

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Report of General Meeting held on Saturday 5 September 2020 by Zoom

Present: Friends Groups and community reps: Ceri Williams (Chestnuts), Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) [Chair], Victoria Midwinter (Coldfall Wood / MH playing fields) [Minutes], Martin Ball (Down Lane Park), Thiago Campos (Springfield Community Park), Phil Chinn (Wolves Lane), Ivana Curcic (Chesnut Park), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Pamela Harling (Meadow Orchard Project), Gordon Hutchins (Alexandra Park), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle), Leyla Laksari (Living Under One Sun), Glenys Law (CREOS and SHIFT), John Miles (Parkside Malvern RA and Haringey Rivers Forum), Clare Parry (Downhills), Mat Pendergast (TCV/Railway Fields), Alex Peschlow (Ducketts Common), Robert Thaine (Chestnuts Park and Russell Park), David Warren (Parkland Walk and Queens Wood), Bethany (Guardian of the Green), Carrie (Edible Landscapes)

Council Representatives: Lewis Taylor (Head of Operations), Paul Ely (Policy Consultant).

Apologies: Quentin Given (The Paddock and Bruce Grove Cloud Garden), Chloe Tait (Hartington Park), Alice Tringham (Priory Park), Simon Farrow (LBH Head of Service).

Minutes of last Meeting held on Zoom 6 June 2020 accepted as true record.

Matters Arising:

New Parks Project Officer has started – Jeffrey Lennon. He will be covering Hartington Pk, Lordship Rec and some other sites.

The extra meeting proposed for 1 August didn't happen and nor did the suggested special trees meeting.

Report Back on Petition to Council Meeting: Clare and the deputation formally handed in the petition (2500+ signatures of local residents) calling for more resources and staffing for the parks service. Clare did the presentation, but what is important is what happens next and holding Councillors to account. Councillors (Cabinet member and reps from the Labour and LibDem parties spoke) appeared largely in agreement but referred to the Council's serious and deepening underfunding from central Government. How do we follow through and get LBH to think differently sometimes and to work with other departments eg Health? How to get central government to reimburse the expenditure on the extra Covid related measures. Klaus pointed out one point of difference - Cllr Hearn thought there was nothing wrong with the controversial commercial events policy, which could be a threat to Parks as there is a big hole in the budget due to Wireless festival not going ahead. There had not been much debate on the Council's over-dependence on events. Dave reminded the meeting that we have an agreed position on this.

Dave suggested recalling working group in a couple of weeks to work out next steps in our strategy. The budget will be set in Oct/Nov and we need to be ready. The campaign group is open to all. [See notes from that meeting, circulated]

Forum Business: Deborah from Manchester Gardens is still managing our website and it's going fine. The e-mail list is working better although some e-mails still going into spam. Reminded us all not to send e-mails cc the Forum, only post to it direct. Ceri to recirculate the guidelines from time to time.

Ceri welcomed Thiago and the other newcomers to the Forum and said we are all willing to offer support and advice as needed. There are three other new groups in development.

TCV and Volunteering issues: Mat heads up the conservation volunteers team in Haringey. TCV run Railway Fields and some education for primary schools and manage volunteers. They can provide free tree whips for tree and hedge planting projects. They restarted volunteer projects in June running two volunteer days a week. Can offer advice on Covid-safe working with volunteers. Railway Fields reopens on Monday with a one-way system and cleaning regimes in place. Alice is to be replaced in the next few weeks.

They have been awarded a one year contract to run The Paddock nature reserve in Tottenham Hale from end Oct with two full time staff 5 days a week to do community engagement, practical volunteering and education. Will work with Quentin on involving the community. LBH is pushing for nature reserve status.

Need to risk assess before running publicly advertised events. They have an on-line booking system which at the moment is Leader and 5 volunteers though numbers may be able to increase. All volunteers reminded of Covid measures and not to attend if they have symptoms. Tools are disinfected and the volunteers keep one set for the day marked up with coloured tape. Some sites are unsuitable if congested.

Leyla said they have just delivered 7 weeks of community activities in Down Lane Park which were prebooked one-hour slots. Whole families so no unaccompanied children. Had to check signatures. It was very successful. They bought lots of cheap B&Q buckets and each group got a bucket of soapy water to wash tools. Lordship Rec was also doing volunteering sessions with safe distancing etc.

People can share to this email group info on any successful sessions they are running.

London and National Networks: London Friends of Green Spaces Network have been meeting on-line monthly with 15-20 group reps attending. As a result of the London Green Spaces Commission a new London-wide fund is to be set up for additional grants that Friends may be able to access. There is a London Network Monthly Bulletin - 'Our Patch'. Dave will forward it.

Nationally lots of behind the scenes work on Covid policies and a need for additional resources although parks services are already seriously underfunded. High level discussions taking place but no concessions from central government yet on green spaces.

The Parks Alliance and the Landscape Institute have joined forces to create a new sector-wide Parks and Green Space Network (PGSN). Dave is on steering group. They are calling on the government to take action in a report '[Greener Recovery: Delivering a sustainable recovery from COVID-19](#)'.

SHIFT: There is an ongoing protest in Queens Wood at the threat to fell four mature oak trees supposedly causing subsidence to a nearby house. As a result, Glenys and others have set up a new group SHIFT - Stop Home Insurers Felling Trees. Over three years twice as many trees have been felled as planted and new trees are not a substitute. The carbon capture of four mature oak trees is equivalent to 2400 new saplings.

They addressed the LBH Environment Scrutiny Panel on Thursday pointing out that 1) LBH does not have a current tree strategy. The 2008 draft has not been adopted or revisited. And 2) LBH is not signed up to the London Tree Officers Association Joint Mitigation Protocol. LB Islington have successfully used the protocol to protect trees and have saved money by it. Why can LBH not do the same?

Simon Farrell did say they were about to appoint someone new to look at planning applications which would be good. We want the Council to save the trees we have. Glenys will send more info about SHIFT to anyone with similar issues and can offer advice on campaigning.

Alex Fraser circulated the new draft tree strategy in July. Dave will recirculate.

Communication with LBH: Ceri wanted to ensure that what we raise in the meeting with Lew gets taken back and we seek written responses to the points made between meetings. The Projects Officer to whom the queries are taken back should respond and responses can be sent out to the group with the Minutes or e-mailed between meetings.

Leyla is worried about loss of staff at Down Lane Park and lack of communication. Why is no-one talking to the Community Hub front line? There was a stabbing in the Park and no-one told them what was going on. This should be the responsibility of the new Project Officer Jeffrey Lennon.

Lew Taylor and Paul Ely joined meeting from LBH. Lew, standing in for Simon Farrow, confirmed he will pass issues to Project Officers for response. Paul has been engaged as Project Manager to develop the new 15yr Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.

Friends' Reports

Guardian of the Green: This new group is looking after the corner of Upper Tollington Park and Stroud Green Road. Flower beds had been neglected. Have started gardening sessions, removed rubbish, started planting – plants have been donated. Bethany interested to know how to start up a Friends Group. She wants to find out who owns Charter Court and who is responsible for the pavement and flower beds and how to get funding to improve. Dave happy to chat to her about forming a group.

Edible Landscapes in Finsbury Park: Carrie explained they have a forest garden and wilder area and little plant nursery. They hold weekly volunteer sessions managing numbers on the day and are getting new people interested. They produce plants and could provide to other Friends groups. Mostly edible perennials. Contact Carrie or turn up on a Sunday morning 10-12.

Meadow Orchard: This is on NHS land. Managed by a collective. They are open for volunteers now who have to pre-book.

Weir Hall Rd People have started a community garden on a school site and Mat is coming to advise. If they get trees to plant they would like LBH advice on where to put them.

Parkland Walk: Have reopened nature trail with one-way system. At the Highgate end a water leak seems to have been fixed by Thames Water. TCV have restarted work which is very welcome. They are holding their AGM on Zoom next week.

Queen's Wood: Trampling and erosion from extra footfall has damaged flora and trees. TCV will try laying dead hedging to keep people off. Groups have turned up unannounced and unbooked. The group are trying to work out with LBH how they can check if groups are booked. They are starting guided walks again of 6-12 people at social distance. TCV have already started excellent work on site.

There is also the presence of those protesting against the felling of the four oaks. Glenys update: Hopefully a solution may be found. There is a 4 week stay of 'AXAcution'. As a result of negative publicity AXA agreed to fund a second independent engineers' report. But if another solution is found will AXA fund or expect LBH to? On 18 Sept will start campaign again. There have been two petitions, one to LBH with 900 signatures but AXA put pressure on LBH with threats of costs of

£300k. 5000 signed a petition to AXA who brand themselves as environmentally friendly and advertise their collaboration with the Woodland Trust.

Crouch End Open Spaces: Restarted work days last month. Work with Good Gym who have strict Covid rules. Pleased to have replaced woodchip path with hoggins at cost of £1500 using volunteers. As elsewhere has been damage caused by trampling in areas where had hoped to create patches of biodiversity. Logs unfortunately being taken from path edges to make bonfires. There is LBH banner asking people to take rubbish home at Highgate School end but they need one the other end too.

Chestnuts Park: Informal gardening following Covid rules has started up but not advertised. £1k left in Meadow lottery fund and want to learn more from Mat about running an event safely. Ceri wanted info from Lew about running large group events as there are different responses from different Project Officers. At what level do they need to go through the LBH permission system as for a festival and are LBH accepting any applications? Looking at feasibility of creating a wetland which would be exciting. Might get Environment Agency funding. Their AGM is to be held on line. Big problem of drug selling and using in NE corner of the Park by two blocks of flats. Feel helpless. Same dealers as at Downhills. Younger and younger crack users. Weapons hidden in bushes. Have met with Police and ASB team and 3 councillors. Alistair (Project Officer) has been great but it continues with impunity.

Lordship Rec: Park is busy. BLM protests held twice a week (with Joan and Dave occasionally attending in support). Dirt bike track and skatepark busy. Summer drawing and art scheme brought in new people. Paths in terrible state and ruts in the field. Friends posted on Facebook about the Moselle river (Friends and Council working with a new contractor) and what the Friends and LBH are doing and 65 people commented and liked. This shows that if LBH would TELL people what they were doing site by site (through Friends fb and email lists etc), people would appreciate it. Core group of the Friends now meeting in the Park and volunteer sessions are back on and there was a major event in Aug to celebrate 7th anniversary of Lordship Hub: 300 people outdoors with good risk management in place. Planning mini annual flower and produce show in October. The pond is completely green with duckweed (not toxic weed) and the Friends get queries from the public. Could the Council's conservation officer issue a statement about this. Friends setting up a Litterpickers whatsapp group of volunteers. Hub centre closure caused a financial crisis – now reopening (restricted usage), having raised substantial funding from a grant and a crowdfunding appeal.

Coldfall Woods and Muswell Hill Playing Fields: Still high usage. Forest school in Woods for a month. People digging bike ramps in ancient woodland – luckily one of the Friends saw and asked them to stop. Alistair immediately put up notices and so far, no more activity. Green Flag pre-inspection walkabout coming up and a couple of Friends will go along. Planning to create a wildflower meadow on section of the playing field and will ask Annabel or Friends groups with experience for advice. Trees are marked up for crown lifting – when will this happen? Wood is not listed as one of the Nature Reserves on the LBH website. Could this be changed?

Alexandra Park: Resumed some guided walks with a leader plus 5. Ran 5 walks over a couple of days and they were booked up straight away. Conservation works have started up in the Butterfly Meadow limited to 6 people. LB Islington have a protocol for up to 15 so if anyone can get hold of that they would like to see it. There has been a huge litter picking effort to allow the grounds maintenance staff to get on with other work. Up to 100 people at a time, provided with litter pickers and hoops - terrific effort.

Living Under One Sun: Re-opened their Down Lane Park café as takeaway at end May. Used all the money raised through crowdfunding. Have had 7 weeks free sport and recreation bookable through Eventbrite and 242 were registered. They have funding to support 60 local families to help use Zoom etc. There is much digital poverty in the area, especially among women.

They are impacted by Tottenham Hale development. A major wall at the edge of the site taken down creating much debris and noise so some events were moved to the Park.

Park colleagues have been reduced in number. A quicker response to queries would give some reassurance. There was a stabbing and the Police asked questions and then just left without giving any info or support. Leyla says they are in the front line. Dave added that Project Officers need to acknowledge emails and respond. It would be helpful if one of the Project Officer team always attended these meetings.

Down Lane Park: Park is in good shape, it's low maintenance. Martin paid tribute to Leyla and LBH for supporting activities. Has noticed increase in construction workers from the development using the Park and they are not leaving litter. New boundaries are created as part of the regeneration. New gate is being installed and a notice board. The views of the Friends on this were ignored and this is not a good use of money when there are broken benches and play equipment is dirty and no net on one of the tennis court. Footers from the temporary security fencing has been left by the playground. It is hard to get any action. They want all three tennis courts up and running and are still waiting for a pledge from LBH that promised MUGA will be built. [Stop Press: Its happening at last!].

Parkside Malvern: Diminishing team of active residents while the maintenance needed on the mature flower beds and plantation is increasing. They are taking on responsibility for extensive SUDS (sustainable drainage systems) at Mayes Rd/Hornsey Park Rd. They are a residents' association and get some support from Parks and Glynis but are not a Park

Rivers Forum: A lot of work for John and he feels he is falling behind. Draft Bulletin to be circulated. Thames 21 have reengaged with the Rivers Forum and Jessica van Grootveld is assiduous. It seems easier for LBH to speak to T21 than to the Forum so they need to ponder how to take the Forum forward in the Autumn.

Springfield Community Park: There is a conservation action plan developed by TCV in 2017 but they have struggled to fund the works involved and are applying for funding. There are security issues and hedges were reduced in height but drug dealing persists.

Bruce Castle Park: The monthly litter picking with tea and cake cannot happen though Friends are meeting informally for chat. They have already secured open air theatre for next Summer. Klaus attended webinar with TCV on risk assessment and will aim for a clean-up in October. Cleanup UK have a PDF on how to run an event if a group decides to go ahead. Welcomed the new litter signage but it is positioned where it can't be seen. Groups are using the football pitches with 20 or 30 children and he would like to know who these groups are. A huge branch fell down on a Saturday morning and he would like to know the plan for checking trees.

Downhills Park: Increased litter and drug taking on West Green Road end. The Friends are trying to work with the Police and keep reporting the issues. Tree felling has started. The Friends are having an informal get together. They have not yet met new Project Officer Jeff. TCV are in touch about creating a wildflower meadow. Ceri paid tribute to Malcolm Hawley, one-time Secretary of the Friends of Downhills Park and very active in promoting the interests of the Park, who sadly died recently after a long and interesting life. Dave did a tribute booklet.

Wolves Lane: Not reopened to public yet. The Palm House has fish ponds and streams. People are feeding the terrapins daily but one pond was leaking and empty. They have now found the source of the leak but the new consortium which runs the site have said they cannot fund repairing it. Other activities going on.

Stationers Park: Very heavily used. All facilities reopened including the tennis courts and café.

Hartington Park: Chloe echoed thanks to Parks Department. She asked for the rationale for the tree pruning that has taken place and why there had been no dialogue with the Friends. They do not have a designated Parks Officer yet (Update: its Jeff). The vegetation in Carbuncle Passage makes it difficult to walk through and it needs pruning. Pre-lockdown they were in conversation with LBH about an outdoor gym and want to pick this up again.

Russell Park: There has been a big improvement since Glynis got involved. Main concern is delayed communications. Robert worked successfully with a primary school raising awareness of recycling, environment, litter. The Great British Spring Clean was postponed to September. New bins have been installed to encourage recycling and Recycling Week is 21-27 September. We need to be more imaginative to bring in younger people and need more diversity in our groups to attract a wider range of people. If Parks are used more it will put off the people using them for drug taking.

New Groups:

There are two new Friends groups:

Friends of Harringay Stadium Slopes – behind Sainsbury's on Green Lanes

Friends of Tottenham Rec - just over the border in Enfield.

And a group of gardeners have potentially revived the **Friends of Stamford Road Park** in South Tottenham

Lew Taylor response:

- Four miles of HERRIS temporary fencing were erected around playgrounds etc and removed all over the borough's parks. All courts have re-opened in stages.

- Big 'take your litter home' awareness campaign has started and banners have been put up.

- Replying to Guardian of the Green he said Charter Court is Homes for Haringey, and Parks provide services on H for H estates. Good to see the group established.

- Meadow Orchard – Lew will pick up with Alex Fraser re trees.

- Pleased to hear Parkland Walk leak fixed.

- CREOS - Will ask Glynis to get another banner put up.

- Carrie's queries about event bookings - There is a new system for contractors who run sports clubs and these are the only events he is aware are being authorised. He will get clarity from Sarah Jones – Events Manager. He would expect us to get notifications and opportunities to comment before events are agreed but there are none at present.

- He is aware of drug dealing in Chestnuts and work on hedges at Conway Rd is scheduled for 9 Sept and Alistair will meet with them and see what other hedges need doing to try and purge the Park of the problem.

- Lordship Rec water quality – he will ask Annabel to respond in writing with guidance on which pond greenery is harmful and which not.

[Dave said it would be good if the conservation officer Annabel Foskett attended these meetings with Simon Farrow or David Theakston heading up project/policy questions while Lew deals with the operation side].

- Coldfall Woods – he will ask Alex to respond about the timetable for crown lifting and also listing on website as nature reserve.

- Down Lane – Will get tennis net replaced and third court open by 14 Sept. It was slowed down by delivery problem. Will collect last bits of HERRIS fencing. And query placement of noticeboard.

- Bruce Castle – will get Alex to come back on the oak tree.

His perspective on the operations side is that it has been a difficult few months. They had no extra resources for litter or horticulture so plans slipped and they also continued mowing and maintaining Homes for Haringey estates.

Almost all courts are now open and litter is still an issue so pushing for more resources with Simon.

Dave said the Projects Officers should be meeting every group regularly and this should be a good conduit for ongoing communication. This works well with the longer standing officers. Lew recognised that this benefits LBH too.

Paul Ely presentation:

- He is developing a 15 year strategy, engaging with the Forum throughout, making positive links with health outcomes. Proposed date to go to Cabinet now March 2021. More consultation sessions to be held in November probably on Zoom - 4 or 5 evening sessions or Saturday mornings.
- Benefits of close partnerships.. Intelligence from us to LBH is very helpful especially on enforcement. They can use our intelligence to target enforcement better.
- Marketing and communication; Paul's view is that marketing needs improvement. There is not enough insight into Parks as a public service. He wants to set up a website for the green spaces strategy. He has managed to get all the documents in one place and a shared drive would be helpful. Awaiting authorisation for it to go live.
- The council spends £0.5 million pa on cleaning up litter. They would love to see it spent differently.
- Tree strategy documents have been sent to us all (5 September).
- Asset management plan – we will be seeing people in hi-viz doing site surveys.
- Haringey Local Plan (which guides all development in the borough) - new review starting in Oct. Open space has not increased in 20 years although the population has grown. The East of the borough has the greatest health needs but the least open space and this needs to change.

Paul will send info on the key issues and a time line showing next steps and when we have opportunities to discuss and contribute.

Robert wants to hear more about young people and different approaches to working with a range of groups across the borough, to ensure vital contributions from minority groups and then broader engagement including young people.

Martin asked if there could be guarantees in the Local Plan that there will be no loss of Parks and green space. Parks Service should actively defend green spaces from development. There was a commitment by Cabinet that all recognised open spaces will be preserved for all time through Fields in Trust Covenants. What is happening to this? Paul responded that it is a slow process but they are operating on the basis that it is an absolute commitment.

Dave said the Council has funding for Changing Places toilets for people with severe disabilities which include hoists to enable them to use Parks. Three sites have been identified, one is Lordship Rec. Lordship Hub have been asked if they could fundraise for some of the capital costs but they feel the Council should fund the capital and the ongoing management and maintenance costs. Discussions continue..

Leyla pleased to see the links made with health outcomes and asked whether open space around housing estates are categorised as permanent open spaces? Paul responded that the Parks Strategy is interested in all open spaces but the main focus in the 57 large Parks, plus Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and allotments but access to local space is key. He will get in touch with Leyla.

Robert wants to meet with Project Officer about gardening for schools and to be embedded as key liaison point.

Martin wanted more info about the £0.5m cost of litter. Lew said this includes vehicles, fuel, running costs, staff, transport to NL waste site and it would be a benefit if they could reduce any element of that through education and enforcement. Klaus said most of those costs would remain

even if people put rubbish in the bins. Dave said we need to continue to lobby for more resources following the overwhelming support at the meeting of Full Council.

Paul said the Parks Community UK team and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces have developed a diagnostic tool for Friends Groups. You go through a questionnaire and get feedback on the strength of your group and how you can improve effectivity. He will send round. They would like us to test it out before it is launched nationally.

Dave thanked everyone for attending.

Date of next meeting: Saturday 7 November.