

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 7 June 2025

Present: Friends Groups reps: Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Susan Beckett (Nightingale Gardens), Peter Gray (Nightingale Gardens), Ricardo Johnson (White Hart Lane Rec) Rene Stones (Ducketts Common), Chris Chadwick (Priory Park), Ben Marsh (Brunswick Park), Kate Swade (Tower Gardens Park), Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) – chaired; Liz Ixer (Railway Fields), Pamela Harling (Tottenham Green, Tottenham Cemetery & Wolves Lane), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Pk), Thunder Raven-Stoker (Queen's Wood); Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gardens, Paignton Park) - minuted; Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Pk); **From 11am: Council reps:** Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (Zonal Officer Manager); Lily Labonte (Physical Activity Officer), Annie (Events Team)

FGs Apologies: Frances Sanders (Hornsey Church Tower), Quentin Given (The Paddock), Joyce Rosser (Priory Common + Rectory Gdns), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Clare Parry (Downhills Pk), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Laurie White (Noel Park FROGS), Robyn (Alexandra Park), Hesketh Benoit (Ducketts Common); **And:** Anna (The Conservation Volunteers) **LBH Apologies:** Sahina Choudhury, Emma Betts (LBH Community & Partnerships Engagement Officer), Chris Cavalier (Operations Manager), Annabel Foskett (Conservation), Simon Farrow (Head of Parks & Leisure); Annabel Foskett (LBH Conservation Officer)

PART 1 – FGs' reps only

■ **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:** April 2025 minutes agreed as accurate

■ **KEY FORUM ISSUES**

- **Welcoming new local groups:** no new groups reported
- **Forum Diversity/Inclusion Working Group:** Deborah to chase Dave for list of contacts, then contact to set up meeting.
- **Forum Coordination Group:** We've a WhatsApp group between meetings – any FG rep who wants to help coordinate things can ask to be added. Guided by and accountable to the general meetings of course.
- **Local Plan/Fields In Trust progress:** Council has commitment that every green space identified in the Local Plan (the Council's key statutory urban planning document currently being reviewed over the next 2 years) should be protected 'in perpetuity' with a Fields in Trust legal covenant. Only 12-15 done so far. Chris said it includes Priory Park and the Friends got £15k from Fields in Trust - Chris to send details to Dave. We'll ask Glynis to give an update re the Local Plan and FiT progress.
- **Biodiversity / Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation:** No update. We have regularly asked Annabel Foskett (LBH Conservation Officer) to update us all as she cannot attend Saturday meetings. At last Forum meeting, Glynis said she hoped a special separate bio-diversity meeting with AF would be arranged, open to all FGs. We await the proposed details. AF does work with individual groups, but also needs to report on strategic matters (eg SINCs, policies, grants etc). We noted that AF needs to advise re Tottenham Cemetery although it is privately managed.
- **Playgrounds upgrade:** £1.5m of urban development 'S106' money has been allocated to upgrade 8 playgrounds in Tottenham and Wood Green. All works must be done by end of March 2026. Playgrounds are very expensive. Ongoing maintenance will be needed.
- **Green Flag visits:** Green Flag applications this year were reduced by the Council from 22 to 11, despite Council policy (and election manifesto commitment) being to INCREASE the number. Council had unilaterally decided to cut down the numbers due to lack of budget. There have been some site visits with the green flag judges, with Friends taking part. No invitation for Friends of Railway Fields. Invitations/contact details should be raised with Glynis.
- **Events waste collection:** Commercial events generally need to arrange their own litter and waste collection/disposal. Community events of over 100 people may be expected to do the same. This of course shouldn't apply to Friends Groups events. We will raise this later on in the meeting
- **Love Parks Week / 26th July to 3rd August:** If there are any events in that week, groups can get it onto the national Love Parks online programme. Dave sent round an email about this.
- **London:** Go Parks London website has some very useful webinar videos of Friends Groups meetings and presentations on lots of key subjects: eg citizen science, community engagement, community gardens, strengthening groups, safeguarding, biodiversity net gain etc. <https://www.goparks.london/articles/webinars-for-friends-groups/>

- **Go Green programme of events throughout June:** Pamela shared leaflet.
- **People Need Parks funding:** Some concern expressed over Council micro-managing grants and potentially stifling initiative.

PART 2 - Council officers joined the meeting at 11am

■BRIEF REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

Nightingale Gardens: Doing planting. Difficult to get more volunteers even though people comment positively on the good work being done. Holding an informal picnic in the park. Will sell cakes for charity. Still need a litter bin. Small grants funding feels over-managed by the Council at a distance - feel stifled.

Bruce Castle Park: Detailed report circulated to all groups about their last 15 months of activities, inc AGM. Funding obtained to cover trunk gaps in the ancient oak, sessions led by expert Russell Miller (see video). 20th July – free open air theatre event. September - Aging Well event. Site meetings with manager. New Playzone half the size of current MUGA - strong concern that a 2-tier system will be created via controlled access. (Half of the MUGA stays as it is). Kids coming after school will probably not be able to access the space. Final public consultation on £270k playground upgrade is now open, the Friends having set up a Playground Improvements Group 2 years ago. Working with the Museum as part of a Heritage Quarter for the area.

Chestnuts Park: really good consultation re playground upgrade, included a group from the adjacent school. Evaluated every piece of equipment to decide what to keep, what to repair or replace. Could spend the whole budget on just the surfacing. Want to leave the zip wire, which is very popular. Council investigating insurance. 'Spotlight' repairs meeting coming up with Chris Poore so need previous report. Thanks to the Parks Service for arranging intro to Monserrat Festival people – Friends intend to liaise about issues to do with the major event planned. Ceri not convinced that council is charging enough for commercial events.

Manchester Gardens: Do regular monthly litter pick, still lot of anti-social behaviour. Thorny planting at the back alongside the homes not yet in. Problem with 'drug' car in adjacent street.

Paignton Park: Do regular monthly litter pick. Tiny Forest is moving forward. Next Earthworks community day on Saturday 12 July. Watering a big problem during the recent dry spell as no tap in the park. Water had to be ferried by car from allotments. Council Water truck came once. Playground is in the consultation phase with online commonplace portal, plus 2 face-to-face engagement, although last one had to be cancelled with no communication. Spring parks fitness programme reggaactivity was great. New summer progamme started with circuit training, followed by table tennis on Wednesdays from 6pm. Good 'spotlight' repairs walkabout with on Thursday.

Ducketts Common: 2 events Access Sport on 29 May - great success, another on 21 June.

White Hart Lane Rec: Matthew F drafting some info to feed back. Deadline for consultation. Management Plan being worked on. Then will work with organisation planning some blind cricket activities.

Priory Park: Old fountain originally from St Pauls churchyard needs refurbishment – Friends were refused funding for a second time last year. Friends decided to crack on themselves in lead up to the centenary of the park. Been offered 4 large granite stones from embankment by City of London. Now trying to work out how to get them installed - difficult - narrow roads - complicated - expensive. Went to visit city gardens depot. Stones now in the park! Would like them around the fountain (with planting) as seating. Corporate volunteers being supervised by the Priory Park Gardeners Group.

Railway Fields: Is now the TCV London headquarters – they run it during week. Friends run at weekends: 3rd Saturday of every month. Try to have a kids activity. Sunday volunteer team also: 2 Sundays per month. Advertised on social media. Nature drawing group - mindful activity - have had exhibitions. Also dawn chorus event. Green Flag question: who gets invited to the judging?

Wolves Lane: Great horticulture food-growing centre nowrun by a community consortium. Have lots of staff and volunteers. Obtained significant grant funding and have built 3 new eco-buildings. Lots of open days.

Tottenham Cemetery: Friends Group have lobbied hard to try to improve the management and maintenance of this large and important Council-owned site leased to a private company, Dignitas, for 50 years. The Friends have lobbied extensively but unsuccessfully for a new Management Plan. This should clearly include biodiversity protection as it is a SINC – but the site's biodiversity is 'strimmed to death'. The Contract is overseen by the Council who have failed to exercise their responsibilities. The fear is that the active Friends group will give up.

Tower Gardens: Friends Group very active - raised £400 to create a pollinator-friendly bed. Low-key community picnic next week. TCV brilliant - 4 times per year now - creating a nature trail/walkway. Problem with big homeless camp, a lot of poo. Camp now cleared, but lots of bits left. Playground kit for bigger kids was in disrepair and was suddenly removed with no replacements planned. Really missed by the kids. Also, sexual assault in that area and found crack pipes. Needs urgent action. Friends feeling weary.

Queen's Wood: Friends very active as always, with regular volunteering sessions and activities. Dawn chorus walks well attended. Family fun day in July - usually very well attended. Usually get some funding. Flower walk in July. Pushing ahead with hedgehog survey. Problems: persistent fly-tipping. All told to use Love Clean Streets app. Trying to get local PCSOs involved. Need habitat management plan from Annabel F.

Brunswick Park: Well used, but poor volunteering engagement despite efforts of the Friends. Trying to get corporate volunteers. Challenges: homeless issue reported to Streetlink. Large-item dumping. Fence hole, big enough for a car to get in and dump. Have a meadow which needs to be maintained - need some help!

Coldfall Wood: Friends cover the woods and the fields. Encroachment on Muswell Hill Playing Field, council has written to culprits. Concrete blocks have prevented access to traveller vehicles. New person wants to start a specific Friends group for the Fields, and to work on skate park. Successful walks programme. Plan to attend nearby Barnet festival. Have received no update from Annabel.

Lordship Rec: Playground renewal underway (£250k) after extensive discussions with the Friends and wider public consultation. The Hub community centre is also having £120k of desperately-needed repairs done. Annual Tottenham Flower & Produce Festival on Sept 13th being planned through open meetings - anyone can get involved. Whole range of Friends' working groups and volunteering sessions managing different aspects of the park. 44 people attended a recent Bat Walk. 6 community events planned this summer in the Shell Theatre. Friends hosted a Green Flag visit re their management of the woodland, and also attended a GF judge's visit re the whole park.

Alexandra Park [written report circulated] reported a wide range of activities and a well-attended AGM

Hornsey Church Tower [written report circulated] reported Green Flag visit, issues to do with lighting and trees, drug-dealing and pigeons. Plus plans for events, including 75th anniversary of the Garden of Remembrance. Gardening group meets fortnightly.

Downhills Park [written report circulated] reported their annual Art In The Park is on 27th July. Consultation on both the Playzone and the playground upgrade. Issues re bins and waste. And their AGM.

Parkland Walk [written report circulated] reported: their wildlife trails is looking fabulous; activities include a butterfly walk and a major plant survey. Working with Annabel F to do a Woodland Report. Thank TCV for their volunteering sessions. No progress by the Council on long-running encroachment problems. Patch repairs to the path need doing. Need pedestrian priority signage to discourage fast cycling. Bridge works, including horrible concrete ramps, still to be completed.

Finsbury Park [newspaper report circulated] – got publicity for their continuing efforts to protect the park from unacceptable huge commercial gigs taking over the park for weeks each summer.

■COUNCIL RESPONSE

Nightingale Gardens: Bin should have been put in. Should be in by next week. Glynis will take away micro-management issue.

Bruce Castle Park: More consultation due on playzone. Glynis encourages engagement with Commonplace portal. Lily will take back the problem with non-inclusivity.

Chestnuts Park: Glynis to pass on praise to Kristie. There has been discussion re the zip wire within the council. Lily: new walk at Chestnuts (Riccardo is walk leader). Note re event charges – these are set fees.

Manchester Gardens: Enforcement officers - Christoph contacted HAGA. Glynis will get back re thorny planting.

Paignton Park: Spurs celebrations shutdown was the reason for f2f playground consultation cancellation. Apologies for lack of communication.

White Hart Lane: Consultation is on commonplace portal.

Ducketts Common: Event amazing.

Priory Park: Keep plugging away re fountain.

Railway Fields: Will check Green Flag invite list. Friends note: considered getting a tutor / applying for People Need Parks funding, but currently don't really need it - self-financing.

Wolves Lane: Open day sounds amazing.

Tottenham Cemetery: Urgent need for a Management Plan needs involvement from senior management. Friends asked to send an email that can be forwarded to Simon Farrow.

Tower Gardens: Communication between different teams needs to improve. Email needs to be sent to action. Safer Neighbourhood Team have been visiting regularly.

Queen's Wood: Fly tipping is recognized to be a serious problem - ward councillor has got involved. Veolia go along every day. Parks team equipment can't deal with rubble. Posters + engagement with SNT. Covert operation planned.

Brunswick Park: Will find out about meadow. Chris P to visit Brunswick Park.

Coldfall Wood: Will address what has been done.

■UPDATES/ISSUES FROM COUNCIL

Commonplace portal for consultations: QR codes. QR codes for commonplace pages for parks which have playground funding. First few days seems to be the key time.

Playgrounds revamp: Need Friends to be fully involved.

Conservation update (eg biodiversity/SINCs): No report from AF. Friends report: Last meeting it was agreed we'd have a meeting with AF. Now it's urgent. What does AF do? How do we contact? Have recommendations of SINC review been adopted? What about the Local Plan review?

Local Plan: Chris Patterson is leading on it for the Parks Service. Dave requested an update, including a full list of proposed "Designated public spaces".

Budget pressures: Council is chronically underfunded by Government. They have obtained a Govt 'loan' and will approve departmental budgets after 17 July. Each item of proposed expenditure above £1k needs to be 'signed off' first at a high level. Long term equipment needs maintenance.

Staffing update: Aisha - one of the 2 new enforcement officers - has already moved on. Hilary B, a project officer, has left - currently can't refill that post due to budget restrictions. Small Green Spaces temporary officer post (Rachel) has ended.

Byelaws review: Long process. Parks Service is due to have meeting next Friday with legal dept. Issue with dog enforcement - areas where dogs shouldn't be. Public consultation date will be set later for first round for byelaws. There will be a commonplace page.

Green Flag: Glynis clarified that Haringey Council officers carry out Councillor decisions. There is a lack of resources. Not all sites had a scheduled site visit this year - some parks 'mystery' inspected.

People Need Parks funding stream: Total pot of £20k for all spaces (Plus £20k for Finsbury Park). Up to £999 available for a group, £250 for an individual. Glynis to look at Nightingale Gardens PNP application to see if communications can be improved.

Waste: Annie, events officer, is newly in post. She explained that there are currently only 2 hygiene officers for each of 3 zones, ie 6 in total in the Clean Team covering the whole borough each day. They are struggling to empty all the bins in each space. Events are an additional burden, so all commercial events need to be responsible for properly clearing up and disposing of their own waste. We pointed out that this clearly can't be expected to apply to Friends' activities as we, as volunteers, put on community events in order to animate our spaces. And we generally would ensure we properly clear up afterwards. Indeed many Friends Groups do regular litterpicking to help the Clean Team anyway. Friends need to contact the relevant officers in advance to get their events' waste removed.

Safer Parks for Girls and Women: Regular meetings continue (Deborah liaises for the Forum). Includes a focus group of 13 young women's coordinated by Lily. Did 1st presentation to council 6 June. Next meeting 25 June - all welcome. Would like to do a presentation to the Friends Forum – Lily and Dave to discuss.

People Need Parks Summer Programme: Lily brought booklets for distribution

Our 'Walk In The Park' free booklets Going well in community centres, Drs' surgeries etc. Still 1000 plus available - to be collected from Friends of Lordship Rec.