

## Next General Meeting for all local Friends Groups – April 11th, 10am, Bruce Castle Museum

**Minutes of General Meeting – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2015** Present: Dave Morris (F of Lordship Rec and Tottenham Cemetery) – Chaired: Martin Ball (Down Lane Park); Joyce Rosser (Priory Common) – took minutes; Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec); Clif Osborne (TCV); Chris Setz (Haringey Tree Wardens); Catherine Appleby (Coldfall Woods and Muswell Hill Playing Field); Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Park); Anna Rogers (TCV trainee); Ant Elder (Fairland Park); David Warren (Parkland Walk and Queens Wood), Simon Olley (Parkland Walk); Clive Carter and Kevin Duffy (F of Finsbury Park); Jo Homan (Finsbury Park); Chris Chadwick (Priory Park); Anne Scott (White Hart Lane); Deborah Cawkwell (Markfield Park, Manchester Gardens and Paignton Park); Alex Peschlow (Christ Church Project - Ducketts Common) **Items 9 - ....** Simon Farrow and Lewis Taylor (Parks Dept); Cllr Stuart McNamara (Cabinet Lead for Environment). **Apologies:** Michael Johns (Queens Wood); Malcolm Hawley (Downhills); Catherine Stenzl (Woodside); Ceri Williams (Chesnuts); Tony Healey (Parks Dept), Bob Hare (New River Action Group).

**Minutes of last meeting, November 2014** agreed. Matters arising **a.** Link to phone app re walk trial. Chris S said excellent. Trails belong to Friends groups. Dave to send app round again. **b.** s106 information needs to be recirculated – Dave to do. **c.** Sarah Jones has booked Bruce Castle Museum for Friends Forum meetings for the year [see at end].

**LBH Budget response letter - proposals from the Forum** A letter from the Forum - with eight key proposals calling for real support for the underfunded Parks Service, and background information - has been sent to all councillors and the leaders of both parties with Cllrs. [See below, at end]. The letter was fully endorsed by the Forum. No detailed response had been received yet from any councillor. **a.** Kevin Duffy wanted to add to point number 5 in future. Council should not become dependent on income stream from commercial events. Forum should campaign against such massive events – the present level as well as any proposed increase. He said there was a lot of concern about Finsbury Park from residents in Haringey, Hackney and Islington. There are lengthy periods when events are being set up and then clearing away. It is degrading the park – he circulated photos. It is difficult to get event holders to pay for damage. There were also restricted access to parts of the park eg tennis courts. There had been a large and concerned public meeting called by Islington council in the Finsbury Park mosque. **b.** Dave explained problems with threat to contract out the parks service – eg wouldn't give better service, our parks should be properly managed by the council not underfunded, problems of accountability and communication if service fragmented, 'commercial confidentiality' clauses. Chris S stressed importance of transparency – should be access to all park service documents. **c.** Joan said that Lottery funding involves contractual commitment to those 3 parks (Markfield, Finsbury and Lordship) from council for several years – this must not be taken from the overall Parks Service budget ie other parks – it should come from a separate capital investment pot. Resources for Homes for Haringey work on estates (which HfH pay for) should also be additional. Kevin said that Finsbury Park staff say they are being taken away to work on estates.

**Walks guides** Two Guides published by HFPF & HFRA. An accessible format of both should be on the two websites. Joan agreed to produce accessible format for the second guide. Could be link on Friends, RAs, Harringayonline, etc. websites. Might be third cross-borough Guide soon (Palace Gates to Seven Sisters – the old railway route).

**Forum Website, Email and Facebook** Catherine would like to hand over running the Forum website. Deborah agreed to take this over. Catherine is happy to continue managing the Yahoo email group. Chris has provisionally set up Facebook – administrator needs to approve items. Chris to circulate so people can see how it works. Anna to work with Chris.

**Anti-cuts lobbying** This is on Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> February at Civic Centre to oppose another £70m cuts to our vital local public services (including parks). People encouraged to attend (leaflets distributed). Joan will try to do Friends banner.

**London and national** Dave reported as Chair of London Friends Groups Network – 16 boroughs have forums. Campaign to declare "Greater London National Park" catching on. There will be conference at South Bank on 24<sup>th</sup> February - all welcome to go. There is a national petition in defence of parks. Should be a statutory responsibility and there should be adequate funding for all parks and green spaces.

**Development threats** Clive Carter reported that at a recent Area Forum meeting Stephen Kelly (Asst Director Planning) said that there would be "no net loss of green space". London is slightly better position than much of UK because of some London Plan protective policies. Main threats are to small open spaces not registered parks. However a key point in the Forum's letter to Cllrs is calling for deficiencies in open space to be addressed as they are supposed to be.

### Local reports

**Markfield Park, Manchester Gardens and Paignton Park** Deborah asked how Groundwork and Community Action Plans work. Markfield Friends seeking more members. Various groups active. Love the Lea project. On the Gardens she said lot of maintenance work done by residents. Problems of plants being stolen. **Down Lane Park** Ongoing work – new fencing, painting lamp posts, new paths,

children's play equipment and a train. MUGA. Concerns about impact of new Harris school on park. Criticism of "green link" concept. He welcomed new playground in Tottenham Green East – improvements there well overdue. **Priory Common** Weekly work sessions on Priory Common Orchard. They have applied for council work for recent improvements (signage, notice boards, water butts, etc.). **Alexandra Park** Two new orchards have been created in The Grove. The Newland Road/Bedford Road area has been improved (£106 funding). The Go Ape project is going for planning permission. The Friends group has 200 members and runs a weekly information session. Lot of activities going on (30 Friends events per year). **Railway Fields** Now open at weekends. Friends Group going well. Volunteers and children's activities. **Fairland Park** Active Friends group. Lot of events. Trying to get zip wire. Ongoing maintenance and dog problems. *LBH comment:* fences issues being addressed. **Coldfall Wood** Recent visit by Baroness Kramer to see coppicing. Various walks, etc. **Ducketts Common** Alex was not speaking for the Friends but for a group running volunteer planting scheme – some homeless people involved. Positive impact on the area. Dog fouling problem – needs enforcement and education. Fence set back by station – shortcutting problem. Cafe to be built. Flooding/draining problems. Drug dealers. Money laundering. Park used as a toilet. *LBH comment:* some success with drug dealers and other problems. Location of cafe – further discussion. At the moment temporary location. When cafe permanent there will be toilets. **Queens Wood** Conservation Officer Ian Holt has RELEAF grant (council match it). Boundary needs retaining wall. Groundwork went out to tender. Café garden has secured some funding. **Parkland Walk** Another RELEAF grant. Problem of graffiti. Friends doing cleaning and painting. Encroachment – council has funds for survey but not enough for all boundaries. Problem of St James Lane bridge repairs. *LBH comment* – graffiti removal ongoing. Bridges regularly have structural examination – done by Highways for Parks. Encroachment - targeted approach because limited funding. **Finsbury Park** Well attended AGM in December - threats to the park. New officers, full committee, about 100 members – target 300. Relaunched website and social media sites. 2015 will be campaigning year because of increasing commercialisation due to huge events. Damage to park. Developers eyeing up the fringes. Tri-borough consultation. Lot of areas of the park are sub-let. Events – Easter egg hunt, etc. Volunteering programmes. Islington/Hackney meeting in mosque – 30 people. Needs a Tri-borough initiative? Edible Landscapes in the Park – Jo reported on activities, work with school children on urban sustainability. Difficulty ensuring EL access to their site. *LBH comment:* more meetings needed about commercial events. Access issue re Edible Landscapes – Simon to meet up with Jo. **Lordship Rec** New Hub facilities fully up and running and very well used. 1270 on Friends email membership list. Installed Memorial sculpture. May 3<sup>rd</sup> event – Riverfest. Lots of other events. Problem with people feeding ducks, could lead to rats. Hub now selling duck food. Did xmas calendar. **Priory Park** 16 people at AGM last month – good new committee members. Tennis courts refurbished to high standard – will be celebration event. New project is the listed St Paul's fountain – survey to be done for restoration. Calendar copies all sold. Taking up damage by lorries eg Veolia. **White Hart Lane** Anne said that there is to be 15<sup>th</sup> February event about the park, in Wood Green library. Made application for funding. Aim to increase activities. Working with five local schools. Concerns – trip hazards, pond in terrible state (need proper agreement for work), how to work with Groundwork and need storage facilities. *LBH Comment:* will consider photos submitted. Outdoor strategy – should be included in improvement plans. Meeting with Friends already arranged. **Tottenham Cemetery:** Set up last year. Being relaunched on 21<sup>st</sup> February at Bruce Castle. **Chestnuts Park (report sent in by Ceri)** The pavilion is nearly demolished. Have successfully raised some funds for developing the willow garden area next to the demolition site and are waiting to hear about other funding bids including for an outdoor gym and growing areas and orchard. FoC member is running the London Marathon to raise money towards the willow garden project: <http://www.friendsofchestnuts.org.uk/sponsor-dan-shea-running-the-marathon-for-friends-of-chestnuts-park/>. Some members have been also working with Chestnuts People, a group campaigning for the Community Centre in the park remaining as a Community Centre. Continue to support Chestnuts Cafe - currently campaigning for reduction in cost of pay and display half hour slots for their breakfast custom.

**Parks Plans: Community Action Plans** – these are about how local groups can help in a green space. **Biodiversity Action Plans** are about improving nature conservation. **Management Plans** are for Green Flag and Lottery-funded parks. To be discussed next meeting...

**Rats** – major issue in parks with ponds because of duck feeding. Simon will take back to Sarah Jones and Ian Holt. New signs at Finsbury Park – pictorial approach will be tried.

**Reports from TCV, Tree Wardens and Groundwork** **TCV** Clif said TCV going well. Monthly programme sent out to all groups. Anna said her project is "natural network scheme – public engagement". **Tree Wardens** – Hold walks and talks in many parks. **Groundwork** Haringey rep needs to attend these meetings. Simon Farrow has contacted them and a senior director will be at next meeting.

**Marathon / fundraising potential** Tony Healey running marathon in aid of Friends of Parks Forum – can all groups help publicise. Dave M, Tony and Andrea to discuss LBH/Forum publicity. Debbie will add PayPal donate button to our website. Chestnuts and Lordship have own runners.

**Cllr McNamara** Cllr McNamara, LBH Cabinet Member for parks, said he was glad to be at meeting - wanted to let people know about his role. Differentiated between policy (his main responsibility) and operational matters. Policies may need changing. He may have new policies eg he suggested a "Friends of Parks compact". Wants transparency. Re the proposed cuts, he promised to produce a written reply to the Forum's budget letter. Says officers work hard. Said he had asked for meeting with Hackney and Islington about Finsbury Park issues. Will follow up White Hart Lane issues. Has spoken to Cllr Vanier about safety in parks (also dogs, litter, urination) – going to seek more joined up approach. Problems of working with the police due to high turnover. Welcomed re-launch of Friends of Tottenham Cemetery as Bruce Castle area needed plan. Due to cuts Wolves Lane nursery to controversially close or transfer activities elsewhere.

**Next Forum meetings** - Sat April 11, Sat June 6, Sat Sep 5, Sat Nov 7 **Additional Items for next meeting** Plant stealing; trip hazards; grass cutting around trees; flooding; biodiversity plans/action plans/conservation plans.

# Support Haringey's Green Spaces and Parks Service

To: All Haringey Councillors, and to the leaders of the Labour and Lib-Dem Parties.

The Council's policy, as set out in the current Open Space Strategy, is: To enrich the quality of life for everyone in Haringey by working in partnership to provide safe, attractively designed, well used, well maintained open spaces for the benefit and enjoyment of the whole community. Public green spaces are an essential, popular and probably the most-used public service, vital for health, social cohesion, biodiversity, education, sport, flood control, climate change mitigation and many other outcomes fundamental to the future of all sections of all our communities in every corner of Haringey.

As you will know, the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum (representing the borough's 40+ local Friends Groups) is the Council's key community partner. As such we are concerned that the Council should have the right approach and commitment to our increasingly important green spaces. Hence we set out 8 points for your response.

1. The Forum fully supports **the Council's 'in-house' Parks Service** and its hard-working and dedicated workers and office-based staff. We call on the Council to continue to back it and praise it, not undermine it or consider privatisation of any kind.

2. The Forum opposes **the underfunding of the above Service** (in 2010 in the lowest quintile of all London Boroughs, and further slashed by 50% in 2011/12) and calls for additional resources to be put in so that all its public parks and green spaces can be managed and maintained effectively. We do not want to see the current slide into crisis continue [See Appendices B and C below] - it has taken 15 years of colossal and collective effort by the community and Parks Service to rescue and turn around our green spaces after the crisis caused by the savage cuts 20-30 years earlier in the 1980s.

3. Certainly the **further cuts threatened to the Parks Budget** should be abandoned.

4. The ring-fenced annual **capital 'match' funding from Haringey Council for the management and maintenance of the Heritage Lottery Fund projects** (Finsbury, Markfield and Lordship) clearly should not continue to come from the seriously underfunded Parks Service budget. This is an unfair and discriminatory practice leaving little left for all the other green spaces. [See details in Appendix A, below, from the Head of Client services]. The outstanding amounts and any future match funding should come from other capital resources. This is a contractual matter which can be remedied simply by drawing on the Council's capital or contingency funding.

5. The Forum opposes increased numbers/lengths of **major Commercial Events in Finsbury Park** - such events often take a week to set up and remove, and dominate what should be a public space during much of the key summer months. Notwithstanding that, any money generated by such 'sacrificial' commercial activities in Haringey's parks should be ring-fenced as additional funding for parks and not used as an excuse to further cut the annual budget for the Parks Service.

6. The Forum supports the Council's policy that all our **local public green spaces be managed and maintained to Green Flag Award minimum standards**, as any community would expect. Over 60% of the key sites are yet to achieve that standard.

7. With an ever-increasing population in Haringey, we call on the Council to implement their policy of **addressing existing deficiency of access to public open space**, as well as ensuring protection of green space and the establishment of additional parks and public green space in all areas affected by development.

8. We recognise that the growing crisis for Haringey's green spaces is mirrored throughout many other areas of the UK, and that the **responsibility to remedy this also lies at the national level**. We call on the Council to demand that the next Government after the General Election in May, whatever its complexion...

- hold a national inquiry into the funding and management of the UK's green spaces
- bring in a statutory duty to monitor and manage these spaces to Green Flag Award standard
- ensure adequate public resources for all green spaces

We call on the leaders of both Parties with Councillors, and the individual Councillors, to respond to these 8 specific points. As the Council's key community partner, we continue to pledge to work in partnership with our fantastic but under-resourced Parks Service and to support our green spaces to the best of our ability through the wide range of activities of local Friends Groups.

sincerely - Joan Curtis, Secretary, Haringey Friends of Parks Forum  
Supported by the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations

## Appendix A

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**Re: Heritage Lottery Funding commitments** 19 January 2015 Dear All, The council has made a legal commitment to maintain each of the HLF parks in accordance with the agreed management plan for each park for a period of 10 years. This obligation is used to increase the council match funding contribution and therefore allows the HLF to increase the amount it is able to fund for the capital works. Therefore the council is in effect paying off its match funding over that ten year period. Andy is correct that there is only one parks budget and therefore in the event that either our current proposals are not accepted or that the proposals don't bring forward the required saving amounts the council would have to look to reducing the core parks budget further.

Because of the legal position around the HLF funding, savings would have to be made in other parks first and therefore those savings would be far harsher because money couldn't be taken from the 3 HLF parks until such time that the 10 yr post completion period expired. The package of measures that you see in the consultation are there to avoid any such reduction in other parks.

I fully appreciate that some of them are difficult to accept or even tolerate, but having sat in other meetings recently and heard about how people's daily lives will be affected there are much worse decisions being made by the council at this time.

I very much want to lead a Parks Department which is thriving and not to be presiding over a declining service. The work of the forum and the individual friends groups is invaluable and we fully appreciate all that you do. If you haven't seen this recent blog about the transformation of Coldfall Wood and the work of the friends over the last decade or so it's worth a read and it very nicely illustrates what we can achieve together. <http://bugwomanlondon.com/2015/01/1>

Simon Farrow - Head of Client Services

## Appendix B

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**Haringey Friends of Parks Forum** Extracts from letter to all Councillors, Feb 2011

**THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS** We explained that these proposals would greatly damage green spaces and return many if not most of them to the state of neglect they fell into in the 1980s when green space budgets were similarly cut. In the early 1980s there were 300 parks staff, and now there are only 60 (of which a substantial % are engaged in working on the Homes for Haringey housing estates - a protected contract). A workforce of 60 staff, as hard-working as they are, is less than the bare minimum for operational viability. This below-minimum staffing level is only able to operate by being bolstered by an active policy team (raising and managing crucial extra money from outside sources for essential capital works and regeneration efforts for the many run down spaces), additional 'parkforce' on-site stewarding, the very popular and vital BTCV community engagement workers, and a very useful safer parks team. All are facing serious cuts. We believe that such cuts would be a disaster and are therefore unacceptable. Its not just that green spaces will inevitably be poorly maintained and managed, but they would be in grave danger of becoming 'problem' spaces with negative implications and actually a long term drain on resources. To ensure green spaces are safe necessitates minimum levels of full-time dedicated and trained staffing. We believe it is madness and counter-productive to cut resources to Haringey's parks.

**Note:** We are quite aware of the value of all the other public services facing cuts, and as a Forum we have taken a principled decision not to compete with any other services or user groups, but to work alongside them. However, we will continue to speak out strongly about our green spaces, and to insist, lobby and campaign for the resources needed. We call on you to stand alongside the communities you claim to serve in demanding adequate Government funding for Haringey.

## Appendix C

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**Haringey Friends of Parks Forum** Extracts from the Letter to Councillors - November 2012

**Friends Survey** At the Parks Forum meeting we decided to send a Questionnaire to all Friends Groups. The initial results [based on a 32% response rate] indicate

1. there has been a real decline in the short time since the April 2011 budget cuts (except where additional funding has been secured for a particular park)
2. strong support for the need for additional resources
3. greatly value the work and efforts of the parks service ground staff and office staff
4. indicate that Friends' volunteering makes a v.small contribution to the ongoing day to day maintenance needed throughout the borough.

The experience of the 1990s shows that green spaces go into serious decline - and become problem spaces rather than the fantastic community resource they should be - if adequate staffing and maintenance is not ensured. It then takes a colossal and very expensive effort to rescue them. Hence adequate resources need to be ensured.

In announcing the Review in November, the Leisure Services Head of Operations, Andy Briggs, stated: "As you will be aware, 18 months ago the Council implemented a programme of budget reductions that have had a significant impact on our ability to maintain the expected standard of grounds maintenance across our parks and open spaces. In responding to the budget reductions a number of initiatives have commenced. These include promoting further volunteering and local involvement in our parks, as well as working with our partners to secure external money to support the maintenance of our parks and open spaces. Whilst progress is being made, it is clear that such initiatives will not in themselves address the shortfall in resourcing ..."

**Background** In 2008 the Council committed to the 'Parkforce' organisational model and partnership - for 'a partnership approach [between the Parks Service, Friends Groups, BTCV and the Met Police] resulting in on-site staff dedicated to caring for every significant urban park during daylight hours'. The 4 key partners, including ourselves from the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, publicly signed up to this together. Haringey's parks budget was at that time in the lowest quintile (20%) of Council budgets for comparable Councils, and remained so until April 2011. In April 2011 the budget was cut 50%, virtually the highest cuts made to any parks service in the UK. The Council's Leisure Services has recognised that this serious under-funding has led to major maintenance and management problems, and that any volunteering by the Friends Groups (where they exist and have the time) could not replace adequate staffing levels.