

London Friends of Green Spaces Network

Zoom general meeting on Monday 20th July 2020

Attending: 28 reps from Friends Groups, Borough Forums, and London and National Organisations. Dave Morris (Lordship Rec, and Haringey Forum – LFGN Chair), Alice Roberts (Campaign to Protect Rural England [London] and Hackney Downs), Laura Collins (LFGN/GoParks/Figge's Marsh), Jean Ettridge (Tooting Common), Alona Sheridan (Mayow Park, and Lewisham Forum), Julia and Richard (Wandsworth Common, and Wandsworth Forum); Ray Liffen (Q. Mary's Pk, Sutton + Green Belt Council), Rob (FORCE, Richmond & Hounslow); Roger Chapman (Gherry Tree Wood, and Barnet Green Spaces Forum); Monika (Sydenham Wells, and Lewsiham Forum), Pat Gross (Wandsworth Park, and Wandsworth Forum), Adrian (Lloyd Park, Waltham Forest) – *took notes*, Symon (Hilly Fields Park, and Lewisham Forum), Simon Walton (Hyde Park and Kensington Gdns), Catriona Sinclair (Burgess Park and Southwark Forum), Chris Norris (Ruskin Park and Nesta), John (Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets), Richard Desmond (Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets), Vanessa Hampton, Ed Stannard (SWEN), Jasia Warren (Dog Kennel Hill), Rowena (Fulham); ? (Coronation Gardens); Kerry (Bromley); **And:** Helen Monger (London Parks and Gardens Trust), Tony Leach (Parks for London), Tim (GoParks)

1. **Minutes of June 8th meeting. Accepted as true record.** <http://www.lfgn.org.uk/minutes-of-8th-june-2020-meeting/>

2. **Welcome** – Dave welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the Agenda would be about how Park Manager's are coping and what the contribution of Friends' Groups is.

3. **Updates from local groups around London**

- a. **Wandsworth Common** - Julia explained the parks were being used far more, creating major litter problems and toilets were an issue. It was proving hard to coordinate the various organisations responsible. Posters had been put up trying to get people to abide by the rules. An anti-litter campaign, in conjunction with Love Parks, was underway. They created a huge pile of litter to take a photo and make the point and are campaigning for toilets to open.
- b. **Wandsworth Park and Forum** – Pat Gross reported signage had been poor but was improving, financial concerns for the future. Reduced maintenance with only the grass being cut and litter removed. Volunteers are now looking after the gardens. Forum ticking over.
- c. **Tooting Common** – Jean reported the contract had been amended and there would be no maintenance of the football pitches and there was a lack of finance.
- d. **Victoria Park** – Richard reported the park had briefly been closed a couple of months back but re-opened with 6 Rangers. Rubbish has doubled and staff have been redeployed to get the park back to normal. The Friends Group presented each member of staff with a mug to thank them for their efforts.
- e. **FORCE Richmond** – Richmond and Hounslow had provided extra staff, and volunteers were working with TCV. It had been a positive experience and litter clearing and normal work underway. Monitoring the numbers using the open space – huge increase.
- f. **Hackney Downs** – Alice reported that the council was trying hard but litter a major problem and swimming in the River Lea a major issue. There were variations in policy and toilets. Cycling encouraged but issues with protocols.

- g. **Lambeth** – Chris reported that a good job had been done by Council. Volunteers doing maintenance work, but paddling pools kept closed. Extra volunteers have come forward as some on furlough.
- h. **Lewisham** – Monika said toilets were only open for a short time creating a major issue as bushes were being used. Symon added there were unlawful gatherings and police were slow to respond.
- i. **Fulham** – Rowena reiterated the toilet was still an issue despite the toilets being open as people were nervous about using them. The park was badly littered and e-scooters and joggers an issue.
- j. **Hyde Park** – Simon reported 3000 tons of litter costing £1.7m was cleared in a year. A publicity campaign “Be Kind to Your Park” was underway.
- k. **Ealing** - Vanessa said the Senior Ranger had been locked down. Volunteers had restarted with Wormhole up to 30 people. 500 of the public have helped with litter picking collecting 900 bags of litter around the Borough.
- l. **Haringey** – Dave gave a report from Haringey saying parks service was already understaffed before covid, and staff had worked their socks off to cope. The service also was due to lose an extra £700k from loss of commercial revenue. The Forum’s 2500-strong petition calling on the council to funnel more resources into the parks service succeeded in gaining a full Council debate on 13th July. All Councillors backed the Forum and all called on the Government to put substantial extra resources into local Council services. Litter and toilets an issue. Cafes beginning to re-open. Paddling pools not opening due to safety and staffing issues. In Lordship Rec (his park) a Black Lives Matter kids march/protest had been supported by the Friends, with 2000 attending. Also, developing a coordinated cycling strategy.
- m. **Barnet** – Roger said the Forum was continuing to coordinate groups. Toilets were closed and cycling was an issue - protocols were needed. His park’s community orchard is being watered by volunteers.
- n. **Dog Kennel Hill** – Jasia said there were many more people using the area and have found an oasis in the AstroTurf. It was good to see the extra use.

4. Campaigning News –

- a. New Southwark Football Stadium – 4000 capacity. Controversially proposed for Metropolitan Open Land. Planning Application can be viewed.
- b. Wandsworth Park - playground issues
- c. Jean had been approached for planting a small forest of 600 trees on a tennis court site.

5. Cycling Statement – Alice will talk to London cycling organisations to develop parks usage protocols and establish good relations with the LFGN and Friends Groups.

6. London and National Issues

- a. **Our Patch** – thanks were made to Alice and Helen for Our Patch monthly LFGN bulletins.
- b. **Parks for London** – Tony Leach explained a survey of the Olympic Park had shown more young people were using local parks and their mental health was benefiting. Pfl continued to work with local Council parks services. A protocol was being developed so that large illegal raves could be prevented.
- c. **Go Parks** – Tim explained 4,000 green spaces had been logged on the map. All 700+ Friends Groups are being urged to register for their own site. Brings together info re community activity, features, history and biodiversity.
- d. **London Green Belt** – Working towards becoming a Charity. Green belt facing some real threats from developers and planning policy shifts.

- e. **www.parkscommunity.org.uk** – specialist site spreading community empowerment, run by and for Friends Groups, is going well. ‘Better Friends’ checker is to be trialed soon, then go live so every group in the UK can check online how they are doing re membership, set up, activities, relations with management, partnerships, plans etc etc.
- f. **London Parks Events research** - 70 Friends Groups responded to Westminster university survey, and the document is now online. Concludes that community events are generally v popular, but large commercial events often not so. Friends Groups need to be seen as partners and their needs and views taken on board.
- g. **London Gardens Trust** – name changed to drop ‘Parks and’. Finance is an issue as the Open Gardens annual event had not been able to be run due to the pandemic. Victoria Tower Gardens – a legal challenge to development in this park is being taken to the Supreme Court.
- h. **National Park City** – 1st anniversary of launch. ‘100 Voices’ 3 day online event being promoted.
- i. **National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces** – Speaking out at a range of national liaison meetings in last couple of months for the extra resources urgently needed for parks. Covid a massive extra load. NFPGS itself (of which we are the London section) is seeking to ensure the Friends Groups movement gets the recognition and support infrastructure it urgently needs and deserves – including proper funding for the NFPGS to promote and support peer to peer learning and coordination throughout the UK.
- j. **Parks Alliance** - to merge with Landscape Institute. Produced a ‘Make Parks Count’ document. A new Parks and Green Spaces Network is being created promoting coordination for the sector. Dave is involved as NFPGS Chair. Dave calling for it to become the effective advocacy and lobby force that our sector desperately needs... everyone seems to agree that’s needed, but currently too much caution re speaking out. Meanwhile the funding crisis for our parks gets ever worse.
- k. **National Trust Report** – calling on the Govt to ensure an extra £5.5bn needed to achieve the ‘levelling up’ of all parks to a decent standard.

7. **NEXT MEETING** – it was agreed another Zoom LFGN meeting should be held on the **14th September**.