



Friends of West Ham Park

Friends of West Ham Park Meeting

Thursday 9 November 2023 at 7:00pm
Meeting by Video Conference

Attendees

Charlotte Cook (Chair), Alan Cooper (Deputy Chair) Ricky O'Garro (Senior Park Ranger), Ciaran O'Keefe (Formal Parks Manager, North London), Roger Jones, Nicky Brown, Eugene Czsauderna, Ron Innell, Marion Innell, John Rands, Uta Saatz, Pearl Saunders, Jules Maurice-Williams and Lyndsay Jones

Apologies

Helen Mossop, Pat Mossop, Mary Edmondson, Lucia Rios Steele, Anne Easter, Christopher Owens

Introduction

Charlotte welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes from the meeting on 14 September were agreed as a correct record

Treasurer's Report

The current balance is £5986.68. This includes the donation of £5000 to plant a hedge around the playground. It was agreed that Nicky will become a card holder for the account as Lyndsay is no longer resident in Stratford. Nicky will arrange to purchase glow sticks for Park in the Dark

Report from Formal Parks Manager, North London

Ciaran introduced himself. He explained that his role as manager of three parks, including WHP, is newly created. He served some of his apprenticeship in WHP Nursery and was looking forward to working with the excellent team in WHP and with FWHP.

Charlotte welcomed him on behalf of all of us.

Update from Senior Park Ranger, Ricky O'Garro

Ricky reported that the park had achieved another gold award from London in Bloom.

2024 will see the 150th anniversary of the park opening on 20th July 1874. It is hoped that a summer of events will be organised with some CoL funding. Emily Brennan, Director Open Spaces, is to visit soon and Ciaran will discuss possibilities with her. FWHP stated that we are happy to help with community events. The Learning Team will plan a schools programme. Roger explained that FWHP have historical material available, and offered to help with co-ordinating the programme through a Joint Working Group.

Charlotte asked about proposed courses in tree pruning. These are available at other sites; information will be provided. Friends who wished to attend could be helped with the costs.

Playground Project

The problem with the gravel surfacing is ongoing, and correction is expected to cost around £90,000.

The contractor is not liable as the design and specifications were done in-house by CoL.

The beds within the playground will be planted up at an appropriate time by corporate volunteers. Preparation for the planting of the surrounding hedge will be done soon, hoping the winter rains will soften the ground and ease compaction

Community Fairs

Two events are being planned. The revenue from these fairs is very helpful to the park.

Ongoing Activities

Vegetable Garden

Few of the regular volunteers are capable of heavy work, particularly digging. Ricky offered staff help as needed. Eugene would also like to attract more volunteers and asked Nicky to publicise this opportunity. Roger suggested that the Sustainable Newham group might be able to help with recruitment, and offered to contact them. Ciaran will contact the Youth Education Officer, who also has access to grants for adult learning and is keen to do a project in WHP. Eugene will write the next Newham Voices article, focusing on the garden and opportunities for involvement.

Bird Surveys

Lyndsay has enrolled two new volunteers to survey the areas formerly surveyed by herself and Mary who are no longer resident locally. We are grateful for their help.

Health Walks

Ron is there to lead scheduled walks whatever the weather, but sometimes others are not so keen!

Litter picking

Alan and Uta are still doing regular picks, but the litter problem has reduced considerably, even during the summer. Ricky reported that staff have been speaking to people seen littering, and given collection bags to groups having picnics.

Wildlife Garden Maintenance

A working party was held on 28th October. Nine volunteers attended. The pond was cleared and netted, and the cornfield meadow on the mound weeded and part covered. Many plants are still growing and flowering as the weather has been very mild. Lyndsay will review the area in December.

Following discussions with Ciaran, a meeting between the Learning Team, himself and us would be arranged to discuss future management and maintenance requirements for the wildlife garden.

Events and other activities

The September Bat Walk went well, around 70 people attended, and so did the bats!

A local resident has asked for FWHP support in plans to install traffic calming measures on Portway. London Borough of Newham has an ongoing scheme to reduce speed on all but major roads throughout the borough to 20mph limit. Portway is already in the second area to be designated and signed which is planned to be implemented in the summer of 2024.

Bids and Grant applications

Voting for the Newham grant offer ends this week. Nicky has been keeping our bid prominent on social media.

Roger reported on the grant available for CoL for groups using sites which it controls. This only came to light at the last minute, but it was possible, after a strong team effort, to rush a bid together which has been submitted. We asked Ciaran to find out why no-one had been made aware of this offer, which appears to have been unadvertised and how CoL could address the breakdown in communication in future. Was it not possible for CoL to hold an email list of all Volunteer groups associated with their open spaces and notify them through this channel?

2023 Programme and Activities

Links and Affiliations with other Environmental Groups

Alan reported that the Sustainable Newham group had planned to meet in WHP to discuss holding an event similar to the one held in Forest Gate in May. The meeting was cancelled. Alan will ask for an update, but fears that the group may be struggling.

Alan and Roger continue to attend the LFGN meetings. They had made available RHS produced guidance on planting etc for emerging climate conditions and these would be circulated.

SINC status

This should be included in the revised London Borough of Newham Local Plan, a formal draft of which is due to be published by the end of the year.

Secondary Schools

Charlotte and Lucia will discuss future approaches. Stratford Academy have made no further response following our meeting in April.

Planning for Future Events

Leaf Pile

Provisionally Sunday 19th November, to be finalised once the rate of leaf fall this autumn is known. (POST MEETING NOTE – the event is deferred until 3rd December due to the current low leaf fall).

Park in the Dark

Friday 8th December. Park Primary School choir will perform. Ron will see his contact at Morrisons for food and hot chocolate. Nicky will arrange purchase of glow sticks.

Food Bank Collection

Saturday 16th December.

2024 Events

The park's 150th anniversary of opening takes place on Saturday 20th July. A year of celebrations are being proposed by CoL (see Report by Senior Park Ranger above). This could include history walks/presentations, dignitary visits to mark the occasion and public picnics etc. This would be discussed in more detail at the January meeting.

Future Meeting Dates in 2024

Thursday January 11th

Thursday March 14th

Thursday May 9th

Thursday July 11th (AGM)

Thursday September 12th

Thursday November 14th.

These will all be Zoom meetings except the AGM, which will be held on the Bandstand.

Publicity and Media

Newham Voices article rota:

Articles are needed by 15th of each month.

Eugene will write about the Vegetable Garden as agreed above.

Charlotte and Ron will do the January issue, about the 150th anniversary.

AOB

There was no other business

The meeting closed at 20.55.