

## Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

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

# **Minutes of general meeting – 7 September 2013**

**Present:** Joyce Rosser (Priory Common) – *Chaired* ; Dave Morris (Lordship Rec, Downhills Park and Tottenham Cemetery); Ulla Lefmann (Ducketts Common); Glenys Law (CREOS); Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), David Warren (Parkland Walk); Ros Abrams (CREOS); Anne Scott (White Hart Lane Rec); Martin Ball (Down Lane Park); Clif Osborne (TCV); Lorraine Gordon (Rascals Party Bus for Kids); Michael Johns (Queen’s Wood) – *note-taker*. **Items 8-12** Paul Ely (London Borough of Haringey) **Apologies:** Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Palace); Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Park); Lynn Percival (Finsbury Park), Mal Hawley (Downhills Park).

### **1. Open Day**

We had planned a Friends Forum / Leisure Services joint Open Day in May. In the event there had been less than 25 pre-registrations for attendance so the open day was cancelled. The Forum might try to organise another one for next year – it might be worth canvassing members to see if there were any topics on which they would like discussion groups.

### **2. London and National Forums**

There continued to be meetings across the country to address the crisis in funding of green spaces. The important national charity Greenspace had closed down for lack of funding but Keep Britain Tidy had taken over management of the Green Flag scheme and Love Parks Week. A national ‘State of Parks’ report had been commissioned by the Lottery and all Friends’ groups in the UK, including Haringey, are being sent a questionnaire on the state of their own park. All are urged to fill it in!

### **3. Moselle Walk**

About 50 people had taken part in another successful walk. Angie Bullock was leading a project titled “A River runs through it” on the subject of the Moselle involving schools and art works. She had created willow sculptures along the route of the walk. She was getting 5,000 more copies of the leaflet printed and anyone who had any corrections to make to the text should let her know. There would be another river walk up from Markfield Park as far as Lordship Rec on 14 September to coincide with the other celebrations. Thames Water had started a 5 year programme to identify misconnections of foul water outlets from properties which might be contributing to the pollution of the river. 50,000 properties had already been contacted and so far 500 misconnections had been identified.

### **4. TCV and Groundwork**

It was explained that funding reductions had meant that TCV had had to restrict its volunteer sessions to parks with Green Flags and one or two others with management plans. TCV had a contract with Haringey and it agreed work programmes with the Council and Friends' groups. It had had to give up community work with schools. It was, however, able to give advice and training to all groups and was keen to know what they needed. It could provide training on First Aid, risk assessment, practical skills like tools maintenance or plant identification. The number of their own volunteers fluctuated but they were still getting new volunteers. The Forum had long supported TCV and they were very pleased that they were maintaining Railway Fields as a centre for the whole of North London and an example of good practice. There was some concern that the restriction to Green Flag parks meant that parks in most need of conservation work were getting less help than parks who were already nearer a reasonable standard. Some Friends Groups of such parks would benefit from volunteers but were only able to do so by paying TCV out of their own funds. Groundwork had a separate agreement with Haringey. The Forum had the impression that they were interested in gaining contracts to do work which replaced paid staff across the country and that they were using workfare "volunteers" who were not genuinely volunteering. The Council had promised to send the Forum copies of the remits of both bodies and their monthly reports but had not yet done so.

## **5. Growing in Haringey**

The Growing in Haringey network supported people to grow food throughout Haringey and would welcome a representative of the Forum on their discussions. On the other hand, many parks did not have any interest in growing food and there was already some cross membership between the groups which enabled them to keep in touch with each others' activities.

## **6. History of local involvement in North East London green spaces**

The Radical History Network of North East London was writing a history of community involvement and campaigning in saving and supporting green spaces. They would welcome contributions from Friends' Groups about any successful campaigning in their own spaces, which should be sent to Dave Morris by the end of September..

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

***Ducketts Common*** There had been a basket ball event in July which had sealed off large areas of the Common from the public for 5 days even though the event had only been for two days. It had been very noisy; complaints had been made to the Council but there had been no response. There would be another event in September and it was hoped there would not be a repeat of the problems. There were also issues about toilet provision. *Paul Ely said he would bring the complaint to the attention of client services and make sure the problems were not repeated.* TCV were drafting a Conservation Action Plan for the common to be discussed and agreed with the Friends and Council.

***Parkland Walk*** Dealing with encroachment was now one of the Key Performance Indicators of Andy Briggs's team. They had sent a letter to 1400 owners of properties abutting the park and

representatives of the council and the Friends had walked all the way along the boundaries. They had identified a large number of cases of dumped garden waste, other dumped waste and moved boundaries and action was being taken to deal with them. On 16-17 November there would be a Big Clean where Friends, TCV volunteers and council staff would try to clear up litter – in a previous exercise by Veolia, 2 tons had been collected in a short stretch. The walk was used by both walkers and cyclists but it was felt pedestrians should have priority. Most cyclists were considerate but a minority cycled too fast and gave too little leeway to walkers. The Friends wanted a small number of signs asking for consideration, but there were indications that not everyone in the council were in favour. *Paul Ely agreed to follow this up.*

**Queen's Wood** The Friends had held a successful Family Fun Day in July. They had used the Lodge gardens because this location was easier for people to find than the Witches' Coven. They still had problems with an individual who was breaking down the fence to the frog pond to allow his dog entry and they were discussing possible solutions (or at least mitigations) with the Council. They were still waiting for action from Groundwork on bids for improving the area near the Lodge. *Paul Ely agreed to follow this up.*

**CREOS** The Friends had held a Big Lunch event on the meadow in June. They were renewing woodchip paths with free woodchip from the Council but had been disappointed that they had had to spend their own members' money on extra help. The land had been transferred from Parks Department to Highgate Wood school and this made for many problems; they wondered why the land was not returned to Parks. They would like a little funding for paths, and possibly help from TCV volunteers, but without having to pay for it themselves. And the meadow needed to be mown once a year and this was becoming very hard for volunteers with trimmers; the Friends thought the council ought to come in and mow it. There was also a problem with litter and dumping in the car park; it might help if a litter bin and some lighting were installed. *Paul Ely said that the ownership by the school went back a long time and Parks Department would be reluctant to take over management unless some funding was transferred with the land. A Management Plan had been commissioned, to be paid for by the school and this should help to ensure necessary work was undertaken and better coordination. He would make sure that the bids for spending were fed into the capital spending review for 2014-15 which was currently underway. All Friends' Groups which needed capital spent on their parks should make bids to Tim Pyle, copy to Simon Farrow and Sarah Jones, for him to consider inclusion in the plan for next year. The issue of mowing meadows was shared with a number of other parks, including Priory Park and Parkland Walk. Paul would ask Ian Holt to look into it and report back.*

**White Hart Lane Rec** Consultation had shown that local residents were very keen to improve the park and use it for sports and other activities. There had been successful Friends events in 2012 and the Friends were holding an event on 21 September as a Big Thank You to everyone involved. As the timing had slipped from original plans they needed to borrow a marquee to hold the events. *Paul would ask Sarah Jones to try and borrow one from Albert Road Rec.* The Friends also wanted to develop local support for a major improvement of the park, restoring original features and doing something with the pond. They had used the Rascals Party Bus to attract interest in the Rec; they would like it to be able to tour other parks and drum up support elsewhere. *Paul said he was drawing up a sports pitches strategy and would include White Hart Lane Rec in the review. He would*

*also refer the need for funds to the capital spending review.* The Forum felt the council should draw up a long term strategy and management plan for the Rec with the Friends. A meeting was being called; *Paul said he should be sent an invitation and he would make sure that someone from the council attended.* It was noted that the Rascals Bus could be contracted for events in other parks; because it was mobile it could be set up and taken away easily and the internal space was very flexible.

**Tottenham Green** The Friends' Group was fully up and running. It was working with neighbouring organisations and had already undertaken a review of the biodiversity of the site.

**Tottenham Cemetery** A Friends' Group had been set up; it planned to improve information about the site and improve the maintenance and to protect biodiversity.

**Downhills Park** The Friends' Art in the Park event had been very successful. There would be a Tottenham Ploughman's Day on 8 September where local bread, beer and cheese makers would offer their wares for sale to eat.

**Lordship Rec** The park's User Groups were increasing their activities and there would be a Flower and Produce show, a Health and Welfare event and a dog show on 14 September. The Eco Hub building was now virtually complete. The Friends' Group had a lease on some of the space and were using the building, although it was not wholly open to the public yet. They were working up a business plan and setting up a specialist co-operative to take over the whole building and were in discussion with the council about this. *Paul said the council recognised how this proposal was a development of the principles which had governed the improvements to the park and they would engage fully with the Friends' group to work it up, but there were a large number of risks which had to be addressed.* The Forum felt that other Friends' groups might like to run facilities in their parks and the risks were not necessarily greater than those where small individual businesses were involved; it would be a good idea, separate from the talks on the specific Lordship Rec scheme, for the general issues to be discussed between the council and the forum.

**Down Lane Park** A new fence had been installed by Transport for London in recompense for a sliver of land surrendered from the park for the new gyratory system. They had also given 20 rose-bushes from the old Tottenham Hale station to the park. The Friends, in conjunction with local Residents' Groups, had got money from the Design Council for a consultation process about how local alleyways to the nearby High Road could be developed in the regeneration of Tottenham. They would like eventually to have a bridge across to Tottenham Marshes and to link up green spaces in the area. *Paul said the council had been frustrated so far in its attempts to secure external funding for the park.*

**Priory Common** Work on the orchard continued every Wednesday.

**Priory Park** The Friends' group was asking the Council to do a cut to the new meadow created by the group. They were looking at what could be done to improve Rectory Gardens, which had benefited from capital expenditure in the past but had had no maintenance since.

**Chestnuts** The Friends were holding a Drawing the Future event on 26 October to draw up plans for when the pavilion was demolished and were in discussion with the council about the pedestrian crossing in Black Boy lane.

**Alexandra Park** The 150th anniversary celebration event had been a great success. Also the Red Bull Soap Box Derby had been much less disruptive than the event the previous year because of careful working between the Friends' group, the park manager and Red Bull to ensure that positioning of the facilities did not impact on the more sensitive areas of the park.

## **8. Haringey Open Space and Biodiversity Assessment**

Under general planning legislation, Haringey Council were conducting a new assessment of its open spaces (which would replace the 2003 'Atkins' report). The Review was being conducted by Landuse Consultants and was to be finished in November. Paul Ely put round a draft questionnaire for the public and asked for comments on the text by Monday 16 September. **Dave Morris would circulate this to Friends' Groups.** The consultation would be important to demonstrate the value people put on open spaces, to defend those which already existed and to show those parts of the borough where more might be needed. Effectively the review would be assessing all parks to Green Flag standards. (This was a separate local survey from the national questionnaire already circulated by Sarah Jones – see para 3 above). The Forum asked about recent reorganisations in the Council. Paul said he now reported to Graham Beasley under Front Line Services; Andy Briggs and his team was part of Direct Services. **Paul would send the Forum an organisational chart.**

## **9. Groundwork/TCV**

The Forum pointed out that at the last meeting the council had promised to let them have a copy of the council's remit to Groundwork and TCV and their monthly reports. These had not been received. The Council had also promised a clarification of its policy towards the use of workfare and people told to volunteer under actual or implied threat of loss of benefit. This also had not been received. It was difficult to have a full discussion on TCV and Groundwork's roles without this information. There was also some unease that the council had told TCV to focus its volunteer sessions on Green Flag parks, rather than decide on a project by project basis. **Paul said he would send the information to the Forum. It was agreed that a full discussion would be held in the light of that information with Simon Farrow present. In the mean time, Clif Osborne would send round an email showing what training TCV could give and inviting expressions of interest.**

## **10. Date of next meeting**

**Saturday 2 November 2013** at 10.00 at Bruce Castle.