



# Friends of West Ham Park

## Friends of West Ham Park Meeting

Thursday 18th September 2025

Meeting by Video Conference

### Attendees

Alan Cooper (Chair), Dries Indesteege (Deputy Chair), Ricky O'Garro (Senior Park Ranger), Nicky Brown, Roger Jones, Charlotte Cook, Ron Innell, Marion Innell, Eugene Czauderna, Lucia Rios-Steele, Pearl Saunders, John Rands, Ian MacDondald, and Lyndsay Jones

### Apologies

Uta Saatz, having problems with her connection; Helen and Pat Mossop

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### Introduction

Alan welcomed everyone to the meeting

### Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes from the meeting and AGM on 10 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record

### Treasurer's Report

We have £2083.84 in hand, having had no expenses since the last meeting

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### Report from Formal Parks Manager

Ricky reported that extra security guards are now in place following the recent stabbing in the park. Thankfully the victim is recovering. The cause of the incident is unknown and may have been a random act. There has been a noticeable increase in the numbers of drug dealers and users in the park, following a crackdown by the police around Forest Gate. The Rangers are having difficulty dealing with those concerned, and have been threatened when trying to escort them out of the park. Support has also been requested from the Metropolitan Police. Nicky asked whether the park had a "Stab Kit" amongst the first aid equipment. Ricky felt that the kit is already comprehensive, but will look into whether a kit is needed. All the staff are first aid trained

On a more cheerful note, the London in Bloom awards are to be presented shortly, and the team are hopeful for a good result

There were several questions for Ricky:

*Water Play area.* Alan had found this out of action again when visiting with his grandchild. Ricky will have it checked, suspecting an airlock which sometimes occurs

*Benches.* The procurement system only allows Ricky to purchase five replacement seat bars at a time, which is delaying the repairs. He plans to purchase some cheaper bars to complete the job, these will be replaced as the better ones become available

The location of the *chatty bench* was discussed. Dries pointed out that it should be in a shady location, and a suitable bench was identified

*Rats.* A large number of bait traps have now been installed around the playground area, and numbers seem to have diminished. The bait in use does not pass up the food chain, so dogs, foxes,

crows etc eating a poisoned rat are not at risk

*South Meadow.* The planting scheme installed several years ago has not been ideal. Ricky is working with the Learning Team to make the area more usable by school groups, as there is a lot of demand. The area will not be fenced off from general park users. He asked that FWHP look into funding for this project

*New Planting around The Mounds.* The problems around drug use taking up a lot of staff time has meant that the weeding, fencing and signing of these areas has been delayed. The fencing materials are on site, and will be installed soon. It was agreed that FWHP will decide on the wording for the signage, reflecting our success in obtaining grants for the work

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## **ParkFest 26**

Roger reported that the review meetings had all agreed that the 2025 event was a success, with, of course, some useful suggestions for improvements! The date for 2026 will be Sunday 12th July. It was agreed that we confirm this date to CoCL, in order to reserve the equipment we will need to borrow from them. The rest of the planning will start in January. Roger thanked Joel Farrell for his offer of help with the coordination of the event

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## **Mini Library**

This is a great success! The box is full, with plenty of movement of titles. Dries checks it most days, and will remove any that linger for months. We will seek a grant to purchase another box for children's books, to be put alongside the current box, but lower down. Dries will look at costing again, but feels that it is important to have a good quality box

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## **Ongoing Activities**

### *Bat Walks*

The August walk went well, both bats and public turned out in good numbers. The September walk will be held on Friday 26th, weather permitting

### *Vegetable Garden*

A good year, with some new volunteers. People often call in for a look around whilst the garden is open

### *Bird Survey*

Lyndsay is struggling to find new reliable volunteers to cover the parts of the area and will ask the London Area Recorder whether the numbers are still useful if only partial. Dries said he would like to assist and Lyndsay will discuss this with him

### *Volunteer Hours*

Each group is to send their own numbers to Stella in the Park Office

### *Health Walks*

There are usually around 12 people taking part. The Newham mental health support group have stopped attending, no explanation has been offered

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## **Publicity and Media**

### *Newham Voices*

Nicky sent an article about the Photo Competition, and the paper is considering doing a large spread with all the pictures. Lucia will write about Leaf Pile for November and Alan will write about feeding wild birds for December

Articles need to be with Nicky by 15th of the previous month

Our social media still receives a good amount of attention, and a regular newsletter was not felt necessary

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### **Links and Affiliations with other Environmental Groups**

The Eastside Community Heritage Group held a walk on local history in the park recently. A number of Friends Group attended and assisted with history details of the park

Roger and Alan are meeting with a representative of the friends group of Epping Forest to discuss the proposed changes to the CoCL funding system. He asked Ricky whether CoLC could give us a formal briefing on the new financing arrangements and the implications of this. Ricky agreed to follow this up. All agreed that there has been very little useful information to date

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### **Future Events**

*Halloween event*, run by the learning team, all FWHP volunteers very welcome. Last year those attending were asked to bring an item for the Food Bank collection as “payment”. Thatcha will try this again, with more publicity including on Park Primary’s social media sites

*Leaf Pile* –16th November – leaves permitting!

*Food Bank collection* on the Bandstand – 29th November

*Park in the Dark* – 5th December

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### **Future Meeting Dates in 2024**

Second Thursday in every other month

Next meeting 13th November, by Zoom

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### **AOB**

The “Go Fund Me” page set up for ParkFest has had quite a few donations. Dries suggested that we have our business card reprinted to show the code on the reverse, as people do ask how to support us. Nicky will look into this. We will have the QR code on display at Leaf Pile and Park in the Dark

The meeting closed at 20.52