wonderful that groups such as Venice in Peril are doing their best to save them for future generations.

With thanks to Ursola and Henrietta – we look forward to updates on the restoration.

YVONNE SHANNON FOJD

LANDSLIP IN THE QUARRY

The photographs below demonstrate the nature of this part of the Ouseburn Valley. The steep sides of the valley mean that landslips do occur now and then. This happened in 'The Quarry' at the end of last year. The rock is primarily sandstone and used to show coal seams running through it.



Photographs
by John Telfer

PETS CORNER ANNIVERSARY

Pets Corner has been open since 4th September 1963, as some of us may remember. There have been many changes over the years - but today, it still helps children (and adults) experience farm life and how to care for animals.

Entry to Pets' Corner remains free, but donations are helpful.

<https://urbangreennewcastle.org/donate/>

The FOJD have always supported Pets Corner and the following video shows why your subscriptions and donations are so helpful in maintaining and caring for Jesmond Dene.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=328486693041862>

FENCING AROUND THE BANQUETING HALL

In June 2021 Urban Green erected some temporary fencing around the Banqueting Hall, thereby blocking the footpath which went round the Hall above the Ouseburn and then continued under Jesmond Dene Road to St Mary's Chapel. Signs on the fence say that the path is closed because of the danger of falling masonry. Further information on Urban Green's website at the time said that it was important to stabilise that part of the building and to carry out urgent repairs. They also said that they had commissioned an updated Condition Survey, and that their conservation architects had carried out an external inspection.

Your committee were concerned that nothing appeared to have been done since then, despite there being no evidence of falling masonry during many severe gales in the past two and a half years. We feel the fence adds to the derelict appearance of that part of the Dene. We are also concerned that the closure might become permanent, preventing access to anyone wanting to get a close look at the building or to follow the Northern Saints Trail .

We therefore wrote to Urban Green to ask if the Condition Survey had been carried out, and if so, what it said, and we also asked what the conservation architect's survey had revealed, and when we could expect the path to be re-opened.

Urban Green replied to say that the condition report was finished in 2022 and that it made reference to multiple instances of loose masonry on wall heads at high levels around the remains. They also said that they were looking to source funds to enable a mobile elevated work platform survey to be carried out, but that in the meantime the path would remain closed to mitigate any risk to members of the public. They did not reveal what the conservation architects report said, but they did say that there are no plans to close the footpath permanently.

So, it looks as though the fencing will remain in place for the immediate future, but your committee will continue to press Urban Green to ensure that the matter is not allowed to be forgotten.

FOJD Committee

FOJD EVENTS AS PART OF THE JESMOND COMMUNITY FESTIVAL



Starting off with our famous:-

Dawn Chorus nature walk.

Saturday 4th May 2024 Come with us in Jesmond Dene to birdwatch and listen to the wonderful early chorus of diverse birds living in the Dene. Bring binoculars if you have them. Stout shoes are advisable.

Please note. we Start at 4.30 am for approximately 2 hours, meet at the Information Centre Jesmond Dene. **There will be no facilities available. i.e., Toilets.**

No charge, although donations to FOJD welcome. Places are limited to 12 so Book at friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com

'Busy Cottages and Millfield House' guided walk and talk with Friends of Jesmond Dene. Tuesday 14th May at 11.00am. Hear about the history of Busy Cottage Iron Foundry. At one time these extensive works covered the sites occupied by Pets Corner and Millfield House. Observe the additions to the house by architect Frank W. Rich and hear about the families who lived here. Meet outside Millfield House.

Stout shoes advised and there are several steps and stairs to be negotiated.

No charge, although donations to FOJD welcome. Places are strictly limited to 10 so please Book at friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com

'The Royal Route' guided walk with Friends of Jesmond Dene.

Wednesday 22nd May at 11.00 am. Come with us and follow the route taken by the Prince and Princess of Wales on 20th August 1884 (also a Wednesday) when they officially opened the parks. **Starting** from Heaton Park and **finishing** in Jesmond Dene. Stout shoes are advisable. Meet at the Main gates at 11.00 am in Heaton Park near the junction of Warwick Road and Heaton Park Road - What3Words: ///gifted.party.hood The walk will last about 2 hours. No charge, although donations to FOJD welcome. please book via friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com

'Jesmond Dene' guided walk by Friends of Jesmond Dene.

Sunday 26th May at 13.30. See the wonders of Jesmond Dene past and present and hear about the eminent people who lived and worked nearby. Enjoy this circular walk around the garden of Lord and Lady Armstrong. A place of Bridges, Forges, and Watermills. Meet at Millfield House, Jesmond Dene. Stout shoes are advisable.

No charge, although donations to FOJD welcome. please book via friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com

THE EVENING CHRONICLE ARTICLE AND URBAN GREEN

The following is from Ean MacKellar Chair of the Newcastle Parks Forum Group and will be of interest to concerned FOJD.

Many of you will be aware of the Chronicle article about a funding crisis within Urban Green. For those that aren't, the article can be found here:-

<https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/newcastle-parks-future-question-council-28784946>

I received a call from Carol Pyrah on Friday night alerting me to the article and to the statement put out by Urban Green:-An Urban Green Newcastle spokesperson said: "The latest annual report submitted to Companies House, which summarises Urban Green Newcastle's fourth year in operation, highlights another successful 12 months for the charity.

"Urban Green Newcastle met its annual income targets, with a high proportion coming from successful grant applications to deliver projects including Beelines Northeast and the upgrading of Hadrian's Cycleway; the national walking and cycling route in Walker Riverside and Tyne Riverside Country parks, which we delivered in partnership with Sustrans.

"The original business model for the charity was based on achieving financial sustainability after 10 years, and by year four, two-thirds of Urban Green Newcastle's income was self-generated from events, car parking, commercial and residential tenancies, our Urban Green Cafes, and fundraising. The charity is currently bringing in more income than expected when compared with the original operating model.

"However, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has delayed the charity's ability to reach its unrestricted commercial income targets. And significant increases in energy costs and goods and services mean costs are higher than originally budgeted for.

"At the time of submitting the accounts in January 2024, Urban Green Newcastle's trustees disclosed a material uncertainty related to going concern in the accounts. This was to provide absolute transparency and state the material uncertainty at the time. However, Urban Green Newcastle has been in dialogue with Newcastle City Council as part of a review of operations and future options for provision, and Newcastle City Council has provided an injection of £1m funding to ensure continuing delivery.

"Working together, we want to see more people visiting Newcastle's green spaces and enjoying the many benefits that come from spending time in nature. Access to green spaces is proven to improve people's health and wellbeing, which is why it's so important for communities across the city to be able to access their local park or allotment. For people without a garden or outdoor space of their own, their local green space is incredibly important to their quality of life.

“Our ongoing discussions with Newcastle City Council will have no impact on the city’s green spaces. Urban Green Newcastle will continue to care for city parks and allotments; ensuring everyone across the city can access safe, clean and welcoming green spaces where they live.”

Carol has been invited to the next Parks Forum Meeting.

EAN MACKELLAR Chair of the Newcastle Parks Forum Group

FOJD OFFER TO FUND THE REPAIR THE PAVILION ROOF

The FOJD Committee have been concerned for several years over the general decline of buildings in Jesmond Dene. Given that we don’t want to see any more buildings in the Dene degenerate beyond the point of repair we asked a local roofer to inspect the roof of the Pavilion on the pic-nic field and to give us a verbal estimate as to how much it might cost to restore it. Some tree branches will need to be removed, scaffolding put up and gutters also require attention. But, given that the damage will only get worse if nothing is done the FOJD have written to Urban Green offering to pay for the roof repair. Hopefully, our offer will be accepted, and we will have good news for the next Newsletter.

YVONNE SHANNON FOJD

FUND RAISING

To help raise more funds for FOJD for example, the Pavilion repair and possible contributions to other projects e.g. the broken wooden bridge on Colman's Field - some of the planking has rotted away and is now unsafe. It has been closed off to the public.

We have posted a fund raiser on our Facebook page and, placed a poster – see overleaf in our noticeboard in Jesmond Dene seeking donations. (Please feel free to display the poster if appropriate)



DO YOU LOVE THE DENE?

**BECOME A MEMBER OR DONATE TODAY AND
HELP US TO LOOK AFTER THE PARK FOR
EVERYONE TO ENJOY**

Our volunteers have been hard at work planting trees, installing handrails, building picnic tables and restoring the aviary.

NOW WE NEED YOUR HELP TO DO EVEN MORE!



JOIN US



DONATE

JESMONDDENE.ORG.UK
friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com
REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 702260

Winter tasks performed by Jesmond Dene Volunteer Rangers (2024) (The FOJD are always appreciative of the work carried out by these volunteers who are also members of FOJD)

Since the end of the Covid lockdown our small group of four volunteer rangers have carried on working together, either supervised or unsupervised, carrying out whatever work is required by the Rangers. Our team meets every Tuesday and Friday morning. There are separate volunteer sessions on a Wednesday morning run on a more casual basis for anyone who wishes to volunteer. These are the tasks carried out by our group :-

Litter Picking

Whenever we work in the Dene one of us takes a black bag and some litter pickers so that we can pick up any litter we see on the way. We often need to do a litter pick along the car park on Red Walk despite the presence of a litter bin there.

Tidying up the Old Mill and the Picnic Field Shelter

Both buildings need tidying up from time to time. If we are working in the vicinity, we remove any litter and dried leaves as an extra task.

Leaf blowing and path clearing

We had some sessions at the beginning of winter clearing the paths in Jesmond Dene and Armstrong Park. When the trees start to drop it's best to remove the leaves from the paths before they rot and produce a sticky slippery coat. We use leaf blowers when available and we also spend time shovelling leaves and mud from the sides of various paths.



Fallen and diseased trees

High winds can do a lot of damage and bring down trees in the parks, blocking footpaths and damaging fences. We don't have access to chainsaws and so rely on the rangers to chainsaw the larger stuff, but we can use bow saws and loppers to cut branches into small enough pieces to be able to dispose of them. Once or twice a tree has come down across the route of the Park Run, and so it has been important to get the path clear before the next run.

Mending fences

Jesmond Dene contains a large amount of wooden fencing, most of which was installed many years ago. Unfortunately, the wooden supports eventually rot so that the fences keel over or are susceptible to vandalism. In places where the fences are above a steep drop it is important that they are promptly replaced to keep the public safe. This is easier said than done, as the original fence supports have usually been concreted in, and to insert a new support into the concrete socket it is necessary to chisel or drill the old support out. We try to re-use any timber rescued from damaged fences, where possible.



Mending fences near Busy Cottages

Repairing the Boardwalk

There is a wooden boardwalk on the path leading down from the top gate at Armstrong Bridge to Red Walk. The structure has started to rot, and it has been necessary to carry out running repairs to keep it safe and usable until it can be replaced. Some of this involves patching holes in the planking where it has rotted. We also did similar patching work on the bridge over the river in Coleman's Field. However, the bridge has since been condemned and, unfortunately, we have had to fence it off.

Hedge Trimming and cutting back

We occasionally trim shrubs and hedges where they are encroaching on paths or just becoming overgrown. We do this with powered hedge trimmers or loppers. We then have to find somewhere to dispose of the cuttings so that they aren't unsightly. We recently spent a couple of sessions cutting back the laurel that grows on the bank above the Red Walk car park.

Tidying up the children's playground

We occasionally tidy up the children's play area next to Pet's Corner sweeping up dried leaves, litter picking and digging over the chippings under the swing (definitely not our favourite task).

Millfield House garden

We sometimes spend a session in Millfield House garden tidying it up. The terraced section that rises up the hillside has lots of shrubs that can get out of hand, so we take time in cutting them back and keeping them looking neat.

Removing invasive plants

Another job is removing invasive species that can damage the environment. The ones that occur in Jesmond Dene are Himalayan Balsam and Few-Flowered Leek. Several years ago, there was a big problem with Japanese Knotweed but that has been largely eradicated. Both Himalayan Balsam and Few-Flowered Leek are quite attractive plants but if left to their own devices will dominate native species, hence, need to be managed.

Christmas wreathes

In December we carry out the seasonal task of collecting branches of yew and holly to be used in Christmas wreath-making sessions. We collect several large bags of greenery; as these are very popular sessions and quickly get booked up.

There are probably several other things that we have done, but that's all I can remember!

DAVE POSTE FOJD and Volunteer Ranger

Please see up to date activities and events:-

FOJD

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/757773184342507/>

Web <https://www.jesmonddene.org.uk/>

Urban Green

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/urbangreenncld/>

Web <https://urbangreennewcastle.org/>

FRIENDS OF JESMOND DENE COMMITTEE LIST

Patron	John Grundy
Chair	Clive Gerrard
Treasurer	Jacki Holmes
Secretary	Vacant post – acting Yvonne Shannon
Members	Geoffrey Carter, John Blakemore, John Telfer
Membership Sec.	Vacant post -
Newsletter	Yvonne Shannon – proofreaders Keith Pringle, Sandra Grant

Urban Green Representative [Sarah Capes@urbangreennewcastle.org](mailto:Sarah.Capes@urbangreennewcastle.org)

Next Newsletter contributions or any other queries to: -

Friends of Jesmond Dene, c/o Ouseburn Parks Visitor Centre, Millfield House, Red Walk, Jesmond Dene, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7BQ or email as above. Or

friends.of.jesmond.dene@gmail.com

To join the FOJD please contact membership.fojd@gmail.com

Subscriptions are set at a flat rate of £5 p.a. for households, paid by standing order. To set up the standing order you will need the bank details for the Friends bank - The Sort Code is **30 93 55** The Account Number is **01464356**. Would you also please ask to assign a payment reference of your own full name (forename and surname) so that we can correctly identify your payment.

To join the Jesmond Dene Volunteer Rangers please contact:

Volunteering and Engagement Coordinator volunteer@urbangreennewcastle.org .

Reg Charity no: 702260 Web: <https://www.jesmonddene.org.uk/>

Postal address: 'Friends of Jesmond Dene', c/o Ouseburn Parks' Visitor Centre, Red Walk, Jesmond Dene, Newcastle, NE7 7BQ.