

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

Report of Saturday June 3rd, 2023 at Bruce Castle Museum

Present: Robyn Thomas (Alexandra Park), Liz Ixer (Railway Fields), Pamela Harling (Meadow Orchard + Wolves Lane), Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Wood and Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Laura Dekker (Queen's Wood), Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) - *chaired*, Hesketh Benoit (Basketball Assoc - Ducketts Common + White Hart Lane Rec), Martin Ball (Down Lane Park), Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gardens + Paignton Park) - *took minutes*, Rosemary Dunne (Chestnuts Park) **From Council for part 2:** Sahina Choudhury (LBH Operations), Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (LBH Zonal Officer), Lily Labonte (LBH Activity Officer), Michelle Lindson (LBH Volunteering Officer), Paul Ely (LBH Strategy Coordinator) **Apologies:** John Miles (Haringey Rivers Forum + Parkside Malvern RA), Joyce Rosser (Priory Common), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Kate Swade (Tower Gardens Pk), Clare Parry (Downhills Park), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Park), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Quentin Given (The Paddock), Cassandra Li (TCV), Alex Fraser (LBH Tree Officer), Simon Farrow (LBH Head of Leisure)

Minutes of last meeting Dave brought copies to meeting. Coldfall Woods update missed off (but had been circulated beforehand). Otherwise accurate.

Strategy Paul Ely email sent to whole list. Strategy docs to be sent to Council Cabinet on 11 July for approval for final approval. An important document is the consultation/feedback report (including hopefully the 10-11 meetings held with the Forum over the last 2-3 years). [See also below]

Trees At the last Forum meeting it was felt important that someone from the parks service's tree unit attend one of our meetings. It was suggested by the Council and agreed by us that due to the detail and time needed we would support a separate joint meeting dedicated to tree issues. But we also think it good if Parks Tree Officer could attend some Forum meetings occasionally. [See also below]

Parks Summit First organised last year by Parks Service in Ally Pally, supported by the Forum and attended by around 80 people. This year will take place in September (likely 23rd). Glynis suggested Lordship Rec. Questions include: launch of the new Strategy, how to implement its action plans, networking, stalls (parks service, Forum) etc. Three Forum reps are attending the planning meetings. [See also below]

Forum Diversity Working Group Promoting inclusion in Friends Groups and in involvement in green spaces. No updates as not met since last Forum meeting. Liz & Dave to convene next meeting.

Memorandum of Understanding Council has proposed a template voluntary MOU to clarify its relationship with Friends' Groups and vice versa. All the Forum's proposed amendments from last meeting have been accepted and incorporated. Subsequent additional amendments by Council itself seem positive. Only remaining issue: what does "responding to communications [...] in a reasonable amount of Time" mean specifically in days? [See also below]

Volunteers Week 1-7 June. Dave was asked by the Council to do a 1-2 minute vox pop to promote Friends' Groups on Council Twitter feed, which he did and got over 2,500 views. This prompted the updating of the Forum website with a revised list of all groups and their key online links - compiled by Michelle and Dave, and uploaded by Deborah. TCV holding a volunteers picnic in Railway Fields June 6th.

Meadows Project Council funding for 6 new meadows created in 6 different green spaces, involving the local Friends groups. In Muswell Hill Playing Fields there are 2 triangles of meadow planting. Local schools scattered seeds and made scarecrows. Also on Downhills Park approach and Ducketts Common (150 metre stretch). TCV involved. Challenge that needs a strategy to ensure that meadows don't get dominated by a single species. Similar project is White Hart Lane 'tiny forest', which has attracted lots of

mums with children, maybe because it is fenced in and feels safe/controlled.

Haringey Community Action Network 200 people attended a public meeting last September and launched a new network to encourage communications and mutual support among local community/campaigning groups and take up some of the key ongoing issues local people face. 24 organisations have so far joined including our own Forum (as we agreed last meeting). The Network is independent of political parties. It was agreed Dave will be our link person. On Sunday June 11th there will be an all-day meeting at the Alevi Turkish Centre discussing support for NHS, housing rights, migrants, climate and biodiversity issues etc.

London Friends of Green Spaces Network Now over 930 Friends Groups. The Network have set up a range of active Working Groups to discuss key themes, including: dogs in green spaces, biodiversity, large commercial events, climate resilience, Friends Groups diversity/inclusion. Also hold zoom meetings and seminars, the last being a discussion: "Make Space for Girls" (ie their requirements must be considered at the facility design stage). Liz and Dave have been attending from Haringey – all groups welcome to attend or get involved.

Haringey Go Green Month throughout June Well-designed 4U2 pamphlet circulated. Also, a Facebook page will be continuously updated. Broad range of events being promoted.

LOCAL REPORTS

Coldfall Wood: Stream suffered a pollution event. Awaiting new info board for wetland area. Need playground repairs date. Access barrier to playing field needs fixing urgently. What to do with request for geo-cache?. Friends have a lively walks programme (arts, photography etc).

Queen's Wood: 2 large areas fenced off for recovery from compaction/over-use. Flood mitigation scheme (previous controversial plan scrapped, new plan being developed). Friends' working groups and activities continuing. Cafe re-opened. Bird chorus, survey 4 months. Family Fun Day celebrating 125 years since Queen's Wood bought by Council. Citizen Science projects: trying for some precision, rather than relying on 'feels better'.

Manchester Gardens: regular monthly litter pick. Problem with people urinating in park.

Paignton Park: recent very useful Green Flag visit, playground to be updated/repared, possible outdoor gym. Regular monthly litter pick.

Lordship Rec: Friends organising or supporting a range of community events in June including a BioBlitz (flora/fauna surveys with children), Open Shell 'surfskate' with DJs, People Need Parks festival, Blockorama steel pan day, and two Hub Windrush Events. Friends Working Groups and volunteering sessions all ticking over well.

Ducketts Common: basketball attracts people from all over + male/female mix. Crucial for the game to have nets wherever there is a hoop. Good Green Flag day. Cafe doing well. New meadow strip. Hesketh wants to get the Friends active again.

White Hart Lane Rec: Want to build upon Anne Scott's good work. New 'Tiny Forest' seems popular.

Alexandra Park: Friends walks and talks continue (trees, wildflower etc). Had lively stall at the 150th anniversary celebration attended by thousands on Saturday 27 May - sold 30 history of park booklets. Go Ape propose additional course in old deer park with 'mini' landrover 2 metres long. Sustainability management report about carbon footprint of the park (part of an academic study) to be circulated.

Railway Fields: Nature reserve managed by TCV during week. Opened at weekends by the Friends & for

special events. Dusk walk by birder. Dawn chorus walk not so popular. Open Day with singers, walk, book stall (by All Good Bookshop in Turnpike Lane). Art Group: exhibition in Stroud Green Library (hopefully there will be another). Butterfly Group survey. Friends concerned about length taken by sewage works since March, fewer toilets has big impact, visitors concerned & affects school groups.

Wolves Lane: Lots of food-related groups and activities. Problem slope needs to be repaired – quite dangerous. Impacts solar panels. New build lottery-funded classroom now going forward.

Chestnuts Park: Public toilets need proper management. Boundary walls overgrown. Grass mown, but boundaries not tended. Willow tree nearly caught fire due to park users cooking. Problems with unauthorised social events/parties – local residents unhappy. Friends active as always. Trying to recruit residents. Awaiting Spotlight walkabout with Parks Service officers.. Flood mitigation scheme is complex: worried council trying to push too fast.

Down Lane Park: Nearby development and gentrification is creating pressures on the space, but also leading to substantial investment and new design planning. User Forum discussing proposals for the future. Friends watching the situation carefully - also asking for replacement key for noticeboard, repairs to broken lampposts, and reasons for why some trees felled. Park is used as thoroughfare to Spurs ground on match days. Lighting and safety important. Community-run Café/Centre thriving.

The Paddock: Run by TCV, supported by Friends. Update circulated on our email list.

Haringey Rivers Forum: John sent report. London Rivers Week last week - event at Lordship Rec with walk, films, talks and discussion. Network Rail pollution in Penstock Tunnel (Wood Green) - raised with relevant bodies. Masterplanning issues for underground Stonebridge Brook in Chestnuts Park. New Sustainable Drainage going in close to Priory Common. Volunteer squad working monthly at Lordship Rec in the Moselle channel.

Loos for Haringey campaign Calling for public access for toilets throughout the borough, including in parks. Forum agreed to support. Parks service currently doing a condition survey of toilets in parks.

The Conservation Volunteers Cassandra sent round TCV apologies and report.

Other reports – a number of groups had sent round updates before the meeting. Dave brought photocopies to the meeting (and also handed to Council reps).

RESPONSES TO ABOVE REPORTS Glynis responded to some of the key points above, and will try to progress or pass on any urgent issues. Her zonal team is down from 3 to 2 at the mo.

COUNCIL UPDATES

New Cricket pitches: Planned for White Hart Lane Rec, Lordship Rec (plus nets), Markfield Park.

Michelle Lindson, Volunteer Officer: Meeting lots of people: faith groups, schools. Useful to have specific info about parks and park activities to give out to people. Coordinates joint Council/Forum spreadsheet with all groups and their contacts. Involved with some local activities – eg WHL tiny forest, Perth Road, drop-in events. Works with specific groups, eg Haringey Learning Group bumblebee survey, Michelle updating volunteer info on soon-to-be-launched new Council website. Will share link when ready - welcomes feedback. Must be attractive to young people. ESOL group, TCV (developing staff skills). Helped arrange Dave's vox pop video on Friends groups. Michelle to discuss White Hart Lane with Hesketh.

Memo of Understanding: Michelle leading on this. All Forum additions included & some good additions also made by Parks. Agreed that “a reasonable response time” could be specified in the document.

Probably up to 10 working days (standard), quicker if urgent. [Note: Obviously individuals may be on leave or off sick, so might be delayed.]

Emma Betts - Annual Park Summit: 2nd one. To be held in Sept on Saturday or Sunday. Emma leading on this. Monthly planning meeting with Alex Fraser from conservation team, plus the 3 reps from Forum. [See above].

Paul Ely - New Green Spaces Strategy: All docs will be ready to go to Cabinet in July. Lots of different themes/issues. Plus consultation/feedback report. Formal launch planned in September. Will need annual updating. It won't stand still as a 15-year strategy.

Matters that arose due to feedback (to be discussed at Summit): parks better used than ever; dogs and their owners; unauthorised/informal events can be problematic; speeding problems with bikes, including delivery drivers; drug-taking/dealing: how does the Council use users' intelligence; important issue of lighting raised by a lot of people; never enough resource.

Forum raised vital importance of having a financial strategy on potential sources of funding for the parks service. eg flood (contingency) money could be used for different spaces, travel routes (TfL money), public health, planning gain and so on. This is essential in order to work towards the agreed aspirations. Funding options document 3 years ago by Simon Farrow was very helpful, and was expected to be expanded into an underlying document - was included on list of original Strategy documents, but Paul says it dropped off because it was viewed as only very general. Further investment needs to be sought. Joined up thinking required. Dave asked Paul to take back to Simon. The strategy is mostly really good and aspirational, but knowing where the money could come from to achieve it is crucial.

New Council Cabinet leade for Parks is Cllr Emily Arkell (Bounds Green). Background in public health – a theme that runs through the document.

Lily Labonte - Events in Parks: People Need Parks summer programme launch festival in Lordship Rec. Summer programme June – September (17 weeks). Diversity in the programme (document circulated – feedback requested). Winter Workout Programme & new Spring Workout Programme planned. Hopes to hold launch event for new cricket facilities.

Haringey Walks programme/newsletter includes around 9-12 walks, eg Garden Walks – sheltered housing – aim to get out of gardens & into parks. We pointed out that Friends Groups and others organise dozens of extra walks – she agreed these could/should also be publicised. Lily working to publicise all regular walks with Anita.

Friends organise many events every month. We suggest Lily either send out a monthly Questionnaire to all groups on their activities planned, or explain how everyone can publicise through the Council website Whats On calendar and weekly bulletins. Michelle offered help inputting into 1 system that fed all the various promotion points. Hesketh suggested a “How to Promote Your Event” section on the Forum website. Deborah can do this if provided with the text.

Lily and Paul attended Conference in Leeds: Safety in Parks for Girls and Women. Important to act on this. Should we do a Haringey event?

Trees: Joint Parks Service / Friends Forum meeting on green space tree issues agreed. Alex F to organise date (weekday evening?)

Council considering setting up a new Tree Forum. Not just about public green spaces (our remit) but about street trees and any tree issues generally. Forum and FGs would be invited to attend.

Noted that Bruce Castle has Haringey's oldest tree – the Oak. Or is there an older Yew tree somewhere?