

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Minutes of meeting, 10th September 2022 @ Bruce Castle Museum

Attendance: Friends Groups reps: Dave Morris (Lordship Rec); Cathy Meeus (The Parkland Walk); Sandra Sutherland (Harmony Gardens); Aarti Jonas (Bluebell Wood); Martin Ball (Down Lane Park); Emma Ries & Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Park); Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Park); Alison Watson (Queens Wood); Quentin Given (The Paddock + Bruce Grove Cloud Garden); Liz Ixer (Railway Fields + St Ann's Green Spaces); **and** Cassandra Li (TCV); **Council reps:** Paul Ely – Strategy Coordinator; Michelle Lindson - Volunteering Officer; Sahina Choudhury - Operations manager.

Apologies: Friends Groups reps: Clare Parry (Downhills Park); Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec); John Miles (Haringey Rivers Forum + Crescent Gardens + Hornsey Park Community Gardening); Phil Chinn (Wolves Lane); Stephen Bryce (Pinkham Way); Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Park); Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Wood & Muswell Hill Playing Fields); Joyce Rosser (Priory Common + Rectory Road); Deborah (Manchester Gdns + Paignton Park); Glenys Law (Crouch End Open Spaces); Kate Swade (Tower Gdns) **Council reps:** Glynis Kirkwood – Zonal Team Manager; Simon Farrow - Head of Parks and Leisure; Cllr Davies – Cabinet Member for Parks; Annabel Foskett – Nature Conservation Officer; Hilary Bournas – Project Team

Circulated to all Friends groups beforehand: Strategy documents, SINC review report, Parks Service Staffing Structure chart, Various local reports

Distributed (or available) at meeting: Key Strategy documents, SINC review report, Parks Service Staffing Structure chart, Minutes of last meeting

PART 1: FRIENDS REPS AND TCV ONLY

Minutes of last meeting: Approved

1. New Friends groups.

We welcomed **Harmony Gardens** – been going 10 years but not attended the Forum before. [See report later]; **Crescent Gardens** – new, and now up and running. Were doing a litter pick so couldn't attend the Forum. **Friends of Brunswick Park** is a fairly new group and seems to be needing support; **Friends of Springfield Community Park** also needs support – Cassandra (TCV) is helping them.

2. Communications with Parks officers.

There's a general sense that communications from officers are at low point, possibly partly due to recent understaffing and reorganisation. Now there are new officers in post Dave had arranged for 4 or 5 Forum reps to meet up with 4 or 5 officers (from the zonal, project and community engagement teams) to discuss how to develop long term good, efficient, effective and friendly relations. Forum agreed. Meeting scheduled for 27 Sept, 9.30am in the Hub, Lordship Rec. Our reps are likely to include Dave, Clare, Cathy and Klaus. (Room for one or two extras to represent the Forum – if interested contact Dave).

3. Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)

The recent Review report was made available to us yesterday. Dave circulated it, and a summary, to our email list. It recommends some upgrades and 11 new SINCs. It will need to be agreed by Haringey (possibly not till January) then go to London Wildlife Board for agreeing any recommended changes and additional sites.[See later item].

Noted that SINC designation does give sites some protection in planning, but does not guarantee enforcement from eg construction works. [See later item re St Ann's]. In such cases it's important to get a protective Construction Management Plan agreed by planning, and then enforced.

4. Other greenspace sites under threat.

McDonalds on Green Lanes cut down 11 30yr old trees on the edge of their site by a public path, and replaced shrubs with plastic grass. There were strong protests by Haringey Tree Protectors and others which got national coverage. Cllr Hakata has talked to them they say they want to make amends, but where will replacement trees go?

Dairy Fields and Acacia Avenue off White Hart Lane are still threatened by development but council won't give proper details despite Fol requests.

5. Strengthening diversity within Friends Groups

The Forum agreed to set up a Forum diversity working group to discuss issues of diversity and inclusion within our local groups and the site-based partnerships we develop – especially around the involvement of younger people and people from BAME backgrounds. The idea is to identify and share good practice, strengthen our groups and make wider links. Dave, Aarti, Liz and Sandra to meet (possibly by zoom) to discuss initial ideas – anyone else who wishes to be part of this working group please contact Dave. It was noted that this was a vital issue and that we need to bear in mind that each group has its own history and each site has its own character. It was pointed out that there may be many different reasons for the narrow demographic of many groups (which it was felt the draft engagement Strategy needs to recognise). Different kinds of open spaces will attract different people. All agreed that attracting younger people also helps with greater ethnic diversity, and it was suggested we could promote things in different ways to better engage with various 'seldom heard from' groups. Also need to be able to recognise and address range of different interests.

6. Admin issues

- Agreed that Job Descriptions of new Council staff, or at least their working protocols, should explicitly include liaison with Friends. Worrying if some officers think communicating and working with us, their key partners, is a distraction from their 'real' work.
- An up to date list of all current Friends groups is being co-created by our Chair with Michelle Lindson from the Council's engagement team. That list and our Forum internal email list were both passed round for people to check and update.
- Chair – the meeting endorsed Dave to continue as Forum Chair. We agreed we should encourage rotation of chairing for our bi-monthly meetings.
- Minutes – agreed we should ask for volunteers for doing the minutes of future meetings. No one has volunteered yet for the November 5 meeting, so that's an opportunity for someone to come forward.

PART 2: COUNCIL REPS JOIN THE MEETING

7. Group reports.

- **Chestnuts:** Friends group has been active for over 20 years carrying out a huge range of activities and fundraising for improvements. It now has 5 subgroups, one of which deals with sports. Big problems with some sports and social events in park. Parks officers say they are unauthorised and won't negotiate, Friends say they are long established and need regulating not banning – the group has been trying to act as an intermediary but due to lack of Council support has now stopped doing so. Also problems with poor gardening, late night noise, defecation, use of toilets for cottaging, playground equipment not fixed, or repaired (zipwire) but padlocked; parks staff don't seem to take ownership of anything but their narrow task. Management Plan (MP) is outdated. On the positive side, some good work on underground water management plans and £300k budget for that. The adjacent St Ann's

development will have 900 homes so even more pressure on park, MUGA and toilet especially (which needs to be rebuilt).

- **Queens Wood.** Long delay on flood management plans being led by Highways Dept, but content has improved since Friends lobbying and Woodland Trust being brought in. Two good events recently, family day had 100, and a TCV fun day. Now over 300 members, including many younger & more diverse. Been in existence 50 years, active for 40!
- **The Parkland Walk.** Fewer people active due to recent frustrations with the Council (eg loss of trees due to bridge works). Desperately need updated Management Plan. Encroachment and back garden gates issues causing damage. Council lawyers says people can have gates but not use them; it is believed some local Councillors are taking these residents' side and undermining enforcement. Very poor consultation re new Stanhope Bridge, no recognition that it's a Nature Reserve and should be treated as such. Lessons need to be learned in future.
- **Harmony Gardens.** Have managed this food growing community garden between Lordship Rec and Broadwater Farm Community Centre for the last 5 years. A huge amount of produce grown by members and volunteers. Have raised money for short term staffing, better social media, involving more Broadwater Farm and other local residents. Currently negotiating a lease agreement and also ideas for better meeting facilities. Addressing problems of anti-social behaviour, willow dome, gates being blow-torched off, litter, theft of produce and safety of lone volunteering.
- **Down Lane.** Lots of sports activity, LUOS café and garden is very busy. Park needs repairs to play equipment. Lots of new high rise development by the park. Need resolution of issues of developers' new access gates. The new Park Users Forum is meeting and seems to be going well, discussing potentially £3m from S106 planning gain funding earmarked for park improvements.
- **Alexandra Park.** Good recent walks for birds, bats and trees. Management are bidding for funding for new wetland, and site surveys being done in preparation. Good comms with park managers.
- **Railway Fields.** TCV open the site during the week, the Friends open it at weekends. Putting on events attractive to people with children and recently also for those without children – drawing, crafts, nature writing, all good for bringing in new people. “Wildlife Gardening” seems better branding than ‘conservation work’.
- **Paddock** Friends Group waiting for meeting on latest work plan to deal with Knotweed; ponds flourished until they dried out, now talking to McLarens, contractor for Hale Wharf, about them putting in new pond.
- **Ferry Lane Estate** Welcome proposal for area along railway to become SINC.
- **Dairy Fields** Friends of the Earth tree planting hit by drought but watering efforts meant nearly all trees have survived, many are putting out new leaves. Site needs a Friends Group to protect it from potential house-building threat.
- **Bluebell Wood** Have set up bank account after much effort. TCV kids event was really good at attracting new people. Council got funding for ancient woodland works, and Friends now awaiting soil survey results. Heavy rains washing away surface soil. Some anti-social behaviour needs addressing through an educational drive. Want to get Council officers to attend an event or workday to improve relations with members and local people.
- **Lordship.** People have watered the many young trees in the orchard field (managed by the Friends) so they have survived. The new Haringey Rivers Forum volunteer group is helping to tackle silt and overgrown vegetation in Moselle. Thames water team investigating recent pollution incident found blocked sewer leaking into Moselle by Turnpike Lane - they fixed it, resulting in a massive improvement in water quality. The Shell Performing Arts Collective have repainted the outdoor Shell Theatre and will re-launch the facility on Sept 17 and thereafter encourage more events there. The community-run Lordship Hub café and community centre celebrated their 9th anniversary with a Community Day (and giant home-made cake), and is very lively - though as always struggling financially. The day of the

Forum meeting was also the Friends' annual Tottenham Flower and Produce Show. The Friends manage the park's Woodland and received a Green Flag Community Award.

- **St Ann's Green Spaces.** Construction works are damaging the large and important SINC on the site, including protected trees being felled. Council not yet taking enforcement action. New Parks Service planning officer (Daniel Monk?) and/or Alex Fraser (Tree Team) need to get involved urgently. Friends are launching "connect with nature" sessions and meeting with developers and other key stakeholders every quarter.
- **Downhills** – Have organised 2 successful major events, their annual Art In The Park and an outdoor theatre show. They reported that lack of communications and engagement by parks service officers is very frustrating.
- **Tower Gardens / CREOS / St Ann's Green Spaces / Hornsey Park Community Gardens / Paignton / Downhills / Coldfall Wood** all sent around written updates on their activities and some key issues
- **Haringey Rivers Forum** [See Appendix 1]

8. Council responses.

It was noted that local reports at these meetings are very valuable but that ongoing and effective two-way communications between each group and the Council should be happening outside of these meetings. The Forum meetings can then just note various issues and allow more time to focus on news of each group's activities. Council responses at the meeting included:

- a) Sahina – will set up meeting with Friends re gardening issues in **Chestnuts** and pass on issues about unauthorised but regular gatherings. Will also take back issues of play equipment repairs in **Down Lane**.
- b) Michelle will pick up issues relevant to her re **Parkland Walk** and **Harmony Gardens**.

9. Nature Conservation

We noted with thanks the **report to the Forum from Annabel** regarding a range of conservation issues. It included this link: <https://www.gigl.org.uk/2022/08/18/rewild-london-haringeys-ancient-woodlands/> plus details of Oak Processionary Moth, Springfield Community Park, recording wildlife at local sites, Haringey's Green Flag Awards (28 local sites, including 3 for community groups), and how to report an environmental problem/emergency.

Paul will feed back to Simon Farrow about need for dates when we can expect the updated **nature reserve Management Plans**; the much-discussed and awaited **nature conservation meeting** between the Forum and Annabel Foskett and Alex Fraser; and about **St Ann's SINC/construction** issues. Recognised that its best if the nature conservation and planning officers can engage with Friends over strategic site protection matters generally, and over some specific local sites, before parks service make official **responses to planning applications**.

10. TCV report.

- **Cassandra** is now based at Railway Fields, having taken over from Helena, and has been a Haringey resident for 6 years.
- **Conservation Action Plans** have been completed for the Paddock, Lordship Rec, and Railway Fields. TCV will do for all Green Flag sites, in collaboration with the Friends Group at each site. She will update the Forum on progress.
- MKA ecology consultants (who just did the SINC's review) will update the specialist **Management Plans for local nature reserves** (Queens Wood, Coldfall Wood and The Parkland Walk)
- TCV volunteers are doing **practical conservation work** every day
- TCV does **public engagement** eg recent educational event on ancient woodlands (good feedback).

- TCV puts big emphasis on **diversity**, had recent LGBTQI+ event in Paddock, and is working with a women's network. 30% of time is spent on outreach.

11. SINC's review.

The new Report and its recommendations have not yet been 'signed off' by council, so we can feed back to Annabel before it goes to London Wildlife Board for their final approval. If there are any mistakes or major issues please let her know. It is likely it will then be introduced via the new Haringey Plan. Noted that the review doesn't really assess how well SINC's are doing in terms of biodiversity. Has this been addressed elsewhere?

12. Haringey Parks & Open Spaces strategy

Paul explained that the draft report and backing documents are going to Cabinet next Tuesday 13th for approval for public consultation 26th Sep – 27th Nov. The documents will be put up on the Council's website, with consultation events due to be organised in libraries and cafes in parks, and we hope publicity in Haringey People. The documents have evolved over the last 2 and half years of workshops and discussion with the Forum and some more recent meetings with groups that are seldom heard from. If there are any blatant typos or errors, please let Paul know asap. There will be a further opportunity to suggest amendments during the final public consultation, after which the Strategy (and a feedback report) will go back to the cabinet for approval early next year, and a public launch probably in April. He recognises that the Friends have put a lot of effort into the development of the documents, which has been much appreciated.

Paul feels that the overall situation is good in that Parks are getting more funding, more staff, interest from other services, and more inclusion and coproduction. But he recognises that communications with Friends Groups are still "work in progress with room for improvement".

Note: It was suggested the council could engage more with dog owners as key regular park users, with a focus group on how to best address dogs' impacts on people and wildlife.

13. Staffing and structure of the Parks Service.

New structure charts received the day before the meeting and circulated to all groups. This is very useful and most welcome.

- we need more explanation about who to go to for what (maybe a sentence explaining each role would help), and who is the 'one-stop shop' contact for each site who will pass on all communications to the right person to action. (Zonal Officer? Operations? Community Engagement?)
- we need to meet officers face to face to establish better communications/relations
- a guarantee that e-mails from Friends Groups will be replied to promptly (even if its just an acknowledgement and when it will be answered, or who it has been forwarded to to deal with the matter)
- Officers need to talk horizontally across teams, not be stuck in silos. How does this happen?
- The Forum/Parks Officers meeting on 27th Sept aims to address some of these issues.

Officers confirmed that any resident public can report issues (repairs, anti-social behaviour etc) through Council web pages. But what are the next steps to action these?

Simon Farrow has recognised that communications is a key issue.

The Forum offered at the last meeting to help publicise Parks Service job vacancies and adverts and encourage local applications – Sahina will send us some ads which she hopes local groups can forward to their members etc.

There wasn't time for the new Volunteering Officer, Michelle, to explain her role. Apologies from us. Hopefully she will be able to do so at the joint meeting on 27th and the next Forum meeting.

14. Strengthening diversity within Friends Groups.

As reported above the Forum is setting up a working group to look into how we can make better progress on some of these issues and to support groups' efforts. Both Michelle (Volunteering Officer) and Cassandra (TCV) are interested in supporting us on this.

15. Future meetings

Agreed it can be difficult to run hybrid meetings with large numbers of people, but maybe we could have a set-up where Friends Groups' reps unable to attend can watch the meeting on Zoom, and feedback via the Chat function - a moderator in the main meeting then reports this to the chair as and when. To be considered for our next meeting on Nov 5th.

APPENDIX 1 – HARINGEY RIVERS FORUM

The Forum hasn't held a meeting and there isn't a plan to at the moment. There has been no progress towards setting up a steering group but a lot of hands-on activity during a busy period.

After a lot of preparation we launched the Haringey Water Squad on August 20th working with Thames 21 to do some work on the banks and in the channel on the Moselle Brook at Lordship Rec. There was an impressive turn-out from the Friends to make up the team and we're now better able to plan actions during the months ahead. Provisional dates of October 29th and December 3rd have been agreed and we will focus on clearing the excess of great fen sedge which clogs up the stream and dragging to remove heavy silt in one of the sections of the stream bed.

There has been considerable progress towards a more collaborative approach in the borough following the pollution incident near Turnpike Lane that dramatically affected the Moselle for a couple of weeks in the summer. Councillor Jameson and the Conservation Officer, Annabel Foskett convened a very representative meeting yesterday, attended by Arup whose scientists have offered to engage with the development of a strategy for the Moselle Brook catchment. Councillor Bevan also attended and the sense is strong, that, with the Parks Strategy going to Cabinet next week, the borough's challenging watercourse problems and opportunities in the face of the climate emergency may achieve political recognition.

Thames 21 are gradually increasing their operations in Haringey and later this year we will take part (with Pymmes Brook and Dagenham Brook representatives) in the first community forum of the London Lea Catchment Partnership, which they facilitate. We ought to be directly involved alongside the flood relief managers and statutory reps but some trust-building is required apparently so this is a first step.

Thames 21 also have important initiatives developing around biodiversity and water quality as does University College East which is developing a citizen science initiative for the whole Lea Valley in London. The Forum has been in consultation with both. We have agreed with Dr Lena Ciric at University College London to rerun Clear and Free - testing water quality at six locations along the Moselle - with a new group of Masters students over the coming winter.

The Hornsey Wetlands Action Group is alive and well but the dialogue to set up a feasibility study with Thames Water, Haringey and Alexandra Park and Palace has been partly suspended because of discussion regarding the status of the filter beds in the new Local Plan. A publicity campaign by HWAG may be the outcome.