

## **Community Profile**

**Robert Howard, Member**

**The Lenton Recreation Ground Consultative Group, Nottingham**

### **What inspired you to get involved with the Lenton Recreation Ground Consultative group?**

I have lived in a house overlooking the park since 1979, so it has always been part of my daily life and for years we watched it slowly decline after it lost its park-keeper and grounds person. In 2003 things came to a head when too many games of football turned it into a sea of mud, so we tried to form a support group without success. Our local city councillors took up our cause and we got our own grounds person again and the playing area fenced off for six months whilst the grass grew again. That was the start of it all.

Then Nottingham City Council appointed a new Parks Development Officer, Stefan Kruckowski, and we tried again to set up a parks consultative group with the help of the Dunkirk and Lenton Partnership Forum, of which I was a co-founder and twice Chair. This time we were successful and the group has never looked back (Stefan no longer works for the council, but he continues to take an interest in the Group and park).

### **What does being part of the group involve?**

The Group meets quarterly in the park's pavilion and is run by the Forum. Meetings are attended by local groups, residents, local police officers, City Council and representatives for Parks and Neighbourhood Services. Nottingham University's Community Officer also attends. We discuss day-to-day and strategic issues. The meetings are usually quite lively, but we do listen to one another's views and we have always found a way to agree, even if, sometimes, it has taken a couple of meetings! I will also be representing the Group at a new Nottingham wide Parks Forum.

### **What do you feel has been your greatest success as a group?**

Raising local awareness of Lenton Recreation Ground to a point where its needs could no longer be ignored and persuading our local councillors to give us their active support. This led to money and grants for new play areas and the arrival of Dave, our grounds person. Getting a permanent worker based in the park has to be the biggest achievement. For the duration of the bowls season we have Simon during the week and Kevin at the weekends. In 2005 the park was awarded the first of its Green Flag Awards (also 2006 and 2007). The Group has been giving its 100% support to the Nottingham Peace Group with the result that an area of the park will become the home of the Nottingham Peace Garden later this year, funding permitting.

### **What have been the main challenges?**

Lenton Recreation Ground is the busiest park in Nottingham because Lenton is the city's main student area (80% of the local population are students). This means the grass areas are heavily used. There are also seven bowls clubs based in the park and last year, for the first time, several county matches were played on its two bowling greens. Thanks to the consultative group, we have managed to balance competing demands and priorities successfully. The most heated discussions have been about car parking because quite a few users come from other places and want to be able to park their cars. The Group's agreed solution to this problem is to go for 'grass grids' when we have the money so that cars can be parked when there is a county bowls match.

### **What interesting projects have you been involved in?**

In 2007 I organised 'Tea in the Park' one Sunday afternoon a month from May until October to raise money for local projects. Throughout 2007 I did a 'Lenton Recreation Ground Day by Day' photographic project which quickly became a blog as well at: [www.parkviews.blogspot.org](http://www.parkviews.blogspot.org). This is now an ongoing project. Last autumn we planted 5,000 Bluebells, so they should be coming up about the same time you are reading this!

In the January 2008 issue of the Nottingham Civic Society Newsletter, we had an article about Lenton Recreation Ground published under the title "Breathing New Life into Nottingham's Parks".

### **What does the future have in store for the Lenton Recreation Ground Consultative Group?**

Nottingham City Council would like the Group to become a 'Friend's Group', but some of us have our doubts, so at present we continue to be part of Dunkirk and Lenton Partnership Forum, who provide all the admin support to the Group. The Group has an 'open membership' and its meetings are widely publicised locally. The nearby Dunkirk Park needs attention and money. The Forum, with the help of our local councillors, has been raising money to make major improvements. If our Group was independent we would be in competition, but by being part of the Forum we can work together and that has to be a good thing. Nottingham University has become the park's 'sponsor' for the next year on the understanding that Dave, our grounds person, has a say in how some of the money is spent.

### **If you had to offer a new consultative group one bit of advice, what would that be?**

Be tenacious and prepared for a long haul. Get your local councillors and other groups involved (local history society, community association, schools etc). Ask people to join you and make your meetings friendly and welcoming providing tea and cake.

To find out more about the Lenton Recreation Ground Consultative Group, visit Robert's website at: [www.parkviews.blogspot.org](http://www.parkviews.blogspot.org), or email: [robert@parkviews.org](mailto:robert@parkviews.org).