

The London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network

The network for London's 500+ local Friends and User Groups and borough-wide Forums for all green open spaces

www.lfgn.net

General Meeting for all London's Friends Groups and the local borough Forums

Monday 11th July, 6pm - 8pm

Committee Room 4 at City Hall (downstairs by the cafe)

110 The Queens Walk, London, SE1 2AA (10mins walk from London Bridge tube station).

Map: <http://www.london.gov.uk/city-hall/visitor-information/location-map>

All welcome to attend! Please forward to all Friends and Users Groups in your borough.

Agenda to include: Minutes of last LFGN general meeting (see below, at end); Local borough news/updates; Report from our 2011 London Friends Gathering on May 21st; Funding cuts and lobbying for adequate resources for all green spaces + taking part in Love Parks Week, July 23-31 (including the London Parks Picnic at Parliament on the last day - see below); Improving communication and co-ordination among Friends Groups;

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London's Friends of Parks & Green Spaces

London 'Love Our Parks' Picnic at Parliament

SUNDAY 31st JULY 2011

12noon - 4pm @ Victoria Tower Gardens - Millbank, London, SW1P 3JA

A celebration of our parks and green spaces, and the immense value they provide to our communities

A call for the protection, resources and management they deserve – NO to cuts!

The picnic is on the last day of the national 'Love Parks Week' in which up to a million people are expected to take part in events in their local parks all over the UK. We will be calling on the Government to value green spaces as much as the public do - by committing adequate resources and bringing in statutory protection measures.

Please come along and bring a picnic to share.

Organised by the London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network

More information / leaflets: www.lfgn.net

Supported by: National Federation of Parks & Green Spaces; and the London

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Draft Minutes of LFGN 'pre-Gathering' general meeting, May 9th, 2011 @ City Hall

1. Attendance: Bexley: Ken Hobday (F of Danson Pk and F of Bostall Heath and Woods in Greenwich); Camden: Christine Farrell (F of Waterlow Park); Greenwich Terry Povey (Greenwich F of Parks Forum); Haringey: Dave Morris (F of Lordship Rec) & Mal Hawley (F. of Downhill Park); Hounslow: Linda Massey (F of Boston Manor, Hounslow Friends Forum); Islington: Chris Ashby & Mike Franks (Friends of Gillespie Park, Islington Friends Forum); Lewisham: Alona Sheridan (F of Mayhew Park); Richmond: Colin Cooper (Richmond Environmental Network) and Pam Ibrahima (F o Sheen Rec); + Metropolitan Public Gardens Association Joyce Bellamy; + London Parks and Green Spaces Forum Alex Rook & Tony Leach
Apologies Hounslow: Cathy Meisels (F Chiswick Common); Wandsworth: Simon Helmsley (F o Tooting Common); Havering: Lois Amos (F o Green Spaces Network); Southwark: Stephanie & Jim Lodge (Friends of the Earth); Tower Hamlets: Richard Desmond & V. Cucchi (Victoria Park); Bromley: Jacky Griffith (F.o. Penge Park).

2. Minutes of the Meeting of March 7th 2011 Amendment: The staffing cuts in Richmond were from 12 to 10, NOT as recorded in the Minutes as a 'loss of 12 workers'.

3. Brief Updates ***Bexley.*** Only four groups of Friends are thought to exist in Bexley. The cuts here appear not to be as harsh as in Greenwich. ***Camden.*** Rumours of further cuts circulate but are not confirmed. In Waterlow Park, the Kitchen Garden on the original Victorian site has been restored as a community garden, with money from the Council. A wide variety of groups has been allocated plots including schools, mental health services and green groups including Friends of the Park. A Camden Friends of Green Spaces Forum has just been established. ***Greenwich.*** The Friends Forum has been active in helping to support local parks events. The Borough has given £30,000 each year towards these events. There will be 20 this year and credit was given to the Borough for this contribution. £4.8 million has been invested in Parks and green spaces in the past few years (Olympiad). The Forum holds six-weekly meetings and leading Councillors attend. The Friends of Bostall Woods are carrying out Council work and repairing paths in the woods. ***Haringey.*** The Friends Forum are campaigning against savage cuts to parks budget of £1 million (51%), including 36% redundancies to Park staff. A special meeting concluded that volunteering should enhance rather than replace full-time workers. A number of on-site staff depots are to be closed. A protest is planned in which Friends Groups will collect litter from parks and dump it at the Town Hall. A petition on the Councils own website has been set up to oppose the cuts. ***Hounslow.*** There are some difficulties of communication here between John Lang, the contractor and sub

contractors. This has led to some managers charging Friends groups for events in their parks. There is also an issue of contract compliance but Friends groups have so far not been allowed to see the contracts or to be involved in the secret negotiations. The Friends Forum will meet in a few weeks and the Contractors have agreed to come to that meeting. *General discussions about this problem led others to offer comments: e.g. need for financial transparency; opposition to charging FGs to use their parks for events; the need for Friends groups to calculate the sweat equity value of their contributions to parks management and maintenance. Greenwich has already calculated rates of between 6 and 20 an hour depending on the task.*

Islington. The Parks Forum has set up a web page on the LA website. There are plans for the Forum to become independent. The last meeting was well attended (18 of the 19 Parks friends groups represented). However, the Council's requirement for their relations with individual FGs to be more formalised might lead to meeting attendance falling. The legalistic discussions tend to put people off. The Islington Compact needs signing and there are financial and insurance issues to be resolved.

Richmond The Friends Forum hasn't met but work on setting one up continues. Events in Richmond require a licence but Friends are not charged. The LA is working on a new Open Spaces Strategy. A third round of cuts will leave only 10 park staff (?).

London Parks and Green Spaces Forum Said they are developing a volunteer strategy for parks in London which would include a unified way of valuing volunteer contributions. They are also working up a Heritage Lottery bid for a training scheme for volunteer supervisors. A web based site is being developed to allow them to produce a snapshot of L.A. experiences of annual expenditure. The meeting was asked if there had been any impact of reductions in policing, on Parks.

Metropolitan Public Gardens Association Joyce Bellamy said that they had a small fund to give small grants for specific items in Parks. eg. planting a new hedge.

4. Lobbying for adequate resources for all parks and green spaces. People were asked to publicise two important events. 1) Our second London Gathering of Friends of Parks and Green Spaces on May 21st and 2) a Parks Picnic at Parliament on 31st July 2011. The latter is a celebration of Parks and Green Spaces, and the immense value they provide to our communities. It will take place at the end of Love Parks Week. Details/leaflets for both these events can be found on the new LFGN website. www.lfgn.net

Results of a GreenSpace national survey recently published reveals shocking impact of the cuts across the country. Front line services are suffering most. A summary of these details is to be found in Inspiration in Challenging Times, April 2011.

5. The second Friends of Parks and Green Spaces Gathering May 21st. This will be held at Lordship Recreation Ground in Tottenham. Help is needed with administration, facilitation, and contributions. Volunteers welcome. The last event was a great success.

6. LFN Communications. A website for the organisation has been set up but needs more material. Contributions welcome. Richard Desmond is the person to contact.

7. National Federation update: meets regularly. Dave attends for the LFGN, but borough Forums can also attend. A national conference for Friends groups will be held in Birmingham on September 17th 2011 (World Parks Day!).

8. Next LFGN meeting Date to be set for early July.

Minutes by CF