



Friends of West Ham Park

Friends of West Ham Park Meeting

Thursday 22nd September 2022 at 7:00pm
Meeting by Video Conference

Attendees

Charlotte Cook (Chair) Alan Cooper (Vice Chair) Ricky O'Garro (Park Supervisor), Roger Jones, Nicky Brown, Joel Farrell, Mary Edmondson, Uta Saatz, John Rands, Pearl Saunders, Jules Maurice-Williams, Ian Mowll, Mark Martel, Lucia Rios Steele, Des Blake, Stephania Horne (Park Superintendent) and Lyndsay Jones.

Apologies

Eugene Czauderna, Ron Innell, Marion Innell, Helen Mossop, Pat Mossop, Georgina Philippou, Helen McGrath, Marlene Sidaway, Joel Farrell

Introduction

Charlotte welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially those attending for the first time. She thanked Roger for his work over the last few years. She extended everyone's sympathy to John Rands, following the sad death of his wife Hillary.

Minutes of the last meeting

John pointed out that his apologies had not been recorded.

Minutes from the meeting and AGM held on 14th July 2022 were otherwise agreed as a correct record.

Treasurer's Report

There was no report as Marion was unable to attend.

Report from the Park Supervisor

Ricky welcomed Charlotte as the new chair of the group.

Playground Project

The playground re-opened on 5th August and has been given a great welcome across the borough. The contractors have left the site but are still in contact for any snagging issues. People seem happy with everything, including the rock pile, which has not proved dangerous as some parents feared. The water feature is a big success. More shade would be appreciated, Ricky is looking into installing more shade sails. One of the original monkey swings, now not able to be used as swings, has been pulled down. They will be reattached more securely. Other items will be added as finances permit. An official opening is still planned, and will be organised by the newly appointed Park Manager once his starting date is confirmed.

Staff Issues

Park Manager, Richard Gentry has been replaced by Declan Gallagher. Charlotte asked that a meeting be arranged for herself and Alan (at least) to get to know him. Darron's team are now up to full strength. Ricky is still acting as leader of his former team, pending the appointment of a new leader.

Other News

The park has retained the Green Flag Award.

London in Bloom awards had just been presented, and Ricky was pleased to announce the West Ham Park had won gold in the Large Parks (over 25 acres) category, and was also the category winner. The Park also was the local winner of Fields in Trust award. Ricky thanked FWHP for our input over the years, which had contributed to this success (although we all recognise that OF COURSE WHP is the best!!).

Charlotte asked Nicky to publicise these awards on our website and social media pages.

Recent Friends Activities and Volunteer Hours

The August *Bat Walk* had been success, with over 120 visitors, and plenty of bats out and about. The September walk is to be held on 30th September. The local Scout Group are bringing around 100 children, with the appropriate number of leaders.

The *Newham Unlocked* event had been cancelled following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The event would have been within the period of official mourning. Charlotte asked if the event planned to be part of it in the Vegetable Garden could be rescheduled to the end of October. Ricky will look into the possibility.

Charlotte questioned whether our events should continue to be free.

This was discussed. There was opposition to a fixed charge, but agreement that we should “shake a bucket” for voluntary contributions.

The *public litter picking events* during August had produced a good attendance been well received. There is a group called Eco7, on Facebook who are holding a wider area litter picking event on October 2nd. Nicky has been in touch and offered to publicise this.

Playground interpretive panels

Mary reported that the artwork is now with Fitzpatrick Woolmer and hoped to be ready for the official opening. We are enormously grateful to the local artist Salvatore for his excellent design work.

Mary has also completed the review form for the grant spend. We have £60 left which is earmarked for related craft activities. She thanked everyone who had helped with the project.

Linking Green Spaces

A successful event had been held on 30th July with the Great Eastern Parks Route project to walk the eastern end of the proposed route, including linking in West Ham Park. The project is in its early development stage but should develop significantly over the next 12 months.

Wildlife Garden

The annual cornfield wildflowers have been pulled up after allowing time for the seeds to fall. The area is now covered in weed suppressing fabric until the end of Winter. The pond has lost much of its water during the drought and is choked with blanket weed and duck weed. Ricky is seeking advice of the best way to proceed.

Community Vegetable Garden

Eugene was not able to attend the meeting, but reported that all continues to go well with the garden.

SINC status

Roger reported that the City of London had agreed to fund the work necessary to make an application to Newham to change the park's grade from 'Local significance' to 'Borough significance'. This was now being developed with London Wildlife Trust.

Newham Green Forum

With assistance from CPRE, GoParks London and the London Friends of Greenspaces Network, a Green Forum for Newham has been developed with an initial meeting planned for 12th October. Such groups have proved successful in other Boroughs and the hope is this can be repeated in Newham. Roger will represent the Friends Group at the initial meeting.

Corporate Volunteering

A number of organisations had been in touch seeking a corporate volunteering event in the park. This

is now being developed jointly by Ron and Ricky with a planned event to take place in October.

History walk

Mary, Ron and Lyndsay had led a trial of their history and botanical history walk on 28th August. The format was well received. This event will be repeated as part of the commitment to the grant received for the exhibition. Lyndsay will start work on writing up the information to make it available for the future.

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Community Vegetable Garden

Roger will let Ricky have an assessment of the volunteer hours for the recent and activities and events.

2022 remaining Programme and Activities

All activities subject to any new Covid restrictions.

Newham's Biggest Leaf Pile

The park seems to be recovering from the summer drought, and Ricky felt that the event could be held on 6th November as planned. Eugene has informally invited the Mayor of Newham. Charlotte will follow this up.

Park in the Dark

Planned for 2nd December. Lucia will arrange for the Park Primary choir to perform, as last year. Ron and Marion will be asked to contact Morrisons again, for supplies.

Future Events

Tree Identification Walk

Charlotte to follow up with From the Ground Up's involvement in this.

The Dogs Trust

Ricky will enquire whether the charity is able to hold non-fund raising events this year. Hopefully they are in a better position financially than after the pandemic.

Food Bank

It has proved difficult to contact the groups running various food banks. After discussion it was agreed that Pearl, Ricky and Lucia would follow up various contacts. Nicky has made contact with Tracy and she is keen to do another preferably in November as December is so busy for everyone.

Affiliation with other park user groups

No progress to date. Fewer people are taking part in the regular run, now that Tessa Sanderson is not involved, but they had expressed willingness to help with the Unlocked event before it was cancelled. Roger reminded Ricky that we had suggested getting all user groups together socially. Hopefully this might happen next year as it would have to be an outdoor event.

Da Shed in Da Park

Desmond Blake explained this project. He is a retired Community Activator, and remembers this meeting place, much used by minority groups when he was a child. It was a safe place for immigrants from Jamaica and other countries. He described his project remembers the Windrush generation, and he would like to hold an event on the Bandstand next year. FWHP are happy to support this. The discussion prompted Charlotte to ask why the summer programme of events of the Bandstand

had not resumed post-pandemic. Unsurprisingly the answer was lack of funding as the performers fees were quite expensive. Stephania stated that CoL was not opposed in principle but WHP would have to seek sponsorship funding.

Future Meeting Dates in 2023

It was agreed that future meetings (save that currently planned for 24 November) would be held on the second Thursday of alternate months, starting with January 2023. These will all be Zoom meetings except the AGM.

Publicity and Media

Nicky reported that user numbers were growing steadily.

Articles submitted to Newham Voices are not always published.

Charlotte suggested we issue a mini newsletter twice a year to our members list, website and social media. Charlotte to follow up.

AOB

Stephania spoke about the CoL restructuring review, and described her role in relation to WHP. She offered to help liaise with the London Wildlife Trust where she has contacts.

Des expressed admiration for the breadth of activities carried out by FWHP and looked forward to working with us.

The meeting closed at 21.02