

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

[www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk](http://www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk)

Minutes of general meeting - 7 July 2012

Present: Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) – Chaired; Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec and Tower Garrdens); Joyce Rosser (Priory Common), Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Park); Ulla Lefmann (Ducketts Common); Mal Hawley (Downhills Park); Jackie Goodwin (Finsbury Park); Catherine Appleby (Coldfall Woods); Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Park); Michael Johns (Queen's Wood) - note-taker; Items 7-14 Simon Farrow (London Borough of Haringey); Lewis Taylor (London Borough of Haringey). Apologies: David Warren (Parkland Walk); Chris Chadwick (Priory Park); Leila Laksari (Living Under One Sun).

1. Minutes of last meeting - agreed. It was noted that in para 7 of the minutes of 3 March, Priory Park, 'lessee for the tennis courts' should have read 'lessee of the cafe'.

2. Matters Arising None

3. River Moselle

The walk (80 attended) and the leaflet (5,000 printed) had been a great success. £100 was still needed towards the cost of the leaflet and contributions would be gratefully received. Copies of the leaflet had been given to libraries and printable versions would be placed on the Forum website. Friends groups were encouraged to link to this page. It was hoped that a feature would be included in Haringey People. Thought needed to be given to how reprints could be funded. An artist was working with Bruce Castle museum on seeking funding for a project with schools on the Moselle. A management group was being set up, largely to handle the Lordship Rec part of the river, but representation from the Western end would be very welcome. There was an issue around drains being wrongly connected up to the river leading to pollution. The attention of Forum members was also drawn to the problem of build up of phosphates in the Lee river and the desirability of using phosphate free dishwasher tablets.

4. Love Haringey's Parks Week

This would be 21-29 July. Dave Morris would be issuing a press release with a summary of the various events planned. If any other group had an event in mind for that week, they should let him know. It was a good way of keeping up the public focus on the importance of adequate resourcing of open spaces.

5. Open Day

It was agreed that it would be good to have a Friends Forum day when members of Friends Groups could get to meet people from all the teams in the Council and their partners who affected parks for discussions and get to know you sessions without the pressure of decisions to take. The Council had agreed in principle and could provide the venue and refreshments. Dave Morris and Jackie Goodwin would discuss arrangements with Sarah Jones. It might be

sensible to seek pre-registrations of interest to ensure that there were enough takers to make the event worthwhile.

## 6. London/National reports

The crisis in Haringey was mirrored across the country with budget cuts and threats of commercialisation or privatisation. There was increasing focus. In the 1980s, when there had been similar issues, the pressure had eventually produced an important Parliamentary report which had led to a lot of improvements. This time there were many more Friends Groups (5,000 across the country) to keep up the pressure and this was already bearing fruit. Horticulture Week had held a meeting with an All Party Parliamentary Group (attended by Dave on behalf of the National Federation of Parks & Green Spaces) which wanted a Select Committee to be set up to review the issues. The Lottery had organised a meeting to discuss how the improvements they had funded could set a benchmark for standards elsewhere rather than substituting for core state funding. There were similar discussions in the Green Flag organisation (where the contract for management was out to tender) about how to spread the standards.

## 7. Local Reports from the Friends, plus Council response

### Priory Park

The Friends remained concerned at the lack of support from the council for their claim for the park to become Metropolitan Open Space. Simon Farrow would ask Ian Holt to send them a response. They wanted to expand the wildflower meadow. Simon said the Council was looking at how best to maintain a number of such meadows in the borough. The cafe had been closed for some months because the new lessee had found there was more work to be done on the building than expected. A programme of investment over two years had now been agreed and the cafe would open in August. The paddling pool had been reopened after the end of the hosepipe ban. The Bowling Clubhouse needed some repairs. The Friends had held a meeting with a view to creating a community interest company to run the facilities.

### Tower Gardens

The Friends Group had been revived and was holding an inaugural picnic on 14 July. They were circulating their own questionnaire supported by Groundwork to local residents.

### Finsbury Park

The Friends asked for a copy of the park rules; Lewis Taylor agreed to supply this. They had had a problem with human excrement not cleared away and wondered what the policy was. Lewis said this raised tricky health hazards for staff as well as park users; he would find out what the policy was. There had been a number of people cutting back bushes who had not worn any identification and one had been aggressive towards dogs. Lewis said these were probably agency staff and he apologised for any rudeness; he agreed they should wear identification and would follow up why they had not done so. The Friends asked why the land above the reservoir was fenced off; Lewis said that Thames Water had identified structural deficiencies in the reservoir and were investigating how to remedy these. The area

was likely to remain fenced off for some time. It was noted that the 10-day Jamaica Village event had been cancelled.

### Coldfall Wood

Groundwork had secured some funding for a new path but there was some dispute about where it should be placed. In October, a marquee would be erected to celebrate the improvements to the woods and the granting of QE2 permanent open space status to the neighbouring playing fields. There had been concern about the behaviour of a young man in the wood, but this was being handled in a low key way as it was thought that he might be more in need of care than correction. Lewis Taylor said the council were developing a protocol about multi agency handling of rough sleepers (though it might not be relevant in this case). The forum asked who should be notified of rough sleepers. Lewis said that if there was concern about law breaking which was not an immediate emergency, Pauline Syddell of the Neighbourhood police team was the best contact. It should, however, be noted that rough sleeping itself was not illegal.

### Queen's Wood

The Woodland Arts Fun Day had nearly been cancelled because of the weather, but in fact there was a break and it was in the end quite well attended. They had replanted the pond and it was hoped that the plants might take better this year although there was still a problem with one dog owner who damaged the fence to let his dog into the pond. 'No Cycling' signs had now been put up – they were very welcome although there were still people who ignored them.

### Ducketts Common

The basketball pitch and green gym had been opened on 8 June. There had been problems with some of the equipment but these had now been fixed. There had been a problem with cars for an event parking on the lawn which was very waterlogged and the Friends had had to call the police who had moved them on. Lewis Taylor said that before events a council official discussed arrangements with the organisers on site and usually allowed one vehicle for delivery. The organisers had ignored the agreement and used ten cars in this case. This had been noted on the file and would be taken into account if they ever sought to use the site again. There were some rough sleepers and it would be helpful if the vegetation were cut back to discourage this; Lewis agreed to look into this. The park had been without a notice board for 18 months. Simon Farrow said that when the Dog Control Orders had been settled, the council would look at notice boards generally. The Friends asked about the arrangements for weekend cover. Lewis confirmed that there was a duty officer for emergencies and events at the weekend. He would recirculate the mobile number though he asked that Friends only used it themselves and did not publicise it more widely.

### Alexandra Park

The Red Bull BMX event had been very popular but the track had done permanent damage to the grass. The organisers had forfeited their damage deposit and the land was being restored. The discussions on the use of the playing fields by Heartlands School were continuing.

Wooden sculptures were being placed in a sculpture trail for the Olympics. The Olympic torch would come to the Palace on 25 July and all tickets had already been taken.

#### Downhills Park

The annual Art in the Park event organised by the Friends would be held on 15 July. There was concern because the main gates to the park had been closed without warning to the Friends for the works to the highway. These works were valuable as they would join an extra open space onto the park but it was important that the gates were open for the event. Similarly a table tennis table was being installed and it was important that those works did not interfere with Art in the Park. Lewis Taylor apologised for the failure to notify the Friends; he would ensure that the work and the table tennis table did not get in the way of the event. The Friends would be taking part in the RSPB cockney sparrow count, and also holding a picnic in Love Parks Week. They would be holding a clearance day for the pond but they still needed to find and fix the leak.

#### Lordship Rec

The regeneration works would be completed by the end of August. The Lordship Rec Users Forum are organising a grand launch festival on 22 September. They also wanted to generate a programme of events in the outdoor performance theatre. If anyone knew local musicians/performers who would be interested in helping put on events they should let the Friends know. Lots of other user group activities were going on. 170 volunteers from a bank had done a day's work repairing some of the natural play features.

#### Living under One Sun

They were holding a Blooming Beds, Bees and Butterflies event next to the allotments in Tottenham Hale on 14 July.

#### Chestnuts Park

They had held an event to launch the sensory garden. There was concern because a free school had sought to use the pavilion, which the Friends believed was not suitable and was due to be demolished. Simon Farrow explained that the council wanted to explore the policy of use of the building in general rather than for the particular user. If the policy was supported, then it would advertise widely so that other bodies could apply in fair competition with the organisation which had made the original suggestion. In this case, the Friends and several councillors had objected in principle and the idea was unlikely to proceed. The Friends said the building was unsuitable for use by children as it was semi-derelict, contained asbestos and had no lobby area. The Forum had a policy that buildings in parks should only be used for activities connected with the park; they thought the Friends and the council should get together to try to find a way of funding the demolition, for example by using trainees.

#### White Hart Lane Rec

There was no formal Friends' Group but a local resident was organising an event there.

## Belmont Rec

Concern had been expressed that the neighbouring school might be able to resurrect a proposal to expand into the park under the changed national planning rules. In fact Haringey's planning guidance rules this out. The Forum reaffirmed it is opposed to any encroachment onto green spaces. The council confirmed that they had no plans to do so.

## 8. Dog Control Orders

The proposals were now out for consultation. Some sessions were being held in parks with dog owners and non dog owners. Friends of Alexandra Park asked if the meetings could be re-held in their park as there had been no advance notification. The results of the consultation would be analysed and put to the Cabinet. New orders were likely to be implemented in November.

## 9. Benches and other memorials

In Downhills Park, a memorial bench had become damaged; the damage was reported to the council but nothing had been done and now it was unusable. No-one had a record of who had given the bench apart from a photo of the plaque taken by the Friends. Similarly in Ducketts Common a memorial had been damaged. The question arose of who was responsible for maintenance. Simon Farrow said that it was confirmed in Management Plans that the council would maintain memorials the same as with all park furniture, but if they were completely destroyed or disappeared, it was not obliged to replace them. He acknowledged that they did not have a list of such memorials. Sarah Jones was putting one together and they would welcome any assistance Friends Groups could give, including photos of any plaques.

## 10. Buildings in Parks

The Forum asked what had happened about the proposed audit of buildings and structures in parks and to their comments on the proposed template for reporting. This could be used to include memorials as well. Simon Farrow said that the Council would update and recirculate a draft template.

## 11. River Moselle

The Forum reported on its achievements (see para 3 above). They asked what was happening about enforcing the correct drainage links. Simon Farrow said he would find out. The Forum also drew the Council's attention to the problem of excess phosphates in the River Lee.

## 12. Resources

The Forum drew attention to the fact that one off sources of money and manpower had had to be found to deal with problems of park maintenance. This was an inefficient way of managing the parks and they believed that permanent increases should be made in the budget

for next year. Lewis Taylor confirmed that £200k had been allotted to infrastructure and a one off force of agency staff had been employed to plant beds, who had also been used for some other tasks. He agreed this was difficult to manage. It was possible that further one off funds would be found to deal with costs related to the Olympics. The council would start the budget round for 2013/14 in the Autumn. The Forum's activities had kept the issue at the forefront of Councillors' minds and they were well aware of the issues. The Forum said it was a pity that Haringey had now acquired a reputation nationally for the extreme level of their cuts to spending on open spaces.

### 13. Any other business

Simon Farrow said that the council were planning to update park management plans in the Autumn and they would be seeking meetings with Friends Groups. After that they would hold public consultations. This would apply to all parks with management plans, whether Green Flag or otherwise. A new section on park buildings would be added.

They were working with Groundwork and the Friends of Stationers Park to construct a wall chart with a plan of maintenance which volunteers could use for their work.

### 14. Date of next meeting

Saturday 1 September 2012 at 10.00 at Bruce Castle.