

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

General Meeting 1st November 2025

Present: Friends Groups reps: Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) – chaired; Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gdns, Paignton Pk) – minuted; Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields); Quentin Given (The Paddock); Joyce Rosser (Priory Common, Rectory Gdns); Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec); Chris Chadwick (Priory Pk); Laurie White (Noel Pk FROGS); Susan Beckett and Peter Gray (3 Avenues RA / Nightingale Gdns working group); Pamela Harling (Tottenham Cemetery); Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk); Ben Marsh (Brunswick Pk); Ricardo Johnson (White Hart Lane Rec); Ben Pitman (Belmont Rec); Frances Sanders (Hornsey Church Tower); Jo Larkin (Russell's Hub, Noel Pk); Kate Swade (Tower Gdns Pk); John Miles (Haringey Water Squad). **From 11am: Council reps:** Emma Betts (Parks Community Engagement Officer), Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (Zonal Officer Manager). **FGs and TCV Apologies:** Anna Pole (TCV), Thunder Raven-Stoker & Robyn (Queens Wood), Trish (Alexandra Pk), Clare Parry (Downhills Pk), Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Pk), Robyn Thomas (Alexandra Pk). **LBH Apologies:** Annie Chalmers Mavor (Senior Events Officer).

DOCUMENTATION: Dave distributed key relevant documents to all delegates present

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Sept 2025 minutes agreed as accurate.

KEY FORUM ISSUES

- **New groups:** Friends of Fairland Park (off Green Lanes near Turnpike Lane) is now active again.
- **Forum Diversity & Inclusion Group:** Deborah aims to email people to try to get it started again.
- **Forum Co-ordination Group (WhatsApp):** any rep is welcome to join & help with admin and coordination between meetings.
- **Bookings for 2026:** We need to book Bruce Castle Museum for our meetings throughout 2026. Dave and Deborah to arrange.
- **Email list:** Due to technical issues with our previous email list: parksforum_internal@haringey.org.uk it had been agreed to replace it with a new list. Dave organised it and transferred all group reps to the new list. haringeyparks@lists.riseup.net It seems to have all gone smoothly. The new list has a data limit per post, so please send links rather than attachments if you want your emails to get circulated.
- **Safety for Women & Girls:** Strong group with a lot of useful presentations & reports. People are welcome to attend. Meeting info is circulated to HFOPF list.
- **Waste collection after Friends' community events:** Controversy re Council proposing charging for the clean team collecting waste after Friends' events of 100+ people. Forum held an emergency meeting on this and then wrote back to all concerned (officers, cabinet members etc). We explained the obvious - that Friends Groups organise community activities to help maintain, animate and improve local green spaces at no cost to the Council, we work in partnership to support the Council, we don't charge them for litterpicking etc. The Council say their Clean Team is grossly understaffed & we agreed to send our solidarity to them and respect for all their hard work. Even more reason for the Council to fully back our efforts to support the Parks Service.
- **Local Plan:** Quentin reported that the new draft Plan for all development in Haringey is now out for consultation – deadline to respond is 19 December. Policies covering green spaces, transport, housing etc. Plus very important 'site allocations' – dozens of red-lined sites where 'development' is being promoted. Advises everyone to take a look. Council gets pressure to achieve 'targets' from GLA & Government, and of course developers seeking profits. Up to the community to speak out and defend our own needs. Problems include allowing developers to avoid their obligations to create green space by allocating money for supposed 'biodiversity net gain' additional green space elsewhere. All Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, including the newly approved ones, should be enshrined in the Plan. Forum has already sent round a briefing to all Friends Groups on our list (30 Oct) about Local Plan with links to various bits of it. Meeting organised by Tottenham groups on 17 November 7pm on zoom – sent around list. Noted that any

threats to green spaces will have to be countered strongly, and new sites lobbied for, as happened for the 2016 Plan (where threats to e.g. the Selby Site/Bull Lane, and Lordship Rec were successfully reversed). Sites needing proper designation include Pinkham Way, Hornsey Wetlands, Bruce Grove Cloud Garden.

- **Haringey Climate Forum:** Meeting about the Local Plan and its Climate policies, 13 November 7pm at Alexandra House.
- **Fields in Trust:** Council policy (as established 10 years ago) is that all designated green spaces noted in Local Plan (approx 60) are to be given covenants ensuring permanent legal protection from any inappropriate development or commercialisation. Therefore in Local Plan, every public green space MUST be in there. The Council (Parks Service and Legal Dept) have been dragging their feet, failing to properly implement this policy except for around only a dozen sites so far. Simon Farrow said a year ago that the policy still applies, so needs to update the Forum on progress with this. Meanwhile all groups should call for immediate action for their site.
- **SINCS:** Our Conservation Officer Annabel has still not agreed to the meeting with Friends Groups we've needed and asked for for the last 3 years. Her Line Manager is Alex Fraser. Among many other key issues to discuss, we need to know that green spaces are being properly advocated for.
- **Playgrounds:** 8 playgrounds in parks in Tottenham and Wood Green are being refurbished this winter with 'planning gain' funding from urban development. 4 x £250k. 4 x £150k. There has been extensive online public consultation and discussions with the relevant Friends Groups. Other sites also need similar investment.
- **Commercial events:** As everyone know, the Government continues to fail to fund public services properly, especially Local Council services. Instead of all Councils collectively and effectively pressurising the Government, they are all desperately seeking each year to reduce services and to sell off public assets and commercialise. The Friends of Finsbury Park have had to oppose the highly controversial, divisive and damaging mass commercial events in Finsbury Park (which mean that huge chunks of the park are fenced off for weeks on end during the summer). We have always supported the Friends campaigning around this. They had some success in at least getting a legal ruling that all moneys raised must be ringfenced for use in Finsbury Park (due to its special status as having been set up by an Act of Parliament). However, such money is not used by the Council as additional funding for the chronically small budget for Haringey's parks, but as an excuse to cut the equivalent amount from the overall parks budget, which means that Finsbury Park is sacrificed and the underfunding crisis continues with falling staffing levels and maintenance budgets. The Council sometimes gets access to capital funding for equipment, but this doesn't cover the essential day to day staffing and maintenance needs across the borough.

Now for the first time these inappropriate mass commercial events, which could be held in any number of appropriate commercial venues throughout London, are being proposed for other Haringey green spaces. The Friends of Lordship Rec, who co-manage and co-maintain Lordship Rec in partnership with the parks service, strongly opposed a proposal for a 4-day beer festival next July, which would result in their main field (which they help manage and have created extensive grassland areas) being sealed off from the public for over a week during the prime time of the year. As a result the proposal was withdrawn, but it is now proposed for the Downhills Park sports field.

Update: The Council have come back with another proposal for Lordship Rec, for a private commercial gig in July costing approx £60 entry, which if allowed to go ahead would result in the main field being fenced off for 10 days. The Friends are now strongly opposing this as well.

Agreed: The Forum unanimously agreed to support any Friends Group opposing any event at their own site which they consider to be inappropriate or unacceptable.

- **Haringey Year of Culture / Rebel Borough in 2027:** Haringey has been designated London's 'Borough of Culture' for 2027, with a £1.3m grant from the Mayor of London. A key theme in the promotion is 'Haringey: The Rebel Borough'. Everybody can take part – don't have to wait for the Council or funding. Lots of funding may be available for related activities, including from the Council (who have set up

a charity to manage this), the Arts Council, Lottery etc. Joan attended a funding meeting at Bernie Grant Arts Centre. Deborah spoke about Hull benefitting from its being designated as a City of Culture. Haringey Community Action Network (to whom we are affiliated) held a special meeting about this which Dave attended as our rep. They are keen to promote the 'Rebel Borough' theme, with an emphasis on grassroots organisations, campaigns and movements standing up for the needs of those who live or work in Haringey. This includes not just celebrating our current activities, but also our history. For example, Friends Groups efforts to protect and improve green spaces over the last 25 years – including successful campaigns against development threats to Downhills Park, White Hart Rec, Bull Lane, Lordship Rec and Ally Pally. It was noted that there's a long radical history around parks going back more than 100 years – many parks were originally created and saved from being built over due to lobbying and petitions by local residents campaigns.

- **Community Networks:** Dave worked with the Haringey Community Collaborative to organise a borough-wide meeting to showcase and promote Haringey's independent grassroots community networks – their importance and effectiveness. It was really good. Joan explained about our Friends of Parks Forum. Dave spoke about the Haringey Community Centres Network. Others spoke about the Turkish/Kurdish Network, the Haringey Community Food Network, Haringey Community Action Network etc. There's also the Friends of Reading and Education (for library Friends Groups), the Haringey Allotments Forum, Haringey Federation of Residents Associations etc etc.
- **Sustainable Haringey:** Pamela distributed information about the Sustainable Haringey network and Community Energy projects.

PART 2 - Council officers joined the meeting at 11am -----

BRIEF REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

The Paddock: The nature reserve is being expanded to cover adjacent land. Contract for next phase of work not yet started: renewing footpaths, changing layout, discouraging people for going into wildlife places.

Tower Gardens Park: Successful AGM in October. Have raised £400 in donations to make some improvements including a pollinator-friendly flower bed. Swings removed due to repairs needed are still not replaced – play equipment has been promised, potentially from equipment no longer needed at other sites being upgraded. Into-University runs the building in the small park – lot of young people access educational services there. Friends Group planning to make funding applications. Want to improve the nature trail. At one entrance there is inappropriate chunky gravel – bad for wheels/accessibility. At AGM decided to replace it themselves. Lots of good feedback from people with buggies + dogs.

Priory Common including Orchard: Orchard area thriving. Group does litter picking, pruning, and manages 7 noticeboards.

Lordship Rec: Circulated annual report before their recent AGM. Have Site Map showing their 6 working groups and other volunteering opportunities – all groups and their maintenance efforts going well. Their annual Tottenham Flower and Produce Festival was a big success – 1,000 attended and lovely atmosphere despite some heavy rain showers. Friends opposing inappropriate commercial events being imposed on the park. Parks service maintenance in the park continues to deteriorate alarmingly. The Hub community centre/café lost money during summer due to £140k essential repairs being done. Hub have launched a public fundraising appeal to cover some of the losses. *Update: £7k successfully raised.*

Belmont Rec: Fairly new group - going strong. Have developed their own Community Master Plan. New mini-forest going well. Differences of opinion about new Multi-Use Games Area which the Council has funding to install but wasn't in the Friends plans. Original consultation seemed to get positive feedback from young people. Widespread counter-feeling that it may be inappropriate for such a small park and that further consultation is needed. Adjacent residents worried about noise and potential anti-social behaviour. There's a petition. There are already 2 MUGAs nearby (in Downhills and Lordship Rec). Council have

proposed various places within Belmont to position it, but no option to reject it. Friends are taking a neutral view. Council seem determined to go ahead.

Priory Park: The gardening group goes from strength to strength with approx 20 members. There are usually around 10 people at Sunday's weekly session. They also supervise regular litter picks which attract family groups with small children who receive certificates and wear special small Hi-Viz. Following damage to the 4m high Sundial in July (combination of wet rot and vandalism) it was in danger of snapping / falling over. Friends have worked closely with Elite Transformations (who crafted the Sundial) to save and repair it. Following wood-hardening and hole-filling traditional methods using rope and glue have combined with industrial-strength hose clips and chains to straighten and support it. Friends have also been working with Elite Transformations for 3 months on the 4 Embankment Stones gifted to the Friends in May 2025 by the City of London. This has been very physical and technical work (granite is the hardest rock to carve / chisel). It is therefore expensive in terms of time (hours worked), equipment (angle grinders, specialist chisels) and materials (sanding discs, acid solutions and sealant). However, the end result will be sitting stones of a comfort and appearance level worthy of their historic and geological significance! They plan to "unveil" the stones in April to kick-off the Priory Park Centenary. A Birthday Party in June is also planned as part of the Crouch End Festival. In addition they wish to build a stage around the St Paul's Fountain for multiple events over 2 years (includes Haringey Year of Culture in 2027). A meeting is planned for 18th November to set up a Committee.

Noel Park / Russell Park: Noel Park FROGS (Friends of Green Spaces covering Russell Park and also around the estate) are a relatively new group. Also, they work with a new Friends of Russell Hub (café building in the park) – urgently need to extend the lease, so lobbying the Council about that. On the estate FROGS help promote the big tree in centre of one of the roads, there before the estate was built – have added lights on tree. Got a small grant for planters from the National Park City Foundation. Consultations re Russell Park about improving one of the entrances. Ongoing debate with Haringey legal team re the 20ft shipping container used for storage by the Friends. Its been there 4-5 years. Legal dept suddenly proposed to charge the Friends £1150 just to keep it there! They help maintain 'Floyds Memorial Garden'. Need some new noticeboards, and identification of water points in park. Need more litter bins – still waiting. Issues with mesh fence and sensory play equipment.

Nightingale Gardens: Local resident proposed a 'wish tree' – the Residents Association gardens working group (which act as a Friends Group for the green space) have agreed. Will draft a notice and people can tie ribbons. Children like it. Awaiting a date for TCV volunteers to start work on a 'Dingle Dell' area. Waiting for woodchip to put on the paths. Trying to have just 2 paths, rather than lots zigzagging through what is a small area. Will do some dead-hedging. Problem with fly-tipping and rough sleeping (leaving a lot of rubbish). People complaining about rats - group litter pick twice per week. Watering 10 new trees and think they were saved during the dry spell – worth the effort. Great community response to the stealing of border plants (about one third stolen). A good thing has come out of it – many donations.

Hornsey Church Tower: Report sent round our list. Problems with car parked on path in garden of remembrance. Commemorated 75th anniversary of Hornsey's Garden of Remembrance – 9th November 2025 at 4pm. Fundraising to repair dwarf walls and repainting. Churchyard official Management Agreement – continuing to try to get it signed. An issue around rubbish collection: Veolia pick within a metre of the path – only twice per month. 'Private' land, but land managed by council. Gardening sessions twice per month – low numbers, so may change days.

Tottenham Cemetery: Maintenance company have 50 year lease from the Council. But the original Management Plan ran out years ago and has not been updated – a serious problem for the Council and the Friends. This is despite years of extensive efforts from the Friends about this, and their efforts to improve maintenance. Very frustrating.

Bruce Castle Park: The Council have had the popular benches removed which were adjacent to the park by the community-run pub. A new Agreement is being negotiated. The playground and the Multi-Use Games Area are both being substantially upgraded.

Parkland Walk: Lots of positive Friends' activities continue. Stone throwing off a bridge into the nature reserve is a huge issue. Possible installation of CCTV. Ongoing challenge over cycling / pedestrian conflict - need clearer signage / enforcement. It is a nature reserve so want it to be very clear walking has priority. Path repairs are OK to be done in patches.. now puddle season, so impassable or path gets wider. Will work with council on interpretation boards. Encroachment issues not being dealt with despite Friends efforts over the last few years to get the Council to protect public land from being stolen. Boundary vegetation between park and highway – whose job to clear?

Brunswick Park: Swing replacement awaited. Rough sleeping reported by Friends – much more focus from council and police. Volunteering is a challenge as they are only a small group. Meadow trial – seems to have been abandoned by the Council. Car park fencing has gaps wide enough for cars to enter the park. Friends put some netting up but Council needs to sort out.

White Hart Lane Rec: Wood Green Boys Club intend to refurbish the derelict club house. Would like football to get going again. Having conversations with adjacent White Hart Lane School. Basketball sessions with a view to further engagement. Would like to talk to nearby Friends of Woodside Park – to establish connection and cooperation. Whole park needs investment and care.

Paignton Park: Playground refurbishment this winter. Children's litter poster competition. Friends do regular monthly litter pick. Someone has unfortunately strimmed a whole line of shrubbery by the Tiny Forest and just piled it up in the Community Square with litter in it. The job was done badly. Chris P confirmed that it was not done by the Council, plus the regular gardener works to a higher standard.

Manchester Gardens: Friends do regular monthly litter pick. But they continue to struggle with serious anti-social behaviour resulting in a lot of very disgusting waste (human excrement, drug paraphenalia, eg needles, condoms, lots of food & drink waste, used tissues). They are trying as a community via the Residents' Association (VCRA) to take a multi-agency approach working with HAGA, St Mungos, the police, parks enforcement officer, police ward panel, but need more support. It is noticeable that people do not report ASBs to the police, but to Love Clean Streets, so that info needs to be shared with the police (as the police seem to need reports to target a problem area). They have spoken about this to Chris P and the Ward Panel, however, so far, they understand the information has not been shared across the agencies.

Coldfall Wood: The new wildflower meadow on playing field has been scarified and cut successfully. Primary school children will do some seed planting. The Friends organising the usual walks eg. mindful, fungi etc. Developing a new Management Plan for the ancient woodland – aiming to diversify the limited number of species of trees. Playground for little children – equipment very run-down and will be removed, but when will it be replaced? New group is planned to champion the playing fields area.

Other: Reports from other groups about their site were circulated to the email list.

COUNCIL RESPONSES TO THE REPORTS ABOVE

The Paddock: Chris Patterson is on the case. **Tower Gardens:** New climbing frames and swings should be going in by March - just working on contractor paperwork. Gravel – it was immediately clear 2 years ago when it went in that it was the wrong grade. Jake to look at it. Just needs smaller gravel. **Lordship Rec:** Complaint noted re proposed commercial event. **Belmont Rec:** Anna P leading on MUGA / play zone. David T aware of concerns. **Priory Park:** Chris to send sketch to get ok for platform around fountain. Would like someone from parks service to go along to Centenary events planning meeting. **Russell Park:** Property dept now deal with all of leases. If you are already in a lease, regardless of it coming to an end, should be ok to continue. More bins - there is the opportunity to place 25 more bins the borough this year. Apparently there's no water points in west side of hub. **Hornsey Church Tower:** Church grounds management plan is with people who need to review it. Glynis talked with Veolia. If litter pickers notice more, then they have to escalate it. Abandoned or parked car – will get fixed penalty notice. **Nightingale Gardens:** Hotspot escalated and Homeless Support Team will investigate. Rats: is it due to the New River? Unapproved entrances to parks via back garden fences – Parks Service is now dealing with it across the borough. **Bruce Castle Park/Antwerp Arms benches:** Community engagement underway re croci beds and benches. Ramp suggested for accessibility. **Tottenham Cemetery:** Will pick up lack of Management

Plan with Annabel F. **Parkland Walk:** Signage and CCTV being discussed. **Brunswick Park:** Needs targetted and focused activity. The issue seems to be more about ASB than homelessness. New swing will go in. Meadow – will pass on – should be followed up. Fencing to prevent car access – Glynis will take back. **White Hart Lane Rec:** Great re pavilion refurbishment. Plus cafe? Process for a lease? That would be change of use. **Woodside Park:** Friends active membership has changed – see their facebook page. **Paignton Park:** Parks operation teams will be keeping an eye. Concerted patrolling. **Manchester Gardens:** Parks Enforcement Officer doing a lot of work trying to engage with HAGA & St Mungos. Chris P involved too – some ideas next week. **Coldfall Woods:** Play area – also identified some of the equipment that will go in. Some elements in older children's playground identified as high risk. **Ducketts Common:** Will get some equipment which will have been taken out of those playgrounds being refurbished.

OTHER REPORTS AND ISSUES

- **Waste collection:** Noted that Forum has had no reply regarding its 10 practical proposals and that the Forum view is that therefore the status quo applies – ie no new charges to FGs for litter removal, no charges to the parks service for our litter picking.
- **Playgrounds Re-furb:** All will be done including equipment transfers by end March
- **Water:** The cost of a new water supply within a park is roughly 'to tee' £10k. Even if pipes do need replacing, if not metered, would need a new line. Someone would have to pay for that water. So the Council tends to use the water truck. However, Deborah pointed out that this was very much needed for the Tiny Forest in Paignton Park, but in the end only came once, which meant water had to be ferried by Friends' car, as the new plants were turning brown. Apparently, also the new tiny trees would have been planted in the Autumn. A Forum discussion on watering will be scheduled for the future. Joan sees a lot of funding pots to address climate change – could we all go for this together? Glynis – 7 parks possibly get water support. Finsbury Park does already have a tap, which is also used for dog hydration.
- **Conservation:** Noted there's been no progress re joint meeting with Annabel. She is link between parks service & local plan.
- **Underfunding:** London Councils have calculated they are £8 billion under-resourced. It was suggested Councils should organise mass protests. Glynis says council workers are told to remain 'neutral'. But of course their Unions should be organising such protests. We noted that neither staff nor Friends Groups can achieve what we want to achieve without proper levels of funding. We agreed to support any such national protests to protect and properly fund green spaces.
- **Staffing updates:** None as yet
- **Rebel Borough / Year of Culture 2027:** The Council's People in Parks grants will be a good opportunity to shine a light on what groups have achieved and are achieving. Maybe the parks service and Forum can encourage and promote a calendar of events for 2027. Groups not so confident about applying can signal to Glynis/Emma. Emma said that the People Need Parks pot will probably use the same criteria.
- **Commercial events:** Concern noted re pressure from Council to spread such events further than Finsbury Park. Also note concern for charging for things that weren't charged for before. Council recognises that Friends Groups contribute over £400k worth of volunteering every year and in addition bring in almost as much in grants and fundraising.
- **Safety for Women & Girls:** Young Women's Network monthly activities.
- **Bulbs:** No bulbs available this year from the parks service – no budget for it.