



**London Friends of Green
Spaces Network**
**On-line Coordinating Meeting held on
Thursday 18th September 2025**

ATTENDING: Dave Morris – Haringey Forum [chaired]; Laura Collins – Merton Forum, CPRE and Go Parks [Meeting Tech]; Adrian Stannard - Waltham Forest [Minutes]; Tricia Moxley – Epping Forest; Annie Hart – Greenwich; Miriam – Islington Forum; Roger – Newham; Pat Gross – Wandsworth Forum; Andrew Stotesbury - Sparrow's Wood Palace Gardens and Church House gdns, Bromley; Karen - Abundance London (based in Hounslow and Ealing); Peter Woodward - Chislehurst Commons, Bromley; Monika Mitchell – Sydenham Wells Park, Lewisham; Polly Freeman - Lambeth Parks Forum; Larry Herbert - Bromley Forum; Caroline Nelson; Ellinor Michel; Simon Edwards; Sarah Houghton - Hanworth Air Park, Hounslow; Marta Pascual Argente - Bankside Open Spaces Trust; John - Friends of One Tree Hill. And 2 or 3 others.

- 1. WELCOME By Dave Morris** – Explained that LFGN is run by and for the movement of Friends' Groups across London. There's about 1,000 Friends' Groups and we've been going about 15 years and we are trying to coordinate, strengthen and build the movement. We want to see a Friends' Group for every greenspace and a Borough Forum in every borough. We're the London region of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces representing the movement of 7,000 groups across the whole of the UK.
- 2. FRIENDS GROUPS REPORTS ON THEIR BOROUGHS (Not representing their Forum unless specified)**
HARINGEY (Dave) - there's about 65 friends groups and our Forum meets every two months and has done for 24 years. We've got a good working relationship with Haringey Council and there are some issues of controversy behind the scenes, off and on, but we're a pretty strong Forum and the biggest problem of course is lack of resources in the Council and lack of staffing. **LEWISHAM FORUM (Monika)** - We've got a meeting in October. There's probably about 20 groups. We've got a good relationship with Lewisham. They have now recently got new policies with the parks. **LAMBETH (Polly)** - I've taken over as Co-chair quite recently with Ben. We have quarterly meetings, about 30 Friends' Groups take part. We're trying a new thing at the moment because the meetings used to be negative, so we now have a surgery with officers to improve relations with the Parks Department and communications between Parks groups and the Council. **ISLINGTON (Miriam)** - Islington Forum meets regularly but things are quiet at the moment. We did have a wonderful summer meeting out in the park. Generally have a very good support from the Park Service in the Borough, but as with everywhere, they are suffering some cuts and there does seem to be budget uncertainties. We do have a strong programme of parks' apprentices who've been filling some of those gaps. Usual problems, commercial events, unruly dog owners, litter. But nothing really to complain about compared with many other Boroughs and several of our parks have recently finished improvement works, extra sports facilities and so on. **GREENWICH (Annie)** - We still have no biodiversity officer to better inform parks, open spaces and planning for new housing. Chair of the Greenwich Parks Forum, Terry, and others have created a manifesto for our parks and open spaces, and this has been a really big effort and a great result. Appreciated by Greenwich Council, but we are suffering in Greenwich from cutbacks so we don't have our Park Rangers. We are still active and we meet every six weeks. **BROMLEY (Larry)** – Bromley has very active Friends' Forum and we've been going over 20 years. We have about 60 Friends' Groups in the Borough and we meet with our groups generally every two months or so. We're fortunate enough to get an annual grant from the Council of £7k, which helps pay for our expenses and to help support our groups. I am aware that Bromley is basically going bankrupt and money is incredibly tight and we're finding it quite difficult to get constructional jobs done. We're really not sure about the future as we see it the moment.

Bromley outsources its parks to IDVerdi, and we have a good relationship with them. I have a meeting with the Assistant Director at the Council next week to discuss the future of how that's going to work. And I don't know what she's going to tell me. But we hope she isn't going to get rid of IDVerdi, because if that happens, then we really would be struggling. **WANDSWORTH (Pat)** - we have 10 Friends' Groups and we've actually been quite active in the past year because the Council has decided to bring everything back in House, and they've involved us in a lot of it, a lot of pressure from our end. So that's been very helpful and it's a lot of new things. The Friends' Groups themselves are meeting very soon because we are all having lots of issues. We want to discuss before we meet with the council again. A main issue is electric bikes and electric vehicles flying through green spaces. **MERTON (Laura)** - We've been using IdVerde for the grounds maintenance for about eight years - their contract's been put out to tender, so it's been a big exercise with the Forum supporting the Greenspaces team at the Council, putting in our views of what we'd like to see included in the tender document. **BRENT (Suzanne)** – The Forum have been contributing to the Brent tree strategy. The Council has a biodiversity officer who we work very closely with and do get a lot of interaction from herself and our principal tree officer. The tree strategy has had an awful lot of input. It's seen some really good responses from different groups and we came up with our own document, but then encouraged groups individually to write in. So there have been just under 100 responses. The tree officer asked us to be as challenging as possible to help her, so we've had a lot of site visits with officers who are sharing their frustrations with us. We do have some very good working relationships with the officers. It's not great news in the sense of cuts, but Brent have suddenly decided to spend some money on parks. Nearly £1m so that was quite a turn around. Trying to get rid of large trees is a big problem so everyone's writing in saying save our large trees. We've started a tree consortium group. **NEWHAM (Roger)** - Newham's had a very chequered history in trying to set up a forum, mostly because the West Ham Park Friends group is one of a very few. However, we have got two new emerging Friends' Groups within the Borough, Beckton and Plashet. I'm hopeful that with newfound zeal on eco and green issues, which the Council have put into their recently completed Borough Plan, we can start to make some progress over the autumn and winter.

ABUNDANCE LONDON (Karen) – Karen reported that her group is active in Hounslow and Ealing. She spoke about some Hounslow matters, including some of the history of efforts over many years to create an effective Forum. In her view some of the time it has been independent, and other times run by the Council or by the Habitats and Heritage organisation as contracted by the Council. There were recent debates and differences of opinion among Friends Groups and the Council over the use of glyphosphates in green spaces. Hounslow has been five years glyphosate free, but there's a move to reconsider this policy. A report is being expected. Dave said he had been invited to attend a number of Hounslow Forum meetings over the last 15 years and that he or Laura are always ready to advise or help where possible. **HANWORTH AIR PARK (Sarah)** Sarah also reported about Hounslow matters. She noted the Council no longer has an Ecologist or Park Rangers, and underfunding was a problem. Her group was trying hard to look after biodiversity as they were right on the edge of the Metropolitan Land Greenbelt. She felt there were lots of challenges and so a strong and active Forum is needed. **BANKSIDE OPENSACES TRUST (Marta)** – She is the volunteer coordinator at Bankside Open Spaces Trust, so this may be a bit less than 20 parks and gardens between Lambeth and Southwark that BOST looks after - mainly with volunteers, including some Friends Groups. She feels her relationship with Southwark Council is easier than with Lambeth for various reasons.

3. LFGN WORKING GROUPS

– Roger gave an update about the Climate Resilience working group which has had quite a lot of strong activity. They visited RHS Wisley in July to look at the work that they're doing on alternative planting regimes, changing climate and critically water management including rainwater management. Relatively small scale ideas that don't involve digging huge holes in the ground. Planning a further workshop on the impact of the Brent Street Tree strategy work. Are thinking about a programme for next year.

- Dave and Laura reflected on the other working groups. 2 or 3 years ago there were 3 or 4 other active such groups, including regarding Biodiversity and Mass Commercial Events. There were ideas for ones focused on Dogs, Cycling and other issues. The original idea was the groups should be autonomous and self-organised, and draw in those around London who were enthusiastic about each theme. This resulted in a wide range of excellent seminars and discussions (see our website and the GoParks website for some of the videos). However, the groups unfortunately came to rely on Laura's coordination efforts, and increasingly she has not had the capacity to take on such responsibilities. For those groups to become effective, people interested need to come forward to help coordinate each group. If so we as a network will be able to support.

- Re the group that we set up for Friends Groups who's sites were heavily impacted by large commercial events, we linked up seven or eight major parks that were having huge summer gigs to work together to share views and experiences to challenge and ameliorate the damage done by such events. That tragically fizzled out due to lack of ongoing coordination. However CPRE London set up a Green Defenders Network to discuss defending greenspaces from commercial threats and sell offs. That morphed into trying to get national organisations and experts to lobby for Parliament to protect greenspaces much more effectively.

4. **GoParks London** – Great map and web site explained, and it also holds videos of some of the LFGN presentations. Hundreds of Friends Groups have a page on the interactive map.
5. **Communications** – LFGN has a web site and Facebook, and a superb regular monthly newsletter is issued by Laura. Everyone agreed Laura's work is invaluable.
6. **Other Londonwide Bodies**
 - a. **More Natural Capital Coalition.** It's a coalition of about 15 different Londonwide bodies who have met regularly for the last five years to lobby around elections. There's Londonwide Council elections next May so they're preparing a substantial publicity campaign around environmental issues. Generally, parks and trees are strongly included.
 - b. **National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces.** Dave is Chair of this umbrella organisation for the friends groups movement - there's about 7,000 friends groups and we want more Friends' Groups, and better organised, better connected, more influential. There's a national drive to try to support that movement as we do in London, but across the whole of the UK.
 - c. **National Park City (Sarah)** – They are trying to get a NPC Ranger for each borough, to liaise with community groups and projects. It's a great way of encouraging new people to get involved with different environmental green issues locally and it's not necessarily linked to parks. It can be linked to allotments, growing spaces, street trees or anything.
7. **AOB.** There were a range of points raised in the Chat. These included:
 - a. concern over loss of biodiversity when sports pitches (especially artificial ones) are created.
 - b. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and how they are identified, reviewed, protected etc.
 - c. Some Councils providing public liability insurance for Friends Groups.
 - d. Ensuring Friends Groups are empowered to take action, help maintain and manage areas, and run projects – yet not replacing Council staff or responsibilities. A genuine partnership.
 - e. Funding for groups
 - f. Tree trails.
8. **NEXT LFGN MEETING: Wednesday 12th November** at 6pm via Zoom. **Note/Update:** This meeting was designated as an informal review meeting for LFGN core folks to discuss internal organisational issues and challenges. It was attended by Larry, Dave, Pat, Andrew, Laura, Miriam, Alona, Suzanne. We discussed, without making any decisions, our programme of activities, resources and social/online media, Laura's role, partnership with CPRE London, our set up and priorities etc.