

Minutes of the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum meeting, 16 January 2021

Attendance: Cathy Meeus – Parkland Walk; Clare Parry – Downhills Park; John Miles – Rivers Forum & Hornsey Park gardens; Martin Ball – Down Lane Park; Robyn – Alexandra Park; Joan Curtis – Lordship Rec; Ceri Williams – Chestnuts Park; Dave Warren – Queens Wood & Parkland Walk; Leyla Laksari – Tottenham Connect/LUOS; Lucy Roots – Queens Wood; Ellie Harries – Stanley Road gardens; Ivana Curcic – Chestnuts Park; Quentin Given – The Paddock & Cloud Garden; Wendy Charlton – New Road Park; Vicci – Coldfall Wood & Muswell Hill Playing Fields; Glenys Law – CREOS; Pamela Harling – Meadow Orchard; Robert Thairu – White Hart Lane; Liz Gray – St Ann’s Green Spaces; Mary Hogan – Railway Fields; Hesketh Benoit – White Hart Lane; Susan Beckett – Nightingale Gardens; Mervyn Barrett – White Hart Lane (from 12.40); Mat Pendergast & Helena Taylor – The Conservation Volunteers

From 11.45am: Simon Farrow, LBH Head of Parks and Leisure

From 12.30pm: Annabel Foskett – Nature Conservation officer, LBH

Apologies: Klaus - Bruce Castle Park; Joyce Rosser - Hornsey Rd raingarden & Priory Common; Dave Morris – Lordship Rec; Paul Ely – LBH Project Manager for the Parks & Open Spaces strategy

1. Minutes of last meeting – Agreed

2. Actions & follow up from last meeting:

- Queens Wood oaks – have a stay of execution for at least 12 months
- Friends of Alexandra Park – new book selling well
- The main HFoPF mailing list is still problematic – some people’s goes irretrievably into junk and some are not receiving emails at all. Suggested we use an alternative mailing platform, but no one volunteered to take this on and look into it further. Hesketh not receiving e-mails – suggested he email Clare Parry ec.parry@gmail.com to get added to the list.
- Facebook page exists but not used by the Forum; Twitter account exists but dormant. No-one volunteered to take on.
- Groups were encouraged to consider whether actions noted by the Council in response to issues raised at the previous meeting had been followed up. It is important that we find a way to hold the council accountable to commitments.

3. **Future meetings:** following discussion, it was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Saturday 6 March and then the first Saturday of every second month, but aim for 10-12 rather than 11-1.

4. **Parks & Open Spaces strategy:** Paul Ely had sent an update noting that the issues paper will go to cabinet on 9 March, with fuller papers going to cabinet in July to be approved for consultation through to September, adoption early 2022. The Forum agreed to take up Paul’s offer of a separate meeting to discuss this and it was agreed that Clare would follow this up with Paul. All groups were encouraged to respond to Paul.

5. **Council budget.** Consultation closed on 14 January, but no significant changes to parks budget proposed.

6. **Haringey Local Plan.** The first stage of this document setting the policies for all planning and development in the borough is being consulted on until 1 February. There have been consultation events including one of biodiversity and open space on Thursday 14 Jan which had been well attended. Link to Council consultation:
https://haringeynewlocalplan.commonplace.is/proposals/virtual-engagement-events?fbclid=IwAR0HfTGSQ7WcPQ4Tm_7ectg5_AgtTMzECquXJkpGCsfAloAUWXLAp09rj84. It was agreed that Quentin would circulate draft Friends of the Earth response to the plan. John flagged the importance of the Biodiversity Action Plan not being bundled in with parks and open spaces given that biodiversity exists in so many and varied locations. He also highlighted the need to ensure that not only is there a social justice aspect to the Local Plan there is also a strong environmental justice element to it.

7. **London and national developments.** Dave has recently circulated London Friends of Green Spaces Network report bulletins “Our Patch”.

8. **AOB:**

- Joan highlighted NHS pilot events on “Ageing Well” encouraging over-50s to get more active, input from Friends group.
- Go Green – Robert reported on involving young people, he would send a proposal to Friends of Parks and Parks service, including gardening help for old/disabled people.
- Rivers Forum – John reported on need to get Friends and residents associations involved in consultation and management of SUDs sites, litter, planting and conservation.
- Grenville Road spinney – Mary reported that informal friends group is working, problems of incursions by neighbouring residents, Planning officers have visited, Glynis Kirkwood-Warren is project officer in the case. Cathy M volunteered to share her experience in this area from Friends of Parkland Walk.
- Hesketh also mentioned initiatives to get young people involved in voluntary litter picking etc as first step to employment and highlighted the work that he has been doing on walking basketball events for over-50s.

9. **Group reports:**

- Stanley Road open space – Ellie Harries reported on new Friends group., have done distanced bulb-planting with people given “X marks the spot” map of where to plant. There is cash from the Red House development for park/play area.
- Parkland Walk – Cathy M – Friends financed art trail with medallions made out of old chewing gum by Ben Wilson, good feedback; liaising with council about bridge works, starting with Stanhope Road; encroachment issues ongoing, joint work with Parks, Property Services and Legal but not effective. Also, tree works by neighbours. We are concerned that residential neighbours are instigating tree works without input from the conservation officer. We have arranged a meeting to discuss this. Footpath had been widened to allow distancing.

- Ally Pally – Robyn – Over 100 volunteers in mega litter picking, History of Alexandra Park book and calendars sold well.
- Queens Wood – Lucy R – online AGM and bird survey report well attended, issues of earth moving related to unapproved cycle path, dangerous hole filled with water. Report of ecological survey in November. Consultation about future plans pending.
- Lordship Rec – Joan C – park had been packed during lockdowns, more volunteers, up to 6 people doing litter picking legally, but now no activity. Setting up playground parents' group, first meeting next week. Free food at Hub each Thursday, since November. Wassail cancelled but quiz done online.
- St Ann's Green Spaces (STAGS) Liz Gray – started as group looking after wooded area in St Ann's site, now working with LWT, TCV and hospital-based group on wider conservation, linking with Chestnuts etc, now had first Zoom meeting. Ivana C reported that developers, Catalyst, were advised by LWT, and sympathetic.
- Chestnuts – Ceri W said they were meeting with Pankit re flood works, talking to parks officer Alistair about feasibility stage with MKA consultants. They don't agree that putting wooden caps on the hoops on our derelict basketball area is useful in enforcing Covid-19 rules. No groups play on that area, they can't, the surface is ruined, it's just young people on their own throwing balls. Conservation Action Plan now out of date, needs renewing. Ongoing issue that management plans have maintenance items "as and when necessary" when they should be "regular", so each time Friends have to raise and chivy to get basic things done. Need better join-up within council, e.g. over playground maintenance.
- Meadow Orchard – Pamela H – no works during lockdown. Issue of young people breaking in.
- Wood Green Common. John M – struggling to get council interest re Wood Green Common. Getting new street trees planted with RA and Alex Fraser. Working towards MoU with Regen, Parks, Highways etc but need RAs to be involved at the outset in designing schemes.
- Finsbury Park, WH Lane – Hesketh said there had been record usage of basketball pitches by young people, it was effective diversion from negative lifestyles.
- Nightingale Gardens – Susan Beckett reported – Friends group working with TARA to renovate the gardens, benches, new trees, renewed lighting, a few people maintaining 8 large flowerbeds. Need cash for works. Local resident Rick has done fox murals.
- CREOS – Glenys reported increased usage but ASB, with bonfires, stealing benches from sports club, vandalism of fences, leading to increased police presence. Much trampling and creation of desire-line paths, and local flooding. Working on their own BAP with LWT, wildflower meadow, new copse of 30 trees, hoggin path.
- Railway Fields - Mary Hogan – Friends of Railway Fields weekend volunteering sessions and events are cancelled for the time being due to the pandemic. Nature on the site benefitted from reduced usage during 2020 - when we last visited in October wild rose, gladden and other wild flowers had thrived and spread and we found a spectacular colony of earth-stars.
- New Road Park – Wendy reported new group had a successful launch (*Dave attended from Forum in support*). New dog control signs causing division.

- Down Lane – Martin B reported increased littering, conflict over dogs, urination. But new MUGA looks good, shame it can't be used yet. Leyla added that pitch is good, LUOS are working on digital inclusion project and community growing; looking forward to consultation on park plan soon.
- Coldfall Wood – Vicci reported that land encroached on might be returned by new owner. Group needs a large-scale boundary map to help deal with this issue.
- Downhills – Clare noted new litter bins had been installed but there was still a problem with litter in the park. Parks staff continue to be very supportive. There have been extensive works to the boundary area, Friends were informed, but we need to better communicate as this wasn't cascaded as effectively as it could have been. The rain this week has caused a lot of issues with water in the park.
- Paddock - Quentin - portacabins for TCV staff now in, bad weather and new bins have reduced littering. Consultation now on with council re: future design - open to anyone.
- Russell Park – Robert T – did litter pick and bulb planting in September, more young people involved.
- Harmony gardens – Joan C – Edible London took over much of the work on the site (in partnership with the Friends), new volunteers, good for mental health. Friends are doing a shed area re-design with architects.

It was noted that it had been difficult to give everyone sufficient time to share their updates and that we needed to consider how to do this better in future. Quentin suggested that to make timing easier, especially while we are meeting on Zoom, that Groups send in short report by e-mail. Leyla and others supported this and suggested we provide a standard format e.g. events, policy issues, questions/issues for the Forum. This might allow for more debate in the meeting and focus on the key issues. Recapping some of the discussion from earlier in the meeting Clare noted that there were still some communications challenges with the Parks team.

10. Parks response.

Simon Farrow responded to various points raised during the reports noting the following:

- that they are looking at how to improve comms and to expect further news on this soon
- volunteer works are legal but the spirit of lockdown is not to; TCV will re-assess their risk assessment in due course.
- New London Councils advice is that vulnerable staff should work from home, this has taken 14 people out of on-the-ground parks work so even more stretched.
- Queens Wood – David Theakston involved – needs detailed design and consultation.
- ASB team involved in Covid-19 marshalling so more stretched.
- SUDS, yes council recognises need to have cross-department approach.
- Down Lane – sorry MUGA is 2 years late but it is good.
- Encroachment –yes it's slow but we are stretched.
- Stanley Road – good to have a new park/group!

- Great that so many have taken part in litter picking and volunteering during lockdown.
 - There will be small grants next financial year, will circulate info when available.
 - The Dog Byelaws were renewed last October there were some minor changes, Simon will follow up and send something around.
11. **TCV** – Mat introduced Helena, taking over from Alice to do conservation plans for parks. TCV Have stopped volunteer activity, but Railway Fields still open Mon-Fri 9-4pm. Various online activities, winter tree ID, and training. Helena encouraged groups to contact her and would follow up with an email to the group sending details on various TCV activities.
 12. **Annabel Foskett** – a lot of work being done behind the scenes, and the Haringey Plan team are supportive of biodiversity agenda. It will take 12-18 months to update all the Conservation plans for parks. Annabel aims to meet each Friends group once or twice a year. We are reviewing SINC's, Local Nature Reserves etc so want to update any wildlife records – need any data we have. Working with Highways, HfH, Planning etc to achieve comprehensive Biodiversity Action Plan. As reported earlier, aim is to consult from July, and adopt plan February 2022.
 13. **Closing remarks** – Clare thanked everyone for attending and for their participation. It was also acknowledged how hard parks teams are working in difficult circumstances. Likewise, the support that TCV had provided to date was also much appreciated.
 14. **Date of the next meeting:** Saturday 6 March, 10am, via zoom.
 15. The meeting closed at 1.15pm.