

**Trustees & Special General Meeting Minutes**

The Priory Rooms, Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham

**Saturday 23 November 2019**

The meeting comprised three sections: [A] A preliminary Trustees Meeting; [B] a Special General Meeting followed by [C] an Open Discussion.

**[A] Trustees Meeting****Present:**

<b>Dave Morris (Chair)</b>	London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN) and Haringey Friends of Parks Forum
<b>Sarah Royal (CEO)</b>	Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF)
<b>Martin Willis (Vice Chair)</b>	Nottingham Open Spaces Forum (NOSF)
<b>Michelle Furtado (Network Coordinator)</b>	Green Tides (Adur & Green Spaces Worthing Partnership)
<b>Roland Bruce (Treasurer)</b>	Bristol Parks Forum
<b>Helen Ellis</b>	Wirral Parks Forum
<b>Tim Wright</b>	Sunderland Green Open Spaces Forum
<b>Chris Blyth</b>	Bham Open Spaces Forum, and <b>Social Farms &amp; Gardens</b>
<b>Judith Oliver</b>	Reading EcoNet
<b>Wasył Strutynski</b>	Association of Manchester Open Spaces Societies (AMOSS)
<b>Paul Barrett</b>	Friends of Bute Park, Cardiff
<b>Anne Ault</b>	Walsall Parks Forum
<b>Nigel Sharp (Secretary)</b>	North West Parks Friends Forum (NWPFF)

**Apologies:**

<b>Jennifer Kirkby</b>	Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum
<b>Keith Elder</b>	South Staffordshire Friends Groups Network
<b>Cliff Munn</b>	Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum
<b>Simon Biggs</b>	Dudley Open Spaces Forum
<b>Sarah Hardy</b>	Sheffield Green Spaces Forum
<b>Paul Todd</b>	Keep Britain Tidy

<b>Minutes of previous meeting (29.6.19) &amp; Matters Arising</b>	
Minutes were agreed.	
It was agreed to defer discussion reviewing the Strategic Business Plan to the next meeting owing to other agenda priorities.	<b>All</b>
<b>Organisational Matters</b>	
<b>Charitable Incorporate Organisation (CIO) application</b>	

<p>CIO status for NFPGS was confirmed in October. This has been achieved without substantially changing the NFPGS objectives or membership details however a minor change to the constitution is required which is to be presented for ratification at the Special General Meeting (see item [B]). Particular thanks were expressed to MW for his expertise and work to progress this.</p> <p>Following discussion about liabilities and insurance, MF has a public liability insurance quote from Unity and MW agreed to support and look at other options.</p> <p>DM had circulated a number of model policies relevant NFPGS activity, subsequently agreed for adoption. DM to include on the NFPGS website.</p> <p><b>Networks Post</b> MF has settled well into this role and is managing a contacts database and adopting GDPR policies based on the Parks Alliance approach, supporting the programme of regional conferences.</p>	<p><b>MF/MW</b></p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
<p><b>Financial Sustainability</b></p>	
<p>RB confirmed participation in the London Marathon (2019) generated over £600.</p> <p>DM will contact Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) for advice on progressing a NFPGS bid now that the CIO status is confirmed.</p> <p>NFPGS potentially could also receive limited additional income from links with TiCL (Tree Trail) and the recent 'Parks Health App'.</p> <p>DM reported that web duties have been transferred to Dave Hastings and first quarter works completed, total £150.</p> <p>RB agreed to support a transfer of role to MW as 'acting treasurer'. Thanks were expressed to RB for his work – and MW for taking on these duties.</p>	<p><b>DM</b></p> <p><b>RB/MW</b></p>
<p><b>NFPGS Development</b></p>	
<p>DM has set up an internal communication list for all Forums and will review this with input from other NFPGS officers.</p> <p>A community empowerment questionnaire survey has been set up with around 300 responses.</p> <p>It was agreed to discuss adopting a Memorandum of Understanding with Social Farms &amp; Gardens.</p> <p>The Parks Action Group (PAG) is to develop a business case to present to the Treasury.</p> <p><b>Networks Post</b> MF reported successful completion of the programme of regional conferences with information from this consultative process now with Locality to prepare a report expected in December 2019.</p> <p>These events have extended the NFPGS membership/ mailing list with around 1300 contacts now on the database which has been consolidated from previous lists. Twitter followers are now over 1500, with additional membership of facebook.</p> <p><b>Website</b> It was noted that there may be additional opportunities related to the charitable status of NFPGS such as reduced costs.</p>	<p><b>DM</b></p> <p><b>DM/CB</b></p>



<p><b><i>for exclusively charitable purposes in accordance with the law of England and Wales. Voluntary organisations are independent organisations which are established for purposes that add value to the community as a whole, or a significant section of the community, and which are not permitted by their constitution to make a profit for private distribution. Voluntary organisations do not include local government or other statutory organisations.</i></b></p> <p>These changes were agreed by all present with two abstentions.</p>	
<b>Election of Trustee</b>	
<p>MW was proposed and elected as a Trustee, by all present (one abstention). The necessary changes to the Constitution are shown in bold</p> <p><i>p13. 12 (4) First Charity Trustees</i></p> <p><i>The first charity trustees of the NFPGS under this constitution as amended are Dave Morris, Nigel Sharp, Michelle Furtado, Roland Bruce, Sarah Royal, <b>Martin Willis</b>.</i></p> <p>The ex officio charity trustee item in the Constitution (13. (2) has now been deleted since this is now superfluous.</p>	

**[C] Open Discussion**

<b>Network development</b>	
<p>MF provided a brief update:</p> <p>A programme of 7 regional conferences had been held with support from Locality, in addition to networking events in the NW and London.</p> <p>Over 300 groups had been involved, engaging with these friends groups to determine current issues and opportunities focused on a series of themes. Locality will prepare mini reports for each area with a more general review of key outcomes which include funding and protection of green space.</p>	
<b>Member group updates</b>	
<p>[Details provided by members attending and copies of Forum minutes circulated to NFPGS]</p> <p><b>Cardiff</b> The Forum meets quarterly, supported by the City Council Parks and Rangers Service who provide updates. Additional input (October meeting) from organisations involved in local projects e.g. Wildlife Trust and Public Rights of Way officer with 5 Friends groups also represented.</p> <p>The Bute Park Forum provides consultation and coordination for stakeholders involved with this city centre park.</p> <p><b>Nottingham</b> A tree summit is planned for the city, to bring friends groups and others from the green space sector together, linking to a Nottingham Blue/ Green Steering Group. Nottingham Open Spaces Forum (NOSF) was Council led but has been independent since 2016. It is a registered charity with around 40 member groups. Nottingham is one of 8 sites approved for Parks Accelerator funding. <a href="https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/landscapes-parks-nature/future-parks">https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/landscapes-parks-nature/future-parks</a></p>	

**Walsall**

Around 20 groups involved with links to the Allotments Society as a sub-group. Awards for All project funding has supported a grants programme and insurance cover for groups.

**Birmingham**

One of the Future Parks (Accelerator funding) sites looking at joint working within the council service areas including education, children's services, health and housing. Progress has been slow however it is hoped new models will be developed to benefit from a more integrated approach, understanding and appreciating the value and role of parks and green spaces.

A coalition of sector groups has established 'Greener Birmingham' <https://www.greenerbirmingham.com/> which it is hoped will develop to become more inclusive.

Currently there are 135 member groups in BOSF with others starting, benefiting from a well established and organised Forum (since 2004). The Forum collates volunteer hours (also presented in an infographic), volunteer hours support the Forum / Council providing insurance cover for groups through Unity. An added inducement for groups is £10/ month to submit returns. The City Council has declared a Climate Emergency and a taskforce is part of Greener Birmingham.

The Forum has a monthly newsletter, plans and delivers training alongside social activities to sustain networking and sharing of resources.

More details at: <https://bosf.org.uk>

**Reading**

Established 20 years ago, Econet represent around 20 practical groups active in parks and green spaces – including additional sites managed by the National Trust or privately. Ten groups in Reading contributed over 260 volunteer days. Econet is separate to the Council, and although the group is engaged in conservation and site management including seed and tree planting, also environmental education, there is a lack of partnership working.

More details at: <http://www.econetreading.org.uk>

**Sunderland**

Launched in April 2019 following a shadow launch, the Forum includes allotments, open spaces, river and coast. Prior to the launch there were meetings to determine the role: to shape and influence strategic plans; to be involved in how sites are managed however current concern at the lack of active engagement and support from the Council, despite meetings with key staff. The Forum has Awards for All funding to cover meeting rooms, social media/ website, promotion and information.

More details at: <https://sunderlandqosf.wordpress.com>

**Manchester**

The Association of Manchester Open Spaces Societies (AMOSS) has been established 6-7 years, meets quarterly with around 25 Friends groups – there are many more parks within the area, so scope for growing the membership.

Details at: <https://manchesteropenspaces.wordpress.com>

**Bristol**

Bristol Parks Forum is in transition, with the successful Nesta project supporting extended activity with neighbouring Bath and the establishment of the Bristol &

Bath Parks Foundation <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/foundation/>. RB commented that the Forum would benefit from becoming more inclusive to create network links with other organization covering 'bluespaces' and infrastructure. The Forum has 52 member groups and recently prepared a strategic document to present a sustainable vision for the future of the city's parks and green spaces. Details at: <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BPFVision.pdf>

#### **Adur & Worthing**

Forum was initiated by the Trust for Conservation Volunteers - around 40 groups are involved with 15-20 attending meetings.

#### **Wirral**

The well established Forum has over 50 groups but more than 200 parks and coastal green spaces. The Forum meets quarterly but challenges include a need for more active membership and better support for the Steering Group. The Forum is well linked to the Council through a Parks Partnership Performance Board which includes good links with the Wirral Tree Wardens. This has supported the 'Wirral Initiative on Trees, working with the Council to prepare a tree strategy.

Inactive Forum membership is prompting a review to consider options to maintain a Forum, possibly at reduced level due to capacity. Consultation will take place ahead of the next AGM (Feb '20).

#### **North West**

The North West Parks Friends Forum faces similar challenges of active membership, given the extensive nature of the networking group. A Tree Conference hosted by Wirral helped maintain links and a members networking meeting is planned for Spring 2020 to help maintain links and encourage wider input to support the active core of Merseyside contacts.

#### **Haringey**

Established over 18 years, the Forum has 45 groups meeting every two months. There is a good relationship with the local authority, enabling sharing of good practice, however loss of funds and standards threaten Green Flag Award status. There has been a series of meetings to develop a 15 year strategy including aspirations for the future of the service.

#### **London**

London Friends of Green Spaces Network has been established 12 years, with regular meetings every two months, to bring together reps from up to 33 Forums. The profile has benefitted from the designation of Gtr London as a National Park City and the Forum aims to influence green space and environmental policy.

#### **Edinburgh**

[The group welcomed an update by phone - from **Jeni**]  
Around 48 groups are involved, with up to 20 attending the quarterly meetings which include sharing of updates, discussion on issues and a themed talk. Meetings at park venues include a site visit with the host friends group. Current issues of concern include public liability insurance.

The city is also included in the Parks Accelerator programme.

[Additional Forum updates were provided in advance of the meeting and included in the meeting papers – brief summaries follow].

#### **Glasgow**

The Glasgow Parks Forum has been involved with the Council and other partner in setting up a citizens panel for the Participatory Budgeting process. The work includes workshops to determine allocation of funds by the end of 2019/20. The work is a pilot for this approach with interest to review the democratic approach.

<p>More details at <a href="https://pbscotland.scot/">https://pbscotland.scot/</a></p> <p><b>Brighton &amp; Hove</b>  Recent meeting included over 20 different groups (from Friends to gardening and residents groups). The Forum now has over 90 groups. The meeting included discussion on a local food partnership to campaign of sustainability; a talk from a tree warden; sharing of group progress and discussion of common issues including volunteering, training, the local tree strategy and the Parks Charter/ NFPGS.</p>	
<p><b>Discussion</b></p>	
<p>A summary of comments is provided.</p> <p><b>Partnership working</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need to support a two way relationship, both parties having equal say.</li> <li>- Data can show the value of community groups, volunteer hours, events, etc.</li> <li>- Regular surveys by Friends groups can help show the value of their role, including funds raised.</li> <li>- Regular meetings/ communication is essential.</li> <li>- Targeting of key individuals / supporters recommended.</li> <li>- Discussion groups to involve groups and present achievements.</li> <li>- Feedback from regional conferences shows impact of loss of key staff/ lack of continuity loss of relationships/ knowledge.</li> </ul> <p><b>The role of Area Forums</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NFPGS and area forums need to link with other groups, support initiatives</li> <li>- Parks Action Group has helped improve coordination and foster joint working.</li> <li>- Forums can help raise demands – on local, regional and national level.</li> <li>- E.g. Haringey success to lobby for scrutiny committee to review parks funding, consider bigger picture and case for resources from other service areas. Also support for Fields in Trust protection and a strategic approach.</li> <li>- Consider lobbying political candidates.</li> <li>- Raise strategic issues and cross cutting themes for parks support e.g. value of parks to health – now including social prescribing.</li> <li>- Need to provide examples, case studies and quantify benefits.</li> <li>- Need to collate data nationally to create impact.</li> <li>- Lobbying and campaigning opportunities relating to increased awareness of climate emergency – need to highlight mitigating and beneficial role of green spaces – and the part of community groups in sustaining these sites.</li> <li>- As above - needs to be recognition of the value of volunteers to biodiversity, trees and even investment.</li> <li>- Increased opportunities for community empowerment now as pressure for ‘new ways of working’ presenting potential for greater control, e.g. community asset transfer, etc.</li> <li>- Grass roots engagement vital to challenge and lobby councils – through ward councillors, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strengthening the NFPGS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benefits from the Parks Action Group process.</li> <li>- Cross sector discussion and memorandum of understanding progress.</li> <li>- Lessons from Greenspace Scotland as a national campaigning body.</li> <li>- Need for additional, active input and expertise to supplement trustees.</li> <li>- Key additional input to include marketing, volunteer engagement.</li> <li>- Potential support from regional activity – need for regional representation.</li> <li>- Charity status is an opportunity to seek funding.</li> </ul>	

- Any expressions of further interest to DM/ MF	<b>All</b>
<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
To be arranged – February/ March 2020 Aim to develop a programme of quarterly committee/ general meetings with the AGM provisionally in May 2020.	<b>All</b>