

LFGN coordination meeting - 13 November 2023

Attending: Dave – Haringey/LFGN (chairing), Laura – Merton/LFGN (notes), Nia – Enfield, Alona – Lewisham, Adrian – Waltham Forest, Richard – Wandsworth, Ernie – Lewisham, Pat- Wandsworth, Tony – Parks for London, Peter – Bromley, Charles – Wandsworth, Chris – Greenwich, Tricia – Redbridge, Michael – Ealing, Frances – Hammersmith & Fulham, Fran –Lambeth/Southwark/Bromley, Joe – TCV/Waltham Forest, Roger – Barnet, Charlotte – Habitats & Heritage, Alan – Newham/City of London, Iz – Sutton, Suzanne – Brent, Joan.

1. Borough updates

Lewisham – forum is currently focused on ASBOs, litter, the need for more bins, working with the contractor

Merton – the forum meets next week, and current themes are communications with the council and developing management plans for spaces with friends groups

Wandsworth – Forum going well. Waste management (including recycling) contracts are due to be re-procured next year, and tree contracts are being put to tender

Barnet – Forum going very well. The council is introducing a volunteer handbook which includes provision of insurance to friends groups, there is a new green spaces strategy consultation, a consultation re West Hendon, the council is going for a single Green Flag award, and there is a new policy on events in parks

Bromley – the contractor delivered training sessions to friends groups which were helpful, and funding is being made available for friends group projects. Long established and strong forum.

Haringey – the Forum helped produce a new 15yr green spaces strategy with the council and an public event (supported by the Forum, who provided speakers and info) was held to publicise the new strategy. The strategy includes an option for MOUs between individual friends groups and the council. The friends groups are helping to publicise vacancies in the understaffed parks team. A review of all SINCs has taken place. The council is still working towards all sites having Fields in Trust protected legal status, but doing it very slowly.

Waltham Forest –TCV runs occasional forums for friends groups. Did a hedgehog monitoring project with groups. Laura and Dave to discuss with TCV and Adrian how to support the nascent forum.

Newham – the recently set-up forum is now being wrapped up into Sustainable Newham

Enfield – interest in re-launching the forum/consortium. LFGN to try to assist

Ealing – friends groups forum recently started through the Ealing Parks Foundation

Greenwich – Long established forum. Working with the council to provide support for insurance coverage, risk assessments, and first aid training

Brent – working with the new contractor and developing better connections in the south of the borough as well as with other partner organisations, the council is going for some Green Flag awards next year. Forum getting stronger each year.

Note: Crystal Palace park friends reported no borough forum but part of a neighbourhood forum –linking with other neighbourhood groups and the Crystal Palace Park Trust, an independent trust with full control of Crystal Palace Park

Sutton –the Friends forum meets once a year and is interested in developing more SSSIs

Agreed: It was reaffirmed to continue to offer LFGN encouragement/support to all those boroughs in which there's not yet a Friends Forum.

2. LFGN Working Groups and other admin updates

Biodiversity group – last summer the group worked with Brent Parks Forum to host an event at Welsh Harp which was very well attended, and there is a Biodiversity Net Gain online event on 6 February – all are welcome

Climate resilience – there is an online event around flood management and the introduction of beavers to assist with flood management (and other benefits) on 28 February – all are welcome

Dogs in parks – the group is working with The Dogs Trust to develop some materials around responsible management of dogs and being mindful of wildlife

Large commercial events – Laura will restart this group – the next meeting is 24 January

Planning – the group is helping with the Biodiversity Net Gain event and is reviewing the Mayor's new London Plan

Note: Anyone who wishes to join any of the working groups should contact Laura@cprelondon.org.uk

LFGN website and social media – a revamp of the website is being worked on. FB page is active – all reps encouraged to join it! LFGN/GoParks now doing joint monthly bulletins to all groups (so as not to duplicate efforts)

3. Updates from London and national groups

Parks for London – a new Quality Manual for local authorities to use is being developed and will be available as a downloadable PDF, outlining greenspace quality standards and best practice sharing. There is also a Women's Safety working group and they are developing a manual to enable the review of safety criteria in parks. Now doing their Good Parks for London reports/celebration every 2 years.

CPRE London – an appeal for sites wanting to get funding and training for hedgerows recently went out, and the Ten New Parks for London campaign is in full swing.

A More Natural Capital – LFGN is supporting this coalition mobilizing around the upcoming mayoral elections next May.

National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces. LFGN is the London region of the NFPGS. All forums are invited to the AGM in January (probably online on the 27th). Working with the World Urban Parks Forum to set up a working group for grassroots organizations around the world to share good practice (with the UK being the strongest such network so far). The second 'Better Friends' report on the state of the friends groups' movement was published in September: natfedparks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NFPGS-PCUK-Second-Report-2023.pdf There is research underway into inclusive nature activities [Nature-based integration: connecting communities with/in nature - Survey \(onlinesurveys.ac.uk\)](#) – please can all groups fill in this survey? The NFPGS submitted a detailed report to a new public enquiry into parks by MPs on the DEFRA Select Cttee.

4. AOB

It was agreed to **rotate the days of LFGN meetings** (previously held only on Mondays) for a while to see if this attracts new and more reps to attend. Laura and Dave to set up dates for 2024.

Suggestions for areas of interest for **future meeting themes** included: admin issues and practices for friends groups (see our webinar in March), managing changes of staff and establishing relationships with the council and contractors, mentoring relationships between friends groups, and a possible London-wide plaque system linking park visitors to information on the park

Thanks to all attending for your valuable contributions!