

**'Share and Exchange' Meeting Minutes**

Zoom Meeting

**Tuesday 16 February 2021****Present:**

Barry Johnson	Association of Manchester Open Spaces Societies (AMOSS)
Wasył Strutyński	Association of Manchester Open Spaces Societies (AMOSS)
Roger Chapman	Barnet Green Spaces Network
Sarah Royal (CEO, NFPGS)	Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF)
Suzanne Morpurgo	Brent Residents and Parks Forum
Cliff Munn	Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum
Rob Acton-Campbell	Bristol Parks Forum
Gordon Swan	Edinburgh Green Space Forum
Kirsten Thorburn	Edinburgh Green Space Forum
Jean Glasberg	Federation of Cambridge Residents Associations (FeCRA)
Wendy Blythe	Federation of Cambridge Residents Associations (FeCRA)
Larry Herbert	Friends Forum of Bromley Parks & Green Spaces
Mark Fiddy	Friends of Glasgow Parks Forum
Lisa Attwell	Green Tides (Adur & Green Spaces Worthing Partnership)
Michelle Furtado (Network Coordinator, NFPGS)	Green Tides (Adur & Green Spaces Worthing Partnership)
Claire Parry	Haringey Friends of Parks Forum
Antonia Savvides	Harrow Parks Forum
Rolland	Harrow Parks Forum
Simon Braidman	Harrow Parks Forum, Harrow Nature Conservation Forum
Sally Sanderson	Horsham Green Spaces Forum
Jenni Chan	Islington Friends of Parks Groups
Lynda Kitching	Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum
Alona Sheridan	Lewisham Green Spaces Forum
Chrisie Byrne	Liverpool Parks Friends Forum (LPFF)
Dave Morris (Chair, NFPGS)	London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN)
Martin Willis (Treasurer & Vice Chair, NFPGS)	Nottingham Open Spaces Forum (NOSF)
Nigel Sharp (Secretary, NFPGS)	NW Parks Friends Forum
Barbara Rouse	Sefton Parks Friends (Derby Park Friends, Bootle)
Nicola Dempsey	Sheffield Green Spaces Forum
Tom Mower	South Tyneside Green Space Forum

**Apologies:**

Jacqueline Watkins	Friends of Thurrock Parks
Shelly Quinton-Hulme	Friends of Trafford's Parks and Green Spaces
	Greenwood Forum, Nottinghamshire
	Lambeth Friends of Parks Forum
Paul Ely	Parks Community UK
Richard Desmond	Tower Hamlets Friends of Parks and Green Spaces Forum
Pat Gross	Wandsworth Forum
	Newcastle Forum

<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	
DM welcomed all. Great to see such a good turnout (representing around 2,000 of the local groups around the UK)	
<b>Area Forum Updates</b>	
Group reps provided a very brief overview of their Forum:	
<p><b>Barnet Green Spaces Network (RC)</b> Established 2 years ago, 30 groups, been holding zoom meetings. Current debate over what the Council has designated as 'low value, low quality parks', and a Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy, also the Great North Road Hedge Project. Relationship with the council is ok. More details available at e-update: <a href="https://mailchi.mp/43589899580e/february-2021-newsletter">https://mailchi.mp/43589899580e/february-2021-newsletter</a></p>	
<p><b>Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (SR)</b> SR in post as CEO, est. as charity (CIO) in 2005, approx. 130 groups with new groups developing, good relationship with City Council, funding to support a fundraiser post, Council covers group insurance, groups return volunteer data to show added value. Virtual coffee mornings continue engagement. Input to Future Parks Accelerator programme.</p>	
<p><b>Brent Residents and Parks Forum (SM)</b> Est. 2018, now 32 groups including community gardens and mutual aid groups. Support from Veolia linking to environmental networks, including Friends of the Earth training support. Adoption of orchard areas, also 'walk run ride events' for goparkslondon.</p>	
<p><b>Brighton &amp; Hove Green Spaces Forum (CM)</b> Around 90 groups, 70 active, noted increase in park use and interest, recent AGM on zoom, aim to help groups restart, support with risk assessments, etc. Forum valued to share information and support.</p>	
<p><b>Bristol Parks Forum (RA-C)</b> Est. 2003, 40 active groups, from the Rethinking Parks set up Britol &amp; Bath Parks Foundation charity, also links with South Gloucester, good relationship with City Council, supportive independent Mayor. Zoom meetings continue but look to future blended approach. Involved in Future Parks Accelerator.</p>	
<p><b>Bromley – Friends Forum of Bromley Parks &amp; Green Spaces (LH)</b> Est. 2005, originally Council led now more independent, ID Verde provide parks service. 160 parks with 50 Friends groups but some cover &gt; 1 park. Quarterly meetings inc. zoom.</p>	
<p><b>Cambridge - Federation of Cambridge Residents Associations</b> Includes around 100 small groups including green space and river issues, an informal network, issues include income generation pressures from green space also housing development concerns. Interested in linking together the greenspace groups.</p>	
<p><b>Edinburgh Green Space Forum (KT)</b> 71 groups, 57 involved in the Forum which has continued with zoom meetings, increased attendance. Appreciated advice from NFPGS and other Forums to develop public liability insurance agreement with the Council to provide cover, involved in Future Parks Accelerator programme.</p>	

**Glasgow - Friends of Glasgow Parks Forum (MF)**

Est. 2017, about 40 groups, 20 active. Council support. Continued meetings on MS Teams.

**Haringey Friends of Parks Forum (CP)**

Est. 20 years, 50 groups, 15-20 attend bi-monthly meetings. Mixed relationship with the Council, issues include staffing and funding. Collaborating on new Open Spaces Strategy, and lobbying for more resources for parks. Council have agreed all designated parks to be covenanted under Fields In Trust.

**Harrow Parks Forum (AS)**

Est. 2015, 24 groups with new groups forming. During restrictions groups have been reviewing policy – a standard constitution is now available for all groups, also developing a support pack for Friends groups. Current issues re. opening group bank accounts. Good relationship with Council but concerns that loss of key officer could affect support. Lobby Council on Climate Emergency and Biodiversity issues – value of green spaces in mitigation, etc. [separate report provided by Eugene Callinan, Chair].

**Horsham Green Spaces Forum (SS)**

Newly established (2020) in response to development concerns. About 15 groups with others to be engaged.

**Islington Friends of Parks Groups (JC)**

Est. 2014, small borough inc. many small sites with Friends groups. Meetings on zoom (20 groups), good relationship with Council and service provider (Glendale – now in house). Site issues re. BBQs and dogs.

**Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum (LK)**

Est. 2013 with Council lead, now independent with 100 groups, meeting on zoom. Good relationship with Council, partner in Love Leeds Parks charity raising funds for park projects. Forum has raised concerns re. loss of front gardens in campaign to Climate Emergency group. [separate report provided].

**Lewisham Green Spaces Forum (AS)**

Est. 2013, meetings with Council reps before separate Forum meeting for groups. Now on zoom, good relationship with Council and Glendale (50+ sites).

**Liverpool Parks Friends Forum (CB)**

Est. by Council (2006) but inactive after loss of officer support, before 2016 becoming Friends group led, gradual recognition from Council now supportive again, working to secure parks with Fields in Trust and seek to draw in additional funds with group support.

**London Friends of Green Spaces Network (DM)**

Est. for about 10 years, 700 groups across the Gtr London area, including 20+ area forums (of 33 boroughs). Meet every 6 weeks. Support National Park City, goparks and A More Natural Capital election-lobbying alliance. [separate report provided].

**Manchester - Association of Manchester Open Spaces Societies (AMOSS) (WS)**

Est. 2011 20-30 groups with 4 meetings a year. Recent admin issues but hope to improve group contact with particular concern re. cuts to park budgets.

<p><b>North West Parks Friends Forum (NS)</b> Est. 2013 to provide additional local support to region's 7 Forums and 100s of local Friends groups with series of events around the region. Some Forums (eg Wirral) in need of support to revive.</p> <p><b>Nottingham Open Spaces Forum (MW)</b> Est. 4 years, originally Council led now independent charity with 30 groups and 'green groups'.</p> <p><b>Sefton Parks Friends (BR)</b> Informal, Council lead twice yearly meeting. Bringing Park and beach friends groups together. Loss of activity/ meetings in 2020 but support from CVS to reinstate meetings and develop Forum for 20+ groups.</p> <p><b>Sheffield Green Space Forum (ND)</b> About 85 groups, 30-40 attend meetings every other month. Some groups reluctant to meet on zoom, so not happened yet. Decent relationship with Council but concerns re. strategy for income generation.</p> <p><b>South Tyneside Green Space Forum (TM)</b> Est. 2018 with Groundwork support, 15 groups, some sites have 2 groups. Increased Council support with a Community Engagement Officer.</p> <p><b>Worthing - Green Tides (Adur &amp; Green Spaces Worthing Partnership) (LA)</b> Est. for 5 years, around 70 Friends of Green and Blue space groups, including beach and river areas. Regular contact with 20-25 groups, bi-monthly meetings now by zoom – increased attendance and increase in green space use. Good relationship with the Council, increased volunteer demands.</p>	
<b>Discussions</b>	
<p>Breakout group discussion focused on four topics – brief summary of items raised:</p> <p><b>Covid-era volunteering and park/ group activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many forums and groups not been doing so much during Covid – volunteers continue some efforts independently where possible.</li> <li>• Adur &amp; Worthing have five rangers supporting groups in their area, which is very different to other areas.</li> <li>• Reduced volunteering opportunities but some 'lone litter-pickers' continuing.</li> <li>• Increased use of parks/ recognition of value to local community with potential to recruit and grow membership</li> <li>• Reduced large events may have benefitted park landscapes and wildlife (eg Harrow).</li> <li>• Lewisham – rule of 6 volunteering was applied at first lockdown, sorted out risk assessments &amp; checked with council as the council cover insurance for the groups</li> <li>• Edinburgh - All stopped at moment, follow guidance from council, risk assessments and activities continued when were able to. Activities still happening, but much smaller. Events never happened last year. Lot more people at zoom meetings now.</li> <li>• Glasgow – want to get volunteering up &amp; running again. Have not got risk assessments</li> <li>• Leeds – need staff for work parties. Litter is a big issue.</li> <li>• Manchester – zoom meetings.</li> <li>• Birmingham – have COVID safe guidance &amp; risk assessments on website, please use if</li> </ul>	

need. When able to be outside, carried on organised activities with a max of 30, keeping safe distance. In full lockdown, no organised activity.

- Bromley – volunteering stopped last April, then groups of 6 were active, now stopped again but some individuals still active.
- Other areas reported similar...

#### **Funding for maintenance and management**

- Cambridge parks manager has the job title of Asset Development Manager – FeCRA believe that clearly sets out where their intentions lie. A management plan with the council has not been agreed. Also housing development pressures in Cambridge.
- Horsham was formed through a protest against parks development and is therefore building a relationship with the council slowly. Undertaking a town-wide tree survey to map their natural assets and understand what exists.
- Tyneside led by Groundwork, on behalf of the council, but this funding is coming to an end and there are no people yet wanting to form a new committee to take things forward.
- All have seen a change in use of green spaces during coronavirus, with significant increases in litter – it's both confusing and annoying.
- Sefton – staffing cuts continue
- There are also concerns that sensitive sites are unable to cope with the increase in user numbers.
- Loss of income generating events will leave gaps in income targets (e.g. Sheffield).
- Pressures on Council budgets due to Covid will mean support and income generation by Friends is even more important.
- Need for support for groups to help identify sources of grant and develop funding bids (Harrow).
- Edinburgh – struggling & reducing, staff shortages especially over Covid
- Leeds – cutting budget a lot and looking at bedding costs
- Lewisham – cash strapped. Their council does value their parks
- Manchester – funding dropping & reorganising staff structures. Want big events bringing in money.
- Birmingham – reorganising parks at the moment in with waste. Looking at ways to bring in income. No money, except in the Future Parks Accelerator project.
- Haringey – Forum concerted lobbying strategy over the last 4 years (scrutiny ctte, petition, deputations to Council meetings, working with officers to identify external sources etc), but up against Government chronic underfunding of Local Authority services.
- Bristol and Birmingham – lobbied to keep funding levels
- Shocking that the Government is not reimbursing Councils in full for the extra covid-era responsibilities
- Local elections provide platform for raising voices
- Need to support national lobbying and publicity especially by NFPGS

#### **Internal organisation and communication**

- Avoid long e-mails, keep brief and if necessary, more frequent updates.
- Some localised what's app groups (Liverpool).
- Want to get Future Parks Accelerator community forums together
- How to run a hybrid zoom & face to face meeting at once
- Mailchimp newsletters – Birmingham
- Edinburgh – more people turning up with zoom
- Brighton – do regular newsletters

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brent – social media v helpful</li> <li>• Many report that zoom meetings very useful, in many cases numbers attending have gone up</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationship with local authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally covered in the group update round-up (previous section).</li> <li>• Many report good ongoing relations, but some not so good. It can vary over time, and depending on the issues coming up.</li> <li>• Some have separate meetings with officers, some have officers at the Forum meetings (with some Forums having officers at part of their meetings)</li> <li>• Some Councils support by providing one or more of the following: venues, grants, secretarial support, public insurance for activities...</li> <li>• All Council / parks service teams should be providing information, but this is not always the case. Its crucial when groups are developing projects and funding bids.</li> <li>• Council cuts and overwork impacts on officer time, yet that's a key reason why they need to work with Friends Groups and Forums.</li> </ul>	
<b>NFPGS update</b>	
<p>DM updated. NFPGS has a newly-developed platform to support park Friends – Parks Community UK with a dedicated website <a href="https://parkscommunity.org.uk">https://parkscommunity.org.uk</a> as a 'one-stop shop' providing resources now including the Better Friends' strength audit tool, enabling groups to self-evaluate with links to relevant guidance. All local groups encouraged to fill it in at: <a href="https://parkscommunity.org.uk/betterfriends/">https://parkscommunity.org.uk/betterfriends/</a></p> <p>NFPGS is a grass roots, voluntary body with no core funding, representing the movement of parks community groups, and working alongside other funded parks sector organisations. NFPGS is seeking funding to develop the capacity. But additional volunteer and trustee support is encouraged (please come forward to help!) – notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regional representatives to support local links and Forum coordination</li> <li>- IT and social media support</li> <li>- specific champions for different issues and themes, e.g. health, biodiversity, etc.</li> </ul> <p>SR suggested a network link between Forums working on the Future Parks Accelerator programme. Agreed to set up a meeting. [Update: Held successfully on 3.3.2021 and groups agreed to set up a FPA Community Voice Network, supported by the NFPGS].</p> <p>DM confirmed that NFPGS will be attending the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) meeting to discuss parks. [Update: 315 attended 1.3.2021. NFPGS views for proper Government recognition and adequate resources for parks were flagged up by the Chair. ]. More detail at: <a href="https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/201104/parks-and-green-spaces.htm">https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhallparty/201104/parks-and-green-spaces.htm</a></p>	
<b>AOB</b>	
<p>LA noted that value of parks and green spaces in both contributing to community health and wellbeing and also in terms of environmental sustainability and mitigating the impact of climate change. These are two key themes for campaigning and support.</p> <p>Lots of discussion and detail in the Meeting Chat eg. LK noted that Heritage Open Days 11th - 19th Sept, theme is 'Edible England', registration from early March. Actual and online events accepted.</p>	<b>All</b>

<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
▪ NFPGS AGM: Saturday 10 April [by zoom]. All Forums invited to send a rep (by zoom).	<b>All</b>