**Annual General Meeting Minutes**

 Zoom Meeting

**Saturday 10 April 2021**

**Present:**

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| Dave Morris (Chair, NFPGS) | London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN) |
| Sarah Royal (CEO, NFPGS) | Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) |
| Martin Willis (Treasurer & Vice Chair, NFPGS) | Nottingham Open Spaces Forum (NOSF) |
| Michelle Furtado (Network Coordinator, NFPGS) | Green Tides (Adur & Worthing Green Space P/ship) |
| Nigel Sharp (Secretary, NFPGS)  | NW Parks Friends Forum |
| Wasyl Strutynskyj | Association of Manchester Open Spaces Soc. (AMOSS) |
| Roger Chapman | Barnet Green Spaces Network |
| Suzanne Morpurgo  | Brent Residents and Parks Forum |
| Cliff Munn  | Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum |
| Rob Acton-Campbell | Bristol Parks Forum |
| Kirsten Thorburn  | Edinburgh Green Space Forum |
| Graham Arnold | Friends of Birkenhead Park (Wirral Parks Forum) |
| Marion Williams (ref. MW2) | Friends of Leazes Park (Newcastle Parks Forum) |
| Shelly Quinton-Hulme  | Friends of Trafford’s Parks and Green Spaces |
| Lisa Attwell  | Green Tides (Adur & Worthing Green Spaces P/ship) |
| Sally Sanderson  | Horsham Green Spaces Forum |
| Jenni Chan | Islington Friends of Parks Groups |
| Lynda Kitching  | Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum |
| Keith Elder | South Staffs Friends Group Network |

**Apologies:**

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| Jacqueline Watkins | Friends of Thurrock Parks |
| Claire Parry  | Haringey Friends of Parks Forum |
| Steven | Harrow Parks Forum |
| Alona Sheridan | Lewisham Friends of Parks Forum |
| ChrisBlyth | Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) |
| Paul Ely | Parks Community UK |
| Barbara Rouse | Friends of Derby Park Friends (Sefton Friends Forum) |

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| **Welcome and Introduction** |
| DM welcomed all and provided an outline of the zoom meeting procedure and agenda. |  |
| **Minutes of previous AGM (16.3.19)** |
| Regrettably, owing to the disruption of Covid-19, there had been no AGM since March 2019. Minutes from this meeting (16.3.19) were agreed. |  |
| **Officers’ Reports** |
| **Chair (DM)**DM provided a brief overview of NFPGS activity and progress over the period since the previous AGM. In 2019 NFPGS was involved with the Parks Action Group (PAG), the sector body to inform and support government policy development. NFPGS input led to a lead role in the Community Empowerment workstream, with funding provided for a one year Network Officer post and to deliver a series of regional conferences to enable community engagement, empowerment and consultation. This comprised a total of 9 events across England, and a NFPGS survey bringing responses from around 400 groups with a report prepared in 2020. The programme showed a need for stronger community networking and support, including more area Forums – and proper funding and support for parks and our movement.The PAG activity led to greater networking within the sector, NFPGS linking with other bodies to lobby for parks and green spaces support, including The Parks Alliance (TPA) which has now joined with The Landscape Institute to form the new Parks and Green Space Network[[1]](#footnote-2) with a key focus on professional sector interests. NFPGS has also supported the new Parks Management Forum[[2]](#footnote-3), a body run by and for parks managers.NFPGS remains the primary organisation supporting parks and green space community groups across the UK and to help deliver this vital role Lottery funding supported the development of Parks Community UK <https://parkscommunity.org.uk> our ‘one-stop shop’ community-facing platform, with a twitter link followed by 2500+. A big thanks to Paul, Dave, Gill, and the Friends of Lordship Rec in North London for setting this up and transferring it to the NFPGS.Recent NFPGS activity has included a ‘share and exchange’ session (16.2.21) attended by reps from over 20 area forums (representing over 1500 local groups), and a separate solidarity network of groups and Forums involved in the Future Parks Accelerator programme.Current priorities for NFPGS are funding and network development – as a national, voluntary body, capacity continues to be an issue but recent success includes the Better Friends tool <https://parkscommunity.org.uk/betterfriends/> which nearly 200 local groups have already filled in to evaluate and support their development. NFPGS responds to group enquiries, both through Parks Community UK or direct approaches toinfo@natfedparks.org.uk or officers.On a national sector level NFPGS thanks Keep Britain Tidy (KBT) for meeting expenses support and has developed several Memorandums of Understanding with sector partners including: KBT, Fields in Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, The Gardens Trust and Groundwork. These agreements encourage collaboration and joint working to promote the Friends Groups movement, and to protect and promote parks and green spaces. It was noted parks have been shown to be invaluable during the Covid period, but with increased pressures of intense use exacerbated by the financial impact of the pandemic on local authorities and parks services. A Parks Collective supported by the Parks Management Forum is aiming to lobby for substantially increased annual resources to support parks. DM noted the huge impact of an estimated 840,000 members in more than 7000 Friends and community groups nationwide, expressing thanks to this unique and inspiring movement which NFPGS has a special and historic role in supporting and championing.**Secretary (NS)**NS noted that closing comments at the previous AGM (2019) suggested discussion about the use of zoom and how the recent challenging times had accelerated use of this system – with significant benefit to NFPGS networking and meetings – since Mar 19 there had been 7 NFPGS general/ trustee meetings and a further 5 finance working group sessions.NS reported that on average he receives 2-3 enquiries each month – 40 since the previous AGM – with membership a popular topic. Responses aim to link groups with a local area forum, or encourage local group networking and potential new forum development, signposting to relevant groups. Threat to green space is the other main topic of enquiries, with guidance provided including signposting to relevant case studies and potential partner organisations. NFPGS are also approached for support with campaigns or potential partnership work. NS noted that enquiries are a little down on previous periods – possibly owing to reduced activity during lockdown but it was also noted that Parks Community UK is a substantial additional resource, with this site also providing networking and peer support.**Treasurer (MW)**MW shared details of a financial report covering 2019/20 and 2020/21. A balance of just of £9K has been carried forward to 2021/22 and MW noted the need to secure a regular income to support core costs and enable sustainable group development. Thanks were expressed to Caroline Jepson (Friends of Lordship Rec) who had independently audited the accounts. |  |
| **Election of Officers and Trustees** |
| NFPGS officers formally stood down and following a nomination and election process:* DM was re-elected as Chair
* NS re-elected as Secretary
* MW re-elected as Treasurer

WS offered additional support as an assistant treasurer – MW to contact and discuss.Marion Williams (MW2) expressed interest to support as Vice Chair and it was subsequently agreed that MW2 could become a Trustee and fulfill this role. Shelley Quinton-Hulme also expressed interest in becoming a Trustee. MW2 and SQ-H were duly elected invited to attend the Trustees meeting immediately following the AGM-General Meeting.  | **MW/WS** |
| **Motions / Proposed Constitution Changes** |
| There were no motions or proposed changes. |  |
| **Discussion: The Next 12 Months – Protecting, Promoting and Improving Green Spaces** |
| Discussion focused on three general topics:How can we best develop strong area forums and regional networks?* need to build at grass roots level, provide support for isolated groups.
* show benefit of support, celebrate good work and successes.
* show the ‘in kind’ value of volunteers.
	+ BOSF captures information from c50 groups regularly, informing the Council of the impact and financial benefit for the voluntary sector.
	+ PCUK has plans to create a volunteer value calculator tool on the website – (subject to resources).
	+ Need to promote park friends on a national level – the State of UK Parks reports (HLF 2014, 2016) included estimates of volunteer contributions. Possible this could feature in a planned new 2021 report?
	+ Important to show volunteer contributions are additional to core management resources, enhancing, not replacing site provision.
	+ Link and promote with Local Government Association.
	+ NFPGS is linked to the professional sector through the Park Managers Forum (soon to be changed to Association).
* NFPGS lacks capacity to initiate or lead area forum development but can help facilitate with good practice guidance and local sector links.
* Need to be aware of different local conditions and issues i.e. Newcastle Trust regime; different levels of Local Authority support.
* Potential in regions for networking – esp. informally - between area forums but subject to capacity.
* Communication of vital importance – zoom has opened links presenting opportunities for wider engagement and involvement.
* Scope for networking not just based on regions/ locations but also focused on themes, sharing expertise.
* Need to grow awareness of the value of networking to both LAs and communities.

How can we lobby effectively to influence policy and decision making at national levels?* local issues, local elections provide opportunities to put parks on the agenda, raise group profile.
* Need to engage local councilors through different themes or values e.g. health and wellbeing; climate and sustainability, support for young people post Covid.
* If LAs are threatening sites with development ‘name and shame’.
* Prior to elections is a good time to approach local politicians if regular surgery sessions are paused – invite to site, show and engage, promote on social media.
* Need for a national campaign to reverse the funding crisis.
* Need to address central government allocations and LA loss of funds.
* National Trust review of urban parks funding estimated £5.5 billion required to reinstate level of resources. A similar Friends of the Earth report called for £2 billion capital funding and £2 billion revenue funding annually for the next 5 years.
* Similar issues in Scotland, additional sector support from Greenspace Scotland
* Lobby for local Open Space Strategies.

How can we strengthen the Federation?* need more active, regional representatives to support NFPGS.
	+ RA-C support for SW England; SR-MW for Midlands; MW2link for NE England; SQ-H support for NS and NW England.
* Need to show value of networking, locally, regionally, nationally.
* Regional groups can provide additional support for isolated groups where there is no area forum.
* Need more NFPGS Trustees and practical support/officers
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| **AOB** |
| New infographic to show value of NFPGS and networking to parks and green space community groups has been prepared – DM to share.  | **DM** |
| **Date of Next Meeting** |
| Date to be confirmed. | **All**  |

**Trustees Meeting**

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| **Present:** Dave Morris (Chair); Sarah Royal (CEO); Martin Willis (Treasurer & Vice Chair); Michelle Furtado (Network Coordinator); Marion Williams; Shelly Quinton-Hulme; Nigel Sharp (Secretary) |

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| **Welcome and Introduction**  |
| DM welcomed new Trustees MW2 and SQ-H. |  |
| **NFPGS Update** |
| Following a busy AGM and General Meeting the need to arrange another Trustees meeting to cover matters arising was agreed. The principle item for discussion is future funding, following three recent unsuccessful submissions for National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grants:* Green Recovery Challenge Fund (large >£250K) - expression of interest
* Green Recovery Challenge Fund (small >£50K <£250K) – full application
* Digital Skills for Heritage – full application

DMhas since met with Drew Bennellick, Head of Land & Nature, NLHF for further comment.Further feedback from NLHF is awaited but there is a need for NFPGS to provide simple, measurable outcomes and greater focus – an issue for a nationally active voluntary body. Seeking funding is a key challenge and it was agreed to continue to explore options.The potential to raise regular income through membership was discussed but it is considered that this could jeopardise the inclusive and representative value of the charity.  |  |
| **AOB** |
| The need to agree a programme of future meetings was highlighted.The need to develop NFPGS capacity – notably additional officer support for the Treasurer role if future funding is secured – was noted. MW would like to see someone else take on the role. |  |
| **Date of Next Meeting** |
| Provisionally 7pm, Wednesday 19 May – now **7pm Tuesday 25 May** | **All**  |

1. <https://www.theparksalliance.org/the-parks-alliance-and-landscape-institute-unite-to-create-a-stronger-voice-for-parks/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://parksmanagementforum.co.uk> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)