

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Next meeting for all Friends of Parks Groups

Saturday April 5th, 10am at Bruce Castle Museum

Minutes of meeting, February 8th 2014 at Bruce Castle

Present: 13 Friends Groups - Coldfall Wood, Downhills Park, Living Under One Sun, Russell Park, Queens Wood, Down Lane Park, Priory Common, Chestnuts Park, Lordship Rec, Alexandra Palace Park, Finsbury Park Stakeholders Group, Tottenham Green, Haringey Tree Wardens, 2 representatives from TCV and Friends of Railway Fields + Andy Briggs and Tony Healy from Haringey Council, and Councillor Bevan came to observe. **Apologies:** Crouch End Open Spaces, Parkland Wlk

Communications: The problem of getting to people who do not have email or computer skills came up but it was felt that each Friends Group should be responsible for getting information to any of their members in this position. A Friends contact telephone number could be put clearly on notice boards. It was suggested that a quarterly or half yearly bulletin could be produced with the key issues discussed or dealt with at the Forum.

Potential Development Sites Consultation: Friends Groups should try to be involved in discussions about public space in future housing development sites presently under discussion by the Council.

TCV reported on their new Green Gym (Gardening with an exercise/fitness element) 2 Wednesdays at Bruce Castle and 2 Wednesdays at Living Under One Sun. Volunteering with TCV allows volunteers the opportunity to see projects around the Borough.

Tree Wardens: They have been going since 1987 and were set up to encourage people to understand the importance of trees in the environment. They hold bi-monthly tree walks in Haringey - see www.haringeytreewardens.org.uk for information about these walks. It was agreed that the Tree Wardens could join the forum and that we could have a small talk on trees at the forum.

Haringey Rethinking Parks Workshop Dave Morris, who apologised for not being able to attend the meeting, provided a written report of the Workshop he attended organised by the Council. This workshop was to investigate how the parks and green spaces of Haringey could be more sustainably maintained and developed when the budget had been so savagely cut. The council are looking at event hire, land and property, greater partnership working, self-management of Allotments, rationalisation of landscape features, running cost efficiencies. *[Dave's thoughts attached]*. We postponed a fuller discussion of the seminar and the issues it raised to our next meeting.

Encroachment of Institutions onto parks: Down Lane Park Friends are concerned that the Techno Park at Tottenham Hale adjacent to their park is to be offered to Harris to be used as a site for a new Free School. The Friends are meeting with the council to discuss the repercussions of this

development for the park. They are not meeting with Parks Dept reps but Property Services although Paul Ely is leading on this. It was felt by the Friends that the poor communication to date with the Friends Group showed a disrespect for the relationship they had built up successfully with the Parks Department over the years. It seems the site is not large enough to provide adequate play and sport space for the students so the School have offered to pay towards the building of a multi use games area in the park that would be for school use in term time. Up to now the Friends had been working with the Council to design and plan for new facilities in the park for everyone but now due to lack of funds the Council are discussing plans to enter into this joint venture with the School ignoring previous discussion with the Friends. This relates back to the previous point about the council rethinking their parks programme. It was suggested that the alternative design solutions be investigated by the school eg roof top play areas.

Health: It was pointed out that more consideration should be given to the value that parks and open spaces hold in relation to public health and the wellbeing of children by being freely available 24 hours a day.

Reports from Groups

Downhills – no particular issues all going well

Alexandra Palace Park – has drawn up a comprehensive programme of events for the future

Tottenham Green – Works are underway to regenerate the green and weather permitting will finish around the end of April. The Friends are in early stage of development and are working to establish a role in future development of Tottenham Green. Concerns about how to get more information.

Down Lane – Working for Green Flag status. Flooding of paths to be dealt with in management plan. In discussion with Premier Inn Developers about donation to green space. It was felt that communication between the friends and Council had disintegrated and worried if this was the model for the future for all our groups. ***Lordship Rec*** – Waiting for the council to provide a lease so that the new Eco-hub Cooperative could open and run the community building in the park. Long running problem with lighting in the park.

Finsbury Park – New Stakeholders Group started for all people who use or have an interest in the park. Want to be a part of any future developments in the park. Some crossover with the Friends, one of the stakeholder members is also a member of the Friends. Some of the drains had collapsed and need attention. Some concern about what will happen to the land used by groups in the park covered by The Metropolitan Housing lease which is coming to an end. The Stakeholders want to be involved in discussions about extension of events in Finsbury Park

Queens Wood – Very popular and successful project with Shire Horses working on coppicing in the Woods. Excessive water has made one of the paths collapse. The friends wished to reiterate the crucial role played by the Council's Conservation Officer in the development of the Woods.

Russell Park – Trying to start park football team for local community but the ground is too flooded.

Friends have done a lot of planting and run a gardening group for senior citizens. Equipment in the playground has been damaged and nothing has been done to replace things for months. Park gates are not being locked. Group would welcome support from long running groups and the forum. Some problems with anti-social behaviour.

Railway Fields – Group is doing well despite some storm damage. Broken trees have been used in making dead hedges. TCV in partnership with the Friends have started an environmental art group for children. Also engaged in Adult education like winter tree ID walk.

Priory common - Community orchard going well. Planning a big lunch event in June.

Coldfall Wood – Also had a successful project with the Shire Horses in the wood doing coppicing. Some of the lighting is not working. They have organised walks and talks in the wood.

Chestnuts – Good news, the new pedestrian entrance is now complete. Vehicle gate is still not being properly managed, other gates in front of community centre are being left open and too many vehicles are coming into the park which is not safe. Consultation on the new crossing over Black Boy Lane is starting and works should be finished by end of march. Still a lot of flooding in the park because of the extreme weather but even in normal weather the park is often water logged, which is why it's impossible to allow any activities that involve vehicles driving onto the field, eg the Funfair.

Various reports

Growing in Haringey and Living Under One Sun – Concerned re lack of access to open space. Campaigning to revitalise Lea Valley Pk. Developing a community vision to bring people together – including those involved in transport and health and also local developers to raise the positive profile of Lea Valley and increase community involvement. Working to bring the Green agenda into development.

Tree Wardens – Arboricultural dept of the Council does good work across the borough. People are not fully aware of that, or of the importance of trees in the environment. Council needs to share info about their work with residents and make it more prominent on the Council Website.

Moselle Walk Joyce from Friends of Priory Common and Tottenham Civic Society has worked with the Forum to produce a walk brochure along the route of the Moselle River across the borough and there will be a walk in the Spring and is now working on a new walk brochure from Alexandra Palace and Park to Bruce Castle Park visiting several Haringey parks and conservation areas along the way which will be produced by the June.

Council's Responses

TCV and Groundwork: Andy apologised that he did not have the answers to the 9 questions that had been put to the council at the last Forum meeting about the role of TCV and Groundwork. He noted that Simon Farrow had emailed us to say that Andy would be given a list of written answers to share with us at the meeting. Andy promised that he would get it to us straight after the meeting so

that we can include them in these minutes. (Ed note – they still hadn't been received by 13 March)

Lighting: Overall restructuring of the council has made working across departments easier. So from now on it will be easier for the dept to deal with problems of lighting. Now working with a company called Ringway Jacobs to develop management of lighting in parks.

Flooding: Not a great deal can be done about that in such extreme weather conditions. Some concern about being able to get onto land when the new growing season starts. More drain clearing and inspection is being done. It was noted that green space was important as soak zones in built up areas and we need to advertise the importance of parks and green open spaces and why they should be protected and extended.

Anti-social behaviour in Russell Park - Parks service is part of the Environment and Community Services along with safer neighbourhood teams. Have asked friends and users of Russell Park to report to parks department about any anti-social behaviour that happens and when so that the council and the neighbourhood police can build up a picture of when it mostly happens and where. Also need to report instances of when dogs are exercised in dog free play areas. He was told that the Friends have been told by police that they are too busy having to deal with gangs around wood green and the betting shops. Need signs up to say what is not to be tolerated in parks.

Chestnuts Park – council have met with Community Centre to talk about their role in managing gates and have voiced concerns about their contravention of their agreement (2 cars only). The Friends need to report any failures to lock gates and control traffic.

Queens Wood – The conservation officer is working with the friends on solutions to the problem of the paths and fallen trees. **Finsbury Park** - needs to be a survey of what lies beneath the park to look into the problem of collapsed drains. Need to keep in contact with the Friends and the Stakeholders Group about best use for the land after lease renewal for the good of the park.

Down Lane Park – Council want to work towards Green Flag standard. Will take back concerns of Friends to the Council.

Various issues

Protecting green space facilities Friends asked whether there was a clear council policy on facilities in parks being restricted from general public use. What will raising funding 'creatively' for parks mean in the balance between public green space and private events hire in the future. The Council needs a long term strategic plan for the future of parks and not short term crisis management. This is not just a parks problem and should be part of a wider debate in the council about supporting public services.

New Structure of Parks Dept. Andy Briggs gave a rundown of how the parks department is structured and who now takes responsibility for what and promised to provide us with a diagram showing all the information. Sarah Jones is responsible for issues to do with Friends Groups.

Site Allocations and Future Development. Plan document showing strategic sites for key developments over the next 20 years can be viewed on the Council Website. Comments can be made up till March 7. Full consultation will take place in the Autumn. The Development should include more green space as well as building and proposed new walkways and greenways. Need to make sure that funding is held back to pay for proper ongoing maintenance of these.