

# Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 4th Nov 2023

**Present:** Dave Morris (*Lordship Rec*) - chaired, Peter Dale (*Belmont Rec*) - took some of the minutes, Robyn Thomas (*Alexandra Park*), Peter Grey (*Nightingale Gdns*), Joyce Rosser (*Priory Gardens + Rectory Gardens*), Hesketh Benoit (*Ducketts Common + WHL Rec*), Quentin Given (*Paddock + Cloud Garden*) - took minutes, Katie Benson (*The Green Bounds Green*), Martin Ball (*Down Lane Park*), Pamela Harling (*Tottenham Cemetery + Wolves Lane*), Cassandra Li (*TCV*), **From 11am: Council reps:** Emma Betts (LBH Parks Community Engagement), Sahina Choudhury (LBH Head of Parks Operations), Paul Ely (LBH Parks Consultant), Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (LBH Parks Zonal Team) **Apologies:** Liz Ixer (*Railway Fields*), Clare Parry (*Downhills Pk*), Phil Chinn, Vicci Midwinter (*Coldfall Woods and Muswell Hill Playing Fields*), Ant Elder (*Fairland Pk*), Dan Meagher (*Belmont Rec*), Ceri Williams (*Chestnuts Pk*), Joan Curtis (*Lordship Rec*), Deborah (*Manchester Gdns + Paignton Pk*), Georgina Fletcher and Klaus Kerner (*Bruce Castle Pk*), Cathy Meeus (*Parkland Walk*), Sheila (*Bluebell Wood*), Alison Watson (*Queens Wood*), Kate Swade (*Tower Gardens Pk*), Bethany Anderson (*Finsbury Pk*), John Miles (*Crescent Gdns + Hornsey Pk Rd Green Spaces + Haringey Rivers Forum*) + **Council reps:** Lily Labonte (LBH Parks Activities), Neil Cole (LBH Parks Projects)

*Note:* Dave distributed a pack of key documents to all delegates present. Many had been emailed to our internal list previously. 8 groups had circulated detailed local reports in the previous 24hrs.

1. **Minutes** of last meetings in June and September agreed.

## 2. **Matters Arising:**

- **SINCs review** – Cassandra reported that local groups have responded regarding their sites' proposed upgrades. TCV will discuss with MKA Ecology, then final report will go to the London Board but no timescale yet.
- Pamela stressed importance of **biological surveys/recording** for protecting sites. Hesketh mentioned the Nature Watch activity run by Council for young people.
- **Parks Summit feedback** – Clare Parry had attended the Council's de-brief meeting and fed back.
- **Zonal Team** – v understaffed as is the whole Parks Service. The long-planned Forum/Zonal meeting has been scheduled [see September minutes] for 8th Nov, 10am @ Lordship Hub to discuss and improve communications. Dave to send out reminder.
- **Memo of Understanding (MoU)**. Michelle Lindson, the Volunteering Officer, has now left – but finalised the MOU before she did so. The aim is to clarify and improve communications and collaboration between the Parks Service and local groups. We agreed to await a few groups to sign the MoU initially and monitor how it goes.
- **Forum Inclusion and Diversity Working Group** – Liz and Dave to convene another meeting.
- **Haringey Local Plan** - a consultation draft of this important and major strategic Planning document is now expected in Feb/March. We want to ensure public green space is protected, enhanced and expanded throughout the borough.
- **Forum tasks**. Dave circulated a paper setting out the tasks (and who currently does them) involved in ensuring the smooth functioning and effectiveness of this Forum - see Appendix below. This includes managing our email list, website, printed materials, answering queries, liaising with Parks Service officers, Forum meetings (preparing, publicising, running, following up), supporting new groups, keeping up to date the list of all groups, liaising with other bodies etc. It was agreed to try to revive the internal coordinating group (currently informally involving Ceri, Cathy, Klaus, Joan and Dave). Hesketh, Joyce and maybe a Belmont rep are also interested. It would be an open group of reps to ensure the Forum functions well between meetings, to which it would be accountable. Anyone else like to be part of it? Quentin happy to do minutes when he's present. Deborah runs our website. Peter suggested having more officers/reps. Agreed to circulate the paper and discuss next time.

## 3. **London and national updates:**

**London Friends of Green Spaces Network** – 930 local groups. Regular open meetings/seminars. Now partnering with GoParks to circulate monthly Bulletin. **DEFRA select committee of Westminster**

**MPs holding new Inquiry into Parks** and current challenges/what to do. National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (the voice of the UK's Friends Groups' movement) has made a detailed submission calling for Government funding to address the deepening financial crisis faced by local Parks Services. There is anger in the sector that many key recommendations of the previous MPs' inquiry (2017) were not implemented or taken seriously by Government.

4. **New Local Groups:** Welcome to the relaunched Friends of Rectory Gardens, the relaunched Friends of Ducketts Common, the new Friends of Belmont Rec and Friends of Hillside Green Space. Friends of Fairland Park wrote in to say they are currently dormant and seeking support. *Note: Congratulations to the Crouch End Open Spaces society who celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. An incredible achievement!*

Council officers joined the meeting at 11am -----.

#### 5. **LOCAL FRIENDS GROUPS' REPORTS:**

**Alexandra Park:** Recent very positive and well-attended event to inaugurate a commemorative bench in honour of a Sudanese refugee who died 2 years ago after making big local contribution. The Friends are very active and in good shape – usual programme of activities, including Art in the Park.

**Nightingale Gardens:** Small group does litter picking (they ask what to do with Nitrous Oxide canisters?), debating planting plans for spring.

**Paddock:** Awaiting consultation on plan for paths, bird hides etc. TCV now have a base there and are running a range of activities.

**Bruce Grove Cloud Garden:** Alarmed to hear there was a planning application that Council missed so might go to appeal. Trying to find out more.

**Lordship:** The Friends' various practical volunteering groups working well. Negotiations taking place due to some commercial activities in woodland approved by Council rather than by the Friends who manage that feature (and recently got their 10<sup>th</sup> Green Flag in a row for their efforts doing so). Got funding for new dipping platform by the lake (installed by TCV), and bidding for funding for other works to lake. A successful programme of events throughout the summer, incl. Skate Jam (put on by Shell Performing Arts Collective), annual Tottenham Flower & Produce Show, and Cloud Appreciation Day.

**Down Lane:** Issues about repairs to lighting, tennis courts and play equipment. Concern about future impact from new Ashley Road building developments. Down Lane Users Community Forum AGM postponed for a few weeks. Question about should there be special signage (eg with emergency numbers) by MUGAs and sports pitches.

**Ducketts:** Good attendance through summer on outdoor gym and basketball, over 100 youth, and 60+ during half term. Hoop and lighting need fixing. Friends Group recently relaunched successfully, meeting in the expanded café building on site. Need to involve young people.

**Priory Common:** New SUDS recently installed adjacent to the site, to be landscaped.

**Rectory Gardens:** New work sessions, working with local nursery "Kindergarten Quarter".

**Belmont:** New Belmont group started in July in response to Parks Strategy survey. Now have 40 members, 200+ on WhatsApp group, and around 15 people at meetings. Local member (an architect) drew up some draft plans which were discussed with Council and have been put out by the Group for public consultation (200 responses). Council have suggested a playzone could be considered. Issues about drainage – seeking expert advice. Adjacent school involved. Bulb planting coming up, and possible tree planting and meadow creation on the cards. Have a junior group doing tree ID sessions.

**The Green Bounds Green:** Monthly litter picking. AGM well attended. Xmas carol-singing soon. Need to replace trim trail equipment – crowdfunding for this. Waiting for new litter bin, also dealing with dumping near N. Circular.

**Tottenham Cemetery:** It's run down, with lots of repairs outstanding. Security concern over fires being lit. Concern that Dignity (who have a 50 yr lease from the Council to run the cemetery and crematorium) have no Management Plan for biodiversity/heritage conservation, despite it being a contractual requirement. Friends pressing council strongly on this, and having some effect (high-level meeting with Friends is planned).

**Wolves Lane:** Lots of positive activities on this horticultural centre/site. New carbon-neutral eco-buildings currently going up, with CONEL construction dept involved.

*Issues from written local reports (circulated to our email list): .....*

**Chestnuts:** In discussions with planners re new local housing developments. Are also discussing with other officers a new Masterplan for improvements to the park. Lots of outstanding repairs identified on a recent 'spotlight' walk – awaiting a written report. Some gardening by grounds staff is now happening (in addition to that by the Friends). Friends aiming to buy and install a tool shed. Doing planting sessions with adjacent school. Are lobbying Council, with Forum backing, to postpone and re-think Highways-led drainage plans.

**Downhills:** Work on tennis courts due to start. Plan a bulb-planting day. Works on wildflower meadow should have been with Friends involvement, but were not engaged. Communications with parks service are poor and a new spotlight walkabout is awaited.

**Tower Gardens:** New Management Plan being developed. Improvements underway for play equipment, and the Friends are currently tidying/planting up the entrances. Volunteer sessions twice a month. Held a successful Community Picnic in the summer. Want TCV to be re-engaged.

**Coldfall Woods and Muswell Hill Playing Fields:** Are taking up an issue over some trees on the border of the playing field being removed without consultation with the Friends. Pleased to see Parks Service staff have visited to mow their new wildflower meadow. Their programme of walks and talks (re spiders, fungi, geology, photography and art etc) is going well. Asking whether a proposed new Playzone is needed as they have already have a MUGA.

**Parkland Walk:** Ongoing issues about current plans for resurfacing: it must be appropriate for a nature reserve – see last Forum meeting minutes. Also seeking to revive the encroachment working group. Awaiting report of a Sept repairs and maintenance 'spotlight' walkabout.

**Finsbury Park:** Supporting the SINC upgrade by providing biodiversity info. Skate area MOU is being discussed. New lights on main carriageway are being plumbed in. Trying to arrange meeting or AGM attendance with Cabinet Member Cllr Emily Arkell to discuss ensuring plan for major investment in the park based on the income from the controversial commercial concerts. Want to know when the new trees will be planted to replace 10 trees lost this year. Continue to organise various sessions eg rewilding, art etc. Looking forward to having a new onsite parks manager. Their member, Jeremy Corbyn MP, arranged a debate in Parliament about funding for the country's parks.

**Railway Fields:** Open the site every third Saturday of each month and some other days. Activities include sessions around wildlife, drawing, walks and workshops. Also support national tree week in December. Ongoing issue with toilets/sewers.

**Fairland Park:** Group was very active in the past but currently dormant. Ex-Secretary would welcome ideas and support – see their email to our list on 4<sup>th</sup> November (10.46 am).

**New River:** Hornsey Wetlands Action Group continues to pursue the case for protection and enhancement of the filter beds.

**Crescent Gardens:** Volunteer sessions once or twice a month.

**Hornsey Park Road area:** Volunteer sessions continue to manage and maintain the small but important local green spaces in the areas.

**Haringey Rivers Forum:** Planning a 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting of the Rivers Forum in the new year. John, the convenor, has attended a range of meetings/events re the Moselle Brook course, Chesnuts and Belmont Rec drainage issues, Heartlands development, and is linking up with wider stakeholder bodies involving the Council, Thames 21, Thames Water and Environment Agency. The Council 'doesn't appear minded' to take up the Rivers Forum / ARUP-generated proposals for a strategic approach to the future of the Moselle Brook. Awaiting replacement for Sam Balch, the Council officer dealing with misconnections. Action needed to remove silt in Moselle by Markfield Park. Want to see positive action to mitigate street flooding, use of SUDS etc. Haringey Water Squad volunteer sessions continue in Lordship Rec and Crescent Gdns, and soon in Rectory Gdns. Plan to monitor River Fly in Tottenham Cemetery.

**Loos for Haringey:** Campaign continues. Supported by this Forum. Members have visited all public toilets advertised by the Council (including in parks) to check condition etc and will make a deputation to a Council meeting. Issues include decency, access, maintenance and maybe future composting opportunities.

## **6. Council responses to the local reports.**

**Cloud garden** – Glynis will ask Annabel Foskett about planning issues. **Lordship woodland** – noted, and recognise that the Friends manage that site. **Down Lane Park** – had been suggested there was no point replacing roundabout as whole park due for refurbishment, but now agreed to replace. Tennis courts will get jet washing. Emergency numbers / signage in MUGAs? Can look into this. **Ducketts**

**Common** – fund identified to repair hoop, lighting **Belmont drainage and plans** – Chris P is officer responsible for drainage, Glynis will come back to group on this. **Bounds Green** – She will contact the relevant officer re trim trail. Bins have been removed because of pressure from residents and friends group because of fly tipping, rats and anti-social behaviour. Removing the bins has not stopped fly tipping but has reduced it. **Chestnuts** – noted. Can't comment on the current drainage plan. **Cemetery** – aware of issues raised by the Friends. **Downhills** – don't know why Friends not consulted, will find out. Works to tennis court soon. **Tower Gardens** – Chris Patterson leading on Management Plan. **Coldfall** – will ensure there's a response re trees. **Parkland Walk** – there is ongoing discussion re surfacing, and encroachment. **Finsbury Park** – trees will be replaced this season. Note: New trees also agreed for White Hart Lane Rec, **Drainage**: Will ask Pankit re Sam Balch replacement.

7. **Staffing:**

**Understaffing and recognition** It was reported that parks teams are very understaffed and under pressure/stress at the moment. Abuse on social media and e-mails makes this worse. Such abuse can affect volunteers too, eg chair of Friends of Stationers Park resigned recently. Staff often not taking sick leave when they should as they are trying to keep up with volume of work. Dave responded on behalf of the Forum saying we recognise this issue, and the Forum is clear that we should be polite and constructive when communicating with officers and indeed among ourselves (and we have recently re-emphasised our Guidelines for the use of our internal email list). **Parks Enforcement Officers** - Aiming to have two new officers in place by end of March. Currently working with legal team to understand the legislation so that the officers can make use of powers to improve enforcement re camping, dogs, anti-social behaviour etc. **3rd Zonal Officer** – vacancy will be advertised in the new year **Finsbury Park Manager** – second-round interviews are happening next week, so should be appointed soon. And Park Ranger vacancy has been advertised. **3 Gardener vacancies** – Currently reviewing applications. Very pleased that 30 applications received. Efforts from Friends Groups to advertise these roles helped to greatly increase the number of applicants – so big thank you to all who helped promote. **3 senior operatives (senior gardeners)** – roles will be advertised soon. **Project Team** - Jake is leaving but replacement has not been advertised for yet. **Volunteering** - Michelle Lindson (Volunteering officer) has just left. **Other** - Tim Pyle has left and they are trying to work out how to cover that role **ACTION:** Glynis said she hoped to share this update in writing and that she also might be able to share a current organisational chart of the parks team.

8. **TCV report:** Saskia has replaced Luke regarding the meadows projects. Paddock volunteer days Weds and Friday. Elsewhere volunteer days Tues, Thurs, Sunday. No activities Dec 20- Jan 2. Barbecue for volunteers at railway Fields on 23rd Nov, 1pm – all welcome. Tree festival Railway Fields 2nd Dec (check date!!) with trees to give away. Nature ID training 10th Nov on fungi + Bryophytes on 12th Dec @ Paddock. All groups encouraged to raise training needs with Cassandra. Cassandra agreed to convene a **Forum nature/biodiversity recording/training group** – Pamela, Martin, Quentin tentatively volunteered. Anyone want to join that working group please contact Cassandra.

9. **Parks Summit and general engagement.**

**Summit** - Emma, as Engagement Officer, helped coordinate the Summit in September. She gave thanks to Friends reps for involvement in planning and publicising the summit, for running a Forum stall, making presentations and being on discussion panels, and for all contributions on the day. There was a follow up de-brief meeting (attended by Clare for the Forum) - very pleased with how open, accessible and welcoming the event was. Disappointed by low attendance, especially for the panel and workshops, which was a shame because the quality was really high. Thinking about what to do next year: a similar large event or other ideas such as several smaller events. There had been positive feedback about the stalls. Outputs from the day (eg presentation powerpoints) are being consolidated, will be put up on Commonplace rather than main council website. Will seek responses on issues raised eg covenanting, defending open spaces in Local Plan. **Mapping** - She is mapping schools, community groups etc near each park to help with engagement and consultations. Friends Groups can access this info. Contact her if you'd like to develop an engagement plan for your site/group. She's also working with Clare Davis, dementia lead, on dementia-friendly audit on all parks, looking at features/benches/signage etc. Team hopes to consider other affected groups in future. **Social media** - Council has recently agreed the Parks Service can have own dedicated Instagram/Facebook accounts.

## 10. Playzones

Paul Ely had circulated details of a new 'Playzones' opportunity. He explained the opportunity for 75% funding from the Football Foundation for new and refurbished Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs, now rebranded as Playzones) in the Borough's parks and housing estates. Paul currently has developed a shortlist of 8 parks and 8 housing estates, to be reduced to maybe half that number based on which sites are the most suitable. 5 of the park proposals would be refurbishment of existing MUGAs. 3 proposals are for new facilities. Friends Groups at each specific site need to contact Paul Ely to discuss the idea/opportunity. One big positive of MUGAs is that they can attract underrepresented park users into sports etc, for example young people and people from ethnic minorities, especially if there's a booking system. **Aiming to firm up the shortlist by end of the year**, or each site he will need to demonstrate need and an indication of likely users. Next year, those still on the shortlist would move into detailed design phase, costing and planning permission. Would not be looking to position any that required removing trees. **Funding:** Refurb expected to cost approx £150k, new MUGAs will cost approx £250k. FA will provide 75% of funding council then needs to find matched funding.

**Question: how do you attract wider user groups to use the MUGA?** Ans: Council is working with women's football groups and others about improving usage. Design can help but programming is the best way to encourage a diverse group of users. **Question: Will the MUGAs be open access or bookable?** Glynis: Likely to be combination of open access and bookable. Booking might be free, but requiring booking helps to manage and monitor misuse such as dog users, people using them for hours on end, coaches using them to give paid-for lessons. In response reps also pointed out that booking might put off many users, especially casual users, and involve bureaucracy and cost.

**Question: Current facilities are often underused and under-maintained. How would that be addressed with these new facilities?** A. Council needs to create and commit to a maintenance plan including staffing. **Signage?** This will be considered as part of the project

## 11. Litter and Waste Collection/disposal

**N2O Gas canisters:** Weston Road no longer accepting gas canisters from the Parks team. Currently have to take them to Finsbury Park and they are taken from there in batches for recycling. Change in legislation this month might reduce the number of canisters left in parks.

**Recycling of waste in park bins:** This is an aspiration in the new Green Spaces Strategy, and needs careful planning. Current fleet of vans and teams cannot collect and separate current waste, so no waste from bins is currently being recycled. Council are working to address this with new/modified vans and new separate bins. Waste in recycling bins in parks is generally 'contaminated' with mixed items. If more than 20% of a bin's contents is non-recyclable then it can't be recycled and would be treated as general waste, so park user education will also be needed.

## 12. AOB

Glynis reminded friends groups to send in a map of where they are planting bulbs so that the park teams know where not to mow

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## HARINGEY FRIENDS OF PARKS FORUM – JOBS/ROLES

Some ongoing key jobs/work which keeps the Forum functioning well and effective:

### 1. **Email list**

- keeping the 'internal' list up to date [Dave]
- processing bounces [Dave]
- reminding people about ensuring its used in conformity with our Guidelines [Dave]
- posting relevant updates (from the Council, plus occasional London/National info re the Friends Groups movement) [Dave]
- sending occasional 'official' Forum posts to our 'news' list [No-one at mo]

### 2. **Website** - keeping it up to date (adding minutes etc) [Deborah]

### 3. **Responding to emails to the Forum** [Dave]

### 4. **Forum materials** (for stalls etc)

- updating and copying 'campaign' flyers, map, list of groups etc [Dave]
  - distributing walking booklets (plus updating them?) [Joan and Joyce]
5. **Forum list of local Friends groups** - keeping up to date [LBH and Dave]
6. **New groups** - encouraging and supporting the development of new groups [Dave and sometimes Ceri]
7. **Forum Meetings**
- publicising in advance, and a reminder [Dave]
  - inviting Council reps to attend [Dave]
  - sending pre-meeting updates/documents to the list [Dave]
  - preparing agendas (preferably circulated in advance) [Dave]
  - bringing paper copies of key documents [Dave]
  - arriving early to set up [Dave]
  - taking minutes [Rotated, often Joan, Vicci, Quentin, Joyce etc]
  - chairing [Dave, sometimes Ceri or Clare]
  - booking the room and liaising with the Museum staff [Dave]
  - liaising with Council officers regarding or chasing up relevant Forum decisions/issues or Council matters [Dave]
8. **Haringey Community Action Network**
- being the Forum rep on the HCAN coordination group [Dave]
  - updating HCAN about us occasionally (eg our bi-monthly minutes) [Dave]
  - [Note: occasionally electing reps to other bodies eg Summit planning meetings]
9. **Forum working groups**
- Diversity and Inclusion (ensuring it meets, is minuted and reports back) [Dave and Liz]
  - Coordination.. this is a loose group of 5 or 6 reps who formerly volunteered to be part of a Forum lobbying group some years back, and then it kind of continued in order to help monitor/help with some of the above jobs/work. [Currently Ceri, Clare, Klaus, Dave, Cathy]