



# London Friends of Green Spaces Network

## MIDWINTER SHOWCASE SEMINAR / MEETING – on zoom

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**Attending: Friends Groups/Forums reps:** Dave Morris, LFGN Chair (Lordship Rec, Haringey Forum); Adrian Stannard, Note Taker (Lloyd Park, Waltham Forest); Alice Roberts (Hackney Downs, Hackney + CPRE); Alona Sheridan (Mayo Park, Lewisham Forum); Suzanne (Tenderden Park, Brent Parks Forum); Symon (Hilly Fields Park, Lewisham Forum); Larry Herbert (Keston Common, Bromley Forum); Antonia Savvides (Pinner Village Gardens, Harrow); Laura Collins (Figge's Marsh, Merton Forum + Go Parks and LFGN); Peter Woodward (Chislehurst Common, Bromley); Sharon (Ham Lands, Richmond); Simon Walton (Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, Westminster); Mary-Jane Jeanes (Merton); Roger Chapman (Cherry Tree Woods, Barnet Forum); Rob Crane (River Crane, Ealing); Miriam Ashwell (Caledonian Park, Islington Forum); Roger Jones (West Ham Park); Elsa (Student @ Bartlet School of Planning); Mary Wayne (Yeading Walk, Harrow), Julia (Wandsworth Common, Wandsworth Forum), Robin Brown (Hayes Canal, Ealing); David March (Broomfield Park, Enfield Consortium). **Also:** Tony Leach (Parks for London); Elliot Newton (Kingston Council); Ed Stannard (Parks for London); Rosemarie Waklin (London Gardens Trust); Daija Angeli (Habitats and Heritage, formerly SW London Environmental Network).

**1. INTRODUCTIONS** - Each attendee introduced themselves.

**2. MINUTES** of November 2021 - were agreed.

### **3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**3.1.** Last year's report "**A More Natural Capital**" was created by a coalition of London organisations including the LFGN to promote environmental issues and policies at London elections. The coalition recently produced a 'First 100 Days' review of the Mayor's practices, and is aiming to encouraging lobbying of candidates at the Local Elections in May 2022. Dave and Tony to re-draft their usual **joint LFGN/PfL lobbying appeal** to Friends Groups. It was noted that the **Barnet Green Spaces Network was producing its own local parks manifesto** for the elections, which others could emulate.

### **4. NEW BOROUGH FORUMS**

**4.1.** Elliot reported that a new Greenspace Friends Forum had been set up in **Kingston** with 15 groups.

**4.2.** **Bexley** was considering setting up a Forum.

**4.3.** Roger reported that in **Newham** groups were beginning to connect.

### **5. LFGN WORKING GROUPS**

**5.1. Biodiversity** – active in summer. Will call a meeting early 2022 to review progress and further activities.

**5.2. Events in Parks** – New group. Very well attended. Concerned to ensure that events are appropriate, and that inappropriate large and/or commercial events are resisted. Plan to meet again in early 2022.

**5.3. Planning issues/policies** – Roger sent in an LFGN response to the Mayor's 'Urban Green Infrastructure' consultation. Aim to provide general (rather than specific) advice and signposting for local greenspace campaigns

### **6. LONDON AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

**6.1. National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces** – Dave reported:

6.1.1. A newly-launched '**Better Friends**' NFPGS report - a detailed nuts-and-bolts analysis of the activities, character, needs and influence of Friends Groups: <https://natfedparks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NFPGS-PCUK-Report.pdf> All groups are urged to read this important and pathbreaking report about our movement!

6.1.2. A new '**Benefits of Friends Groups**' Infographic showcasing the immense value Friends Groups bring to green spaces and local communities: <https://natfedparks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NFPGS-PCUK-Benefits-of-Friends-Groups-Infographic-2.pdf>

- 6.1.3. The recent upgrade of the NFPGS's [www.parkscommunity.org.uk](http://www.parkscommunity.org.uk) online presence and support for grassroots activists
- 6.1.4. The new '**State of UK Public Parks**' report (by the Association for Public service Excellence) on the effects, implications and challenges due to the deepening financial and staffing crisis being imposed by years of Government cuts to Local Authority budgets for local public services: <https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/state-of-uk-public-parks-2021/#> It includes stats on the continued growth of the Friends Groups movement, and references to the NFPGS.

## 6.2. Parks for London –

- 6.2.4 Tony reported about the public launch of the '**Good Parks for London**' Report, the Annual Audit of park services for all Local Authorities.
- 6.2.5 It was also noted that Council stats calculated there are now at least **890 Friends Groups** across London.
- 6.2.6 Ed will call a meeting of **London-wide community-facing greenspace organisations** to share news and improve liaison. Dave to discuss with Tony and Ed.

**6.3. Go Parks** – Laura reported that **further funding** for the project was being applied for, including so she can continue her work producing the excellent monthly **Our Patch** bulletins for the LFGN. As always, all groups are urged to **register for GoParks** and have their own page on the map. **Borough-wide promotions** in a number of boroughs will start again in 2022.

**6.4. London Gardens Trust** – Since the last LFGN meeting at least 4 Friends Groups have contributed to the LGT historical **Inventory** of Londons Parks and Gardens. Last year's **Open Gardens** event was a success despite being online - this year it is hoped to return to outdoor openings.

## 7. PRESENTATION – Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE)

- 7.1. Rob Gray, Chair of FORCE which was set up in 2003, gave a fascinating insight into the issues, challenges and successes regarding their efforts to protect and promote the River Crane and its myriad of adjacent green spaces.
- 7.2. The river rises in Harrow and flows to the Thames at Isleworth.
- 7.3. FORCE has worked on positive alternatives to inappropriate developments and threats, has championed and lobbied for improvements to the whole length of the river, and tried to answer the question of how does a river survive and contribute value in an Urban Environment.
- 7.4. The group now has 750 members including 50 supportive groups along the Crane corridor. Initial success stopped 5 green spaces being built on.
- 7.5. The value of an open space is its future value to all.
- 7.6. 10 new open spaces have been created for the community.
- 7.7. Monthly volunteer days with up to 45 volunteers.
- 7.8. FORCE are developing partnerships with TCV who do 3 events a month and also a Green Gym each week.
- 7.9. FORCE have developed many useful partnerships and feel they now have real influence with ecision makers.

## 8. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 8.1. 2 surveys a year are taken to check diversity and how many users of the open space. This is powerful info.. Analysis of the data shows some spaces are perceived as not safe eg. more males than females. It is also shocking how many people living adjacent to the open spaces are unaware of them.
- 8.2. How to get MPs to legislate to stop the dumping of sewerage in the rivers. 2011 all wild life was wiped out because of pollution. 'Citizen Crane' partnership collected data for a Court Case and Thames Water are now spending £1.5m cleaning up the river.
- 8.3. How do you get people out monitoring? Start somewhere eg. Bats etc. and it is surprising who may come forward.
- 8.4. Conservation Projects such as water voles attracts attention. People are fascinated by nature in their back yard. 'Nature Heroes' includes kids and parents which widens interest.

## 9. 'JUST-A-MINUTE' FRIENDS' GROUPS SUCCESS STORIES FROM 2021

- 9.1. **Broomfield Park, Enfield** – Raised £13k in 2 weeks to purchase and plant 100 new trees. Have 80 volunteers, and are working with local school, teenagers excluded from school, local Duke of Edinburgh award scheme participants, and adults with mental health issues..
- 9.2. **Wandsworth Common, Wandsworth** – Group is 3 yrs old, and now have 350 members. In last 12 months have raised £12k for tree planting, won an 'In Bloom' award, installed a drinking fountain and seen their public toilets refurbished. They also published a history pamphlet, organised 'walks and talks', outreached to local school, and reinvigorated interest in their bowling green.
- 9.3. **Brent Forum** – Contributed to local history project on libraries. Have been promoting to their local groups the LGT historical Inventory and also biodiversity issues.
- 9.4. **Islington Forum** – Have continued to meet regularly online and recently face-to-face (last month 15-20 groups attended). Some new groups have joined. Organised a butterfly conservation talk. The Healthy Parks project promoting healthy activities in parks has gone really well and is to be extended. Council have agreed to gradually replace petrol-driven leaf blowers with battery versions. Caledonian Rd Park amphitheatre project has been completed.
- 9.5. **Figges Marsh, Merton** – Recently 35 volunteers planted 700 bulbs, and continue to do fortnightly weeding.
- 9.6. **Yeading Walk, Harrow** – Started last year. 25 volunteers helped with a clean up of the river running through their small open space. Held a successful adopt-a-tree day, and a COP26 climate action event with local children chalking messages all over the park. Got Japanese knotweed sprayed.
- 9.7. **Lewisham Forum** – Maintained positive relations with Council and Glendale contractors. The Forum is negotiating over the text of a Council-proposed Partnership Charter for Friends Groups. Many Green Flag Awards in 2021.
- 9.8. **Lloyd Park, Waltham Forest** – Successful annual xmas singalong/mince-pies/fundraising public event. This year raised £94 cash and £348 through an izettle card reader (recommended!)
- 9.9. **West Ham Park, Newham** – In the autumn they reinstated their regular annual events, including: 2 evening batwalks (over 120 on each), 'Giant Leafpile' event (over 200 attended, many helping to rake up leaves and then all watched as kids leaped into the pile!), and 250 attended 'Park In The Dark' torchlit procession to the bandstand for hot chocolate.

## 10. NEXT GENERAL MEETING: 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022