

Donating a bench to Eaton Park

Background

Benches are places for people to meet up, rest, read or watch the world go by. During lockdown Eaton Park's benches were a lifeline for many people and the habit looks set to continue. For people who find walking difficult they are essential.

When the park opened in 1924, apart from the bandstand benches, just a scattering were provided. War, depression and a decline in the fortunes of parks in the 1970s and 80s meant there was little further investment. Great stretches of Eaton Park had no benches at all.

In 2014 Friends of Eaton Park decided to address this lack, raising funds for fifteen new benches and, with Norwich City Council, lead a campaign that brought fifteen more. There are still many areas of the park where new benches would be welcomed.

Type of bench

Formal areas like the avenues have traditional wooden benches. In less formal areas recycled plastic or mixed materials benches are used. Thought is given to how a bench relates to what's around it. Sustainable or natural materials are preferred. Here are some examples:

- Traditional wooden bench [Cavendish 1800mm in iroko](#)
- Recycled plastic and metal [Tenby Seat](#)
- Benches without backs (can work well in the right location) [Neath Bench](#)

Inscriptions

Eaton Park is important to many people. It's somewhere they love and feel at home – a valued part of families' histories and the community. Some parks have adopted the idea of 'memorial' benches with the unintended consequence that a park begins to feel a bit like a cemetery. Bench donors are invited to choose inscriptions that express affection or recall good times and memories. Simple is often best. Here are some examples from Eaton Park:

- Thank you for the days (*this is, of course, from a song by The Kinks*)
- Celebrating the joy of Eaton Park from Mike, Ann, Lizzie and Bob
- Liz, Annie & Pam – sitting here got us through lockdown
- Kath and Vic ~ so many happy Sundays!

Friends of Eaton Park uses benches instead of blue plaques to celebrate key people and park stories. These examples may also give you ideas:

- In memory of the local men who in 1920's built Eaton Park
- In celebration of Eaton Park's Green Flag Award 2014
- For Andy Anderson who told the tale of Norwich's great parks

You can also chose to add a small metal plaque with formal details such as names and dates.

Writing an inscription can feel daunting. Friends of Eaton Park have experience of helping people consider options and are happy to help.

Maintenance and care

From time to time Friends of Eaton Park organise bench cleaning sessions. This depends on availability of volunteers. You can also clean the bench yourself if you wish. The Friends have put together some guidelines for doing so.

If the bench is vandalised it will be fixed. If it becomes impossible to repair it will unfortunately be removed.

Costs

It costs between around £700 and £1500 depending on the type of bench but mostly depending on location as installation costs vary greatly.

If this is too much there are also other ways to give something back to the park. These range from donating plants or bird boxes to campaigns such as restoring the rose garden fountain. The Friends can advise on these too.

Next steps

- Contact Friends of Eaton Park to discuss bench options, locations and inscriptions. A park visit will be needed to confirm exact location.
- Confirm order and price - Friends of Eaton Park and Norwich City Council
- Pay Norwich City Council (you will be sent an invoice)
- Norwich City Council submits order and manages installation
(Estimated lead-in time of three months, though this may be longer)

Contact

Friends of Eaton Park is your first port of call for bench enquiries. We will answer your questions and help guide you through the process. contact@friendsofeatonpark.co.uk

Thank you for your interest in Eaton Park. Do get in touch if you have any questions or would like to discuss donating a bench.

