

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 2 November 2024

Present: Friends Groups reps: Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) - chaired, Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gdns, Paignton Pk) - minuted; Pamela Harling (Tottenham Green), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Hesketh Benoit (Ducketts, Common, White Hart Lane Rec), Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Robert How (Brunswick Park), Ben Marsh (Brunswick Park), Frances Sanders (Hornsey Church Tower), Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Pk), Thunder Raven-Stoker (Queen's Wood)

Apologies: Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Quentin Given (The Paddock), John Miles (Parkside Malvern, Haringey Rivers Forum), Emma Betts (LBH Community & Partnerships Engagement Officer), Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (LBH Zonal Team Manager)

From 11am: Council reps: nobody available

PART 1

- **Minutes** of September meeting agreed - accurate (some changes requested later via email by Chris from Priory Park) for Priory Park & for Queen's Wood)
- **Matters arising (3):**
 - **Senior Officers attendance at Forum meetings** - Cathy wrote to Simon F who replied constructively. Agreed with in principle. Dave to chase & confirm. Annabelle F (Conservation Officer) likewise - Cathy to write similar letter requesting AF come or have separate meeting with us.
 - **Bio-diversity:** Pamela had meeting with GiGL (Greenspace Info for Greater London) re London Day for Nature. Do we have a record of who is recording species & where? Tell Pamela. We need to compile a list of those in Haringey doing surveys. iRecord is best for liaising with GiGL, but many use iNaturalist as its easier. Quite a few people are recording. Needs to be site-specific over a long period of time to see patterns. People should say what they're doing & what they're using. BTO (British Trust for Ornithology), PlantNet, and Bee Conservation Society are resources. Pamela aims to send a basic questionnaire to Friends Groups asking who is doing what.
 - **Forum Inclusion/Diversity Group:** This important working group needs to meet up again. Deb C to email those who said they're interested & let people know. Thunder happy to help with mailing list.
 - **Forum Co-ordination Group:** WhatsApp set up, 10 people so far, to spread the load. Robert How to be added to Group.
 - **New Friends Groups:** - None reported. Elizabeth Place is a new play facility - We would support a group setting up there. Hesketh to reach out.
 - **Women and Girls** – Lily from the Council has set up a network to promote safer use by women and girls of green spaces. Meeting regularly and lots of people involved. All welcome to join.
 - **Spaces under threat: CREOS** (Crouch End Open Spaces) concerned that first draft of new Local Plan is out soon and that Council might try to downplay its Metropolitan Open Land (highest protection) status. Council policy from 5 years back is that all sites in the last Local Plan should have **Fields in Trust** 'in perpetuity' legal protection scheme covenants. So far only around 12 out of around 60 have been finalised by the Parks Service and Legal Dept. Dave bumped into Simon Farrow who confirmed the Council are still committed to completing this. Every site needs to keep pressing for this. **Whitewebbs Park, Enfield** is an important open space between 2 ancient woodlands. Spurs have highly-controversial plans to build all over much of it. The local Friends Group has mounted a vibrant campaign. We agreed to support [Update: Dave has done this].
 - **Growing in Haringey (GiH)** is an offshoot of Sustainable Haringey. It started 15 years ago, mainly to link up community gardens and promote food growing: They've just purchased loads of bulbs (narcissus & tulips), available to Friends Groups for free. GiH is now struggling to continue and needs new people if it is to survive. Wolves Lane are now doing some of that work, eg. Seed Protectors Group - young & enthusiastic. There are still many community gardens around Haringey, and many other people growing food. Contact Pam if interested in getting involved.

- **Green Flag Awards - Controversy:** Council policy, as enshrined in its Green Spaces Strategy, is to expand the number of Green Flag sites. Green Flag is the minimum standard for the effective maintenance and management of all such spaces, and ensures they have Management Plans, Spotlight audits, and external evaluation. However, in 2024 the Council made a unilateral decision to abandon half of its current sites (22 to 11). This is due to increasing pressures to make budget cuts due to Government underfunding of Local Authority services. However the more pressures they are under the more they need to work with their key partners – in this case the Forum. The Forum sent out a Press release, copying in all councillors. Only 1 Councillor (Independent Socialist) sent a reply.
- **London & National Reports: *National March for Clean Water*** was due to take place the day after the meeting. ***London Friends of Green Spaces Network*** – this network links the 1000 local Friends Groups around London. It continues to circulate monthly news bulletins, and organise a range of seminars and discussions promoting the work of Friends Groups. ***Good Parks for London*** Pfl is an independent charity supporting parks. They do an audit and Report every couple of years to evaluate the state of green spaces in every borough, and to showcase good practice. Their recent Report praised Haringey's collaborative approach to the development of its new 15year strategy, and added a quote from Dave (for the Forum) saying: *'Haringey's local green spaces are vital to every community. The 65 local green space friends groups and their many volunteers throughout the borough work hard to champion and improve such spaces. To achieve this, our network is committed to working alongside and in partnership with the Council's Parks & Leisure Service and their dedicated staff, most recently around strategic policies, communications, funding bids, and promoting community engagement and activities.'* [See pp 26-27] <https://parksforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Good-Parks-for-London-2024-Collaborative-Solutions-updated-Dec24.pdf> The ***National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces***, the umbrella organisation for the Friends Groups movement throughout the UK, was due to hold its AGM on Nov 16th. Dave to attend for the Haringey Forum. [Update: There were reps from various Forums, representing around 2500 local groups].
- **AOB. *Finsbury Park*** - The Friends Group have proposed to the Council a way forward in the battle to protect the park and its users from the controversial mass commercial events there which dominate every summer. They have proposed the events charge attendees more, but happen only every other year. We agreed to back this compromise solution. ***Friends Groups' internal issues*** – how do groups deal with internal disputes or challenging individual behaviour within their group? Do some groups have specific policies, procedures or guidelines about this? It was suggested this could be raised on our internal list.

PART 2

We noted our disappointment that no officers from the Council had been able to attend.

■ **Local Group Reports**

- **Chestnuts Park:** Want to progress their Management Plan. Community Centre needs lease to be sorted as they have less access to funding. Friends meet once per month. Council removed one of best bits of play equipment without consultation – seems they are lacking enough maintenance budget, and therefore will remove rather than fix equipment. This is a serious problem for every site. The Friends want to work with TCV on their Winter Hedge. Lily's efforts to promote activities are noted and praised. Cricket people want an astroturf strip & make it a cricket hub as very little opportunities in East of borough – it was suggested to talk to Clasford who manages the Lordship Rec enclosed sports field.
- **Brunswick Park:** A very small group of volunteers, with lots of supporters on their WhatsApp group. Transport for London need access to put in lifts for access for building works. Cut down 2 trees & didn't tell the group, so Council need to improve their communications. Need contact with Conservation Officer.
- **Coldfall Woods:** Have been asked to do Woodland Survey by Conservation Officer. Bird & bat survey done – not sure what will happen to the data. No Spotlight walk recently. Organised a "Beat the Bounds" events to celebrate the site's boundaries. A few years ago lost a small part of park as the Council didn't contest (apparently because deemed 'too expensive'). So want to ensure can't happen again. Issues include the number of dogs that can be walked: 4 or 6 if professional. It should be in the agreed Green Spaces Strategy. Where is the final Strategy document on Council website? People need to be able to find the right version.

- **Queen's Wood:** Lots of volunteering sessions. Looking for someone to lead an insect survey. They have done a number of species surveys and will liaise with Pamela re borough-wide collation. Responding to fly-tipping. Buggy which used to collect bins within park is now re-assigned to Finsbury Park (so now patchy emptying of bins). Need to clear Frog Pond of pennywort.
- **Hornsey Church Tower:** Foundation for new external storage space is due to be installed. Open day on London Open House Day – expect most visitors to be local. Garden of Remembrance has its 75th anniversary – need funds for improvements. Planning a xmas carol service, which attracts the biggest congregation of the year. Green Flag mystery shopper noted some points needing improvement, eg bins. Litter pick twice per month - Issue as right by school so need extra bins. Several years ago, Alex F promised coppicing of trees, but it didn't go ahead - one fell over, so friends cut it down.
- **Parkland Walk:** Wildlife trail managed & nurtured over several years now. Continues to go well. Trees & hedgerow whips ordered. Couple of tree losses. One branch came down & narrowly avoided a person with a buggy. Some trees too big & complaints from neighbours. Need new trees for greenery, and deadhedges (TCV) + need to control brambles in open areas. Problem of adjacent residents' encroachment into the Walk, stealing public land. Friends have been trying for years to get the key officers in Parks, Legal and Property to coordinate effective action. Nothing currently being done and Council is not engaging. They should be acting on it. Conservation Officer cancelled last couple of meetings with sub-group. Need some practical ideas/guidance for useful things to do with volunteers - things that are useful for nature within the context of expert advice. Too much form filling. Need more positive and in-person engagement. Stanhope Road bridge repair works - need input from Council in conjunction with contractors.
- **Tottenham Cemetery:** A challenging site, 50 yr lease to Dignitas. Needs to be tidy, but is also important for conservation. Friends want more bio-diverse areas – Council not properly overseeing the contract. Listed historical feature in cemetery (underpass) is fenced off. Historic Monuments England been to see & horrified. Lake needs attention. Friends still meeting every month. Had hoped to organise a Family Day at the chapel. A spate of arson is being regularly reported.
- **Manchester Gardens:** Regular monthly litter pick. Terrible problems with anti-social behaviour (litter, late night noise, fires etc). Multi-agency approach by local residents' association and others. Problem is much reduced when gates locked, but council have no resource for this & will not permit local residents to do it. Stakes (holding chicken wire stable) stolen from leaf composter, but Parks Service gardener has helped out with rigid material.
- **Paignton Park:** Regular monthly litter pick. Weeding, bulb & shrub planting. Outstanding problems still not sorted: playground gates, hazardous missing bricks in steps to community square, wobbly table tennis table (regular group of people no longer come), dangerous divots in central grassy area. Playground is in a shocking state. Parents are unhappy. Chris Poore, Zonal Officer, has been off sick for most of the last 6 months. **He** says new playground possible in the future, but would require Friends/residents' association to fundraise.
- **Ducketts Common:** A key focus is the MUGA/young people. Easter Programme commissioned by the Council - good numbers and volunteers. Conservation area poles need some explanation. QR codes? Access to Sport - facelift due to MUGA. Need Glynis to come along for next meeting. Looking dismal. Can't move forward without Council. Friends vibrant 10 years ago. Got going again – currently core of 4 people.
- **White Hart Lane:** Unclear what is happening at this site. Recent tree planting. Ann S set up a CIC group some time ago. Hesketh to investigate.
- **Lordship Rec:** The local ParkRun celebrated their 2nd anniversary. Also there's now a weekly JuniorRun. 1,000 attended the Friends annual Tottenham Flower and Produce Festival – more groups and activities involved this year. The Friends' Working Groups organise around 12 volunteer sessions per month. The Woodland Group partnered with a Somali Faith Group. Maintenance in the Rec is getting worse & worse. Volunteers doing almost all of the nature conservation work. Lordship Hub continues to be a vibrant community base - Loads of activities there including a Benjamin Zephaniah event celebrating his Tottenham links.

- **Haringey Rivers Forum:** Written report circulated. Lots of issues re watercourses and SUDS etc around the borough.
- **Sits of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS):** All local sites reviewed a couple of years ago. Report drafted a year ago but still not published. Dave attended a London-wide meeting (organised for Friends Groups by the London Wildlife Trust) to improve the process for identifying and reviewing SINCS.
- **Staffing Update:** new person recruited as Head of Parks/Operations. Simon Farrow is Head of Leisure and now also Planning.
- **Bylaws review:** Complicated, statutory process now underway in Haringey. Will include dogs, e-bikes. We are awaiting further detail.
- **Rough camping in parks:** Is increasing. StreetLink need to be engaged.