

## General Meeting Minutes

Zoom Meeting



**Tuesday 11 June 2024**

### 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)
Shelly Quinton-Hulme (Interim Treasurer & Organisational Development, NFPGS)	Friends of Trafford's Parks and Green Spaces
Nigel Sharp (Secretary, NFPGS)	NW Parks Friends Forum
Lynda Kitching	Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum
Miriam Ashwell	Islington Friends of Parks Groups
Suzanne Morpurgo	Brent Residents and Parks Forum
Cliff Munn	Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum
Len Wyatt	Bristol Parks Forum
Kirsten Thorburn	Edinburgh Green Space Forum
Angela Stone	Friends of Trafford Parks and Green Spaces

### Apologies:

These included:

Paul Ely (Research, NFPGS)	Haringey Friends of Parks Forum
Michelle Furtado (Network Coordinator, NFPGS)	Green Tides (Adur & Green Spaces Worthing P/ship)
Lisa Atwell	Green Tides (Adur & Green Spaces Worthing P/ship)
Sally Sanderson	Friends of Horsham Park, Horsham
Mark Fiddy	Friends of Glasgow Parks Forum
Ean MacKeller	Newcastle Parks Forum

### Welcome and Introduction

DM welcomed all and outlined the Agenda as an introduction to the meeting.

### Discussion:

**Protecting and promoting biodiversity - how are Friends Groups and our Forums sharing good practice and seeking to influence key policies?**

DM introduced the item with reference to a student research brief prepared by NFPGS (Paul Ely):

*'Halting biodiversity loss is a key component in overcoming and better adapting to climate change. Within an urban setting, a very substantial percentage of flora and fauna are found in parks and greenspaces. However, both the quality of data held by environmental agencies and local authorities and the overall level of resources available to protect and restore nature is limited and much less than appears to be needed...there is real enthusiasm and a significant resource amongst volunteer Friends of parks groups*

*for promoting and contributing to nature recovery.'*

We want to look into:

- *What are some of the most successful ways community groups can contribute and do contribute to greenspace biodiversity (including helping with maintenance, management, education, data collection, development of policies and decisions, fundraising for projects, etc.)?*
- *How can successful efforts be promoted and spread widely?*
- *How do the development of Local Nature Recovery Plans, biodiversity partnerships and action plans (at site, borough or regional level) actively involve Friends Groups and Friends Forums, and where they do so - what positive impact can be demonstrated as a result?*
- *How can successful efforts be promoted and spread widely?*
- *How do the development of biodiversity partnerships and action plans (at the site, borough, or regional level) actively involve Friends Groups and Friends Forums, and where they do so, what positive impact can be demonstrated as a result?*

NS provided further context for this work:

- Government's Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) is 'largely off-track' to meet legally binding targets.
- This is shown in the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) - independent watchdog – progress report – details at: <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/government-remains-largely-track-meet-its-environmental-ambitions-finds-oep-annual-progress>
- In response to this Wildlife and Countryside link, a coalition of over 80 environmental groups (including NFPGS) has launched a legal challenge to force the new Government to respond and ensure political parties respond: <https://www.wcl.org.uk/environment-groups-challenge-plans-to-halt-wildlife-decline.asp>.
- To support this the 'Restore Nature Now' march has been organized for 22 June – details at: [www.restorenaturenow.com](http://www.restorenaturenow.com)

NS stressed the important role of parks community groups – a key component of the EIP is enhancing engagement with the natural environment and Chapter 11 of the OEP progress report states: *'Improving people's connection with the environment is fundamental to building societal support for actions to improve it. This EIP23 goal area should be seen as the foundation goal supporting the delivery of all the other goals.'*

#### **Haringey (DM)**

- Area Forum has input to 15yr Open Spaces strategy
- Also conservation action plans/ Green Flag site management plans and input to Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) review.

#### **Bristol (LW)**

- Input to a range of strategies and plans associated with Bristol and WECA (West of England Combined Authority). City Council had agreed to submit a £1m bid to West of England Combined Regional Authority, for nature recovery.
- Additional work relating to climate, the One City agenda (<https://www.bristolonacity.com>) and Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

- Key input is to the Local Plan with locally strong Forum network based on postcode areas.

### **Birmingham (SR)**

- Initiatives originally through Future Parks Accelerator, led to development of City of Nature Alliance (<https://naturallybirmingham.org/birmingham-city-of-nature-alliance/>)
- Mapping of city wards to assess environmental justice and identify priorities (ranked red-amber-green).
- BOSF (Forum) part-time staff working in red areas to engage with community, help groups fundraise through link with Get Grants (<https://www.getgrants.org.uk>) and provide vital support for bankrupt local authority.
- Issues include reduction in rangers to support 100+ Friends and community groups and their green spaces.
- Rangers now employed through Public Health affecting their role and effectiveness.

### **Islington (MA)**

- involved in local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) providing vital site knowledge.
- Good working relationship with the local authority.
- Campaigns against pesticide and chemical use; support for ban on BBQs.
- Work to promote biodiversity and climate resilience initiatives.
- Training for group members to support as site survey volunteers.

### **Leeds (LK)**

- Over 100 member groups – including ‘In Bloom’ – with good working relationship with the local authority, support with officer access.
- Loss / rationalization of LA staff increased need for community support and input with site knowledge helping new staff –e.g. new biodiversity net gain (BNG) officer.
- Support for new tree planting programme, group/Forum input to fundraising.
- Projects include Bees Needs Week 8-14 July details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bees-needs/bees-needs-campaign>
- Support for increased pollinator friendly planting, reduced mowing etc., use to engage groups and community.
- Also set up a trees and orchard group
- Fewer rangers but still supportive.
- Input to Parks Strategy including food growing in parks opportunities – supported with Forum survey ‘Neat or Natural? Brought 900+ responses - details at: <https://leedsparkforum.org/2023/05/25/neat-or-natural-survey-the-results/>
- Partnerships include Feed Leeds food growing link with schools, and the Incredible Edible Network (<https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk>).
- Links with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust for training to help ecological recognition and promotion.
- ‘Love Leeds Parks’ parks foundation to consult on community use and support with funds for parks <https://loveleedspark.org.uk>.
- Also Forum input to Safer Parks research and actions [this has now been included in Green Flag guidance at: <https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk/resources/safer-parks-for-women-and-girls-guidance> .
- Local Plan includes new park development: Aire Park <https://airepark.co.uk>
- Current issues – seeking funds for First Aid training to support parks events

### **Brighton (CM)**

- input to local rewilding initiatives part of ‘The Living Coast’ – the Brighton & Lewes Unesco Biosphere <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk>.
- This designation has helped raise the profile of open spaces and encouraged local authority

support.

- Projects include:
  - o 30 sites with grazing and volunteers 'lookers' to support <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/jobs/volunteering/volunteer-livestock>
  - o Seed harvesting with Wildflower Conservation Society to plant elsewhere.
  - o B Banks <https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/new-b-bank-wildlife-haven-for-brighton>
  - o Trees and orchards
- Work aims to develop templates for biodiversity in different park sites.
- The Forum's Autumn Seminar will focus on biodiversity with guest speakers.

#### **Brent (SM)**

- linking with local BNG officer and Fields in Trust (FiT) to ensure a sustainable new building in park.
- Input to Parks and Tree strategies.
- Encourage Friends group members to get involved in wildlife recording and surveys.
- Concern at housing demands – hope to work for more protection through FiT designation.

#### **Edinburgh (KT)**

- links from Future Parks Accelerator programme.
- Localized projects and revised mowing regimes with need to raise awareness – e.g. local studies to show benefit.

#### **Trafford (AS/ SQ-H)**

- Forum focus is on relationship with One Trafford partnership, trying to improve links and site management standards with strategic improvements.

#### **London (DM)**

- The London Network promotes and shares good practice – helped and coordinated through their dedicated Biodiversity and Climate Resilience working groups.
- London's designation as 'National Park City' helps raise profile
- Work closely with Campaign to Protect Rural England (London branch), including campaigns to protect spaces under threat etc.
- Also part of 'A More Natural Capital' coalition with other environmental organisations

#### **Horsham (SS sent details ahead of the meeting)**

- Horsham Green Spaces is doing a major piece of work on Nature Recovery across the town's greenspaces to promote biodiversity – Horsham Town Wildways – working with the local authority and county council on changing mowing regimes, encouraging residents to do more in their gardens to support nature, not use pesticides, plant for pollinators etc.
- Early days after months of planning (mapping out the corridors, doing Phase 1 habitat mapping) and building links with local authorities, Councillors, Sussex Wildlife Trust, etc. This is the first summer of mowing changes and practical action. Biggest challenge is public engagement, details at: <https://www.horshamgreenspaces.org/wildways>.

#### **General comments:**

- Comments highlight the importance of input to local plans and strategies
- Show the value of parks communities in bringing site knowledge and resources – both to assist surveys and lever in funds.
- For groups biodiversity projects can raise profile, develop partnerships and engage new members/ communities.
- While parks may not be a statutory service – they help deliver statutory roles in terms of nature conservation.

<b>AOB / Additional comment [chat]</b>	
<p>DM thanked all for attending and reminded all that there is additional opportunities to share information or seek peer support through the Forums UK network e-mail list:  <a href="mailto:parksforumsuk@lists.riseup.net">parksforumsuk@lists.riseup.net</a></p> <p>There is an open invitation for Area Forum reps to be nominated to become a NFPGS trustee and attend Committee meetings to represent their area/ region. Anyone interested please contact NS <a href="mailto:secretary@natfedparks.org.uk">secretary@natfedparks.org.uk</a>.</p> <p><b>Additional comment - from Zoom Chat</b></p> <p>Len Wyatt Bristol PF to Everyone:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">before I forget would like to say thanks for all the info on new parks in your area - we are collating the information ready for the Local Plan Examination - but will circulate what we have found. Aire Park sounds really interesting and will add it to the list.</p> <p>Miriam Islington Forum to Everyone:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Mowing: We like the reduced mowing but get lots of complaints from dog owners about grass-seeds hurting dogs. Opportunity for teaching dog owners about biodiversity and how dogs can be managed better for both nature and dogs health. The other issue is we've got medick taking over, and leaving bare patches when finally mown.</p> <p>From Len Wyatt Bristol PF to Everyone:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">One thing I am hoping will happen is that there will be new Forum in Bath and North East Somerset....watch this space.</p>	<p><b>All</b></p> <p><b>All</b></p>
<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
The next AGM is provisionally 16 November 2024 – time and date to be confirmed.	<b>All</b>