

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk

The umbrella network for the 40+ Friends groups for public green spaces of all kinds throughout Haringey

Next General Meeting for all local Friends Groups – June 6th, 10am, Bruce Castle Museum

Minutes of General Meeting – 11 April 2015

Present: Pamela Harling (Meadow Orchard Project); Ceri Williams (F of Chesnuts Pk); Mandy Hawting and Phil Chinn (F of Wolves Lane Horticulture Centre) - Chaired; Dave Morris (F of Lordship Rec and Tottenham Cemetery) – Took minutes; Martin Ball and Zena Brabazon (Down Lane Park); Clif Osborne (TCV); Chris Setz (Haringey Tree Wardens); David Warren (Parkland Walk and Queens Wood), Kevin Duffy (F of Finsbury Park); Deborah Cawkwell (Markfield Park, Manchester Gardens and Paignton Park); Alec Peschlow (Christ Church Project - Ducketts Common); Ricardo Johnson (Rockstone at Lordship Rec)

Items 8 onwards - Simon Farrow and Frankie Hunt (Parks Dept)

Apologies: Michael Johns (Queens Wood); Malcolm Hawley (Downhills Pk); Tony Healey (Parks Dept), Joyce Rosser (Priory Common); Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec); Catherine Appleby (Coldfall Woods and Muswell Hill Playing Fields); Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Park); Anna Rogers (TCV trainee); Ant Elder (Fairland Park); Tony Healy (LBH Parks Mgr West); Officer (Groundwork); Anne Scott (F of White Hart Lane Rec)

1. Minutes of last meeting, Feb 2015

Agreed, except Wolves Lane Centre is 'under review'.

2. Walks guides

Our 2 Walk Guides (Ally Pally-Bruce Castle Walk and River Moselle Walk) published jointly by the Forum and the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations are still available and are regularly given to libraries for display. An accessible format of both should be on the two websites and link circulated. A new one is planned for the route of the former Ally Pally-Seven Sisters railway line. Could we also do a 'north-south' walk through the centre of Haringey?

3. Marathon Run for the Forum

Tony Healy, the Parks Service manager for the west of Haringey, is running the London Marathon to raise money for us! Can all groups publicise? We now have a PayPal donate button on our website. £275 raised so far. 2 other runners for Friends of Chestnuts and Friends of Lordship unfortunately had to pull out before the event. Debbie got Radio 4 publicity for the difficulties for community groups using the official Marathon online fundraising due to 'charity' status protocols.

4. Forum Website, Email and Facebook

Deborah has taken over running the Forum website from Catherine. A big thanks to Catherine for all her hard work - she continues to manage our Yahoo email group. Chris and Anna will manage and

promote our Facebook page. We could probably do with some twitter action too.

5. LBH Budget

A letter from the Forum - with eight key proposals calling for real support for the underfunded Parks Service, and providing background information - had been sent early this year to all Councillors and the leaders of both parties with Cllrs. It outlined our concerns, including...

- Underfunding of the service
- increasing reliance on large, inappropriate and often damaging commercial events
- renewed pressure to consider yet again the contracting out of parks operations despite the excellent work they do
- the need to ensure the Council's 'match funding' legal commitment to the 3 Lottery-funded parks comes out of its general capital budget rather than the inadequate Parks Service budget
- Need to address deficiencies of open space, and improve s106 'planning gain' funding for parks
- that resources for the work on Council estates should be additional to the core parks operations
- Need adequate resources to achieve Council aspiration for Green Flag status for all our green spaces

As the key community partner actively involved in the management of the borough's parks we expected our points to be fully addressed. The Forum was shocked that not a single response was received.

We supported the lobbies and protests to defend local public services during the budget-setting process – our vital local services were facing another £70m central government cuts. Protests included a 250-strong anti-cuts rally at the Civic Centre in February and a 500-strong demonstration and rally in March called by the Haringey Alliance for Public Services and backed by the public sector trades unions.

Meanwhile, in this year's budget, the situation for parks has deteriorated, with further loss of office-based staff and even more major commercial events planned. [See Council info below]. Despite this the Forum pledged to do continue to do everything we can to support our green spaces and our Parks Service.

6. London and national

Dave reported that as Chair of London Friends Groups Network he addressed the campaign launch for the designation of London as "Greater London National Park". Friends Groups across London and nationally were being encouraged to speak out and lobby election candidates for adequate resources and statutory recognition for green spaces – all urged to promote the national 'Save UK Parks' petition.

7. Development threats

Alarms sounding over potential development threats to parks and green space, including 'protected' green space, as the planning department works ever more closely with private property developers.

Current examples in the draft Haringey Local Plan 'sites allocations' document out for official consultation include a south west corner of Finsbury Park, the northern third of Lordship Rec, Down Lane Park 'green road' link and the nearby Monument Way green space. Also Wolves Lane Centre is 'under review'. It was reported that at the recent London Mayor's 'Question Time' in Haringey, the 500 people attending were handed Lordship Rec campaign leaflets and 2 Friends Groups' activists put Boris on the spot about this – he apparently looked shocked to hear of the Council's proposal. The Forum agreed to back all the local Friends Groups campaigns to protect green space. We also noted that we had mounted a successful campaign in the mid-2000s when Council planners wanted to introduce a policy of allowing schools to annex neighbouring green space to extend school playgrounds/sports. We also reaffirmed our affiliation to the Our Tottenham network.

8. Local reports

Wolves Lane Centre New Friends group successfully launched. Dave had attended from the Forum to give support. Responding to the Council's 'review' by defending and promoting the Centre's unique facilities - café, animals, allotments, bedding plants, palm/rainforest greenhouses, its schools usage, large group of volunteers, offering to work in partnership, coming up with funding ideas etc. Plan public Open Day on May 9. *LBH comment: Thrilled at the launch of a Friends Group for this important site. Plan to review the Centre over the next 12 months to ensure its facilities and services are maximised.*

Markfield Park, Manchester Gardens and Paighton Park *Markfield* Love the Lea project. The amazing Steam Engine House has been in action. Schools using sports pitches well. *The Gardens* Local residents working with Groundwork to do maintenance. *Painton* Local Residents Association planning an event.

Down Lane Park Ongoing improvements underway – new fencing, improved access points, painting lamp posts, new paths, children's play equipment and a train, a MUGA. A key community event coming up, but have expressed alarm over some large commercial events being allowed. Criticism of Council's proposals for a "green road link" cutting through park and for skyscraper blocks by the park. Want to see good maintenance at the Paddock nature reserve on the far side of Tottenham Hale. *LBH comment: Pleased to report the Down Lane improvement works are going ahead. Re the Paddock, recognise that investment is needed, working with the Friends Group there.*

Railway Fields Now open at weekends. Good Friends Group AGM recently. Lots of volunteer and children's activities (including dawn chorus). Made new interpretation boards and leaflets.

Ducketts Common Alex represents a group running volunteer planting scheme. Their spring flowers are now out. Positive impact on the area. Trying to address dog fouling and improve mowing regime. *LBH comment – dog fouling issues will be passed to Council action team.*

Queens Wood Have put in for Community Green Flag. Groundwork have completed some improvements to Café community garden. Proposal to open up and promote the source of the Moselle river. Have objected to a planning threat at the border of the Wood.

Parkland Walk Problem of graffiti now being tackled, including meetings with the 2 boroughs and the police. Encroachment action – the key council officer has left / needs replacing. New benches in. Walls and bridges need safety attention. Friends organised a Big Clean Up day backed by Council. *LBH comment – graffiti removal ongoing, but ‘no graffiti’ policy ‘not realistic’.*

Finsbury Park Group has got a lot stronger over the last year. Campaigning against increasing commercialisation due to huge events, whilst seeking concessions over ones already booked. Also against potential development threats on the ‘fringes’ of the park, including at Manor House corner. Held some constructive recent meetings with the Council. Cabinet member attended their last meeting. 200 people had attended a winter conference over the future of the Finsbury Park area as a whole, including the park itself. Friends planning walkabouts with grounds staff. Trying to re-establish good communication and coordination with other user groups. Consultation over the children’s playground. *LBH comment: Welcome the recent series of meetings with the Friends, and with neighbouring boroughs.*

Lordship Rec Hub and café thriving, lots of activities by park user groups and others. Friends organised Marathon Day events to promote walking trails and other exercise opportunities in the Rec – including a Skate Jam organised by new Lordship skateboard/BMX group. Tottenham Ploughman’s Riverfest event due May 3 [Update: 1,000 attended]. Lots of training sessions eg first aid, safeguarding, tree ID etc. Friends continue to make improvements to Woodland. Rockstone bike group planning to open up base. Monthly park co-management meetings with key stakeholder groups and Parks Service going very well, coordinating maintenance, management and further improvement projects. Everyone stunned when Council planners unveiled a proposal to promote demolition of neighbouring social housing and build on the northern third of the Rec (including the community-run sports pitches). The Friends, the Broadwater Farm Residents Association and Broadwater United FC have launched a major opposition campaign and public meeting, and have distributed 12,000 leaflets throughout the area. *LBH comment: Parks Service had informed the Planning Service last year that the park has full protection. Simon will send the Forum the complete Parks Service response to the draft Haringey Local Plan.*

Tottenham Cemetery: Relaunched on 21 February at Bruce Castle. Met monthly since. Seeking walkabout with managers.

Chestnuts Park The derelict pavilion has at least been demolished – will open up the whole park and make way for a new path, a Friends orchard and willow garden area and possible outdoor gym. Almost all of the Friends/Parks Service 10 year plan for park now achieved, except for Council support for café needed (lower rent and free parking). Also plan to improve basketball courts, safe entrance by school, create a community garden, and re-visit drainage problems. Issues with grass and meadow maintenance. Consultation over the future of Chestnuts Community Centre in the park (recently handed to a development charity) showed how important it is as a community venue, with many campaigning for it to be returned to genuine local self-management.

Alexandra Park *[In writing]* The Friends group runs a weekly information session and a programme of educational and fun events. Have made some improvements to their Information Centre. Have objected to some proposals in the Haringey Local Plan which affect the park. Lottery

funding now earmarked for the renovation of the Palace, including the historic theatre and the original BBC TV studio.

Priory Common *[In writing]* Earmarked for a 'SUDS' environmental drainage project.

White Hart Lane *[In writing]* Organising a social event

Priory Park Refurbished tennis courts celebration event planned.

9. Strategic parks service matters – Council responses / discussion

Simon for the Council explained the **post-budget / parks service strategy** [some of the info added after he met up with Dave Morris the following week]: Commercial events Controversially the service is being expected to raise approx £300k from commercial events this year, £600k extra next year, and £900k extra the year after. Outrageously the budget will then be cut accordingly, creating a shockingly irresponsible long-term dependency and uncertainty. Any income above that can be reinvested in parks. Finsbury Park is to bear the brunt of most of the events. Wolves Lane Centre Review will be aiming to protect and improve this facility, but cut £77k from its budget. Further general efficiencies/cuts eg reviewing landscape maintenance and property management. This will include doing an Infrastructure Plan and an Asset Management Plan regarding the state of all paths/fences/buildings etc. Parks Service commissioning / privatisation review They have been told to review parks management [again!] – 3 years ago the review concluded privatisation would not even save money. Various models will be looked at in 2015/16 (including contracting Veolia, or devolving management to Friends Groups), for a decision the following year on whether or not to implement.

Development. Property development is being strongly promoted by the Council all over Haringey, especially in Tottenham. We expect the Parks Service to vigorously protect green space, to seek a large % of any s106/CIL funds for improvements, and to seek additional green space to address deficiency. Need to keep our eyes on the draft Crossrail route long-term plans, which could affect green space. There is a Green Infrastructure Group - Simon to send Martin the details.

Bye-Laws The issue of reviewing these may be re-visited, with Public Spaces Protection Orders also considered.

Apprentices The service will get 4 apprentices for the Lottery-funded parks.

Haringey 'Park Life' bulletins – Council aim to produce 3 or 4 per year, including showcasing the great work of Friends Groups.

Events It was reported that Bridget Badoe, the events officer, is leaving (post to be re-filled). We sent her our thanks for all her admin support to Friends Groups.

10. Other stakeholder reports

TCV Monthly programme sent out to all groups. Annual performance review showed 121 volunteer work days across Haringey's sites (equivalent to £86k value). 1,500 have taken part in training sessions. TCV have been leading on the introduction of Conservation Action Plans for Green Flag parks and other sites. Have invested in Railway Fields. Seeking a new contract with the Council – the Forum agreed to back this strongly.

Tree Wardens – Volunteer group, holding walks and talks in many parks (3 in the last month!), and plant trees at various sites.

11. AOB

- Another Sustainable Haringey 'Compost Giveaway' planned.
- Various Election Hustings events publicised.

12. Next Forum meetings

Sat June 6, Sat Sep 5, Sat Nov 7

Additional Items for next meeting Plant stealing; trip hazards; grass cutting around trees; flooding; biodiversity plans / management and action plans / conservation plans.