



Friends of West Ham Park

Friends of West Ham Park Meeting & Annual General Meeting

Thursday 8th July 2021 at 7:00pm
Bandstand West Ham Park

GENERAL MEETING

Attendees

Roger Jones (Chair), Ron Innell (Vice Chair) Ricky O'Garro (Team Leader, West Ham Park), Lucy Stowell-Smith, Alan Cooper, John Rands, Pat Mossop, Helen Mossop, Nicky Brown, Joel Farrell, Charlotte Cook, Pearl Saunders, Marion Innell, Lucia Rios Steele, Hani Ahmad, Marlene Sidaway, Mary Edmondson, Su Levers, Lyndsay Jones.

Apologies

Jules Maurice-Williams, Jim Holt, Hilary Rands, Tracey Zanelli, Eugene Czauderna.

Introduction

Roger welcomed everyone to our first "face to face" meeting since the start of the pandemic. He particularly welcomed Lucy, the former Park Manager, and Ricky who has agreed to represent the Park Management until the post is filled, which may be some time, as the City of London currently has a ban on recruitment.

Lucy thanked everyone for the support she has received from FWHP during her six years as Manager. She will follow us on social media, with particular interest in the progress of the playground project.

Roger returned thanks on behalf of FWHP and wished Lucy well for the future.

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting on 25th March 2021 were agreed as a true record.

FWHP activities and recent events

Roger stated that he considers FWHP have achieved a lot in the past year, in spite of the restriction imposed by the pandemic.

Vegetable Garden

Su reported that more volunteers have joined the group, and it is hoped to open the garden more as restrictions ease.

Wildlife Garden

Lyndsay reported that we have worked to keep the paths clear and control the duckweed on the pond. We now need to know how the garden is to be used, and what work to prioritise, as nature is getting the better of us!

Fothergill Exhibition

Mary reported that the opening of the exhibition had gone really well. Alison Steadman had been very complementary about both the exhibition and the park, and had been welcoming to all who approached her. Many people were delighted to have the chance to meet her. Mary thanks to Marlene for arranging for Alison to visit and perform the official opening.

Playground Project landscaping

Hani reported that the many hours spent on the grant request for Newham Community Assembly

Grants have paid off, as the project has qualified for the public vote. We need to alert everyone on our mailing list to register to vote, and support the park.

Heritage Lottery Fund Application

Hani has not progressed with this. There seems to be some confusion over the current state of funding for the playground upgrade. After discussion it was agreed that Roger, Alan and Mary would look into this. *Post meeting note – it had been concluded the project would not qualify for this grant scheme and further research on grant options would be made.*

Bird Surveys

Lyndsay reported that the survey team is now down to four members, and thanked Alison for taking on extra areas so that the survey is still complete.

Litter Picking

Ron reported that there had been a lot of enthusiasm for this. Further events will be planned.

Food Bank

Dates for future collections were discussed.

New Website and Logo

Roger thanked Nicky and Jim for their work on these, both now up and running and attracting new members.

Conservation Status of the Park

London Wildlife Trust have made a visit and consider that WHP should be raised to “Borough Importance” as a wildlife site. We do not need any more expensive survey work, although there will be some cost involved. Roger will take this forward with Ricky and Martin Rodman.

Hedgehogs

Pat reported that the monitoring tunnels and food will cost £51.00. It was agreed to fund this. We will need to agree a rota to set up and check the tunnels and food. The tunnels will be installed as soon as possible. Pat will take this forward.

Affiliation with Other Groups

Contact had been maintained with LFGN group – they were featuring some of our work in future publications/social media posts.

Newham Voices

This new local paper has asked us to provide a regular column about the park. Nicky has already submitted one about the Fothergill Exhibition. After discussion it was agreed that Roger will send out a rota detailing who will write about what, and for which dates.

Future Meetings

It was agreed to hold future meetings by Zoom for the foreseeable future. The next meetings will be 23rd SEPTEMBER and 25th NOVEMBER 2021.

Future Events

If pandemic regulations allow:

Bat Walks 27th August and 24th September

Leaf Pile 7th November

Park in the Dark 3rd December

Working parties in the Wildlife Garden. Roger asked if anyone could do a weekday, 5th August was suggested and was subsequently confirmed.

Treasurer's Report

Marion reported that we have £2011.75, which includes £1300 remaining from the grant for the Fothergill Exhibition. Mary and Lyndsay will contact the Learning Team regarding using this money to provide educational materials.

Park Update

Ricky reported that it has been a very difficult year for the Park Keepers, with staff absent for shielding, and a huge increase in numbers using the park. This resulted in a lot of extra rubbish and higher disposal costs. There was some anti-social behaviour and flouting of COVID guidelines, which required help from the Police. In spite of this the Green Flag and Green Heritage awards were retained. The Gardeners were also able to retain the Gold Award for London in Bloom for 2020.

Ricky thanked FWHP for our help in opening the park and litter picking in July and August 2020.

Most staff are now back at work, but there has been a 12% cut in the budget. This is partly offset by a rise in the rent obtained from the TA site, but overall it is still a reduction.

New vehicles have been purchased which are less polluting than those which required replacement.

Use of electric scooters in the park is a challenge. The keepers are stopping users where possible.

MANAGEMENT CHANGES As previously mentioned, there is a recruitment embargo, plus an instruction to do "only what is needed". This means that the funfair will not take place. It is hoped to appoint an interim supervisor from amongst existing staff and to have a new staff structure in place, City wide, by 31st March 2022.

NURSERY SITE. The following statement was made:-

"West Ham Park is a charitable trust that runs at no cost to the communities that it serves and is funded principally by the City of London Corporation, together with grants, trading income, donations, and sponsorship.

"West Ham Park nursery is a secure area used partly for operational purposes. Large parts of the secure area are redundant having been formerly used as a nursery, which closed in 2016.

"The trust is currently exploring options for the future of the site. Some of these options include an additional area of parkland, community facilities such as additional changing rooms for sports and potentially a community café. However, key to the decisions being made by the Trustees will be the potential for the site to provide an invaluable funding source for the future management and maintenance of West Ham Park Charity, ultimately ensuring the Charity is financially sustainable long into the future. Some of the options therefore include the potential for housing, as you will have seen in the local press.

"The Friends of West Ham Park and other local residents attended an engagement session in December 2019, held at the Forest Gate Library, at which Park's officers presented the options being explored. As we are sure you will appreciate, further engagement has been curtailed by the Coronavirus pandemic, however there will be more opportunities for local stakeholders to engage with the project in Spring 2022, to help shape the new park facilities. The community will also have the opportunity to feedback on future proposals for the whole of the site as part of the planning process."

FWHP formal position in respect of future use of the nursery site

After a discussion the following resolution was adopted:

The Friends of West Ham Park want to see the nursery site become public open space whilst retaining and improving the necessary operational buildings and facilities. We will strongly oppose any alternative proposition.

London in Bloom inspection

This will take place on 23rd July between 10.00 and 12.00. FWHP will be represented by Roger, and Eugene will represent the Vegetable Gardeners.

AOB

Roger suggested the development of a contact list of groups interested in the FWHP activities and the future of the nursery site. Alan and Nicky agreed to take this forward.

We have decided to create a sub-committee to handle the nursery site, separate from regular FWHP activities. This will be chaired by Jules, who will contact members separately.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

Chairman's Annual Report

Roger introduced his report. The report covers two years as we agreed in Summer 2020 to extend the term of office of all the group's officials until 2021 AGM, due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic.

In spite of the restrictions created by the pandemic the group had achieved a lot of success –

- Major contribution to the operation of the park during summer 2020 through daily opening up and litter picking for the months of July and August. This was through 14 trained volunteers from the group on a rota. This had been much appreciated by both staff and park users with many positive comments received.
- The planning, installation and opening of our new exhibition in the rose garden 'The Kew Gardens of the East, celebrating the botanical history of the park. Alison Steadman had opened the exhibition on 4th July, with representatives of City of London, Newham BC, park users and members of the Friends present.
- The group had a new logo and website.
- The vegetable garden, health walks and bird surveys had continued throughout the pandemic period.
- Food bank collections had taken place in October, December and April.
- A number of successful litter picking events had been held.
- Maintenance of the Wildlife Garden had continued.

There were, though, down sounds to reflect on –

- The Group had lost a long time supporter Abdul Karim Sheikh, who died from COVID during Spring 2020.
- We have been unable to hold any events with the public
- City of London has finally announced their outline proposals for the nursery site, which we will oppose.

On balance we have achieved a lot in spite of the restrictions caused by the pandemic and added value to the local community.

He thanked the group for all the help and support they had so willingly given. The respect and esteem with which the group is held by The City of London, Newham BC and the local communities is reflection of our capabilities and approach, which we should all be proud of.

Appointment of Shadow Chair

After discussion, it was agreed that a shadow chair should work with Roger for the next year, to fully understand the issues facing FWHP at present. This person would then become Chairman at the 2022 AGM.

Election of designated roles within FWHP

This was conducted by Ricky O'Garro.

CHAIR

Roger Jones. Proposed by Charlotte, seconded by Marion, elected unopposed

SHADOW CHAIR

Alan Cooper proposed by Roger. Charlotte Cook proposed by Marion and seconded by Alan who was only prepared to stand in the absence of any other volunteer. Elected unopposed.

DEPUTY CHAIR

Ron Innell. Proposed by Roger, seconded by Alan, elected unopposed.

TREASURER

Marion Innell. Proposed by Lyndsay, seconded by Helen, elected unopposed.

EVENTS MANAGER AND EDUCATOR. It was suggested that this role be split, as we now have a qualified teacher in the group who could better deal with educational matters.

EDUCATION LIAISON MANAGER

Lucia Rios Steels was asked to stand and agreed.

EVENTS MANAGER

Lyndsay Jones was proposed, nominated by Marion , seconded by Roger, elected unopposed.

NURSERY SITE CAMPAIGN CO-ORDINATOR

Jules Maurice-Williams. Proposed by Roger, seconded by Alan, elected unopposed.

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Nicky Brown. Proposed by Helen, seconded by Marion, elected unopposed.

MEETINGS SECRETARY

Lyndsay Jones. Proposed by Helen, seconded by Roger, elected unopposed.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Ron Innell. Proposed by Nicky, seconded by Mary, elected unopposed.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm and was followed by a short social get together.