

# National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces

Annual General Meeting, 21 January 2017



at The Priory Rooms, Quaker Meeting House Birmingham

## Present:

<b>Dave Morris (Chair)</b>	Haringey Friends of Parks Forum; London GSFGN
<b>Sarah Royal</b>	Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF)
<b>Paul Todd</b>	Keep Britain Tidy
<b>Don Crabtree</b>	Doncaster Greenspace Network
<b>Sandra Crabtree</b>	Doncaster Greenspace Network
<b>Emma Woolf</b>	Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF)
<b>Chris Blythe</b>	Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF)
<b>Gary Roskell</b>	Bromsgrove and Redditch Open Spaces
<b>Patrick Meleady</b>	Sheffield Green Space Forum (SGSF)
<b>Bhupinder Dev</b>	Leeds Parks & Green Spaces Forum
<b>Michael Straw</b>	Friends of Greenwood Community Forum
<b>Wasył Strutyński</b>	AMOSS (Manchester)
<b>Roland Bruce</b>	Bristol Parks Forum
<b>Tom Cranston</b>	Treasurer
<b>Nigel Sharp</b>	North West Parks Friends Forum (NWPFF)

## Apologies

<b>Peter Woodward</b>	Bromley Parks Friends Forum
<b>Sarah Webster</b>	Derby Green Space Forum
<b>Barbara Rouse</b>	Derby Park Friends Group, Sefton
<b>Rod Fillingham</b>	Friends of Greenwood Community Forum
<b>Michelle Parker</b>	NFPGS advisor / Worthing Forum
<b>Keith Elder</b>	South Staffs Forum
<b>Ann Ault</b>	Walsall Friends Group Network
<b>Robert Lee</b>	Wirral Parks Forum; NWPFF

Minute	Action
<b>1. Minutes of Previous Meeting (22/10/16) &amp; Matters Arising</b>	
Noted that Patrick Meleady (Sheffield Green Space Forum) be added to those attending, NS details to be amended - post-Love Parks he attended as an advisor and North West Park Friends Forum rep.  The minutes were agreed.	<b>SR</b>
<b>2. Minutes of the Previous AGM (18/7/15)</b>	
These were agreed.	

### 3. Chair's Report (Dave Morris)

DM provided a résumé of work since July 2015, highlighting excellent progress in our networking, campaigning and in partnership development.

- With support from Esmée Fairburn Funding (EFF) NFPGS has held a series of conference events throughout England regions which have helped identify and link with existing groups and inform them about the wider movement.
- NFPGS has been influential in mobilising and informing the sector:
  - joining with the campaign group 38 Degrees and others to lobby for parks and green spaces to become a statutory service;
  - raising awareness about the financial crisis facing parks;
  - presenting written and oral evidence to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Select Committee Public Parks Inquiry.
- The NFPGS events, campaign and public inquiry have helped improve links between NFPGS and partner organisations, with the support of EFF also helping develop a very sound strategic business plan.
- The Business Plan has informed an Action Plan to reform the NFPGS organisational structure, moving to Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status and potentially improving the financial sustainability of the NFPGS.

DM stressed that this had been progress without losing the grassroots character of the movement and stated his pride at the local regional and national community impact at this significant time for parks.

DM thanked SR and TC for their unwavering commitment to the NFPGS, and thanked all the officers, reps and others involved at every level. Those present all thanked DM for his tireless and dedicated work.

Chair's report adopted.

### 4. CEO's Report (Sarah Royal)

SR reported that in addition to support for the DCLG inquiry, NFPGS was influential in promoting network contributions to the 2<sup>nd</sup> State of UK Parks report (details at: [www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016](http://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks-2016))

NFPGS regional events comprised:

- East Midlands (Nottingham)
- West Midlands (Coventry)
- Yorkshire (Leeds)
- North East (Newcastle)
- South / South East (Brighton)
- South West (Bristol)

In addition, regional conference funds enabled the existing NW Parks Friends Forum to hold workshops in Blackpool and Chester.

<p>Attendance at each event ranged from 25-50 with members from local Friends groups, Forums and representatives from partner organisations.</p> <p>SR has submitted an end of project report to EFF and thanked all those who helped deliver the event programme. The NFPGS strategic business plan is available at: <a href="http://www.natfedparks.org.uk/nfpgs-literature.html">www.natfedparks.org.uk/nfpgs-literature.html</a></p> <p>There was general acknowledgement of the need to maintain momentum and keep in touch with new contacts generated by the Conference programme to ensure the network development is sustained.</p> <p>NS agreed to liaise with SR to review and revise the NFPGS database and ensure comprehensive listing of active group contacts. The need to keep regular contact through updates and newsletters with MailChimp providing a convenient format. It was agreed that wide circulation will be particularly important until the NFPGS structure and lead contacts are established to coordinate information regionally.</p> <p>CEO's report adopted.</p>	<p><b>SR/NS</b></p>
<p><b>5. Treasurer's Report (Tom Cranston)</b></p>	
<p>TC circulated account details (see Appendix 1). The principal income had been the EFF grant, with the main expenditure the CEP salary (SR) and conference events. He noted that event costs varied according to location. Financial details have also been included in the details final project report to EFF.</p> <p>TC confirmed that he would stand down as Treasurer and all thanked him for his diligence and commitment to the role.</p> <p>Although it was suggested that this transition could provide an opportunity for a fresh start with a new bank account to maximise convenience for the new treasurer, after discussion it was agreed to retain with the present account for continuity, and review requirements subsequent to future changes in NFPGS status.</p> <p>Further discussion followed regarding the financial agreement and meetings' expenses contribution from KBT. PT confirmed KBT's continued support, and suggested claims could either be sent direct to KBT or arrangements could be made for KBT to make the necessary advance bookings. It was agreed that the new treasurer should review terms and procedures direct with KBT.</p> <p>The finance report was accepted and TC agreed to liaise with the new Treasurer until the end of March to complete the account for 2016/17.</p> <p>Treasurer's report adopted.</p>	<p><b>TC/RB</b></p> <p><b>RB/PT</b></p> <p><b>TC/RB</b></p>
<p><b>6. Election of Officers</b></p>	
<p>Existing executive officers stood down from their posts pending election/re-election. Following this process the composition of the 2017/18 Committee officers is:</p>	

<p>Chair - Dave Morris</p> <p>Treasurer - Roland Bruce</p> <p>Secretary - Nigel Sharp</p> <p>Vice Chair - Michelle Furtado</p> <p>Although unable to attend, during the meeting Michelle Furtado was contacted and invited to become Vice-Chair and duly accepted. Elected.</p> <p>Sarah Royal will continue as CEO, work commitments subject to available funds.</p> <p>Thanks were expressed to outgoing officers Ann Ault (Secretary) and Tom Cranston (Treasurer) and TC made a personal donation of £150 to NFPGS. All expressed their great appreciation.</p>	
<p><b>7. Motions or Constitution Change</b></p> <p>A draft Action Plan, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, was discussed (see Appendix 2). Key proposals for NFPGS to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)</li> <li>• adopt a revised operational structure of Trustees (mainly the elected officers) and Committee members (elected regional delegates)</li> <li>• rationalise meeting programme comprising committee and general member meetings</li> <li>• be supported by paid staff: a CEO with freelance regional coordinators.</li> </ul> <p>EW outlined these recommendations and confirmed the Chair of BOSF has offered to prepare a revised constitution to accommodate the necessary changes and satisfy CIO requirements. This was appreciated.</p> <p>It is also proposed to review the organisation name with a view to adopting a shorter title that would be augmented with a more descriptive strapline.</p> <p>It was agreed that this could be an opportunity to engage with and involve the wider membership in developing the NFPGS through a simple online survey.</p> <p>Discussion followed regarding the operational structure and particularly the status and respective role of trustees and committee members. Issues included regional designation, development and equal representation while retaining grassroots links. The need to streamline representation and ensure continuity of membership was also noted.</p> <p>It was suggested that structural change could be introduced during a transitional period and pragmatic approach to invite regional committee representatives to become trustees if they wish was agreed (11-1).</p>	<p><b>EW/SR</b></p> <p><b>SR</b></p> <p><b>All</b></p>
<p><b>8. Fundraising Bids</b></p>	
<p>Potential funding streams under consideration include: EFF, Big Lottery</p>	

Fund and Lush.

The potential for donations was discussed. Although membership fees have been previously rejected to ensure NFPGS is an inclusive organisation, the benefit of a 'donate' button link (BT 'just giving') on the website was noted, particularly if website revision also includes clear information of the work and benefits of NFPGS activity.

**DM/MP**

SR reiterated that future funding opportunities will be enhanced by the move to CIO status – notably in enabling eligibility to apply for EFF support.

The end of EFF grant report has now been submitted and feedback - which would inform subsequent project development and bids – is awaited.

**SR**

PT confirmed that following the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) support for the Love Parks project, KBT has discussed a subsequent bid with BLF's Reaching Communities programme. Current funding priorities for England are focussed on localised engagement to work with community representatives to build capacity and empower local groups and individuals.

PT suggested NFPGS would be their community partner and help develop a joint bid. Initial proposals favoured a project to develop site monitoring and condition assessment, enabling communities to become involved in protecting and improving green space standards. The North East was proposed as one of two regions for project delivery.

SR outlined preliminary discussions involving NFPGS as a grassroots community partner in a possible future joint programme with Groundwork, Fields in Trust and Greenspace Scotland. The general project aim would be to provide support for parks and green space community groups, help them to develop skills to play a more active role in park and green space management. SR to advise further in due course.

**SR**

Lush offer more limited, specific funds, such as support for a conference. This opportunity may be more appropriate once NFPGS is re-established as a CIO.

DM reported that the London GSFG Network is developing an 'Our Parks' regional green space event/campaign with CPRE which may also offer a template for a future Lush-funded NFPGS event/campaign. The meeting expressed broad interest and support for this idea.

[Discussion followed regarding campaigning – details included in item 11.]

RB suggested more consideration of the various funding opportunities, reviewing compatibility, joint bid and match potential, etc perhaps through the NFPGS funding sub-group. PT suggested this could focus on the KBT opportunity and agreed to liaise with SR and Committee reps (DM/RB/CB/GR/NS) to agree a date.

**PT/SR**

## **9. Relations with KBT**

PT confirmed that KBT will continue to support NFPGS, including funds for meetings, to be reviewed on an annual basis.

<p>Love Parks Week 2017 (14-23 July) is likely to be themed 'love it or lose it'.</p> <p>The Green Flag Award continues to develop with an increased number of log-ins including new submissions from community groups associated with the recent 'Pocket Park' initiative. Award ceremony events are provisionally planned for Hull, Derby and Reading.</p> <p>NS highlighted the potential for strengthening links with KBT and specifically for the KBT community network to engage with NFPGS groups who are active nationwide. He noted that the KBT 'Great British Spring Clean' (3-5 March) represents a particular opportunity for KBT to approach parks &amp; green space groups (details at <a href="http://www.greatbritishspringclean.org.uk">www.greatbritishspringclean.org.uk</a>). We agreed to support.</p>	<b>PT</b>
<b>10. Internal NFPGS Administration</b>	
<p>The website continues to need updating and upgrading and now includes the Strategic Business Plan and our response to the National Inquiry. NS noted that there also remain additional items no longer relevant or out of date which need to be removed. He added that the operational structure reform should also present the opportunity to raise the profile of NFPGS with more social media activity.</p> <p>NS confirmed that as Secretary he will review and revise the membership database with SR/ DM.</p>	<b>DM/MP</b>  <b>NS</b>
<b>11. NFPGS Activities and Campaigns</b>	
<p>The Woodland Trust is leading a call to adopt a 'Charter for Trees' (<a href="http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/tree-charter">www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/tree-charter</a>) and DM suggested a similar 'Charter' approach to parks and green spaces. Following discussion it was agreed to mainly focus on the Action Plan at the moment. It was agreed that DM could draft a proposed Charter (based on our 2016 Grass Roots Manifesto) to aid further discussion. It was further noted that the forthcoming report from the DCLG Public Parks Inquiry will represent an opportunity to raise the profile of NFPGS and contact the membership.</p> <p>DM reported moves by 38 Degrees to follow lobby work associated with the Public Parks Inquiry with a campaign to encourage communities to lobby their local authority, including around park and green space budgets , using Freedom of Information (FOI) act requests.</p> <p>While the need for evidence and clarity of financial pressures was noted, the general consensus at the meeting was concern that the focus on Fols could be counter-productive: many local groups already have such data (and the NFPGS had passed on some such data to 38 Degrees), and submitting FOI requests could further burden already under resourced park officers with additional tasks, jeopardising existing, often harmonious relationships between park community groups and officers. However, the active mobilisation of thousands of 38 Degrees members around the future of parks was welcomed.</p> <p>DM agreed to feedback the need for cautious support for the initiative and ensure this works with existing park groups to consider the implications and</p>	<b>DM</b>         <b>DM</b>

benefits.

SR reported that she had met with the Edinburgh Parks Forum and Greenspace Scotland.

DM led a workshop at a Land Use Conference. He also reported a request from Horticulture Week for news items relating to local parks and green space community groups' issues. Details at [www.hortweek.com](http://www.hortweek.com) ; contact [sarah.cosgrove@haymarket.com](mailto:sarah.cosgrove@haymarket.com) .

NS attended a War Memorials Condition Survey workshop organised by Civic Voice. This is a national initiative with widespread events and he noted the potential link to a similar park based initiative. He added that Civic Voice is now promoting Civic Day ('a day to say I care about where I live') on 17 June ([www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/civic-day-celebration](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/civic-day-celebration))

## 12. Area Forums and Regional Network reports

DM requested to be copied in on the circulation of any Area Forum minutes. **All**

### Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF)

- the Forum is campaigning against cuts and threats to park services
- these include loss of 75% rangers and park keepers
- members are attending and lobbying at Council meetings

### Friends of Greenwood (Nottinghamshire)

- a wind turbine on a former colliery site – now a country park - is providing Nottingham County Council with £30K/yr rental, a possible income stream for others to consider.

### Sheffield Green Space Forum

- Group is meeting 6 times annually
- Official launch on 6 May due to be attended by Clive Betts MP (chair of the DCLG parks inquiry)
- Forum is identifying training needs and preparing workshops
- Loss of 14 parks staff posts

### Doncaster Greenspace Network

- Group meets quarterly, supported by Council rangers
- Agreement for Council insurance to cover groups is being finalised.
- The Forum has secured £10K Tesco Bag grant to cover new 'superbins'. Partnership deal with Council will avoid VAT charges.
- New Council officer helping initiatives including Green Flag bid.
- Council support has helped grow the Forum to include 12 groups.
- Council recognition of the positive impact of the Forum

### Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum

- Now 102 members including Friends and other reps
- Membership now extending to include Bradford
- Supported by social media
- No parks staff reductions in 2017/18 budget
- Council adopting efficiency savings

- Deputation from Forum met with Parks Portfolio holder
- Parks and green space seen as a priority for health & wellbeing
- Parks to feature in Leeds bid for European capital of Culture 2023
- Forum keen to work with others to develop S Yorks Regional Forum

#### Association of Manchester Open Space Societies (AMOSS)

- Group commenting on Gtr Manchester Spatial Strategy
- Concern at threat and impact of new housing development
- Council training on asset management

#### Bristol Parks Forum

- Parks Service structure is under review
- Ongoing threats associated with development
- Council is reviewing its policy on allotments

#### Bromsgrove and Redditch Open Spaces

- Concern at lack of County-District communication/co-ordination
- Group is assisting member groups to seek funding
- Also developing links with other neighbourhood and community groups – not just Friends groups.

#### Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

- Having good turnouts (10-15 groups) at their bi-monthly meetings
- Continuing concern over underfunding, development pressures and commercial events.
- Organised successful Walking Weekend (20 walks) and booklet.
- Sent response to national Parks Inquiry backing NFPGS position.

#### North West Parks Friends Forum (NWPFF)

- Similar concerns about 'development creep'
- Threats to park – especially indirect through buffer sites, adjacent sites being developed
- These include approval to building the garden of property adjacent to grade I Birkenhead Park – setting a concerning precedent.
- Closure of National Wildflower Centre Court Hey Park, Knowsley will lead to the loss of key park facilities and staff base in park.
- Liverpool Parks Friends Forum rejuvenated with more members and regular meetings
- NWPFF to meet with HLF to develop a Resilient Heritage programme project to support community group capacity building and network development in NW.

#### London Parks & Green Spaces Friends Groups Network (LPGSFGN)

- Regular (every 2mnth) meetings of reps from groups and Forums from up to 18 London boroughs.
- Topics cover local issues and campaigning initiatives
- Support for Gtr London National Park proposal
- Sent response to national Parks Inquiry backing NFPGS position.
- LPGSFGN attended and contributed to a Mayoral and London Assembly Parks Inquiry, mirroring the national Inquiry.
- Group is working with CPRE to organise an event/campaign focussed on a Strategy for Promoting and Protecting London's

<p>Green Spaces. ('London's Green Space – It's Ours!').</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although there are 600 Friends groups around London a further 2400 sites potentially need friends!</li> </ul>	
<b>12. AOB</b>	
<p>Yorkshire-based groups present at meeting agreed to start setting up a regional network.</p> <p>Link to the DCLG Public Park Inquiry:  <a href="http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/public-parks-16-17/">www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/public-parks-16-17/</a></p>	
<b>13. Date of next meeting</b>	
<p>April 2017 – date and venue to be confirmed.</p>	<b>All</b>



**Appendix 2: NFPGS Structure –Draft Action Plan v3**  
**[As broadly approved at AGM January 2017]**

		Issues for comment
1.1	<b>Legal Structure:</b> Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)	
1.2	<b>Proposed new name:</b> On the Ground (?) or Grass Roots [Action] – the national federation of parks and green space community forums	<b>Options to be discussed</b>
1.3	<b>Democratic Structure</b>	
1.3.1	Minimum of 6 trustees drawn from the elected officers – Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, plus at least 2 others. Elected regional reps to be invited to be Trustees. Constitution to include scope to co-opt trustees with specialist skills.	<b>Trustees need a spread of experience &amp; expertise. Trustees to meet quarterly – attached to committee/general meetings</b>
1.3.2	Committee membership to be made up of elected officers and delegates from the regional and sub-regional Networks or bodies, where existing. [Or co-opted regional rep from a Forum/Hub if no functioning Network yet exists]. And co-opted advisors.  3 committee meetings per year, alternated with 2 General Meetings (see 1.3.4 below). Meetings open to all Forums. Only Committee members will have fares reimbursed [subject to funding availability]. Trustees to hold short formal meetings just before these meetings.	<b>The idea of Regional Hubs – helps to solve the challenges in developing the regions</b>  <b>Size/activity level of regions and need for paid support – see 1.4.2 below</b>
1.3.3	Regional meetings in each region are hoped to be held twice a year – content and format to be self-determined by regional Networks or a regional hub / Advocate where no Network yet exists. Between meetings contact maintained by online/email support/contact, exchange visits and socials for reps of Forums and groups Organised regions to elect reps to NFPGS Committee. Where region not (yet) organised, NFPGS can elect reps of an active Hub in that region trying to develop the region, or an Advocate (without voting rights).	
1.3.4	NFPGS General Meetings. 2 per year, including AGM, for reps from Forums (the NFPGS membership).	<b>Membership continue to set the over-arching policies and general direction of the NFPGS, and to elect trustees/honorary officers at AGM.</b>
1.4	<b>Paid Support Structure</b>	
1.4.1	<b>CEO (or equivalent) Role plus or includes Information role</b> Policy * Strategy Canvassing * Partnerships Keeping membership informed * Supporting the regional networks Supporting the trustees and committee * (below could be separate role) Central Secretariat * Distribution of info to the regional consultants to be further distributed Maintenance of central website	<b>How many days a week?</b>  <b>Depends if the whole role taken on by one person or if role split between CEO and Information/Publicity person</b>
1.4.2	<b>Network of Freelance Regional Consultants/Coordinators</b> Supporting the regions and forums. Organising regional events and exchange visits Producing regional information, maintaining regional pages of website	<b>Approx 3 days a mth each? Might depend on activity levels and geography of the region. Each could take on more than one region – where appropriate</b>

Diagram of proposed structure - “ Grass Roots [Action]” – the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces’ [Forums]

