

Annual General Meeting Minutes

Zoom Meeting



Saturday 5 November 2022

Present:

Dave Morris (Chair, NFPGS)	London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN) + Haringey Friends of Parks Forum
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 & Green Spaces Worthing P/ship)
Marion Williams (ref. MW2)	Friends of Leazes Park / Newcastle Parks Forum
Shelly Quinton-Hulme	Friends of Trafford's Parks and Green Spaces
Nigel Sharp (Secretary, NFPGS)	NW Parks Friends Forum
Suzanne	Barnet Green Spaces Network
Suzanne Morpurgo	Brent Residents and Parks Forum
Cliff Munn	Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum
Mark Logan	Bristol Parks Forum
Len Wyatt	Bristol Parks Forum
Les Gounbie	Community Works
Barbara Rouse	Friends of Derby Park (Sefton Friends Forum)
Lisa Attwell	Green Tides (Adur & Green Spaces Worthing P/ship)
Sally Sanderson	Horsham Green Spaces Forum
Jenni Chan	Islington Friends of Parks Groups
Lynda Kitching	Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum
Alex Sporidou	Love Old Trafford
Ean	Newcastle Parks Forum
Daija	Richmond / Habitats and Heritage
Valerie Edkins	Sandwell
Nicola Dempsey	Sheffield Green Spaces Forum
Stephanie Purser	South Gloucestershire Green Spaces Forum
Annette Lloyd	South Staffs Friends Groups Network
Norman	Stockport
David Newrick	Sunderland Forum
Megan Hart	Torbay Community Green Spaces
Judie Collins	Trafford
Barry Brotherton	Trafford
Dave Eatock	Trafford

Apologies:

Paul Ely	Parks Community UK
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Welcome and Introduction

Dave explained that the delay in holding this 2022 meeting was due to Covid. It was then planned as a hybrid meeting in Manchester and online, but was held entirely online due to a

<p>train strike.</p> <p>DM welcomed all. It was good to see so many Forums representing maybe a couple of thousand local groups. He provided an outline of the zoom meeting procedure and agenda.</p>	
<p>Minutes of previous AGM (10.4.21)</p>	
<p>Minutes from this meeting (10.4.21) were agreed.</p>	
<p>Officers' Reports</p>	
<p>A link to the NFPGS Annual Report was circulated prior to the AGM. The report is available at: https://natfedparks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NFPGS-Annual-Report-2021-2022-pdf.pdf</p> <p>Chair (DM) DM provided a brief summary of the report and the sector over the past year:</p> <p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sector has emerged from the Covid-19 period with significant impact with increased use of green spaces. • The pandemic and successive lockdowns affected park friends and community groups' activity. • Many groups adopted zoom as an alternative/additional option to maintain contact. • Green spaces are absolutely essential to communities, however capacity and activity has been undermined by the massive impact of Government austerity policies on the sector – and this is ongoing as cuts to public sector services continue. • Voluntary parks groups contribute an estimated £140m annually to the sector, based on approximately 1000hrs/group each year (£70m) along with substantial income derived from grants and other fundraising. A huge contribution to the £1bn spent annually on parks and green spaces. • The voluntary parks sector is estimated to comprise 7,000 Friends (and equivalent) groups, with around 840,000 members. <p>NFPGS activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFPGS continue to support the grassroots parks and green space community, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parks Community UK - 'one-stop shop' website https://parkscommunity.org.uk ○ Better Friends – a special self assessment audit tool for groups https://parkscommunity.org.uk/betterfriends/ . Over 300 groups have now benefitted from this resource - a report on findings from its use is available at: https://parkscommunity.org.uk/better-friends-tool-report-of-headline-findings/ ○ Better Friends has now been adopted/recommended by Keep Britain Tidy to all applicants to promote good practice for community groups involved in the Green Flag Award scheme. • A priority area for NFPGS is to encourage diversity in Friends Groups and the parks voluntary sector, particularly to better engage young people and those of diverse ethnic background. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Research has been undertaken in partnership with University College 	

London with findings due to be published soon. *Note: Now ready -*
<https://natfedparks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/NFPGS-Ethnic-Diversity-and-Friends-Groups-Research-Report-9.2022.pdf>

- It is intended to use the research to prepare further good practice guidance for friends and community groups.
- NFPGS continue to campaign nationally for adequate resources for parks and green spaces.
- Ongoing support and coordination is provided for the parks voluntary sector, including around 70 area forums across the UK. Work continues to promote the role and grow the membership and activity.
- Communication between groups is enabled by our Parks Forum internal mailing list, and news spread to thousands of followers on twitter @NatFedParks and @ParksCommUK.

NFPGS progress and proposals

- NFPGS is an entirely voluntary / unfunded charity up to now (except occasional specific time-limited projects) but needs to seek core funding to develop infrastructure, capacity and activity.
- Current focus is to develop a major bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for core funds to support dedicated NFPGS staff to lead on engagement and support for the national network, and manage our websites and IT.
- NFPGS continues to link with other sector bodies as a parks advocate and to share good practice.
- NFPGS is due to participate remotely in the World Urban Parks congress 2022 (held in Mexico) via an online presentation on community empowerment in the UK (and seeking links across the globe). *Note: The Presentation can now be viewed here:*
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/tn0bfc8k8ex7u3s/Dave%20Morris%20MASTER.mp4?dl=0>

DM concluded with thanks to all groups and their volunteers for the continued commitment and huge contribution to support the U.K.'s parks and green spaces.

Treasurer (MW)

- MW noted that NFPGS continues to operate with minimal resources, the main outgoing costs being to sustain the NFPGS and Parks Community UK websites, the latter including additional annual fee to cover the Better Friends tool.
- Previous donations to the charity cover ongoing costs although this is recognized as not sustainable, hence funds have been invested in preparing a substantial external funding bid to NLHF to help develop the charity, it's membership and resources.
- A financial review is included in the annual report and the current balance at the time of the AGM was £5329.

Additional questions and comment

- Question re. scope of the NLHF bid (ND)
 - DM noted that NFPGS has been influential in cross sector meetings and parks sector discussions over the past 8 years and is generally the only grassroots and unfunded UK-wide body 'at the table'. Core funding would support a post to develop the charity activity and business sustainability.
- Question re. Statutory status campaign (CM)
 - NFPGS spearheaded a campaign based on the Parks Charter with 24 national organisations signing up. This was presented to the then 'parks minister',

Rishi Sunak MP in 2018 and could be relaunched as a campaign – all organisations which support it are still urged to add their backing.

- Further lobbying has been affected by other issues and challenges – including the pandemic and NFPGS capacity but it was noted that this remains a key sector issue. The Parks Action Group has fizzled out due to lack of Government commitment. The Parks Alliance did good advocacy work but has now merged with the Landscape Institute. In the last 18 months the NFPGS has made 2 powerful presentations on the deteriorating financial health of the sector and the need for adequate resources – to the Westminster MPs’ All Party Parliamentary Group on Parks, and to the Local Government Select Committee of MPs at a special evidence session about parks..

Secretary (NS)

- Noted that NFPGS receives a wide range of enquiries annually from requests for specific support – such as advice on insurance or campaigning – to queries from organisations undertaking parks research projects.
- Enquiries relating to membership are supported with signposting to relevant local area forums or encouraged to explore local networking options. NFPGS can support with advice and guidance on new area forum development.
- Most enquiries are now supported through the ParksForumsUK mailing list which enables peer to peer support comment.

Additional comment

- Noted that social media and websites are vital for parks groups. Suggestion that overheads can be reduced by involving volunteers with relevant skills.
- Comment re. NFPGS membership and possible charges. It was stressed that the NFPGS model is an inclusive approach committed to full open membership to ensure representation and as such any charges are considered prohibitive to this ambition.
- Brief comment re. additional, national, parks sector bodies (as touched on above):
 - The Parks Alliance has become part of the Landscape Institute (LI) and this ‘Parks and Green Space Network’ is ‘working with the LI to create a professional home for parks and green space managers.’ with a LI focus. It has not met for over a year. Details at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/parks-green-space/>
 - The Parks Management Association <https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk> has newly set up and is run by and for parks’ managers and is now active ‘Representing those individuals and organisations working in the public parks and open spaces sector, whether in the public, private or third sector.’
 - The ‘Nature for Everyone’ campaign is being led by Wildlife and Countryside Link (backed by 60 organisations), and has mounted a strong lobbying campaign calling for increased resources linked to a campaign for the right to access. Details at: <https://www.wcl.org.uk/nature-for-everyone.asp>
- Suggestion that NFPGS could seek donations from other sector bodies – NFPGS has previously received contributions from Keep Britain Tidy which formerly covered face to face meetings costs. NFPGS has Memorandums of Understanding with a number of ‘community facing’ national greenspace bodies.
- Comment re. statutory access to green space and children’s play provision. Fields in Trust has guidance on this: <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/green-space-index>

NFPGS Theory of Change (SQ-H)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NFPGS board has undertaken a Theory of Change exercise, led by Shelly, to help review its activity and priorities. Details are included in the annual report • SQ-H offered support and advice for any other groups keen to progress this approach. <p>The annual report was adopted by those attending.</p>	
Election of Officers and Trustees	
<p>NFPGS officers formally stood down and following a nomination and election process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DM was re-elected as Chair - NS re-elected as Secretary - MW re-elected as Treasurer - MW2 elected as Vice-Chair <p>SR and MF are to continue as trustees. Cliff Munn (Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum) and Paul Ely (Parks Community UK) were also nominated and approved as new trustees.</p> <p>DM extended the invitation to other Area Forum reps to become Trustees – a role description will be circulated to the membership (following a request in the zoom chat). In particular MW indicated he intends to stand down as Treasurer during 2023, so we are looking for a replacement.</p>	MW/DM
Motions / Proposed Constitution Changes	
There were no motions or proposed changes to the constitution.	
Discussion: How do we develop good relations between our Area Forums and Local Authorities/ Park Services?	
<p>DM introduced this session noting that as individual groups committed to improve green spaces there is a need to work closely, preferably in partnership, with the land owners and landscape managers; as a Forum – usually covering a local authority area there is a need to interact, sustain communication but involvement could range from joint working and support to input on a strategic level. In return Area Forums may receive support for their activity – perhaps including meeting room use, materials, copying, etc.</p> <p>Birmingham (SR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum http://bosf.org.uk/birmingham-open-spaces-forum was established in 2005. - Need to show the Forum is not there to complain, although it needs to assert itself – it wants to be recognized as a positive, active influence on the city’s parks and green spaces. - The Forum is involved as a ‘critical friend’ - The Council support by covering group insurance and fundraising support. Groups provide returns by recording volunteer hours and generating additional external funds for activity and site improvement. - Forum has regular meetings, maintains a good relationship with the Council, but recognizes there are issues due to reduced staffing and operational cutbacks. - Additional issue is portfolio conflict – other priorities for the Council and its elected 	

members.

South Gloucestershire (SP)

- good relationship with the local authority.
- Aim to involve Council officers, put faces with names, build links.
- Challenges for groups include attracting members; raising funds and the lack of consistent Council contacts.
- Work of Friends not always recognized or promoted.
- Need to promote the role of community more and show its impact.

Horsham (SS)

- Generally good relationship with Council
- Issues re. other council officers/ teams –e.g. Promotions/ communications not helping.
- Need for wider relationship / support across different Council service areas.

Sefton (BR)

- concern at reduced contact and support.
- loss of dedicated Community officer and reduced capacity.
- Need for regular communication to advise and support groups and help resolve issues.

Newcastle (E)

- Parks Forum meets every 6 weeks.
- Transfer of services out of Council has led to fragmentation of management.
- Communications issues with new management, Urban Green Newcastle.

Bristol (ML)

- good relationship with senior managers.
- constant issues for both Council and Forum re. budget.
- Independent, well-established Forum, able to lobby.

Brighton & Hove (CM)

- Forum established due to concerns re. cutbacks and site threats.
- Website <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk> provides a key link, a hub for members.
- 95 member groups, around 80 are active.
- Working on a volunteer leadership scheme to enable groups to qualify for insurance cover and ensure Council support.
- Positive relations with regular calls with senior Council officers, regular meetings.

Trafford (DE)

- Difficulties arising from outsourcing of operations to Amy Ltd.
- Quarterly Forum meetings.
- Limited input from One Trafford and Amy, some issues excluded.
- Forum not involved at a strategic level.

Leeds (LK)

- Council initiated Forum and provide admin support.
- Close links to ranger service help communication and contacts.
- Forum retains independence.
- Quarterly Forum meetings include senior officers, discussion includes funds,

<p>projects, etc. Also consulted on strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forum has had input to woodland creation scheme and related planting plans. - Involved in Love Leeds Parks https://loveleedsparks.org.uk fundraising charity . - Links with Active Leeds – important recognition of public health value of parks. <p>Barnet (SM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good relationship with Council. - support with meeting spaces. - Support Council with survey of needs - Council support with insurance cover - Input to Council strategy development (newly elected Party had backed the Forum’s own Manifesto during the recent election) – links on policy work. <p>Adur & Worthing (MF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relationship improved with regular meetings. - impact of budget cuts, loss of staff capacity. - Forum lobby for volunteer charter and insurance support. - Still issues, e.g. re. communications. <p>London Friends of Green Spaces Network (DM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The LFGN coordinate the movement throughout London. There’s approx 900 groups and around 22 borough Forums who each have their own relations with their Local Authority <p>Haringey Friends of Parks Forum (DM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Around 55 groups. Meet bi-monthly with senior Parks Service officers present for half of the meeting. Good relations, but communications at site level need improvement. Forum has been working closely with the Service to develop a new 15 year Green Spaces Strategy. <p>Additional comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - zoom meetings can help make Forum accessible to new members - links through Social Prescribing - Links with other local Parish Councils - Role of Forum / Friends groups to support Green Infrastructure work, local nature plans, etc. need input from community. <p>How to improve or develop relations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - show the benefit of group contribution - this may be tangible in terms of volunteer hours, fundraising contributions, site improvements and activities/ events. - Role in community contact, engagement and involvement. - Link to wider initiatives, other Council services benefiting from parks & green spaces e.g. health, green social prescribing, biodiversity, climate change and environmental sustainability, education. <p>Additional comment - from Zoom Chat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bristol does have a parks volunteer coordinator and do put on courses and to be recognised and insured we have to do safety training for individual parks groups. - South Glos. has a volunteer Co-ordinator and issue Volunteer agreements for Friends Groups which cover members with insurance but only 16-80 year olds, this is 	<p>Could strategy details be shared with DM?</p>
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- in discussion with SGC as some active members are over 80!!!
- Stockport has system where task leaders are trained & then task days are covered by Council insurance when task day form & risk assessment is sent to Council, cannot work without this & some problems with getting new people trained.
 - Nottingham had this issue at the wildlife trust but challenged the insurers who then backed down.
 - Lisa, has now been nominated as the environment representative for the local VCS (Community Works), this means Green Tides is becoming more of a strategic partner and less of a 'nice to have'. Now recognised as important but staff issues certainly play havoc with building relationships, including working effectively with member groups. They have successfully lobbied for lots of benefits for friends groups and continue to promote and fight for resources.

Strengthening Forums – sources of support for Area Forums

NS provided a brief overview of sources of support for Area Forums to assist with both their activity, and in their role helping local groups. The following examples were shown – links added for support:

Parks Community UK <https://parkscommunity.org.uk>

Our 'one stop shop' website providing sector specific guidance including 'how to' guides and case studies with links to the wider e-network of area forum contacts for peer comment and support. [All Forums should be on the list, but contact us if your Forum is not]

Local infrastructure bodies

Local area Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) groups and Voluntary Action groups provide websites with guidance and resources, including policy templates and relevant local links to training, funding and events and staff which may provide support.

National voluntary group support

Organisations such as National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) provide good practice guidance and resources e.g. <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk>.

Other examples shown were:

- Resource Centre (Sussex) <https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/>
- MyCommunity <https://mycommunity.org.uk>

For group development, organisation and governance – including support for Trustees:

- Charity Commission <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-commission-guidance>
- Getting on Board <https://www.gettingonboard.org>

Funding and Funder insights and guidance:

- Get Grants <https://www.getgrants.org.uk/free-resources/>
- National Lottery Community Fund <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/insights>
- National Lottery Heritage Fund <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance>

AOB / Additional comment [chat]

<p>SR is to meet with Natural England to discuss Green Social Prescribing. LK noted positive links through these link workers connecting GPs with local green spaces and community groups.</p> <p>LK added Leeds Parks Forum is to hold a workshop relating to safety in parks and research at use of parks by girls. It was noted that Make Space for Girls campaign has provided some useful guidance: https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk</p>	
Date of Next Meeting	
Another general meeting will be arranged for the New Year - date to be confirmed.	All

Trustees Meeting – directly followed the AGM / General Meeting

Present: Dave Morris (Chair); Sarah Royal (CEO); Martin Willis (Treasurer); Michelle Furtado (Network Coordinator); Marion Williams; Shelly Quinton-Hulme (Organisational Development); Cliff Munn; Nigel Sharp (Secretary)

Welcome and Introduction	
DM welcomed new Trustees, Cliff Munn (and Paul Ely).	
NFPGS Update	
<p>MW noted CM and PE that with additions to the Board, personal details will need to be provided to the Charity Commission. CP and PE can also be invited to join on NFPGS what's app.</p> <p>MW2 – the forthcoming budget statement will raise issues for parks funding. Following continued austerity measures there is little scope for further cutbacks – need to lobby on the value of Area Forums.</p> <p>PE is keen to lead on policy and research – may be scope to highlight these issues along with other good practice guidance emerging from the meeting re. working with local authorities, and the forthcoming checklist on diversity. We agreed for Paul to be our Research and Policy Officer.</p> <p>Agreed to meet again next month to discuss future works further.</p>	
Date of Next Meeting	
7.30pm, Monday 5 December (by zoom)	All