



# Friends of West Ham Park

## Friends of West Ham Park Meeting & Annual General Meeting

Thursday 14th July 2022 at 7:00pm  
Bandstand West Ham Park

### GENERAL MEETING

#### Attendees

Charlotte Cook (Shadow Chair, CC), Ron Innell (Vice Chair, RI), Marion Innell (Treasurer, MI), Ricky O'Garro (Park Supervisor, ROG), Lucia Rios Steele (LRS), Helen McGrath (HM), Colm McGrath (CM), Eugene Czauderna (EC), Nicky Brown (NB), Pearl Saunders (PS), Uta Saatz, Marlene Sidaway (MS), Mark Rosenberg, Zoë Flynn (ZF), Alan Cooper

#### Apologies

Roger Jones (Chair, RJ), Lindsay Jones (LJ), Joel Farrell, Mary Edmonson (ME), Jim Holt, Helen Mossop, Stephanie Horne, Jules Maurice-Williams

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### 1. Welcome and introduction

CC (Shadow Chair) welcomed everyone and kicked off the meeting, standing in for Roger Jones (outgoing Chair) who couldn't be at the meeting. CC thanked HM for taking the Minutes in place of LJ.

### 2. Agree minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 7 April were agreed as a true record.

### 3. Park Update from Park Supervisor

ROG provided an update on a number of current initiatives.

#### a. Playground project update

There are currently 15 people working to get the playground completed in time for the informal opening on 22 July (still on track for this date). They are putting down surfacing at the moment and are going to work over the weekend to get this done.

Due to the weather (high temperatures), the planting won't be completed now, and instead will be completed in September / the Autumn. When it is planting time, ROG will look for volunteers from the Friends and the Scouts. The plants will be on a tropical / jungle theme, and they are looking to use from a number of different countries. They have managed to squeeze the costs of the planting into left over budget.

The official playground opening is planned for September, but the date hasn't been finalised yet.

#### b. Plans for events in 2022

There is not much planned for the remainder of 2022 as the park is fairly short staffed. The park is hosting the Newham Unlocked Festival on Saturday 17 September between 12pm and 6pm. ROG and his team are working with Newham on this, and the application is being assessed currently. The event itself will be run by Newham.

The Festival will involve a celebration of performing arts, music, dance, theatre and comedy. There will also be arts and crafts; learning and making workshops, a roller rink; and pop up stalls with street food and Newham Community Kitchen. They are expecting ~3000 people to attend.

ZF commented that this replaced what Newham used to do in Central Park in East Ham., and CC asked if the event would be hosted in West Ham Park from now on.

ROG explained that the organisers were still unsure, and were thinking they might move the event around parks in Newham. West Ham Park is an attractive venue as it is centrally based and accessible.

LRS suggested that the Friends have an information stand / stall at the event, to which the other Friends agreed. ROG to confirm who to speak to about arranging a stand.

*c. Green Flag and London in Bloom judging*

Green Flag judging took place two weeks ago. There were two judges, and the judging went very well - both judges were very impressed with the work they are doing in the park, including the work of the Friends supporting the park (thanks to RI and EC who supported on the judging).

London in Bloom judging took place the day before the meeting. Again, the judges were highly impressed (despite weather conditions and the impact on the park!). They were overwhelmed by the rose garden and the new planting by the totem pole.

Results for Green Flag are expected at the end of the week / early next week, with London in Bloom results due in August. Both sets of judges were very impressed and the Friends group has definitely helped in getting high marks.

*d. Operational Review Update and staff changes*

ROG explained that he doesn't yet have an update on this. At the end of August / early Autumn ROG expects to know more about what's going to happen. ROG expects limited changes for West Ham Park as it is already down to bare bones staffing. Larger sites may be more impacted.

ROG also updated that Mr Gentry will be moving departments to the Surveyors and Security Department. ROG is not sure if / when he will be replaced - it may be that any decision on this happens as part of the Operational Review in the autumn.

CC updated that the Friends have been asked to be involved in the Operational Review and will also update on that in due course.

ROG concluded by thanking the Friends for all the hard work and effort put in to keep the park running and amazing for everyone.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

MI provided the Treasurer's Report. The Friends account is healthy and up to date, and stands at £1778.96 in credit.

CC queried if there were any applications for grants this year that we should be alert to / looking out for. The Friends general feeling was that we should apply for grants ad hoc as we need it / have a project to attach an application to.

#### **5. Summary of current and recent activities**

*a. "Spring in the park" joint event with local RSPB Group 1st May*

CC provided an update on the Spring in the Park event on behalf of RJ. This successful event looked at trees and birds in the park and was jointly led by EC and Alison Gibson (representing the RSPB). There was a stall, which was well attended. About 40 people took part.

*b. Vegetable Garden and Queen's Jubilee celebration event 2nd June*

EC provided an update on the Vegetable Garden and the Queen's Jubilee celebrations.

Jubilee Event - EC thanked the Friends for all the help on the event and reported that the event went well. Around 100 children and a similar number of adults attended. EC and Su would like to do something similar again but it did take a lot of organisation and preparation, especially as Su had to grow plants from seeds.

The Friends agreed that it would be nice to host a similar event next year. It was tentatively agreed that we would target late spring / early summer, and CC confirmed that she would add this to the agenda for discussion in the February Friends meeting to allow sufficient time to organise volunteers and to prepare.

ROG offered the use of Greenhouse No. 1 for plants / seedlings, and MI suggested potentially selling plants at a very small amount.

Vegetable Garden - EC explained that they had hosted a couple of school groups. There is varying interest from the kids but they are trying to get them more involved and have been quite successful. Strawberry plants were particularly good for that. More generally about 10 volunteers come regularly. There is lots of watering right now due to the weather, but they are successfully keeping it going.

EC ended with a request for a few less snails and squirrels!

*c. Fothergill exhibition events with Forest Gate Arts Group*

CC provided an update from ME.

- The Central Grants Unit of the City of London (CoL) has asked for a monitoring report on the project by August, no date specified. We are required to attach the financial transactions so I will be in touch with MI on this.
- The playground panel will not be ready for the informal opening of the playground due to the lead time required by Fitzpatrick Woolmer to make the panel, and the time required to complete the design by our illustrator Salvatore Rubbino, who is a professional, generously giving us his work for free. Aim is to be ready for the formal opening expected in September. Meanwhile ROG has proposed a lovely structure on which to attach the panel and will be able to install this in readiness.
- We were in consultation with the CoL Learning Team until November 2021 about developing materials for use in local schools, springing from the Fothergill Project. However, communications then ceased and the lead person left her post. It now appears that the materials have been produced without our further input. This work was a part of our grant submission under the community involvement section, so this is a bit unfortunate.
- Our partnership with two local art projects has been positive. Frames of Mind, an impressive local charity, have funding from CoL for a creative digital art project using the Fothergill exhibition as a springboard (<https://framesofmind.uk/from-the-ground-up-project-update/>, more below). ME gave a Fothergill walk and talk session in the rose garden for their group, which was hugely enjoyable. Forest Gate community garden have a Heritage Lottery fund grant which they are using to explore the Fothergill story and his plants with a series of art classes and talks. I was due to do a talk today in the gardens, but the artist has Covid-19, so it was cancelled. ME is giving a Fothergill talk at the community garden on 3rd September.
- ME proposed that the friends should consider our own 'Fothergill story' walks which would cover the plants, the current planting in the ornamental garden and the history. Would need volunteers to make this work. CC will check in on timings with ME for these walks in September

#### *d. Frames of Mind update*

ZF gave an update from Frames of Mind.

After a long delay to the From the Ground Up project due to Covid, Frames Of Mind have successfully re-connected with residents of Hamara Ghar, Newham's Supported Housing Scheme and delivered three well attended and very much enjoyed, guided walks in West Ham Park and a picnic:

- 23/03/22 -Spring Walk - lead by head gardener Peter Hansen.
- 08/06/22 Rose Garden Fothergill Heritage Walk kindly lead by Mary Edmondson.
- 13/07/22 Summer Social Picnic.

These walks have inspired personal and creative responses which have been realised as digital art, creative photography, stop frame animation and audio recordings. This material will be edited and curated by Frames Of Mind to be exhibited as a QR exhibition. The QR codes will be located on benches in locations which relate to the material produced ie Rose Garden, opposite N. American Planting, Opposite cricket crease, near Margery Park Road Gate, Park pathway intersection. There will be 5-6 QR codes in total. Exhibition launch - Spring March '23.

#### *e. Bird surveys*

CC gave an update from LJ. These continue to go well with some interesting sightings.

#### *f. Wildlife Garden Maintenance*

CC gave an update from LJ. The new cornfield wildflower display has been a great success. RI added that Green Flag had been very impressed with this.

#### *g. Health Walks*

RI reported that the Health Walks were going well. Covid had reduced their numbers - only 5 out of 15 prior participants returned post Covid. They are currently walking with 7 to 8 people every Wednesday under the Park flag (as the Ramblers have discontinued Health Walks).

The group has been approached by Newham Mental Health, who currently walk between 10 and 11am, and have asked if they can join up with the Friends. They are talking to their walkers to see if they can do 11am starts instead of 10am and are planning on joining on 27 July for their first walk. They expect up to 6 of their people will join with the walk.

ZF flagged that she would refer people from Stratford Library to our walk.

#### *h. Litter picking*

RI reported that litter picking was not going too badly - 5 bags had been collected the previous Sunday!

CC proposed another weekend litter pick event for the public. The Friends agreed to run a litter pick every Sunday in August from 10am-12pm. 3 or 4 volunteers would be needed to man the table outside the playground and distribute litter pickers and bags. CC agreed to follow up with RI on the rota and to complete an "Operation in the Park" form.

### **6. 2022 Programme and activities**

#### *a. Playground refurbishment – signage, display panels and planting*

- In addition to the earlier update, ROG flagged that the playground would be retaining the Orangutans as features used for photos in the larger beds. They couldn't be replaced as swings as no-one manufactures those anymore.
- LRS flagged that the kids would love to be involved in the re-opening, and the Friends also discussed the potential for a local celebrity.
- ROG will keep the friends updated on timings and dates.

*b. Linking West Ham Park to other green spaces – Great Eastern Parks Route – walk event on 30th July*

- i. CC updated that the Project Manger for the concept is arranging a walk along part of the proposed route, including through West Ham Park, with local authority members and Officials and members of the public. ROG and RJ will make a presentation to them and give them a tour of the park when they arrive about 2pm. If anyone wishes to join they will be most welcome.
- ii. ROG updated that RJ will be planting a tree for the Queen's Jubilee in the Ornamental Gardens for his extended services as Chair of the Friends. The tree is a Magnolia.

*c. Programme of FWHP events*

- i. CC led an update on the Friends 2022 programme and activities.
- ii. *Summer Fair -15th to 17th July* – FWHP involvement and social with other park user groups
  1. ROG informed the group that we would have a gazebo outside the fair. There are lots of rides this year and less community stalls..
  2. CC, LRS, RI and MI volunteered to man the stall on Sunday afternoon (2-6pm), and NB and EC volunteered to man it on Saturday.
  3. NB explained that we don't have any leaflets and flyers right now, but would look to dig out some old flyers and badges / stickers.
- iii. *Newham Heritage Month – history walks in the park*
  1. RI explained that the focus this year was the Olympics so we had not taken part in this year's event. The Friends agreed to start thinking about what to do next year, and the potential for 4 or 5 walks on different topics and themes.
- iv. *Bat Walks – 26th August & 23rd September*
  1. CC agreed to further liaise with LJ on dates and staffing, but RI confirmed that LJ will do one on 26th and RI will do one on 23rd September.
  2. RI explained that we would need 8 people / volunteers but no training needed.
  3. NB confirmed she would product leaflets once times are confirmed.
- v. *Leaf Pile – 6th November*
  1. CC noted this date for diaries.
  2. EC explained he had informally invited the Mayor at another event, who seemed enthusiastic but the Friends would need to send a formal invite.
- vi. *Park in the Dark – 2nd December*
  1. CC noted this date for diaries.
  2. RI confirmed that the Morrisons contact is unchanged since last year meaning that we will likely still be able to get some supplies for the event from them.
- vii. *Wildlife Garden maintenance*
  1. CC provided an update for LJ. LJ will arrange a further programme of working parties, commencing in August. She will be in touch with those who are normally involved but if anyone else wants to be involved they should shout.
- viii. *Food Bank collections*
  1. RI and MI confirmed that these used to be arranged with Tracy and Irene, but there had not been as much response last time they reached out.
  2. PS mentioned the Church in West Ham Lane which has contacts we can reach out to. PS confirmed she would talk to them.
  3. NB also mentioned that Tracy Zinelli had also worked with some foodbanks. LRS confirmed she would check with Tracy.
  4. ZF is also aware of some food banks on the Carpenters Estate and will provide contact details.
  5. LRS suggested this might be a nice thing for harvest time.

- d. Affiliation with other Groups.
  - i. CC provided an update for RJ, that RJ has continued to develop this but it can be a hard struggle to gain any interest and support. The emerging Friends group in Plashet Park might be a new ally. Our Friends Group is becoming increasingly well known and regarded across London.
  - ii. EC flagged that he is also involved in a network of community gardens and WhatsApp group.
- e. Other potential activities?
  - i. CC led a discussion on other potential activities. The following ideas were suggested:
    - Planting sessions
    - Art in the Park
    - Photography

## **7. Future Meetings (by Zoom). The next meetings will be 22nd SEPTEMBER and 24th NOVEMBER 2022.**

Going forward the Friends agreed to meet on the second Thursday of every other month at 7pm, and to continue holding meetings over Zoom.

## **8. Publicity and media**

- a. Newham Voices – programme for 2022
  - i. NB provided an update on the programme and articles for the remainder of the year. ME has already submitted the next article which will be on Fothergill and the playground.
  - ii. MS reported that she had heard an article about the Park (potentially Alan's) in the Newham talking newspaper for the blind. She shared contact details for the paper with NB who will look into getting articles published in the paper going forward (if OK with Newham Voices).
- b. Advertising forthcoming events – web/social/ in park leaflets
  - i. Once times are confirmed for the bat walk NB will put together advertising.
- c. Social media activity
  - i. NB reported that the Friends Facebook page is getting about 200-300 people on likes, with just under 2000 users from a reach perspective.
  - ii. We have 500 Instagram followers, and around 242 on the ailchimp email list.

## **9. AOB**

None

ZF and Alan Cooper left and did not attend the AGM.

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022**

### **1. Introduction and statement from retiring Chair**

CC read out a statement from RJ as retiring Chair.

“It's been a memorable five years

I am sorry I can't be with you in person to present my Annual Report and handover to Charlotte, as the new Chair of the Friends Group.

However, you will be pleased to hear I have not forgotten the Chair's now traditional gesture at the AGM and Ron and Marion have been shopping on my behalf to provide some refreshments.

It has been a privilege to lead the Group for the past 5 years. It has been, as they say, an 'interesting' five years. The COVID pandemic dominated and changed so many things, including the way we as a group operate. The high points, for me are the new Dr Fothergill exhibition in the Rose Garden and seeing so many people come back to our events in the park after the pandemic restrictions were eased. The low point must be the proposed

residential development on part of the nursery site.

Over the past year we have seen our events in wildlife observing, the leaf pile and Park in the Dark attract record crowds, reflecting how important our activities are to the communities the park serves. The Community Vegetable Garden has gone from strength to strength under Eugene's leadership.

COVID has shown the true value of this wonderful open space and all that it provides in such a built up environment. We have deepened our links with the network of organisations managing and promoting open spaces across London and made a start in developing potential green corridors to link West Ham Park to other open spaces. We have also started to build up our relationship with the new teams within City of London who are responsible for managing the park.

I feel proud to be handing over to Charlotte the leadership of a Friends Group, which is very well regarded, very professional in all that it does and has a high profile both in the local community and across London. Long may it continue!"

CC thanked Roger for his leadership.

## **2. Confirm Shadow Chair to be new Chair**

The Friends confirmed CC as the new Chair

## **3. Election of:**

### *a. Deputy Chair*

- i. Alan Cooper. Nominated by RI, seconded by EC and CM, elected unopposed.

### *b. Treasurer*

- i. Marion Innell. Nominated by CC, seconded by NB, elected unopposed.

### *c. Events Manager*

- i. Lindsay Jones. Nominated by CC, seconded by MI, elected unopposed.

### *d. Education Liaison*

- i. Lucia Rios Steele. Nominated by CC, seconded by MS, elected unopposed.

### *e. Nursery Site Campaign Co-ordinator*

- i. Jules Maurice-Williams. Nominated by CC, seconded by all other Friends attending, elected unopposed.

### *f. Communications Manager*

- i. Nicky Brown. Nominated by CC, seconded by LRS, elected unopposed.

### *g. External Liaison Manager*

- i. Roger Jones. Nominated by CC, seconded by MI, elected unopposed.

### *h. Meetings Secretary*

- i. Lindsay Jones. Nominated by CC, seconded by HM, elected unopposed.

### *i. Membership Secretary*

- i. Ron Innell. Nominated by CC, seconded by HM, elected unopposed.

The Friends also discussed if a role was needed for fundraising and grants. It was agreed that CC would reach out to Hani Ahmad who had helped the Friends on these in the past.

The meeting closed at 20:33 and was followed by a short social get together.

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