

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Parks, Green Space and Countryside Stakeholder Panel Agenda

Date and Time: Wednesday 24th of July 2024
19:00 - 21:00.

Location: Online Teams Meeting

1. Welcome and Apologies,
2. Previous minutes (08/01/2024) – agreement,
3. Review of actions in ‘Action Update Document’ (03/04/2024),
4. idverde Update,
5. LBB Update,
6. Feedback from Stakeholders,
7. AOB,
8. Date of future meeting – January 2025

Attendees

London Borough of Bromley (LBB)

- **Hannah Jackson (HJ)** - Assistant Director, Carbon Management and Greenspace (Chair).
- **Helen Stickling (HS)** – Arboricultural Support Officer.
- **David Braybrook (DB)** - Parks & Greenspaces Borough Manager.
- **Mollie Lyon (ML)** - Greenspace Contracts and Programmes Manager.

idverde

- **Martyn Bradley (MB)** - Operations Director,
- **Susan Holland** – Conservation & Education Manager,

Stakeholders

- **Larry Herbert (LH)** - Friends Forum, Chairman,
- **Peter Woodward (PW)** - Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray Commons,
- **Janet Clayton (JC)** - Orpington and District Archaeological Society (ODAS),
- **Carol Gould (CG)** - Bromley Biodiversity Partnership (BBP) & Orpington Field Club (OFC),

Apologies

- **Dr Judith John (JJ)** – Orpington Field Club (OFC),
- **Angela Wood (AW)** - Community Development and Fundraising Manager,
- **Hugh Chapman (HC)** – Arboricultural Services Manager,
- **Mark Garthwaite** – Operations Manager,
- **Councillor Will Rowlands (Cllr WR)** - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services,
- **Councillor Adam Grant (Cllr AG)** - Chairman, Environment and Community Services Policy Development (PDS) and Scrutiny Committee,

Other Non-Attendance

- **Clive Randell (CR)** - Chairman of the Leisure Garden and Allotment Federation.
- **Mike Ruffhead (MR)** - Bromley Council Bowling Club Association (BCBCA),

Agenda Items	Owner	Target Date
<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>HJ welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>		
<p>Previous minutes (10/07/2023)</p> <p>Attendees had no suggested amendments to the previous minutes.</p>		
<p>Action Log Review</p> <p>The action log was reviewed and updated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act 13: Closed. ▪ Act 17: Closed. ▪ Act 18: Closed. ▪ Act 24: Closed - HJ advised that LBB Planning have made the decision not to send a representative to attend, therefore this action was closed. The response from Planning was noted on the action log. CG advised she will try to progress separately. LH asked that it be recorded that members of the meeting were unhappy with this decision, which HJ acknowledged. ▪ Act 25: Closed. ▪ Act 26: Closed – LH noted that signs may continue to be damaged/ignored. HJ encouraged that reports be made to Fix My Street (FMS) and the enforcement team within LBB will address this. ▪ Act 27: Closed - Three training sessions so far this year. LH requested list of Friends groups from SH, who agreed to send. Two further sessions planned. 		
<p>Idverde Update – Led by SH</p> <p>Staff changes SH advised that the two staff vacancies have been filled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Luke Blanchard: RSPB Biodiversity Advisor. ▪ Ben Jarvis: Biodiversity Manager. <p>Both settled well and already looking at funding opportunities.</p> <p>Progress and activities of the Countryside and BEECHE team, including completed and ongoing projects, species surveys, volunteer work, funding applications, training, and public engagement. Key points include:</p> <p>Woodland Works and Targets: The first phase of woodland works was completed in February, with the second phase scheduled for the end of the year. They are on track with their 2024 targets.</p> <p>Species Surveys 2024: Surveys began with bat hibernation surveys (3 winter roost sites in the borough: 23 bats from 3 different species recorded), Great Crested Newts (8 surveys at Jubilee and Scadbury parks: with 47 GCNs recorded) with lots of toads and newts. 55 species surveys were conducted with help from Friends groups and volunteers. Species include: dragonflies, moths, orchids, woodland and meadow plants, aquatic pond life, and dormice. Butterfly and reptile transits recorded between April and October – results expected in October.</p>		

<p>Volunteer Contributions: Since January, 224 supervised volunteer workdays were completed, totalling 5,508 hours, focusing on woodland and pond maintenance and infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Funding and Projects: The Jubilee Platinum Fund was used for pond creation, orchard planting, entrance revamps, and pathway improvements. Applications for additional funding, like the Water Restoration Fund and stream improvements, are in progress. Water Restoration Fund results expected in August. £40k for the Water Environment Improvement Fund has been secured by LBB and working with Thames 21 to complete works by March 2025.</p> <p>Training and Development: Various training courses were delivered, including Amphibian and Reptile surveys, Butterfly ID and Transits and Moth ID and Trapping surveys. Delivered a Biodiversity Champion course at Dorset Road allotments. Any data from biodiversity champions and citizen scientists comes to /dverde. The team has access to an e-learning system for continuous development. No set days for this.</p> <p>Public Engagement and Education: The team delivered numerous school sessions (131 since January 2024) and public events (89), improved social media engagement, and formed a partnership with Capel Manor College for conservation student placements. Visitor numbers have increased significantly since January 2024 due to enhanced events and improved facilities.</p> <p>Overall, the team has made substantial progress in conservation efforts, community engagement, and educational outreach.</p> <p>SH shared AW's report in her absence, on the Parks Development Team's activities:</p> <p>Community Support and Initiatives: The team supported Platinum Jubilee Grant projects, Big Bromley Brush Up initiative, 3 corporate days, Princess Trust sessions, and 12 community action days focusing on litter picking, infrastructure, painting, gardens, and planting.</p> <p>Green Flag Sites: Cator Park and Chislehurst Recreation Ground were added to Bromley's Green Flag sites, bringing the total to eight. Judging results improved from the previous year. Plans are in place to review feedback.</p> <p>Staffing Changes: Anita Zambaldo (AZ) the Community Manager, will leave at the end of July. SH noted her achievements with thanks. Recruitment for her replacement is ongoing, with AW acting as the interim primary point of contact.</p> <p>Fundraising and Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Croydon Rd Rec Bandstand: Restoration of the Grade 2 listed Beckenham Bandstand was completed, with sensitive, yet modern upgrades and a celebratory launch event, supported by local businesses, acts and schools. ▪ Baby Loss Memorial Garden: Preparation for a memorial garden in Chislehurst Cemetery, including a special sculpture and tranquil landscaping. ▪ Queen's Mead Recreation Ground: Revitalization of the playground with new inclusive equipment made from sustainable recycled materials, funded by various sources. Launched in July, attended by the Mayor. ▪ Coney Hall Play for All Project: Phase one included resurfacing a disused tennis court and installing a learn-to-ride track and table tennis tables. Friends held a launch and fundraising for phase 2. 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cudham Recreation Ground: Fundraising for new play equipment, Friends successfully raising £57,000 through grants and local efforts. <p>SH welcomed questions and advised if she couldn't answer them directly, she would forward them on to AW for feedback.</p> <p>MB acknowledged SH's detailed report and expressed gratitude for PW's kind words about the staff. He emphasized the crucial role of Friends groups and stakeholders in partnership with <i>Idverde</i> and LBB in achieving their goals. Reflecting on last year's operational challenges with grounds maintenance, MB reported significant improvements, attributing success to robust monitoring and governance, despite weather challenges. He concluded with appreciation for the feedback and ongoing support.</p> <p>LH echoed MB's comments and acknowledged the positive work being done but highlighted some issues, specifically at Hoblingwell, where maintenance errors affected orchids. HJ responded, appreciating LH for raising concerns through the partnership and mentioned that additional processes are being implemented to prevent such issues. She and MB apologized for past mistakes and emphasized their commitment to improvement. LH expressed satisfaction with the response and praised the extensive work and training programs underway. HJ further noted the significant behind-the-scenes efforts. MB commended Anita's contributions to the team and her role in achieving progress and engagement.</p>		
<p>LBB Update – Led by HJ</p> <p>HJ outlined the challenging budget situation facing LBB. Despite balancing the 2024-25 budget, a projected budget gap of nearly £39 million is expected by 2027-28, starting with a £17 million shortfall in 2025-26. This gap is significant, equivalent to the entire environment budget, though no specific cuts have been decided yet. Overspending due to pressures in children's social care, adult social care, and housing further complicates the financial outlook. The Council aims to manage costs carefully, focusing only on essential spending, and is exploring new transformation strategies to save more without drastically affecting service levels. HJ emphasized the importance of understanding these financial constraints as they impact service delivery.</p> <p>HJ and ML shared a PowerPoint presentation “Parks, Greenspace and Countryside Stakeholder Panel July 2024”, discussing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund ▪ Infrastructure Projects ▪ Waterbodies ▪ Consultations ▪ Arboriculture Projects ▪ Arboriculture <p>(This presentation is included alongside the minutes PDF)</p> <p>ML formally introduced herself as the Green Space Contracts and Programs Manager.</p> <p>HJ highlighted the positive impact of the Big Bromley Brush Up initiative, a collaborative effort involving various teams, including Pete McCready's Streets and Waste area. The initiative saw many volunteer hours, with notable contributions from <i>Idverde</i> and HJ's team, who participated in activities like painting and clearing community gardens in Kelsey Park. This was a rewarding experience and HJ showed appreciation for her team's involvement.</p>		

<p>LH noted that as the Chair of Friends of Keston Common, he expressed concerns about not being informed about the Keston Ponds water project. HJ and SH explained that discussions are still in early stages, and more detailed stakeholder consultation will follow. HJ noted that she had shared the update in the last partnership meeting but acknowledged LH’s concern with an apology, explaining the urgency was due to a short time frame to apply for a development grant, advised by the Environment Agency.</p> <p>ML advised LBB are happy to share any surveys and proposals with LH and the Friends teams. ML also recommended that they can put LH in touch with Debra Van-jaarsveldt (DV – LBB Kelsey Park Lakes Project Manager) who is able to provide more detailed information concerning the boroughs water-ways. HJ reassured LH that they will include him in the process and provide detailed updates if the grant application is successful.</p> <p>ACTION: DV and BJ to set up a meeting for further discussion on Keston Ponds water project with LH.</p>	HJ/ML	24/10/24
<p>Bromley Biodiversity Partnership Species & Habitats sub-group & Orpington Field Club – Led by CG</p> <p>CG noted that JJ sends her apologies and noted that both now will be representing the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership subgroup for habitats and species as the Orpington Field Club has wound down. She reported that the Orpington Field Club has become inactive post-COVID, except for a still-active Facebook group. She and JJ have focused on Planning-related activities, expressing concerns about biodiversity net gain in recent applications, which often show significant biodiversity loss without addressing mitigation. Despite spending over 40 hours on Planning permissions recently, they have little clarity from the LBB Planning team. The species and habitats subgroup continues their surveys, with recent sightings of white admirals in Crofton Woods. Additionally, CG inquired about the status of the Bromley Local Plan and the survey that was done approximately 18 months ago. HJ responded that there was potentially a next stage of consultation planned but that she was unsure of timescales. HJ promised to obtain an update and circulate it.</p> <p>ACTION: HJ to investigate and circulate an update of the Bromley Local Plan to the stakeholders.</p>	HJ	24/10/24
<p>Orpington and District Archaeological Society (ODAS) – Led by JC</p> <p>JC also emphasized the need for updates on the Local Plan, especially from an archaeological perspective. JC reported on various public openings of sites, including the Romano British bath house (opened four times) and Scadbury (opened three times), noting the involvement of volunteers and officials. Concerns were raised about litter management and mowing responsibilities at these sites – although not all archaeological sites are not within the Parks remit, maintenance takes place close by. Further open days are upcoming, biggest event in September, which will hopefully be opened by Cllr Rowland. JC welcomed the change in contract regarding mowing on the manor site.</p> <p>JC highlighted a recent visit by ML, Historic England, and others to discuss the Open Space Strategy (OSS), stressing the importance of clear timelines and collaboration.</p> <p>ML clarified her earlier comments about a six to eight-week deadline, ensuring further key stakeholder input before any submissions are made. ML passed on thanks for their welcome when the site visit was made.</p>		

<p>DB also acknowledged ongoing maintenance issues and promised to address them before upcoming open days.</p> <p>ACTION: DB to feedback to JC an update on the ongoing maintenance issues.</p>	DB	24/10/24
<p><u>Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray Commons – Led by PW.</u></p> <p>PW emphasized the importance of collaboration and communication in maintaining and celebrating green spaces. PW noted that he and LH have had a better experience working with Bromley than some other London Boroughs. He noted the effectiveness of recent initiatives, such as new litter bins funded by the Jubilee Fund and public engagement events, such as the Loneliness Campaign. PW highlighted successful summer activities, including children's events and visits by officials. PW noted with sadness the closure of the Orpington Field Club and recognized its incredible service over the years.</p> <p>PW noted his concerns regarding the biodiversity situation and raised concerns regarding the significant volunteer hours spent on Planning issues, which should ideally be managed by the Council. PW concluded by stressing the need for the Council to better support volunteer efforts in biodiversity regarding Planning.</p> <p>CG noted PW's concerns and agreed that it is worrying that Planning rely on volunteers to tackle certain issues. She noted that she and JJ will be able to discuss this with one of the Councillors at the Hayes Common event the following day, and be able to at least get an agreement on the first steps of the way forward. HJ recognised the comments made by CG and PW and advised that LBB hear the feedback coming through. DB passed on thanks to PW for the interaction and time spent on the Chislehurst visit.</p> <p>JC highlighted a collaborative event at the Roman Bath House open day, where Ellie Denniss (a.k.a. Spider) and the Poverest Recreation Ground Friends participated by setting up a table and bringing tarantulas, which were a hit with the children. JC appreciated the positive collaboration. JC also supported PW's comments about the significant reliance on volunteers for tasks that ideally should be managed by the Council. She acknowledged the staff's pressures but pointed out the difficulties volunteers face, particularly in monitoring Planning applications in their areas, noting that while this isn't ideal, it's a necessary reality they must manage.</p>		
<p>Friends Forum – Led by LH</p> <p>LH echoed PW's comments in regard to the London wide forums and the London wide community, and also the concerns raised. LH expressed concerns about communication issues, particularly citing a low profile of the new Portfolio Holder and the lack of communication since the departure of Cllr Cuthbert. He highlighted instances where his group were the last to know about events or changes in their parks, such as Green Flag arrangements and unexpected repairs at Keston Common. He emphasized the need for timely information and felt that volunteers were often left in the dark, making it difficult to manage their responsibilities. He mentioned that the number of Friends Groups had decreased, with new groups forming at Poverest Rec and Covet Wood, which they plan to support financially. LH also talked about organizing a number of first aid courses across the year and rescheduling a bi-monthly meeting due to a conflict with another event. He discussed the upcoming AGM in November and the need to finalize plans and venues. LH noted that they are addressing signage in the parks and potential installation of water fountains.</p>		

<p>In response, HJ assured LH that repairs at Keston Common were planned and promised to keep him updated. DB apologized for the lack of communication and committed to following up on the repair details and electricity restoration. HJ confirmed that insurance covered the repairs and that they were actively pursuing the matter. She also mentioned uncertainties about the venue for the AGM but assured that arrangements would be made.</p>		
<p>AOB</p> <p>MB expressed appreciation for the constructive feedback and positive comments received. With 47 years in the industry, he acknowledged Bromley's unique partnership with Friends Groups and recognized the need for ongoing improvement. He assured that they would consider the feedback to further develop their partnership.</p> <p>HJ thanked everyone for their time and feedback, emphasizing its value and the intention to reflect on it for future improvements. She acknowledged the challenges faced by local government and apologized for any shortcomings, encouraging ongoing communication and input.</p>		
<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>HS advised that the next meeting would be in January 2025. She noted that she would circulate a couple of potential meeting dates to ascertain which would be best.</p>		