

Report of Trustees to Charity Commission - 2023– 2024

Introduction

The Friends of Kennington Park was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission in April 2020. Seven Trustees were appointed. Our status is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registration number 1188922.

Our Charitable purpose is defined as ***being for the benefit of the inhabitants of South London ("the area of benefit"), to provide or assist in the provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of the area of benefit in particular by supporting the preservation, conservation, improvement and protection of Kennington Park.***

Our financial year ran from the end March 2023 to the end of March 2024. Our current income level means that we are classified as a small charity. Our accounts are audited annually by an independent Auditor and copies are available on our website.

This activity report covers the period from the last AGM held in September 2023.

Park Infrastructure – Improvement and Protection

2023/24 has been another busy year. As well as organising the annual programme of events and managing the day-to-day issues relating to the park, members of the committee have continued to be actively involved in shaping the council's **capital development programme for the park**.

The programme originally comprised several elements – the restoration of the iconic 1970s skatebowl, development of a new children's play area, creation of a youth zone, the improvement of the toilet facilities and pathways and the provision of drinking water fountains.

The new **children's play area** has continued to be extremely popular and is a meeting place for many of the children taking part in the Junior Parkrun which happens every Sunday morning. The water fountains have proved popular with humans, dogs and other wildlife, a young fox was seen using the dog bowl of one fountain.

Unfortunately, there have been significant delays with the work on **the skatebowl** due to technical difficulties. This was always a challenging project, but the hoped-for simpler restoration options have not proved possible leaving only a costly and complex solution which will require additional funding. Work on the project was suspended for a short period in the earlier part of the year until additional funds were secured. In the end funding was primarily sourced by redirecting money intended for the other projects, referred to above.

One of the reasons for agreeing to the transfer of funds from other projects was because our hopes of installing modern toilet facilities in the park continued to be thwarted. Despite support for our proposal from project officers and the Councillor representative, Lambeth Council's Planning officers are insisting on the retention of the old cottage style buildings based solely on their aesthetic value. Modernising the toilet facilities within them is a more expensive option than creating a new purpose-built block and may not allow for the auto-locking option which forms part of the new block option.

Early progress was being made on the design of a **youth zone** and consultation had begun with local youth groups based on the concept of a modular design featuring both activity and social

space. The need to reassign funds means that this project has now stalled. The possibility of securing additional funding will be explored later this year.

Work on the **pathways** which are prone to flooding was designed to take place alongside the development of each individual project. This means that the pathway near the children's play area has been completed with the surface changed and additional drainage added.

Events and Activities in the Park

FoKP has already held a diverse programme of events this year – all events were free, open to everybody and well promoted through posters and social media. The programme included nature and history walks, including a Dawn Chorus Walk at 5am to mark the International Day and a Chartist walk to commemorate the 1848 Rally. The Easter Egg Hunt was again held in the Flower Garden and was a great success. Working again with our co-organiser Melanin Health & Wellness, the Summer Festival (KPF24) was a great success. It was bigger and better than in 2023 with more commercial and community stallholders and more workshop activities for both children and adults. This year Surrey County Cricket Club supported us by organising cricket practice games. Reluctantly, we had to turn many commercial stallholders away. Many more wanted to be involved than we felt able to accommodate. This was done to ensure that the event retain its character and allowed visitors space to picnic, dance and do exercise routines. Next year is the 5th anniversary of the festival, so we will need to carefully consider how to manage the event to continue to keep the right balance of activities. Our successful (and important) monthly gardening sessions continue to be popular.

The Committee recognises the need to arrange events which will appeal to all ages and communities and has plans for a Dog Show in October. Other ideas include a tree hugging competition and the possibility of an outdoor art event. Plans for later in the year and into 2025 also include the possible restoration and enhancement of the Nature Trail. This project has been proposed by a local community group and is subject to securing funding.

Partnership Working and Protection of the Park

The working relationship between committee members and Lambeth Landscapes staff and management remains strong, as do relationships with local councillors. We continue to work in partnership with other park-based organisations such as Bee Urban and Trees for Cities to promote events and activities. Events such as the Summer Festival strengthen our ties with local businesses and organisations such as community services, schools, churches and colleges, also with community groups and independent traders. This year we worked closely with one of the leading figures in the Brandon Estate, a large housing estate adjacent to the park, a useful connection, which we hope to continue.

In addition, FoKP is a member of both Lambeth-wide and London-wide organisations helping us to keep in touch with developing issues, legislative requirements, etc. The Park was again awarded a Green Flag, has accreditation as a Green Heritage Site and received Gold awards from London in Bloom. In the late winter/early Spring a large number of hedging whips were planted on the park extension. The purchase of these was supported by London CPRE grant funding and the input of Lambeth Council's Environment officer. The planting is designed to improve biodiversity in that area of the park and to help extend the Bee Highway. FoKP are also encouraging the Council to proceed with the Field in Trust Initiative helping to ensure the long-term future of the park as a recreational space. There have been further delays as the Council is trying to position itself to take all Lambeth parks through in one application.

Governance

Financial Reporting and Updated Policies

As the result of commercial sponsorship for some of our events and the generosity of members our budget position is healthy. The usual financial protocols have been followed. Our Treasurer has prepared the final accounts which were submitted to our Auditors for review prior to the AGM. This year we have reviewed and updated a number of our policies and role descriptions.

Membership Numbers

Similarly, our membership levels are relatively stable although there has been a slight reduction in new members.

Committee Membership and Trusteeship

A new trustee was co-opted part way through the year and will be formally proposed to the 2024 AGM. Two trustees will be standing down as part of the required rotation. Both are prepared to continue to stand.

Recruiting new Committee member continues to be difficult despite publicity among members in our regular e-bulletins. One of the 2023 committee plans to stand down at the AGM and is being proposed as a trustee. He will be sadly missed on the committee, but his presence as a trustee (if elected) helps maintain the number of independent trustees.

Public Benefit Statement

FoKP continues to act in accordance with the required protocols and legislation, required by the Charity Commission. This means that there is appropriate decision making and recording of decisions and there are protocols and policies in place. Specifically, this ensure that:

- money is appropriately spent, managed, and reported.
- decisions are made through the committee process and in accordance with our charitable purpose; these decisions are recorded in meeting notes and through the AGM process.
- the interest of the park and its users are the focus of our decision-making and actions.

Summary

We have continued to help create improvements in the park and to run a successful programme of events. Progress on some of major developments in the park have been slower than anticipated mainly due to technical difficulties with only one fully completed and launched. Work continues on the restoration of the skatebowl with FoKP Committee members closely involved.

We have unfortunately not been able to add additional committee members this year, but we are pleased to have welcomed a co-opted trustee. Recruiting new committee members and event organisers remains a priority.

Marietta Crichton Stuart – Trustee and Chair of FoKP

September 2024

The AGM is recommended to endorse the report of the Trustees.