

While we (plus the Environment Agency and the Charity Commission) accept that there may be a need to use part of the park for a depot, for the benefit of Graves Park, this does not justify the dumping of waste collected from other parks or waste land in Sheffield. We did not fight long and hard to protect this land from development only to have it abused by the Council.

How can you help? Write to the Council and express your disgust. Remind them that it is only the work of FOGP that has kept the Nurseries site as part of the park. And if you wish, perhaps you might want to register another complaint with the Charity Commission.

What are we doing? We have sound legal advice clearly stating that the council **can't** do this. They cannot, as trustees, lease the land to themselves. They cannot use this charitable parkland for anything other than the direct benefit of Graves Park. So far, the Charity Commission has agreed, and has told us that if they are using the site as stated, then they are in breach of the Graves Park trust's covenants. We complained to the Charity Commission. To be honest, we are not particularly surprised at the Council opposing the restoration of the final section of Norton Nurseries. They tried to block the wildlife area in the beginning and made a scandalously poor effort of clearing the site, which took the FOGP a considerable amount of time and effort to put right.

Later, when we first proposed an arboretum, we were told this was a totally unsuitable use (even though it was woodland up until 50 years ago when the Council originally cleared the site). This was around the time they made plans to build a hospice there.

Now is the time to speak up and make our voices heard – before it's too late!

Addresses to make your own protests are below.

Councillor Isobel Bowler: Cabinet Member for Culture Sport and **Leisure**

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Friends of Graves Park

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Saving Parkland Special: Latest

Introduction from the Chairman

Welcome to the latest edition of FOGP newsletter and an update of our progress.

Once again much of our time recently has been spent on Cobnar Cottage, negotiating with Sheffield Councillors, looking into surveys and possible funding and ways of keeping the land and the cottage as part of the park. We've also been very busy looking into the situation at the Norton Nurseries site, which is again under threat.

Spread the word: pass on the extra enclosed Newsletter to a friend or neighbour!

We have lots to tell you about our work and plans in the rest of the park; because of the need to give you details of the threats on both sides of the park, we'll give more details in our next newsletter, which will be in May/June. This will include details of the project "Norton in the Heart of Chantreyland", a detailed survey organised by representatives from Sheffield Hallam University.

www.chantreylandnorton.org.uk

Cobnar Cottage Update

As our supporters know, our committee has been working hard to prevent the sale of Cobnar Cottage. Despite talks with Sheffield City Council officers and councillors, the Council are still determined to sell the cottage.

Why does this matter? After all it is an unremarkable cottage, very run down and in a deplorable state of repair (thanks to council officers who have allowed it to deteriorate to such a poor condition that what would have cost about £10,000 to refurbish 5 years ago would now cost a whopping £160,000), with little aesthetic value. The answer is because it is on charitable parkland. It is part of the gift from J. G. Graves, of which the original covenant states that any buildings no longer needed may be demolished, to preserve and keep the parkland. If the cottage and its land (which the Council is keen to sell freehold) were sold, this would break the original covenant, leaving the

rest of the Graves Park land at risk of being sold off.

Would the Council try to sell any other areas of parkland belonging to Graves Park? For the answer to this one, please skip to the next article!

The Friends of Graves Park, at short notice, spread the word about the proposed sale of Cobnar Cottage. As a result, 62 supporters, some members and some not, wrote to the Council to oppose the sale. Some people also wrote to the Charity Commission to complain, which has resulted in the Charity Commission looking further into the issue.



Although the deadline has now passed for writing to Kier regarding the proposed sale, it is still a good strategy for those of you who have not yet written to write to Isobel Bowler, councillor for culture, sport and leisure, about the proposed freehold sale of parkland. You can also write to the

Charity Commission to complain, although if you have access to a computer it is easier to complain via their website.

Stop Press: The latest is that the Council Cabinet, in its role as trustee of the Graves Park trust, has been told by the Charity Commission that it cannot just sell the cottage and must submit a scheme. Despite this, the cabinet voted on 18th March to push ahead with the sale. They are convinced that the scheme will allow them to sell the cottage. We have to make a fuss; we have to protest. Disposal of this one small part of the park could jeopardise the whole of the rest of the park, despite what the Council's cabinet and officers say.

Support us by writing to the Council and/or the Charity Commission. Let them know what you think. Addresses are on the back page.

Norton Nurseries Site Update

At least the Friends of Graves Park were successful in protecting the Norton Nurseries area of the park from sale or development.

Or were we?

The second stage of our restoration programme, the arboretum, is now complete and almost ready to be opened up to the public. This will complement the

first stage, the now well established wildlife area, Chantreyland Meadow. The Friends of Graves Park committee approached the Council in July, to begin talks about restoration of the final section. Isobel Bowler's response was to say that the site is now an area depot, stating she would contact us when she had more information. As we had heard nothing by this January, we contacted her again, to which Ms. Bowler replied that there are no intentions to honour previous agreements to return the site to parkland, as it is now a maintenance depot for south Sheffield.

Really? After 17 years of being told that this site is derelict, surplus to requirements and not part of the park, we now have a council cabinet member, a trustee, speaking for the trustees and stating that the trustees are leasing the site to the council (themselves) for £10,000 a year, to prevent the site from otherwise being sold freehold to make money. It is less than 6 months since a supporter gave us a copy of a letter she had received from a councillor telling her that the Norton Nurseries site had not been in use for years and was derelict! Despite this, Isobel Bowler has written to us saying "the Norton Nurseries site is required as a maintenance depot for the maintenance of Graves Park and this has been the case for many years."..."The site is also used as a base for the maintenance of other Council parks in the area."

The FOGP are particularly disgusted at this abuse of part of Graves Park. The only reason this land does not have a housing estate on it is because we fought long and hard to establish its charitable status and to have it recognised, by its own trustees, as charitable parkland.



Latest evidence of illegal dumping

Our original plans were to extend the arboretum into the 3rd section of the site, followed by an investigation into possible future uses of the site, generating an income to support Graves Park. All investigations are now on hold.

