

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 16th May 2024
Civic Centre & Via Zoom Video, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Attendance

Forum Committee:

Please refer to secretary for details

Friends:

Please refer to secretary for details

Apologies:

Please refer to secretary for details

1. Chairman's Welcome

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance. A quick introduction by each member present followed.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7th March 2024 were accepted with no alterations. The minutes would be revised with full names removed prior to publication on the Forum website.

Matters Arising:

§2 Friends Levy on Commercial Events: LH had discussed this with both LBB and *idverde* and it is understood that this is now under consideration by *idverde*, who are charged with managing the licensing of commercial events. Options as to whether it is a fixed rate or a percentage of profits is yet to be decided. Still under discussion.

Action continues.

Action: LH

§4.3 Hi-Vis jackets: The Forum Committee is considering the purchase of some hi-vis jackets for distribution to Groups. An option including pockets was presented to the meeting. Members felt this was un-necessary and that a simpler version was preferable. Wording to include parks and green spaces was agreed as preferable.

Action continues.

Action: Forum

§4.5 Events Training Course: LH had discussed this with *idverde* who were looking at providing a slimmed down version of a course proposed by Lollipop Events. This remains under discussion. Action continues.

Action: LH

§5.2 De-fib for Whitehall Rec: Now installed. Discussion followed around the subject of defibrators with regard installation/usage etc. MK offered to provide members with an overview of operations. Action complete.

§6.2 Penge Parks Tour: KR invited members to a tour of some of Penge's parks and green spaces but due to a lack of response the event has been shelved for the time being. Action cancelled.

3. Forum News

3.1. Council Update

LH opened the discussion on the subject of *idverde* staffing. They have now appointed a Biodiversity Manager, who is Ben Jarvis and a Biodiversity Assistant, who is Luke Blanchard. They have also confirmed their BEECHE Education Manager, Eleanor Denniss, who likes to be commonly known as Spider.

3.2. Parks Signage

LH referred to the signage audit (jotform) of main signs in parks and that to date the uptake and response had been very low. LH agreed to recirculate the request and see whether additional information can be collected. This would then be reviewed at the next partnership meeting and a decision taken as to any future steps.

3.3. Funding

LH referred to Forum's new policy on Small Grants announced in the previous meeting and urged members to submit an application to them. To date no new applications had come forward, so there are still significant funds available.

3.4. Training

LH reported that *idverde* had now announced the dates of the five courses reported at our previous meeting. These should be booked through the Bromley Parks website.

Forum has now run two first aid courses (one in April and one in May) and these were both well attended and received. Further first aid courses will be planned for the autumn.

3.5. Insurance

The Friends insurance is due for renewal on 24th June. LH had discussed with idverde the possibility of changing provider as it was felt Unity's method of fees per individual policy was quite expensive. It is expected that each Friends Group will be informed of the renewal ahead of the date and documentation subsequently circulated.

4. Friends Group Reports

4.1. Keston Common: LH reported that Keston was one of the successful applicants to the Jubilee Fund and has had its playground revamped with some new equipment. The project itself went through various re-designs as initial ideas didn't appear to fit the space available, which was rather frustrating. In the end the chosen equipment was installed over a period of five days and appears to have been well received from families and friends. There was a cost to the Group of slightly more than £1k, which was perhaps higher than we were hoping for. We hope to arrange a Community Action Day soon to paint some of the older equipment and do a general tidy-up of the area.

Keston was also successful in receiving funds from the Co-op (over £3k) and we have used some of this to install two new interpretation boards. One describes the wildlife at one of our ponds whilst the other gives the history and hydrology of Caesar's Well. We went for wood-effect recycled plastic boards and lectern style for ease of reading by children. The design work for the boards was done in house, which saved costs on employing a professional designer.

The Friends organise a monthly walk on the first Wednesday of the month starting at 2pm. All are welcome to join us.

4.2. Hoblingwell Wood: RA reported that Hoblingwell had had a glorious spring and are seeing lots of butterflies amongst other wildlife. The Friends of Hoblingwell have planted 63 metres of mixed native species hedging as part of our Hoblingwell Hedgerow Heroes project, supported by CPRE London.

Our first family wildlife walk and talk went well, focusing on birdlife. These will be held at 11am on the first Saturday every month until October.

During May half-term, 28 to 30 May, we will have additional activities for children 8+ with Superzones at Hoblingwell Pump Track seeing free street art, basketball, skateboarding and BMX sessions. Installation of the perimeter rail is nearing completion.

4.3. Bromley Town Parks: JR reported that with the assistance of Thames 21 they have undertaken a lot of work at Glassmill pond to move sediment and generally improve the water quality. We have had a couple of Community Days and now planted some 3000 plug plants in the bank.

JR reported that they are currently in discussion with the Council on a Jubilee Parks Fund bid to upgrade Bromley Palace Park. Costings at the moment are considerably high and negotiations are on-going.

There's been a problem with fallen trees in the lake in Bromley Palace Park and finding a contractor to deal with the issue has proven to be quite difficult. Issue rests with the Council at present.

Looking to naturalise the river at Queensmead and put it back to how it was before all the ramps were installed. Work would involve the Environment Agency, Thames 21 and other interested parties. JR also reported that they are expecting the installation of the new Queensmead Playground equipment within the next few weeks.

4.4. Alexandra Rec / Cator Park: MK reported that they have planted 120 metres of hedgerow in Alexandra Rec last year. Doing well though with the wet weather its competing with a lot of weeds. Also added plum trees and the like to the fruit orchard. Alexandra Rec received funding from the Jubilee Parks fund and the paddling pool was converted to a playarea including the installation of a table tennis table. Slight problem with weeds now and getting grounds maintenance to get on top of the work. Now logged to FMS to try to progress.

Lots of graffiti in Alexandra Rec, most memorial benches affected. Will need lots of attention later in the year. Have entered Penge in Bloom as we have a large quantity of roses and have made improvements in biodiversity.

Cator Park nominated for Green Flag and judging expected next month. Lots of work undertaken in preparation. Also planted mini-forest in response to the reported tree destruction in the area. Some whips have been disturbed, probably by animals, and we need to keep an eye on this to replant/replace. Replanted and re-mulched recently to improve matters.

Invited to be part of the three rivers clean-up project, to monitor the purity of the water and the life within it. Alexandra Rec has been identified as a good place for a naturalised pond and a meeting to discuss this further is to be planned. This is being organised in collaboration with Froglife.

4.5. Crofton & Sparrow Woods: JA reported that they have a sewage problem with this coming into the River Kidbrooke. Problem for children and dogs in particular.

Received a £20k Jubilee grant for playground improvements. Made a second application for two interpretation boards. Some discussion over who's doing the design work and the costs involved still to be resolved.

Looking for a funder to help improve pathways, many of which are covered in mud. Problems with motorbikes in the woods.

4.6. Downe Orchard: ZK gave a brief overview of Downe Orchard. It was originally planted in 1992 on a 2 acre plot with some 80 trees. Annual calendar includes pruning in January and harvesting in September. Apples are sent off for juicing which brings in some funds.

In 2016 the Orchard Project supported us with items such as event training, pruning and health & safety in orchards.

4.7. South Hill Wood / Kingswood Glen: DA reported that they have a problem with vehicles causing damage to pathways, the rubbish collectors or maintenance vehicles are either too big or driving without care. This was leaving a lot of ruts and/or damage to the grass verges. The meeting recommended to put complaints on FMS, which DA confirmed they did. Forum to raise with idverde. **Action: Forum**

4.8. Darrick & Newstead Woods: MS reported that they have made an application to the Jubilee Fund to resurface some of their pathways. The area is surrounded by schools so they are heavily used and can become extremely muddy, which is not ideal for the children (and parents). Expected improvements to be made in the summer holiday period.

Friends have undertaken a lot of work to remove cherry laurel from the site and this is now by and large complete.

Friends conduct a weekly walk for well-being, not massively attended with some weeks only a couple of attendees. Good strong social element amongst the team with occasional outings to London attractions and the like.

Problem with quad bikes in the woods and minor complaints from residents about blocked off pathways.

4.9. Chislehurst Commons: PW reported that they produce a monthly newsletter with a weekly electronic summary. Has been quite successful in disseminating information and arose as a result of Covid.

The Commons has suffered greatly with tree deceases and it's costing a vast sum of money in tree contractors to manage the issue.

The Friends Group started in 1995, so nearly 30 years.

Very pleased to see events on the Common being run by different and multiple organisations.

Problems with catapults and anti-social behaviour. Can't enforce but need to be aware and report and hopefully over time the culprits will get bored and/or grow up.

4.10. Willett Rec: GC reported that Willett is completely surrounded by houses and fences, it has two entrances and a tarmacked path. They have 16 trees. There is a pavilion for pre-school, a bowls club, a cricket pitch and 2 playgrounds. There is also 6 flood-lit tennis courts. No ponds or specific biodiversity to consider. A very busy place with scores of people and lots of dogs.

Willett has public toilets and these get vandalised from time to time, as does the pavilion.

4.11. Scadbury Park: VS reported that they are currently waiting for the big plan for the site and as there are not enough volunteers at the moment no events are planned. Not in a great place right now, lots of hits on the website and social media contacts but getting people to do things is a bit lacking. *Idverde* continue with general maintenance and the site continues to tick over.

4.12. ODAS: MM reported that ODAS is extremely busy. As part of the London Festival of Architecture the Poverest Bathhouse will be open on 8th June and the Moated Manor will be open on 23rd June. In addition, ODAS are organising open days for the Bathhouse (21st July) and the Moated Manor (14th/15th Sept pm only). Private tours by various parties are also planned. Lots of new members keen to get involved with archaeology.

4.13. Jubilee Country Park: JB explained that they have now planted up a small orchard and that they are currently looking into relevant signage. Recently held an AGM with a guest speaker talking on the subject of “wasps”.

Lots of walks around the site planned, history, wild flower etc.

4.14. Croydon Road Rec: CP reported that the bandstand had now been successfully refurbished and that a grand opening was planned for 17th May, which is a ticketed event. Through the Jubilee Parks Fund new signage incorporating the bandstand emblem has been installed

The paddling pool is back in use and as part of the next project it is planned to re-line it. However technical knowledge on how to do this seems limited within the Council/*idverde* and further investigations will be needed. The pool itself is very popular with the community.

Concerns that *idverde* no longer attends evening meetings and wonders why.

Also concerned, like South Hill Wood, about damage to verges by vehicles. Lots of ruts and churned up grass.

5. AOB

5.1. JJ asked all Groups to look out for hedgehogs, toads and white admiral butterflies this summer. Sightings should be reported to the Bromley Biodiversity partnership.

5.2. There is a London Rivers Week 22nd to 30th June with a myriad of different events, See <https://www.thames21.org.uk/london-rivers-week-2024/> for details.

5.3. The Big Bromley Brush-Up is being organised between 20th June to 17th July. See <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/street-care-cleaning/big-bromley-brush> for details.

5.4. A new Group covering Poverest Park is under consideration, Carroll Long is looking to take this forward.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18th July starting at 7pm. This meeting will be both in-person at the Civic Centre on on-line via zoom.