



London Friends of Green Spaces Network Coordination Meeting - 3rd April 2023

ATTENDANCE 16 Friends Group and Forum reps from: Haringey, Waltham Forest, Barnet, Lambeth, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Newham, Lewisham, Hounslow + London Gardens Trust. **Apols** incl Merton and Islington Forums

Chair: Dave Morris **Minutes:** Adrian Stannard

1. **WELCOME** – Dave welcomed everyone and outlined the agenda for the meeting. He reported that there were a reported 926 Friends' Groups and around 20 Friends Forums in London and encouraged groups to set up more Borough Forums. The LFGN had 6 Working Groups and held regular meetings alternating between General, Coordination and Showcase meetings.
2. **THE BIG ONE** – A Friends rep present explained that a combination of various groups, coordinated by Extinction Rebellion, have planned a huge mobilisation around Parliament Square, 21st to 24th April, to call for immediate and effective action to reverse the worsening global climate crisis. It will include workshops, pickets, marches and discussions. Over 20k people have signed up to it. LFGN agreed to publicise.
3. **UPDATES**
 - a. LFGN had held a successful (postponed) **Christmas Social** in January at Cowcross Street with 25 reps attending. Presentations about local groups' successes were given and a Parks Quiz held.
 - b. **A LFGN Biodiversity Working Group meeting about Butterflies** explained how to encourage butterflies into parks. Wild flower meadows, shelters, drought resisting plants and plants attractive to butterflies were explored.
 - c. At the last LFGN General Meeting a rep from **Make Space for Girls** explained the barriers to teenage girls and young women using parks. It was felt many park activities and facilities (eg MUGAs, skate areas, sports pitches) are mainly male-orientated and dominated and put females off visiting them. It was suggested informal seating be installed and more thought given to encouraging females to make use of parks which are for everyone. Groups shared their experiences and views.
 - d. We recently organised a **special seminar to promote the use of iNaturalist**, an App for recording wildlife in parks. City Nature Challenge will be held at the end of April and will use iNaturalist to record nature. It is a very user-friendly App. Officers from Haringey Parks Service and TCV did the presentations.
4. **BOROUGH FORUMS** – Dave and Laura are encouraging the development of new and existing Forums.
 - a. **Barnet** – Are talking to the new Cllrs about progress on implementing the Friends Forum's Greenspace Manifesto which they had agreed to support during recent elections. The Forum meets regularly and is creating a new website.
 - b. **Brent** – A new parks management company Continental Landscapes has taken over the £2m pa contract. The Forum is working closely with Brent Parks Service. Local schools are involved with iNaturalist and are joining the City Nature Challenge. The Forum is supporting other groups to manage the Welsh Harp Education Centre.
 - c. **Haringey** – Has been in existence for 21 years and have 10-20 groups attending each bi-monthly meeting. The Council attend for the second part after the groups have discussed their own concerns and policies. The Forum are helping the Council develop a new 15 year strategy for Haringey Parks. They supported a public event Park Summit last year and will support a second summit for this September. The Forum have set up their own Diversity Working Group to encourage groups to share good practice around inclusion. The Forum is discussing a proposed new Memorandum of Understanding between individual groups and Haringey Parks Service. The council has funding for developing new meadows in 6 parks.

- d. **Newham Nature Network** – The structure of a new Forum, with LFGN support, has been agreed and will discuss and report on sustainable green issues. An interactive map showing all Newham open spaces is being developed. A lot of work has gone into scrutinising green issues in the Local Plan.
- e. **Bromley** – Has 56 Friends’ Groups and meet bi-monthly, including quarterly meetings with the council and Idverde contractors. Friends’ Groups can apply to a general fund for community groups (£40k to each Ward with a maximum of £20k per award). A 2 year trial of green friendly verges is underway for 11 verges; a mow and leave to nature policy. 5k trees are being planted over 2 years with a bar code on each tree to give information about the tree.
- f. **Hounslow** – The Forum is run by the council but has had regular re-launches. There is now agreement to move towards it becoming independent.
- g. **Lambeth** – Recently had a Dog Control survey consultation. An Annual Report was agreed.
- h. **Lewisham** – It was an active Forum but fizzled out somewhat during covid. Now trying to revive itself and meet up again - 2hr meeting with first hour with the council and 1 hour without. There’s some green funding by Council which Friends’ Groups can apply for eg. bins, bird boxes etc. Occasionally funding for playground equipment. Good relations with contractors Glendale, which before Covid was going to be taken back in-house - but Glendale’s contract has now been extended. A Parks Charter between the council and groups might be useful, but the council does provide Insurance.
- i. **Greenwich** – been running 15 years and very active – no report
- j. **Merton** – very active - no report
- k. **Islington** – very active - no report.

5. LFGN WORKING GROUPS

- a. **Biodiversity** – 25 to 30 people attended both the Butterfly and iNaturalist presentations. An event at the Welsh Harp is being discussed.
- b. **Climate Resilience** – A new group which met at the end of January. Laura has been helping gather an understanding of climate resilience in boroughs across London. A Friends Groups survey is planned to identify issues eg. water retention, watering newly planted trees, adequate tree cover for summer shade, future planting options, attractive alternative travel routes...
- c. **Planning** – Possible meeting about statutory Biodiversity Net Gain policies being brought in later in the year. Issues about future of Green Belt and Open Space definitions.
- d. **Dogs** – Meeting held with the Dogs Trust about signage in green spaces.
- e. **Major events** – Much needed group had a promising start, but fizzled out as it required effective coordination. Commercial events public Inquiry 13th June regarding Clapham Common and Finsbury Park. Shirley is keen to help revive the group.
- f. **Inclusion and Diversity** – New group, not yet met. Alona and Dave keen to join.
- g. **Traffic in green spaces** – Larry to look into e-scooters issues as a potential starting point for a new working group.

6. LONDON NETWORKING

- a. **GoParks/LFGN survey** of Friends Groups about their 2022 activities - 69 responses received. To be published as part of a report on the movement in London and why all Councils should actively support.
- b. **Go Parks** going well. Did a survey of FGs asking them what support they might need.
- c. **Agreements between Council and individual Friends’ Groups.** Haringey working on such an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. LFGN was able to collate a number of examples from other boroughs.

7. PARTNERS

- a. **London Gardens Trust** – Nic introduced himself and said he will liaise on Planning Applications to help Friends’ Groups. He will be trying to get a volunteer from each Borough to liaise with LGT using guidelines from Historic England. Tickets are on sale for the annual London Open Gardens Weekend and they are delighted No 10 Downing Street garden will be included. Currently lobbying Parliament regarding protection of Victoria Gardens.

- 8. **NEXT LFGN MEETING: Monday 12th June at 6pm via Zoom. SHOWCASE: Organising Successful Community Events in Green Spaces – what are the practical and organisational challenges, and how do we get a wide range of people involved? Introduced by Friends of Lloyd Park and Friends of West Ham Park.**