

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Report of Saturday April 1st, 2023 at Bruce Castle Museum

Present: Cassandra Li (TCV), Laura Dekker (Queen's Wood), Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) - *chaired*, Hesketh Benoit (Basketball Assoc - Ducketts Common + White Hart Lane Rec), Robert How (Brunswick Park), Susan Beckett & Peter Gray (Nightingale Gardens), Clare Parry (Downhills Park), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Park), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec) – *took minutes*, Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Park), Joyce Rosser (Priory Common), Martin Ball (Down Lane Park). **From Council for part 2:** Emma Betts (Community and Partnerships Engagement Officer), Sahina Choudhury (Operations), Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (Zonal Officer), Michelle Lindson (Volunteering Officer), Christina Oliveira (Parks Area Supervisor Zones 3&4). **Apologies:** Dan & Jade (Belmont Rec), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Glenys (Crouch End Open Space), Liz Ixer (Railway Fields), Robyn (Alexandra Park), Quentin (The Paddock), Pamela and Denise (Wolves Lane), Kate (Meadow Orchard), Gordon (Finsbury Park), Vicci (Coldfall Wood), Aarti (Bluebell Wood), John Miles (Haringey Rivers Forum + Parkside Malvern RA), Anne Scott (White Hart Lane Rec).

1. Minutes of last meeting agreed

- 2. New Groups:** Friends of Belmont Rec, N15, have just started and have a strong whatsapp group and a founding member has drafted some preliminary designs for potential improvements.
- 3. Green Spaces Strategy** – Not quite finalised yet, and still waiting to go to Cabinet. **Action:** Clare from Downhills Park to write to Paul Ely on behalf of the Forum to ask for more information.
- 4. Parks Summit** – We are awaiting a date so that it can launch public consultation over the new 15yr Strategy. Council have requested that the Forum send 3 Friends reps to help with the planning of the Summit. It was suggested one from East, one from central and one from West, but also good to represent different kinds of green space, eg nature reserve, recreational park and small green space. Need to find out more about the scope of the planning meetings before volunteering to join the working group..
- 5. Forum's Diversity Working Group** – Just had a well-attended second meeting. Purpose is to discuss groups' efforts in trying to involve a more diverse and representative membership and local partnerships. [See report in **Appendix 1** below]. All welcome to join in. Robert from Brunswick Park and Susan from Nightingale Gardens expressed interest in joining the group.
- 6. Draft Memorandum of Understanding (re maintenance and communication) between individual groups and the Parks Service** – As discussed at the last meeting, Dave has sent our proposed changes to Michelle, who is leading on this for the Council. Clare voiced doubts about it as it assumed or aspired to a level of co-operation that at present was not happening in her park, Downhills Park. The Memorandum needs to be backed up by efficient communication. Klaus questioned the section about maintenance. Friends groups take on different roles in their parks and some do not do any maintenance apart from litter picking and bulb planting as they do not necessarily have the resources. The Memorandum may not be relevant to all groups. Communications had worsened recently. He felt that Friends of Bruce Castle would not be in a position at the moment to sign the Memorandum as it is. It was agreed that it could be tweaked so it more successfully acknowledges a wider range of group activities and that it would not be compulsory for all groups to sign if they felt it was not relevant to them. Dave felt it was generally a very positive move as it defines what a two-way relationship should be, laying down both our and the Council's responsibilities. It was agreed that it was important to clarify sign off and liability if the Friends carry out any improvements.
- 7. Meadows Project** – The Parks Service are trialling windflower meadows in 6 parks through Haringey Meadows Project. Downhills and Brunswick are part of the project and were both pleased with the way things were going. Slight worry about future sustainability and maintenance and it was hoped that the Project would make sure all groups were fully involved at all stages of the project.
- 8. Haringey Community Action Network** – As agreed Dave has been liaising with this new network but as yet nothing of relevance to parks. A public event bringing various groups and campaigns together is planned for June 11th. Dave has suggested it include a workshop on public services – not decided yet.
- 9. iNaturalist and City Nature Challenge** – This is a survey of species in London to be part of a wider survey in hundreds of cities across the world using the iNaturalist app. Happening 28th April to 1st of May. It is a fun way of involving children and adults in nature. See <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/citizen-science/bioblitz/city-nature-challenge.html> Also for a training video on iNaturalist see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwVfRjpher0>

10. **London and National** – London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN) are planning a series of seminars on various issues and these will be advertised in their monthly bulletin sent to all groups.

11. Reports from Groups

Brunswick Park – Thanked Council for the implementation of the Meadows Project there. Had concerns about cleanliness in the park, especially numbers of cigarette ends.

Priory Common – Holding regular orchard sessions. They have a large pile of woodchip that is shared with community. As part of the Muswell Hill flood protection works, SUDs will be developed over the next 3 months.

Nightingale Gardens – group continuing to maintain the flowerbeds. Have planted an avenue of 15 cherry trees. Making changes to the wooded area. Need some discussion about grass cutting and which areas to leave. They have a young student working with them doing Duke of Edinburgh Silver Medal. Asked if there was a map showing where the river runs under the green space.

Downhills Park – Tennis court consultation is underway. Friends have planted 100 tree whips along boundary by Apple Tree Yard, part of the Mayors/TCV initiative. Their annual Art in the Park will be held on 23rd July. A new tree has appeared in the park and a new bench installed. A new wildflower meadow has been sown as part of Meadows Project pilot. Thanks to the council for the free bulbs and the daffodils are looking spectacular. Meeting with a researcher doing work on informal sports in urban settings. Litter remains a problem and there's a need to understand the work of the hygiene team. There is a disappointing lack of responsiveness from the council to Friends' emails.

Bruce Castle – Continue monthly litterpicks (and cake) on 1st Sunday of the month. The group's Summer Theatre in the park will be Wind in the Willows on June 25th. Russell Miller ran a very successful tree walk for them. Work on the historic oak's protective fencing is nearly complete as is the production of the interpretation board, a joint effort between the Friends, the Museum and TCV. Communication with the Council is not good. Awaiting response to questions re rat problem around the tennis courts and problems with vehicles driving over grass. No report received after Spotlight walkabout in January. Friends feel that the park is being neglected. Not been told why the green flag inspection meeting was cancelled at very short notice. Café opening not regular and seems to be often closed.

Down Lane Park – User Forum has been formed to advise/oversee use of development funding available. The Forum is developing its organisation and structure, including a youth advisory group. Problem with vehicles driving over grass. Equipment in the playground is still missing/broken. Surface of the tennis court has green moss growing and needs power washing. The playground is prone to flooding in bad weather. The park is well used.

Queen's Wood – Rewilding grant work with TCV to reduce soil erosion and fence areas off. Doing lot of deadhedging to attempt to stop people trampling everywhere. Are monitoring footfall. Some footpaths are disintegrating and becoming dangerous. Ran a very successful geology walk with over 50 participants. Dawn chorus walk coming up. Flood management proposals have gone very quiet, no work and no news since last spring. Need information. Café is going to be re-opened, but community garden is running OK.

Chestnuts Park – Zip wire has been mended in the playground. Informal tournaments and ad hoc noisy parties still an ongoing problem in the Muga area. Lack of public toilets is a major problem in relation to these and other large gatherings. How are toilet facilities managed especially when they are in privately leased buildings? Tennis consultation is ongoing. Turn up and play preferred but this may mean no LTA funding if the courts are not locked. There is no clear maintenance plan for hard surfaces, only done "as required". Needs to be assessed and done more regularly as leaves and detritus can easily grow to be large problems. GLA Greening grant, communication about where this has got to has not been good. Suddenly new Deep Water Feature proposal had been received - Friends have led on this project and feel this to be disrespectful.

Lordship Rec – Spotlight, regular walkabouts continue – Friends usually produce the notes. Working groups ongoing in orchard, woodland, river, litterpicking, and lake. Received a small Thames Water community grant to replace broken dipping platform and lake interpretation board. Presently crowdfunding for a bottle filler in the rec especially now that there is a large, weekly Park Run. The Bike Hut has now reopened and is being run by Rocky's son and others after Rocky's sad death in November. Paddling pool has had a makeover. Council will be installing a changing places unit by the Hub for people with severe physical disabilities. Hub AGM will be on 22nd April and on 5th April all will be celebrating 20 years of community/Council partnership-working through the Lordship Rec Users Forum.

12. Some reports from groups not in attendance that were sent round before the meeting:

Finsbury Park- Friends have reprinted their book celebrating the 150th anniversary of the park in 2019.

Bluebell Wood – The wood continues to be in a bad state, with bad weather meaning paths are expanding. Entrance needs attention and Friends are awaiting a promised noticeboard which will be very welcome. New committee members have joined at 2nd AGM. The rewilding grant has allowed soil surveys and expert advisors.

Waiting for management plan to be put into effect, hopefully this year. Phase one of managing footfall to allow regeneration and stop path expansion will come into play in April with some temporary fencing. A monthly bird watching group has been formed.

St Ann's Green Spaces – Call for favourite photos, drawings or paintings of St. Ann's to be part of a celebration of their Connect with Nature sessions over the past 2 years where the work will be put together on Saturday May 20th afternoon. A lot of trees lost to the new development works.

Wolves Lane – Volunteer days continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays and are very lively with about 30 people on site. Fridays and Sundays are open days with food grown on site for sale. A seed swap took place in March. The back of the site has now been cleared in preparation for four new community buildings to be built over the summer. Exciting times!

Crouch End Open Space (CREOS) – The meadow is rain-sodden but the new path is working to get walkers across without trampling damage. Thanks to TCV for helping get the site into a good shape. Dead hedging has been created to protect recent bulb and tree planting. Saddened by loss of several mature trees. Haringey are helping to investigate possible sources for death of trees. 3 mature trees were felled by Shepherd's Cot Trust and were told it was for development of tennis courts. They are within their rights to do this but now have set up systematic meetings with the Friends so that any works can be discussed in advance.

Friends of Railway Fields – Site now open to public again although there is still work to do. AGM to be held in April. The drawing group in Railway Fields has an exhibition at Haringay and Stroud Green Libraries. Saddened by death of long-time education volunteer and member of committee, Bob Jakoby, he will be greatly missed.

Alexandra Palace Park – Very busy couple of months with tree walk, moss and liverwort walk, history of football, art session and a women's brass band playing a specially composed piece for international women's day.

13. Council Responses

Nightingale – Glynis said she has a river map for the green space and will share it. Flooding happens above the course of the river and the gulleys need clearing.

Vehicles – Shahina believed they had identified one person particularly responsible and they were not a permanent staff member. Will reiterate to all staff the importance of not driving on grass. Suggestion that there could be smaller vehicles to fit paths?

Down Lane – playground equipment is on order and should be done next month. Will get back to Martin re cleaning Tennis surface.

Queen's Wood – Chair of Friends wrote to the Asst Director asking for information on flood scheme. It is now up to the Asst Director to respond.

Park Toilets - Glynis has been asked to put together a form to get a clearer understanding of the availability of toilet facilities around parks.

Bruce Castle Café – cant really discuss legal lease issues at this meeting may be better to meet in person.

14. TCV report – Cassandra Li is the first point of contact for TCV. They will be offering training on "How to run family events" and "Species ID". Railway Fields is now open. The Paddock is still closed due to Japanese Knotweed removal. They will run bird surveys in some parks. Tuesday –Thursday practical workshops ongoing. Rewild grant for ancient woodlands – Work in Coldfall will start on Monday and then they will move on to Bluebell Wood. Wood chipping and fencing around oak in Bruce Castle. Tree survey along the Moselle completed in Lordship Rec.

15. Emma Betts – Mapping of community groups in and around local sites – Identifying groups not currently making full use of parks. Mapping groups already existing around parks; clubs, schools, faith groups, residents groups. Want to have Friends input in this exercise, or groups can take the initiative themselves.
Comment - We need to decide on best ways to engage with this and identify a proper way to measure success.

16. Michelle Lindson - Memorandum of Understanding – Has looked at similar documents from other boroughs. Has taken in our changes and added some bits and will send it back to Friends Forum.
Comment – The Aims sentence needs to recognise the wider activities of Friends Groups. Communication needs to be good for this memorandum to be meaningful. Need to know that Council will hold up their side of the bargain.

17. Glynis – Friends / Parks Service Communications – Will talk to everyone in the staff team about better communication. Agreed to set up a special meeting on communication and cooperation with Zonal Officers and Friends. Will continue to do training until everyone is satisfied. *Comment*: Make sure we have enough notice of meeting. *Comment*: Councillors potentially might give some political direction to officers.

18. Green Space Strategy and Parks Summit – Emma said that the Summit should be in September, hoping that the strategy document will have gone to Cabinet by then. The joint working group would be planning content. Clare from Downhills Park in the East (large park), Sue Beckett from Nightingale Gardens in Central

Haringey (smallish park), and Laura Dekker from Queens Wood in the West (nature reserve) all expressed an interest in being involved.

19. Staffing – We welcomed Christina a new area supervisor (grounds operations) covering Bruce Castle towards Bounds Green area. There are 3 area supervisors. A Zonal map to be sent round again with the structure of the parks service, The Zonal and Project teams are all in place but there are still vacancies being advertised for operation jobs; occasional staff, senior operatives and gardeners. 2 sports ground maintenance staff are still needed to join Tim Pyall and Robert Liss in specialist play and courts team. *Comment:* need to make sure someone has the task of cleaning Mugas, tennis courts, playgrounds etc.

20. Diversity Group – Michelle and Emma very happy to contribute to our working group.

21. AOB

Martin asked if it were possible for Alex and the tree team to give Friends advance notice of tree felling. There is a tree maintenance survey every 10 years, but the last one may need updating. *Agreed:* The Forum agreed it would be good to have someone from Tree section at our next Forum Meeting.

Clare asked about Green Flag inspection works and what was the value to the parks department of last minute works done just before before judges' visits. Could the money be spent on longer term projects across the whole year? *Comment:* Dave said the Green Flag standard should be aspired to by all spaces, and throughout the whole year.

Michelle – Has been working with Dave to update the complete Friends Groups contacts list and needs us to check that our information is correct. [Latest version circulated]. Also, if groups have any digital leaflets to plug an event or just general information about their group, please send it to Michelle.

Big Help Out – at the time of the king's coronation – groups can register events on Big Help Out website.

People Need Parks small grants for parks - has now opened again for this year with £40,000. Groups can claim up to £1000 and individuals can apply for £250. Information on applying can be found on the Haringey Website – People Need Parks Funding.

London Rivers Week – Lordship Friends are organising a river event at 2pm on Sunday 28th May at the Hub with films, talks and discussions about supporting our local rivers.

Next meeting June 3rd at Bruce Castle Museum

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APPENDIX 1

**Haringey Friends of Parks Forum Diversity Working Group
Notes of meeting, Tuesday 28th March, 8pm-9.30pm**

Present: Dave Morris – Friends of Lordship Rec, Emma Betts – Parks & Leisure Service, Leyla Laksari – Living Under One Sun, Liz Ixer – Friends of Railway Fields, Orla Falls, Sandra Sutherland – Friends of Harmony Gardens. **Apologies:** Aarti – Friends of Bluebell Woods, Hesketh Benoit – Basketball for All, and Michelle Lindson – Parks & Leisure Service.

- 1. Background** (Dave Morris)
 - This is the second meeting of an open Working Group reporting back to the Friends Forum.
 - Our role is to come up with examples of good practice and ideas on how we can improve our inclusivity and diversity in our memberships, activities and partnerships – and become stronger as a result.
 - This is a national focus. London Friends of Green Spaces Network has started a Diversity and Inclusion Group. Birmingham Open Space Forum is also grappling with these issues. The National Federation is doing likewise and recently published research on the subject commissioned by them in partnership with University College London. So the work of our own Working Group feeds into the whole movement – and we can learn from efforts elsewhere.

2. Sports and Fitness:

Liz Ixer:

- Railway Fields is a nature reserve so sport is not really a focus but fitness is. TCV encourages people to sign up for work parties. The same people tend to turn up to these, the majority are retirees and white. Liz approached Sonia Camara and invited her sewing group to visit. She also invited an Alcohol Recovery group to visit. This led to a small tree planting activity.
- Also tried introducing some walks but take up was low.
- It would be very interesting to see if there are barriers to access for people and whether everyone feels comfortable in the space, there is no evidence for this at the moment.

Orla Falls:

- Research shows that one of the reasons minority groups are not using parks is due to issues around safety.
- It would be really good to be able to share information on what clubs currently operate in parks and what facilities are available. There are fantastic facilities in some of our parks but often people are not aware of them.

Dave Morris:

- The Down Lane User Forum may be the only such group alongside Lordship Rec User Group that he is aware of. They have made real efforts to involve the youth football club on site.

Sandra Sutherland:

- At Harmony Gardens we struggle for volunteers.
- We focus on working with children and increasing diversity that way.
- The successful Art in the Park activity last year will continue.
- Engagement is a mixed bag in terms of diversity. We do have Somalian and Caribbean residents coming through but it can be temporary as they then get busy with work and other responsibilities and stop coming.

Dave Morris:

- At Lordship Rec, we are as a Friends group quite concerned about wanting to be more inclusive, especially regarding age and ethnicity. Most of the group are women. Not been able to get many young people and people from a Black and Minority Ethnic background involved in the Friends Group and attending the meetings.
- Now have about 20 user groups in the Rec, and an amazing range. We've encouraged that.
- Dave had written and circulated his thoughts about this challenge, especially linked to sports and fitness activities/groups [See below]

How can we improve diversity and inclusion in our site and group?

- *WHO: this is especially regarding age, ethnicity, class, gender, disability, general interests*

- *IMPACT: working towards diversity within our spaces, site user groups, and especially in our own groups and activities and partnerships*

What are the opportunities eg. around sports and fitness - formal and informal?

For example, in Lordship Rec, we have:

- *FACILITIES: a MUGA, skate/bmx hard surface area, bmx dirt track, Model Traffic Area, football pitches, a bike hut/workshop, outdoor gym, kids playground, Community Hub. We will soon have a Changing Places unit for people with severe mobility challenges.*

- *GROUPS: Wheelytots cycling for tots, weekly Parkrun (and many informal daily joggers), a bmx track group, an informal whatsapp group for the skate/bmx area, a ghanaian football team every Sunday in the open field, 11 youth football teams based in the enclosed sports field, 7 walking groups, and various outdoor fitness groups.*

- *THE FRIENDS: The Friends of Lordship Rec ourselves hold regular practical volunteering sessions (in the woods, in the river channel and in the orchard field, and a litterpicking group). Plus in the food growing garden run by the Friends of Harmony Gardens, linked to us.*

- *NEARBY: Schools, Childrens Centre, Faith Centres, Residents Associations, Youth clubs, specific ethnic community groups, others.*

How could the Friends could improve the diversity of our contacts, partnerships, activities, membership and core group?

- *AWARENESS AND MAPPING: Understand better the usage of our site and its users, its other user groups, and groups and facilities in our surrounding communities.*

- *LINKS: Try to make direct and stronger links and partnerships, with other user groups, and specific nearby community facilities and groups. Listen to what they want to see on the site and in relations with the Friends. Ensure regular User Groups joint meetings focus on inter-group relations (rather than just maintenance and management of the site as at the moment).*

- *THE FRIENDS GROUP: Improve the diversity of our overall membership, and of our core group of people most actively involved. Recently we have identified age and ethnicity inclusion as a key challenge. Have a diversity champion in the Group? Ensure our events and activities are attractive to wider sections of the community (maybe held in partnership with key other groups), and that our comms and publicity are attractive to diverse audiences.*

Emma Betts:

- The consultation that we have undertaken with young women as part of the development of our new Parks and Greenspaces Strategy highlights safety as being a key concern, echoing Orla's point.
- We've also carried out consultation recently with a group of Year 6 girls at Rhodes Avenue Primary School on the design of an Outdoor Gym at O. R. Tambo Recreation Ground. The barriers to engaging in exercise in the park that they highlighted included not feeling that they had space as the exercise facilities are taken over by teenagers and particularly

teenage boys. The layout of the space and placement of equipment in the outdoor gym will be important in determining the extent to which the girls will engage.

- Down Lane Park is developing its own Young People's User Forum. They have some capacity building funding and are using part of that to train themselves up as sports coaches and referees. They plan to then start delivering activity sessions on site as a way of engaging more children and young people in the park. This group could be a really good model for other parks to consider.

Dave Morris:

- Who are we focusing on in this working group? Young people, people from BAME background, teenage girls, class, disability - it's very wide ranging.
- One particular group are those with serious disability problems – one important development is the recent installation of Changing Places toilets at Finsbury Park and shortly at Lordship Rec.
- As Friends Groups we need to focus on how we're supporting people of all interests, eg to do sports and other things in parks, not only horticulture, planting etc...

Liz Ixer:

- As a Friends Group, we don't do a lot of horticulture and we don't get a lot of interest when we do. I'm convinced that if we could get young people in to build things they would be interested.
- For us, it's about trying different things. We're open one Saturday a month, we try lots of different things to get people in. We have a very active drawing group, it's free and very friendly – good mix in terms of class and gender. Trying creative writing as well and we have younger people come in for that.

Sandra Sutherland:

- We could tap into groups such as Beavers, scouts etc..., and they could do their badges in the parks. There are also groups such as Little Fingers, Urban Forest and even nannies.
- I teach adults and find that consistency is key to retaining engagement.
- The school system within the borough – how can we tap into that and get into some of their newsletters etc...? I have 2 schools close by and they are really looking for creative outlets for children. Need to think about safeguarding.

Orla Falls:

- Need to think about ways to think about how to promote activities. The Food Banks produce a leaflet for example that now includes information on free activities too.

Leyla Laksari [*just joined the meeting*]:

- For the past 5 years we have established how a community can take over a space that has been disused for many years - involving communities that have never had power. One of the biggest achievements of that is that we now working to establish a permanent hub at Down Lane Park. Most importantly creating a space for people who have not had a space to run activities.
- We have a fantastic model of neighbourhood concepts that we hope we can scale up.
- Community development is about wealth building and health building.

3. Mapping

- Emma has started mapping community groups around some of our parks. She is keen to work with Friends Groups on this; to complete the mapping, identify where there are gaps in engagement and potential actions.
- Dave invited Emma to speak about this at the Friends of Parks Forum on Saturday.

4. Questionnaire

- Dave is going to draft a questionnaire for Friends Groups about inclusion and diversity. There is London-wide interest too.
- Information gathered through the questionnaire can act as a baseline and groups that are trying to change things can then measure their progress over time.
- The information will give us a snapshot of where we are and can link to the mapping work.
- The National Federation is drafting a Checklist for groups to draw on. Dave is keen to identify simple tools that Friends Group can use to better understand their situation themselves without relying on professionals.

5. Whatsapp group

Everyone confirmed that they would be happy to be added to a Whatsapp group.

