

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Minutes of general meeting, 11th June 2022 at Bruce Castle Museum

Friends Reps Present: Dave Morris *Chair* (Lordship Rec), Joyce Rosser (Priory Common + Rectory Gardens), John Miles (Haringey Rivers Forum + Parkside Malvern Open Spaces + Crescent Gardens), Liz Ixer (RailwayFields + St. Ann's Green Spaces), Pamela Harling (Meadow Orchard Project), Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Park), Laura Dekker (Queen's Wood), David Warren (Queen's Wood), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gardens + Paignton Park), Marcus Haas (Manchester Gardens + Paignton Park), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Aarti Jonas (Bluebell Wood), Klaus Kuerner *Minutes* (Bruce Castle Park), Martin Ball (Down Lane Park), Martin Laheen (Antwerp Arms Association [external]) **Apologies:** Joanna Yeung (Weir Hall Community Open Space), Phil Chinn (Wolves Lane), Quentin Given (The Paddock + Bruce Grove Cloud Garden), Chloe and Rachel (Hartington Park and Carbuncle Passage), Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods and Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Charlotte & Robert (Brunswick Park), Clare Parry (Downhills Park), Ceri Williams (Chesnuts Park), Mat Pendergast (TCV).

Council reps and officers present for Part 2: Cllr Julie Davies (Cabinet), Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (Zonal Team), Sahina Choudhury (Operations), Paul Ely (Strategy Consultant). **Apologies:** Annabel Foskett (Nature Conservation)

PART 1

1. **Minutes of last meeting, 02/04/2022** Agreed

2. **Amendments to Agenda** Added "Trees" (summit, etc.), "Rivers" (forum, etc.), and "Cabinet" (re-organisation of responsibilities, etc.).

3. **New Friends Groups**

- A group is mooted for the newly-improved Wood Green Common. Dave has offered to encourage this.
- A new group has been set up for Crescent Gardens, opposite the Civic Centre

4. **Green Space Strategy**

Paul Ely has circulated the feedback report from the recent Parks Summit, attended by around 80 people. Included summaries of points made in the workshops' discussions.

5. **Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, and Conservation Action Plans**

- We are awaiting the independent report reviewing all the 59 SINC's in Haringey. Annabelle Foskett (Nature Conservation Officer, NCO) to send to the Forum. Some groups (eg Bluebell Woods and Lordship Rec) have seen drafts for their site.
- Helena has now left TCV, but has completed the CAPs for Green Flag sites. A TCV update has been circulated to Friends Groups.
- No NCO update for the Forum this time, and no news on the hoped-for meeting between her and Friends Groups.

6. **Ancient Woodlands**

The management and maintenance of all the borough's ancient woodlands is being reviewed. Soil experts are to assess Bluebell Woods. GiGL (Greenspace Information for Greater London) is doing a report too.

7. **Campaigning to save green spaces**

We await an update on the promised 'in perpetuity' protective covenants for all 60 public green spaces which have status in the Local Plan and are managed by the Parks Service. A number of other important green spaces, especially on or close to housing estates, remain under threat of having housing built on them – eg a recent development just off Seven Sisters Road, and one on Park Road in Hornsey (despite a strong local campaign). The Forum has called on the Council to protect such spaces and called on local residents to campaign to save any such spaces under threat.

8. Staffing and posts

At the last meeting we and the Council discussed the need for a chart / overview of the Parks Service operational changes showing names, contacts, and specific role(s). We've heard there are problems in recruiting and filling vacancies. Friends suggest we can help by distributing details of any advertised vacancies provided by the Council to us.

9. Communications between Friends Groups and the Parks Service

Many groups present reported ongoing problems with communications between themselves and the Council. Eg re Bruce Castle Park, Klaus stated 'there is no communication, no responses to emails or updates on projects.' Aarti added she feels her group 'have to be careful not to annoy the Council so as not to be ignored'. Deborah had similar experiences when trying to arrange with the Council to pick up full litter bags. Cathy added Paul Ely draft documents speak of "co-production" while the reality often looks so much different. The question did arise of what exactly is the Council's definition of "co-production" – it should mean a real partnership of equals. The project team's zonal officers not only are responsible for repairs, contracts and project management, but also and importantly, to communicate effectively and systematically with Friends Groups. We are the key partners in the maintenance and management of the borough's public green spaces so this should be a nailed-down priority. The zonal officers have been tasked with passing on requests to the relevant/responsible officer/person. However, currently the system is poorly working. See later..

10. Cabinet

The cabinet has reorganised and changes in responsibilities were made. Cathy highlighted that this reorganisation may lead to gaps and overlaps, eg Leisure (e.g. fun, sport) is not necessarily compatible with Nature Conservation, which fall into different Cabinet Member portfolios whilst both remain (as they should be) part of the Parks Service. Cathy wrote to Cllr Mike Hakata and received a response acknowledging this was an issue the Council acknowledge.

11. Finsbury Park

Recently, volunteers planted tree whips in Finsbury Park, it having been agreed with the Parks Service staff.. Considerable effort was made by these volunteers. Sadly, a few days later the trees were removed by Council staff due to 'being in the wrong place' which had been earmarked for preparation for the summer's large commercial events. Likely, this was due to a lack of communication in the Council's teams. Situation is very regrettable and the Council apologised.

12. Haringey Rivers Forum

Expertise (Community Groups, Council officers, Developers, Thames 21 etc.) from Haringey and beyond are beginning to be brought together by the community-led Forum to discuss the problems efficiently and identify the full potential for maintaining, valuing and deculverting our watercourses. Eg Moselle, Chesnuts Park, Hornsey wetlands.. Held some very successful collaborative meetings and are developing a positive vision for the borough and the practical improvements needed. John had circulated an update from the Forum, but there was not enough time to discuss some of its key points. It was agreed to do so at the next Forum meeting in September.

13. London

Dave reminded everyone that the London Friends of Green Spaces Network meetings are every 6-8 weeks online and all Friends Groups are welcome to participate. These meetings alternate between General Meetings (for discussion on key themes), Coordination Meetings (to strengthen cross-London collaboration and working) and Showcases (giving a platform for one or two groups to report on their success stories). The monthly 'Our Patch' LFGN bulletin gets sent out to all 900 Friends Groups around London. See www.lfgn.org.uk for more info and to sign up for the updates. Meanwhile all groups are also urged to check out www.goparks.london

14. National

Dave reported that the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces continues to support the Friends Groups movement. Advice and guidance available at www.parkscommunity.org.uk Efforts continue to be made to call for much greater Government funding for parks – Local Authorities report parks budget cuts of over 40% on average since 2010. The Westminster MPs on the Housing and Community Select Committee have at last agreed to review the situation since they last addressed it in a special report in 2017 – the situation continues to deteriorate.

PART 2 --- COUNCIL REPS JOIN THE MEETING ---

15. Local Friends Groups Reports

Railway Fields. Open on one Saturday and two Sundays per month. However, many people still don't know about it. Therefore, Friends are trying to provide a number of activities like conservation projects, choir singing, wellbeing Saturday(s), etc. Friends also have a very good work relationship with TCV and are sorry Helena recently had to leave TCV.

St. Ann's Green Spaces. An important (ex-hospital) site for nature conservation. TCV helping maintain. The group are organising programs to connect with nature, and activities to combat mental health issues. The group are looking for new funding.

Parkside Malvern Open Spaces Turning local spaces within the street scene into community-managed green sites. Council supportive. Problems with communications/meetings with developers.

Priory Common. There was a planning application made last year by developers to greatly enlarge the building adjacent to the wonderful community orchard. Following a mass of local objections it was rejected by the Council's planning committee. Now the developers have appealed. As the orchard would be destroyed by the development Friends are trying to strengthen the existing protective covenant.

Bruce Castle Park. The park has now become part of the Bruce Grove Ward. Contact with new Cllrs. was made and Friends are looking forward to working with them. Monthly Friends' litter picks are ongoing and well attended. Friends of Tottenham Cemetery joined the litter picks as there is already an "infrastructure" in place. There will be an outdoor theatre event in July organised by the Friends. Generally, there is a lack of communication with Council. Why? Fencing off the ancient oak in the park has moved forward but not as fast as it probably should have. TCV will take lead on erecting the fence with possibilities to volunteer. Communications with TCV are excellent.

Crescent Gardens A new group for a special site (with a war memorial), now finding its feet.

Down Lane Park. The MUGA has needed repair for a long time. Similarly, some equipment in small playground is broken and not repaired. A new Community Users Forum has been set up and will oversee major planned improvements funded by urban development (mainly tower blocks) in the area.

Bluebell Wood. The new group recently celebrated its first AGM. Ground survey including the subject of compaction was done. Friends now have the report. Currently, there is lots of antisocial behaviour, trees are damaged, tents are put up, saplings are broken... After a fire leaflets were distributed locally by Friends. Unfortunately, awareness

towards nature is not long lasting. So Friends are asking for education in local schools to encourage respect for the Woods. If the sender is the Council schools will react to it better. Good news, a stag beetle was found in the wood. The dead wood hedge installed by TCV is doing well. Successful bid for restoring ancient woodland. The front of the Woods is still a concern. Signage etc. is dated. Friends are concerned with lack of communications from zonal team and are now asking for monthly updates (even if nothing has happened).

Lordship Rec. Paths need repairs (plus problem with damage done to trees by contractor's vehicle), and the playground surface is in a bit of a state. The Interpretation boards (designed by the Friends 10-15 years ago) all need replacing – seeking funding from the Council. The 9th birthday celebration of the community Hub is in a couple of weeks – there are plans to install new solar panels and a weather station. The Friends and Council are discussing a new contract for river channel maintenance. There is now a new and detailed Conservation Action Plan (mainly focusing on the areas of the Rec managed or part-managed by the Friends) which took a year to produce in partnership with TCV. The Friends are organising the annual Tottenham Flower and Produce Show. The People Need Parks borough-wide summer programme was launched by a successful festival in the Rec. There are now 7 walking groups with weekly walks in the Rec. The Friends' facebook page is very useful (now around 1300 on it).

Manchester Gardens. Friends are holding litter picks every last Sunday of the month – the full bags need to be picked up, regularly, by the Parks Service without asking for it everytime. Friends would like to have some feedback on their bug hotel. Lots of knives are regularly found in the Gardens. Some excessive drinking is happening as well.

Paignton Park. Some growing was happening including blackcurrants, bulbs, and herbs. Planted wildflowers were paid for by residents. The wildflowers are a great success also with insects. There is drug abuse and dealing, rough sleeping, knives. There are active volunteers from the Jewish community helping with problems. Friends face also communication problems with the Council. They don't know who is responsible for things and need feedback.

Martin Laheen. As a recycling champion he is asking parks operations and generally the Council to start recycling litter collected from in parks (which is not currently done due to quality concerns).

Parkland Walk. The friends will have their first AGM since 2 years, in person. They are asking what the bin emptying schedule is. Friends have met with Jack for Community Interest Levy (CIL) funded projects and are concerned that maintenance should be included in CIL funding so as not to reduce other resources in upcoming years. Believe their Management Plan needs updating. They are also unhappy and seeking changes to the design of new 'access path'. Friends highlight that behaviours of contractors is not monitored and things like dumping soil/rubble are happening because of that. The Friends' wildlife trail is very good and perceived well.

Queens Wood. Events for members have resumed. There will be a specialist tree survey walk at the end of the month to collect data. Work with TCV goes very well. Friends consider TCV as good partners. Most of Friends' time recently has been taken up by the controversial flood relief scheme designed by the Highways Dept for 20 sites around the wood. In part the cooperation is now working well but for example after years in planning only in the last few months has an involvement been possible. There is also the situation that current plans might not achieve the planned aims so that Friends are now trying to improve/amend the scheme.

Alexandra Park. Birds, bats, trees family activities every 1st Sunday of month. Friends are working with Ally Pally Trust management on a (re-)wilding fund, specifically on generating a new/improved wetland patch inside the park. For this the Friends did a baseline survey on insects, etc. When the spinney area was trampled and the fence was down Friends generated a path with the help of TCV through the area to guide/nudge people and avoid trampling of whole area. It was suggested this approach might also work for other sites.

Meadow Orchard Project. Their site belongs to the NHS. It is opened on Saturdays for gardening activities. There will be a big gathering on the 26th of June.

Other sites – Written reports: These were circulated on our email list to all groups, and forwarded to Glynis Kirkwood-Warren and Sahina Choudhury for the council. They are the following: **Hartington Park and Carbuncle Passage, Priory Common, The Paddock, St Ann’s Green Spaces, Coldfall Wood and Muswell Hill Playing Fields, Downhills Park, Chestnuts Park.**

16. Council responses regarding local sites/groups (Mainly from Glynis Kirkwood-Warren)

Bluebell Wood. Glynis agrees with what has been said re an outreach program particular to the local schools, and actually for all ancient woodland spaces and nature reserves because these are issues in all of them. Maybe TCV could deliver it (if funding available) as they have an educational arm. Glynis is going to have a chat and suggest it similar to a previous meeting with ancient woodland sites and nature reserves regarding forest school activities. It would be best if the relevant groups could come together to discuss it. Glynis added that behaviour changes can take time. Glynis also agrees the frontage needs attention. When she met and spoke to Sheila they wanted to wait for a report first so that the frontage then can be redesigned and motorbikes are stopped from coming in and out. The fence was discussed with Helena (TCV) who has left now, so Glynis is waiting now for a new person to come in.

St. Ann’s green Spaces. Glynis is not sure if Anabell Foskett is aware of St. Ann’s. The land belongs to NHS.

Parkside Malvern Open Spaces Community Gardening. Glynis agrees joined up thinking is needed for the area with the community, developers, regeneration team and parks service.

Rivers Forum and Coldfall Woods [?] Meeting can be re-arranged to have a look at the whole scheme because when Glynis looked at previous thoughts she felt not convinced. Mainly she is not sure of what kind of impact flood mediation works in Barnet will have on the Brook. Glynis will copy John Miles into these conversations.

Priory Common. The Council doesn’t support the development. Glynis is not aware of the covenant but will follow that up.

Crescent Gardens This site may be an issue for the landscaping team. In principle, those specific types of horticultural schemes like roadside gardens and similar, where there are additional needs exceeding cutting grass or trimming some hedges will be handled by Tim Pyall’s team - currently recruiting.

Bruce Castle Park. Glynis thought the fence round the oak would have been up by now. Chris Patterson (project team, for the money) and Mark (zonal officer) and Alex (trees) should be in communication with the Friends. Glynis will pass on the comments to her colleagues.

Down Lane Park. Re repairs Chris Poore is the zonal officer. But there is also a team for wider projects like this and additionally the Active Communities team is involved as this is where the money came from. Clearly again, communications need improving when many teams are involved. Not clear when the swings will come back as there are currently discussions with other stakeholders on what they might want. Glynis has supported the setting up of the Community Forum.

Lordship Rec. If there are issues with contractors (eg Lordship and Parkland Walk) then feedback and advice from people (volunteers) on the ground are invaluable. No direct answer for funding for restoration of interpretation boards but a note will be made.

Manchester Gardens. Glynis apologises re communications issues. The Council is restructuring and the different teams still need to come together. The zonal officers should however always pass requests, etc. coming from Friends towards the correct person. The ultimate responsibility as a zonal officer is for hard assets. The other part of their responsibility is to liaise and listen and work and cooperate with Friends groups. There is no green officer per se. Sahina is the manager for all green things but when spotlight meetings are held, which should be organised by each

zonal officer, there is an opportunity to join and talk. There should be also a post meeting report circulated within say ten days as a working guideline.

Parkland Walk. Bins will be definitely emptied twice a week in summer. With respect to the maintenance, Glynis is not sure if this is included in the CIL money but she will come back to the Friends with that question. David will do the Green Flag inspection.

Queens Wood. Really pleased about the current situation. Communications have greatly improved.

The Conservation Volunteers Their update report for the Forum was noted

17. Other issues discussed with the Council

Staffing and Recruitment. The Forum offered to help the Council with advertising jobs as they are struggling to recruit at the moment. Glynis announced that there is now a senior event officer working in Sarah Jones team. There is also a new green space volunteering officer. The role is very specific and strategic to try and encourage more volunteering and also try to engage with 'hard to reach' groups.

Glynis cannot present just now a (skeleton) chart of positions and roles as they are not yet filled. Cllr Julie Davies said she has a draft and can mail it to Dave to forward .

Communications Cllr Davies also would like to see Cllrs being included in some of the communications with officers so that they can follow that up, support Friends Groups, and see if there was a response to the problem.

Cabinet Responsibilities. Cllr Davies said Cabinet members work together so there should be no issue.

Summer Parks Activities. Have launched already. There is still funding money for this summer for groups aiming to organise an event.

Wheely Bins. Large bins were introduced in some parks in June. Some have complained the bins are unsightly and clutter up space, but they are temporary in order to deal with the expected increase in volume of litter.

Trees. No dates yet for the planned Tree Summit or Tree Week but it will be rather at the end of the year.

SINCs and CAP(s). Reports should be ready. Some groups already got drafts. The Forum/Friends have also asked for a meeting with the conservation officer (Annabel) but there has been no date proposed so far.

Parks and Green Space Strategy (Paul Ely). Paul reported that he had over the last two months a lot of focus group meetings with schools, elderly people, LGBT groups etc. No specific women's group. It was highlighted that the strategy will last 15 years, and Paul explained frequencies of reviews will be critical. Groups are very keen to see the strategy consultation feedback report. Paul aims to finish it by end of July so that in September it can be passed on to the cabinet for approval for public consultation.

AOB

- **Friends Forum walks booklets** Are still available – contact Joyce or Joan.

- **Climate Action Week** This was noted to be coming up in June

