

# Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

## Minutes of general meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 at Bruce Castle Museum

**Friends Reps Present:** Dave Morris *Chair* (Lordship Rec), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Park), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Caroline Beattie (Alexandra Park), Rachel Sheldon (Hartington Park), Joan Curtis *Minutes* (Lordship Rec), Pamela Harling (Meadow Orchard + Tottenham Green), Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods and Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Robert How (Brunswick Park), Sheila Holloway (Bluebell Wood), Martin Laheen (a recycling champion). **Council officers:** Glynis Kirkwood-Warren, Sahina Choudhury **Apologies:** Phil Chinn (Wolves Lane), Joanna Yeung (Weir Hall Open Space), Clare Parry (Downhills Pk), Joyce Rosser (Priory Common), Ceri Williams (Chesnuds Park), Kate Swade (Tower Gdns), Liz Gray (St Ann's Green Spaces), Steven Brice (Pinkham Way Alliance), Quentin Given (The Paddock + Bruce Grove Cloud Garden), John Miles (Parkside Malvern Open Spaces + Haringey Rivers Forum), Alison (Queens Wood), Glenys (Crouch End Open Space), Deborah (Manchester Gardens + Paighton Park) .. **and:** Matt and Helena (Conservation Volunteers), Annabel Foskett (LBH Nature Conservation Officer), Mike Hakata (Council Cabinet Member for the Environment)

### 1. Minutes of last meeting, 5.2.2022 Agreed

**2. Matters arising:** Regarding applying for bank accounts and financial audits for some funding streams - there seem to be more bureaucratic obstacles these days. This is something the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces should investigate and take up.

### 3. Haringey Parks Summit

This event at Ally Pally was the first of its kind. It was organised mainly by Paul Ely, with substantial input from the Forum through open planning meetings. The idea was to cover a range of themes in the Open Spaces Strategy (currently being rewritten), plus networking and celebration. Around 80 attendees, mostly from Friends Groups and the Council, but some people who had not necessarily been to meetings on this issue before. A lot of positive communication in the breaks. Unfortunately the technology malfunctioned and one of the Key Speakers was not able to give her presentation. The 'just a minute' slots were inspiring. The room was quite small and having the workshops all in the same space was a bit noisy. The workshops were minuted, but felt to be too short and maybe should have been more focused around pre-prepared set of questions. Suggestions: Name/organisation tags and list of attendees and their contacts, more networking time, too broad and needs a theme to focus on if done again next year (as suggested), more accessible venue for disabled. Council presentations could be more attractive and engaging and not so text heavy. Overall it was felt that it had been a quite powerful event – a good beginning and could be a positive thing in future.

### 4. Trees

**Tree Summit / week of events** There have been 2 planning meetings led by Alex (the Council's Tree Officer) which Forum reps (Vicci and Rachel) have attended on our behalf. Now called "Festival of Trees" - this may have been put back to September. *Comment:* Council needs to make resources available for public education on biodiversity issues. **Tree Condition Survey** As far as we know the council employed contractors 2-3 years ago to look at condition of many trees across the borough. Need to re-survey in some sites as some flagged up tree work was been done (eg Downhills Park) but the report is now out of date. We were unsure which trees were surveyed, if the survey had been done borough wide and what is the current status of the report. Update on process needed. *Comment 1:* Good to hear that the understaffed Tree Team has at last recruited some new officers. *Comment 2:* Bluebell Wood Friends started as a result of the survey which shows the importance of communication. *Comment 3:* It would be useful to have an update on the recent Trees For Streets and Parks sponsor-a-tree project.

### 5. Haringey Open Spaces Strategy

After around 2 years of Council / Friends Forum collaboration and workshops on a range of key issues, Focus groups with other (wider) stakeholders is to end April 21<sup>st</sup> and draft documents will eventually go to the new Cabinet following the May elections – we hope to see the final drafts first in case any substantial concerns remain. Formal public consultation on the proposed new 15 year Strategy will likely be in September. The Friends Forum is very keen to see a feedback report from consultations we had participated in. It was felt that we all had put a lot into the process and needed to know if we had made a difference to the Strategy and in what way.

### 6. Creation of Conservation Action Plans (CAPs)

Helena Taylor (The Conservation Volunteers - TCV) has been working with Friends Groups to develop and draft Conservation Action Plans to expand biodiversity for local sites with Green Flags – to be in addition to general parks' Management Plans. Annabel, the Council's Nature Conservation Officer (NCO) is also involved. Some groups are unsure if proper on-site consultation had taken place with their group at their site.

## 7. Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)

59 SINCs around Haringey are being reviewed (as happens every 10-15 years). Report is being done by specialist company MKA Ecology, looking at existing sites and recommending any upgrades or any new sites which fulfil the statutory criteria. Once the report is completed there is an official board review (including non-Council experts) before adoption of the recommendations.

## 8. Review of Haringey's ancient woodlands

The Council obtained a grant to review the condition and management of Haringey's ancient woodlands. Some site meetings with Annabel (NCO) and the relevant Friends Groups have already taken place.

## 9. Haringey Rivers Forum

This community-led network continues to bring together a range of key stakeholders (including the Council and Thames21 etc) to promote good management of watercourses and water features, deculverting, protection of wetlands, and community involvement in all this. Productive meeting in February. There's a chance that the Tottenham Ploughmans group may organise another River Festival festival this year.

## 10. Protection of Open Space

**Designated sites** Every Haringey open space which is acknowledged in the Haringey Local Plan (the borough's official urban planning policies, currently up for review) is to be protected for all time by legal covenants with 'Fields In Trust'. This was agreed, following lobbying by the Forum, 4 years ago. Of the 60 sites, only a dozen or so of these covenants have so far been completed and it is urgent that the Council completes this legal process. There is a cost in terms of legal officer time. **'Undesignated' sites** There are presently a lot of threats (from the Council and developers) to important but 'undesignated' green spaces in and around housing estates and elsewhere due to proposed house-building. The Forum has called for local residents to set up new Friends groups or get their local Residents Association to campaign to protect any sites under threat.

## 11. Trees and insurers

We need to lobby for a more effective approach to claims by insurance companies relating to street trees or open space trees near houses. Need a process for contesting. Some local campaigns and petitions have already had some effect in forcing insurance companies like Axa onto the defensive. The Council now have a new tree officer working with their Planning Dept. Coldfall Friends have asked Simon Farrow for the Council's engineers review for some trees under threat on the edge of their site.

----- COUNCIL REPS JOIN THE MEETING -----

## 12. Local Friends Groups Reports

**Brunswick Park:** Friends grew out of Neighbourhood Watch around antisocial behaviour and safety issues. The Marathon Trust funded a transformation of the park and Tesco grants funded new entrances. Locals were involved from the beginning. Good relationship with TCV. Held a tree planting event involving schools. Want a management plan but not sure who should be involved in its creation.

**Lordship Rec:** Onsite meetings have been held with council and partners re maintenance of the River Moselle and developments for the wildlife lake. Have done walkabouts with new parks service zonal officers. A variety of walking groups have sprung up and free community exercise classes. Friends have 3 or 4 sub-groups with volunteering sessions (eg for woodland, orchard, litterpicking etc). Shell Performing Arts group has been revived, and a new ParkRun is starting up. Hub applying for solar panels grant.

**Meadow Orchard:** Saturday volunteer sessions are ongoing

**Tottenham Green:** Looking into collection of Green waste. Asked how other sites get theirs collected?

**Hartington Park:** Outdoor Gym has made a huge difference - public launch with activities in MUGA and gym demonstration. Held bulb planting activity. Dog bins need to be replaced and are in a bad state. Really positive meetings with the Council re developing children's play park and wider landscaping issues. Planning a walking loop. 7 new trees have been agreed for a TCV day.

**Coldfall Wood and Muswell Hill Playing Fields:** Wildflower meadow has been developed on part of playing field with the help of local schools. 10-14 trees have unfortunately been removed due to insurance claim, about which a redacted Engineers report was promised but has not been received. The insurance debacle is going round in circles. The cemetery fence is falling into the wood.

**Alexandra Park:** 330 households on the Friends membership list. More people are participating in activities – wild flower walk was overbooked. Increased bat activity round the boating lake. Art In The Park organised to encourage people to enjoy the park. Solar lights are working well. Still waiting to hear about SUDS/wetlands in the SE corner – ongoing.

**Parkland Walk:** [Written Report circulated]. *Extra thoughts:* The council gave very short notice of tree works. The Council need to communicate to parkland walk users re works and cannot depend on the Friends to do it, especially if it is at such short notice. Encroachment continues – is there an emergency process/hotline to report encroachments?

Council sent out letters to adjacent properties re private gates made in fences to nature reserves which has caused some consternation and is unenforceable. Another matter is how do Friends make sure greenspace users only use approved paths and don't create their own through natural areas? Parks policy needs to differentiate between parks and nature reserves. Update needed on playground development.

**Bruce Castle Park:** Open Air Theatre performance planned for 17<sup>th</sup> July. Do litterpicking on Sundays working with Friends of Tottenham Cemetery. Thanks to Parks Service for picking up bags in a coordinated way with Friends. Met with TCV about protection of damaged historic oak tree – Tree Officer to organise protective fencing after vandalism and TCV to do the work. Money coming from a financial pot specifically earmarked for Bruce Castle Park. Ongoing discussion about Benches in front of Antwerp Arms, installed temporarily during Covid.

**Bluebell Wood:** New group still in its first year. First AGM to organise legal and official side of group in order to access funding. Need support finding a bank account and insurance. Most community insurance covers up to £5m and many funders demand £10m. Forum needs to look into bank/insurance problems/obstacles. Monthly Friends work parties are well attended. Keeping people to main paths has become a problem, delineation work being done but it is difficult. Den-making can become a problem. Anti-social elements breaking off young saplings. There have been 2 fires which the fire brigade got to quickly. Leaflets, posters done by council. Council have visited to look at issues including drainage/entrance etc, Need to find out about first aid training so that a first aider can be present at work parties. Council received funding from Re-wilding Fund and need to know what that is for and also want to know about CAPs and SINC reports.

**Other sites - Written reports:** These were circulated on our email list to all groups, and forwarded to Glynis Kirkwood-Warren for the Council. From: **Parkland Walk, Manchester Gardens, Paignton Park, Crouch End Open Space, Parkland Walk, St Ann's Green Spaces, Priory Common, Tower Gardens Park, Downhills Park, Chestnuts Park, Bluebell Wood, Queens Wood, Alexandra Park, Haringey Rivers Forum (covering water courses/issues in Chestnuts Park, Lordship Rec., Heartlands, Paddock, Hornsey Wetlands, New River, and Queens Wood).. and reports from The Conservation Volunteers and the LBH Nature Conservation Officer**

### 13. Council Responses regarding local sites/groups

**Brunswick park:** Noticeboard keys can be held by Friends.

**Lordship Rec:** Disabled changing rooms are planned to be installed in the park. Details to be discussed.

**Hartington:** All projected works are out on council system – delay due to end of financial year. Money for landscaping in Hartington coming from CIL money (planning gain).

**Coldfall Wood:** Simon Farrow has been off work. Will ask about Engineers Report. Will have conversation about cemetery fence.

**Alexandra Palace:** Will tell Annabel about bat sightings.

**Parkland walk:** There is a difference between planned and emergency tree works. Council do need to inform people as well as informing Friends. Looking at ways the council can deal with doors in fences and informal path creation but a very difficult problem to deal with. Can only keep an eye on signs that footfall is happening. Friends can expect an invitation to onsite meeting re next stage of the design for play area.

**Bruce Castle:** Parks staff have been very proactive supporting the Friends litter-picking. Money for the tree fence is from CIL pot. Update on Antwerp benches will be given.

**Bluebell Wood:** Still have to organise plans/works for entrance. Lily Labonte from the communities team will be organising First Aid courses and sending information to Friends Groups.

**Related issues: Green Waste:** Email Sahina Choudhury in advance of any Friends' work-party and she will arrange for waste to be removed. **Bins:** New load of bins coming in across the borough so can be used in any park to replace broken ones. You can report any overflowing bins via "love clean streets" App. *Note:* Some members stated that the App was not always easy to use. **Mowing regimes** Any variations re grass cutting (where to cut and where not to cut etc) needs to be discussed with relevant officers initially (Zonal reps?), then once agreed can go to Sahina for operational action – maps and schedules would need to have been agreed.

### 14. Other issues discussed with the Council

**a.SINCs/CAPs:** SINC sites evaluation reports are coming in slowly and Annabel is working through them to put together a full Report. We have been told previously that as soon as it is ready we will be sent a copy. Friends request a list of all SINCs. What is the process (timescale)? Which places have had CAPs? Confusion about Friends' level of involvement and which groups have been involved. Friends' sites need to be involved at every stage as they are the people who will be doing most of the conservation work or monitoring it.

**b.Council view of Summit:** Paul Ely is putting together a debrief document. Paul had circulated the slides from the event, including a Strategy implementation timeline. Everyone seemed happy to be finally talking face to face again. Friends groups contributions very positive. Networking opportunities positive and lots of good will.

**c.Friends/Annabel Nature Conservation Joint Meeting:** Can we have a date for the long-awaited Friends' meeting with Annabel? Dave, for the Forum, has sent a proposed agenda.

**d. Staffing and personnel: *Filling vacancies and new posts:*** The Parks Service is still missing a park manager for the big Down Lane development and 2 others for smaller developments. A proper chart is needed but there are still vacancies to be filled. It is not a simple document and needs explanation rather than just a list of names. Glynis said this can be presented at next meeting of the Forum. Employment opportunities are advertised on the Council Website and banners on vans. Outreach has been done to organisations whose clients could do operational jobs. ***Zonal Spotlight Tours:*** Glynis Kirkwood-Warren, Mark Bambridge and Chris Poore are the 3 parks service Zonal Officers overseen by David Theakston. These Zonal officers are the main point of contact for all the Friends Groups. Glynis explained that there will be 4 walkabouts per year in each green space and of these 2 will include the community. The walkabouts could include operational staff, police, councillors, community and Friends. It was noted that the Conservation or Tree Officer should go on Spotlight Tours in nature reserves. Important that there is regular contact between Zonal Officers and Friends. There needs to be a written bulletin of things/repairs that need doing which should be shared with Friends and to which Friends can input. Friends should be kept in touch with what has been fixed and the schedule for fixing/developing things.

**e. People Need Parks Funding;** This funding is now available and can go to groups (up to £1000) and to individuals (up to £250). *Note:* 2 new posts in the events team will be dealing with Volunteers and wider Community Engagement.

## **15.AOB**

***Chestnuts Park*** The Council has obtained £300,000 from the Resilience Fund for work in Chestnuts re water/drainage management. ***Down Lane Park*** Also £40,000 for Down Lane Park on top of £80,000 per year already raised. Planning gain money (around £2m) is available for major improvements/regeneration of the park. A new park users' Community Forum is being established. ***Parkland Walk*** £8m has been earmarked for Parkland Walk Bridge refurbishment. ***Dairy Fields*** Friends of the Earth have been engaged in planting trees in the green space around the Rowland Hill Nursery ***Tesco Bags Funding*** This initiative is a good one to apply to as the community vote for which project they want funds to go to. ***London Climate Action*** – Green Week 25<sup>th</sup> June-3<sup>rd</sup> July. ***Commercial use of parks*** Glynis explained that any groups using their park for activities that charge people to participate then that group should be paying to hire the park. Money from park hire goes back into that park.