

Tree Planting and maintenance by Friends Groups

View recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u58F2UpdSeA&feature=youtu.be>

List of Attendees:

SPEAKERS: Richard Fox (Friends of Wandsworth Common, Wandsworth) and Annie Hart (Friends of Hervey Road Recreation Ground, Greenwich) **Other Friends Groups/Forums/Organisations reps:** Dave – *LFGN Chair* (Lordship Rec, Haringey), Alona Sheridan – *LFGN Biodiversity* (Mayow Park, Lewisham) Laura – *LFGN Support* (Go Parks, and Figge's Marsh, Merton), Peter (Chislehurst Common, Bromley) Simon Braidman (Stanmore Common, Harrow), Roger – *LFGN Climate Resilience WG* (Friends of West Ham Park, Newham), Simon (Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens), Richard (Cannizaro Park, Merton), Anna (Manor Park, Sutton), Adrian – *LFGN Website* (Lloyds Park, Waltham Forest), Tricia (Epping Forest, Redbridge), Jonathon (Burgess Park, Southwark), Mary Jane (Merton Tree Wardens), Liz (Railway Fields, Haringey), Elizabeth (Wandsworth Common, Wandsworth), John Poole (Woodcock Park, Brent), Chris (Horn Park, Greenwich), Millie (Cator and Alexandra Parks, Bromley), Sandy (Hadley Common, Barnet), Richard (Priory Gardens, Bromley), Candy (Hermit Road Recreation Ground, Newham), Roger (Finchley Way, Barnet), Naomi (London Urban Green Community Garden -borough not noted?), Open Space, Tina (Friends of Doctor Harold Moody and Consort Parks –Southwark), Helen Monger (Dir London Parks and Gardens Trust), Louisa (Cricklewood, Brent), Helen (John Innes Park and Recreation Ground), John White (Mile End), Lisa, H. Dexter (Wandsworth), Gareth (?), Ernest (Garthorne Rd Nature Reserve, Merton), Roger (Cherry Tree Woods, Barnet), Ed (Parks for London)

Laura facilitated the meeting and asked everyone to briefly introduce which group and borough they were part of.

TALK BY RICHARD FROM FRIENDS OF WANDSWORTH COMMON

There has been a tree planting scheme in Wandsworth Common to celebrate the legal protection of the site by the passing of the Wandsworth Common Act of 1872, 150 years ago.

The original plan was to plant 150 trees but discussions between the Friends of Wandsworth Common and Enable (the not-for-profit company outsourced by Wandsworth Council to run its leisure and sports profile) showed that this was too ambitious a target. Instead a target of 50 larger trees were to be planted all across the Common. In addition there was to be planted a mini-forest of tightly packed smaller trees following the Japanese practise of Miyawaki planting. The high density planting creates quick growing vertical growth creating the desired understorey below larger trees. Such planting helps trap Carbon and block pollution plus gives nesting sites for birds. New hedging and new shrubs were planted and native Wildflowers sown.

The aim of all the planting was to increase the amount of tree canopy growth, to create a structured woodland with canopy and understorey, to use the hedge planting to absorb road traffic pollution, and to link habitats and increase biodiversity.

The trees were planted by 2 guys from Enable and Richard was very impressed by how hard they worked – they plant all the trees (700 this year) planted by Wandsworth Council and maintain them over their 1st year after planting.

Planting started in December 2020. Trees were donated by individuals and community groups, all the new planting was native.

The mini-forest covered an area of 100 square meters and formed the understorey to 4 larger new disease -resistant Elms, the food for the White-letter Hairstreak Butterfly.

The whip planting included species such as Buckthorn – the food plant of the Brimstone Butterfly, Blackthorn, the food plant for the Black Hairstreak Butterfly and the Brown Hairstreak Butterfly (the latter is spreading from its core

populations). Dog Rose and Guelder Rose also formed part of the new planting and their open flowers will provide nectar for lots of insects.

To protect the new mini-forest it was fenced off and an interpretation sign put in. Besides the woody planting the area was also sown with a range of woodland and woodland edge wildflowers such as Agrimony, Broom, Lesser Celandine, Cow Parsley and Foxglove.

The hedge planting was partly an anti-pollution measure as roads bisect and border the Common. It also provides wildlife habitat and helps to link areas to create wildlife corridors. The new planting includes Gorse an excellent wildlife plant with high level of structural diversity and protection for nesting birds. Gorse is one of the foodplants of the Green Hairstreak Butterfly as is Broom.

The cost of the Scheme is £15,000 which covers the material, planting and most importantly the maintenance of the planting.

The Friends were due to raise £5000 and Enable kindly contributed £10,000. The Friends actually raised £12,000 thanks to the generosity of the 700 members of the Friends group.

This has enabled the scheme to grow - with an extra 50 trees in the second year. A slide was shown of a group of Silver Birch trees planted 20 years ago showing how quickly trees can provide a woodland landscape and habitat. Associated with the planting has been community events such as tree walks and as an unexpected bonus the involvement of a local artist, Holly Frean, who has designed tree leaf themed artwork which is sold and some of the money has come back to the project.

The Whips came free from the give-away tree pack schemes from the Woodland Trust.

The major issue with the project has been watering. In Wandsworth, trees planted by the Council are watered every 2 weeks by Enable. A decision by Wandsworth and Enable to include the new larger trees in the overall borough-wide watering programme has been crucial to tree survival and a huge thanks goes to them.

During the drought watering was increased to every week and although watering is normally restricted to 1 year old trees, it was kindly extended by Enable to include 2 year old trees.

The whips do not get officially watered but they were watered by volunteers twice during the drought period and there was extra watering on top of that. Whip survival was estimated to be 85%.

Trees are monitored and tree planting tranches are dated by painting the tops of the support stakes.

ANNIE'S TALK ON TREE PLANTING AT HERVEY ROAD RECREATION GROUND

Hervey Road Sports Ground is in Blackheath in the London Borough of Greenwich. The sports ground is the home of Blackheath Rugby Club which has a 30 year lease with the local Council.

The Friends of Hervey Road is a local community group which have taken on the management of the perimeter of the site.

The group have taken advantage of the Woodland Trust free tree pack give-aways and focused on fruiting trees such as Dog Rose, Dogwood, Hazel, Blackthorn, Hawthorn. A total of 50 trees were ordered for the 2020 planting.

To prepare the ground the area was close mown. The planting followed advice from the Woodland Trust on tree planting.

Planting was relatively easy it was the aftercare which was much more difficult. Around each tree a 1m wide bare earth patch had been created to reduce resource competition weeding out deep rooted species such as Bramble,

Buddleia and Couch Grass. Keeping these areas weed-free proved hard work and was done by Annie and her son. There is a continual need for volunteer weeding.

In 2021 another 30 whips were planted, a strimmer was used to cut down grass between the existing trees.

There were an additional 6 shrubs planted by the entrance gate to the sports ground and another 4 trees for the car park, the trees came from Ashridge Nurseries and monies came from donations and fund raising during Park Fest Events

Another 8 trees were donated by Westland Woodlands as part of the National Queens Canopy planting scheme.

Watering also was problematic and again Annie and her son did this too. The Rugby Club House provided the water and long hoses. Watering took 4 hours every other day in the drought. The planting close to the gate was watered using Watering cans.

New waterpoints on the Rugby Club Clubhouse now give an external water supply.

There was also someone who was (unfortunately) taking the tree protection spirals off the trees.

Not all tree species did well some species suffered badly in the drought. Grey Willow is very vulnerable as its water demand is high and most died. Hawthorn did well and future planting will include more Hawthorn.

COMMENTS ON THE PRESENTATIONS

Queens Canopy Scheme <https://queensgreencanopy.org>
- National planting scheme where one registers tree planting.

John Poole- used a 100m hose from his back garden to water new trees. Limbs falling off Horse Chestnut trees in Woodcock Park, tree was removed, woodchip kept and used.

It is recommended to keep at least 60cm bare soil around a new tree to remove competition when the tree is under 2 years old.

Mulching very important to retain moisture and hence reduces the watering- 20cm depth minimum of woodchip which gives also interesting fungi. In some schemes deep mulching has avoided watering all together but a drought means watering of new planting has been essential, especially for woodland trust donated whips which have smaller root systems. Tree surgeons have excess woodchip which they will happily give away. Parks departments when asked will often supply woodchip. Woodchip in storage needs to be kept dry.

Dave – Friends of Lordship Rec recently had a 5-year agreement with Trees for Cities where corporate volunteers come in and help maintain trees. This can be useful but takes a lot of project preparation (by the Friends, who got some pay for this) and supervision (by TfC).

Water companies need to provide support for watering. There is a lack of communication with them. Affinity Water are considering providing support as part of their community programme.

If a park does not have its own water supply it can do something such as taking water off adjacent or internal buildings. Also check the history of the park and its past use, some parks had internal buildings now gone or derelict which did have a water supply.

Use of stakes to mark out whips in hedge planting.

The matching of trees to soil type.

One site planted fruit trees in poor soil with a lot of hard core. The trees were fine but do not fruit. Are the trees self pollinating or cross-pollinating. If they are cross pollinating it may be a lack of insects and the provision of more

nectar and pollen plus bee banks or hotels may help with this. Also trees may not fruit until 3 or more years. Fruit trees in poor soil may need feeding with manure so that they thrive and have energy/nutrients to spare to produce flower buds.

Groundwork gives grants for tree planting. Information has to be provided on who is involved in the planting scheme. There is a joint Groundwork/GLA grant called Grow Back Better and 20% of the grant is for a 3-year tree watering programme.

Holly hedges quite drought resistant

Serious problem with Ash Dieback a lot of trees have been removed. Note from Simon: Sickly Ash does not necessarily mean a dying Ash, so try to keep it standing (whilst ensuring safety is paramount). Disease-resistant Ash is being developed.

Haringey TCV at Railway Fields run tree planting and maintenance workshops. There is a tree festival on site on December 3rd <https://www.tcv.org.uk/london/haringey/>

Trees under threat at St. Anne's Hospital <https://www.facebook.com/StAnnesGreenSpaces> from re-development of the Hospital. There is a petition on the Facebook page.

Very important is to check that your tree planting does not destroy existing wildlife habitat such as meadowland or wet grassland or acid grassland. Tree planting should be on recreational grassland ideally. Also if one wants to regenerate woodland and create glades and rides it may be better to fell young, vigorous healthy trees with good root systems/mycorrhizal connections than plant new ones. The felling creates new dead wood habitat opens up woodlands to light, encouraging a good ground flora. Also tree invasion onto high quality wildlife rich grassland should be combated by removing new saplings, but scrub (young trees) on grassland in limited quantities is useful habitat.

Pinner Recreation Ground Woodmeadow project doing well with good whip survival (watered but no bare soil or mulching). The success has been the appearance of grassland invertebrates such as Long-winged Conehead and the caterpillar of Common Wainscot Moth. The wildflowers are developing and additional planting has added lots of Common Sorrel grown from seed to support Small Copper Butterfly.

Where certain species are lacking it may be good to create a new glade and plant things like Hazel and Willows. It may be necessary to protect the new planting especially from deer and this can be done with fencing. One site has used Willow wattle fencing to do this.

Some Councils have tree policies but they vary in length and quality.

There is an important new butterfly conservation scheme being brought out next year. Check the website <https://butterfly-conservation.org> for when the scheme comes on line.

Appreciation of the seasons, weather and climate change is very important. This month sees the launch of a new weather station and weather exhibition/event in Lordship Rec. This is to celebrate the work of Tottenham resident Luke Howard, the man who transformed weather prediction by classifying clouds by shape and height. He was born on 28.11.1772, 250 years ago. Info: www.tottenhamclouds.org.uk

Dave thanked all the attendees and their groups for all the work they put in. He encouraged all to link up with other groups in their borough to share news and good practice – via existing local Forums, or by creating new ones in boroughs which unfortunately don't yet have one.

Laura explained that the LFGN has an alternating schedule of different bi-monthly meetings for Friends Groups and supporters (Showcase / General / Coordination), and a special end-of-year Get Together on Mon 12 Dec, 5.30 at 70 Cowcross Street.