

## Report of Trustees to Charity Commission - 2022– 2023

### 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 2022 to the end of March 2023. 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 2022

### Park Infrastructure – Improvement and Protection

2022/23 has been a 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 been actively involved in shaping the council's **capital development programme for the park**.

The programme comprises 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.

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 necessitate additional funding. Work on the project has been suspended until funds can be found. All options, including commercial sponsorship, are being explored and discussions will take place with the Lambeth Council officer responsible for fundraising in September.

In contrast, the redesign of the **children's play area** has now taken place and is already proving to be very popular with local children. It was officially opened by Cllr Chowdhury on 19<sup>th</sup> July having passed the necessary RoSPA certification the previous week. A major disappointment for this element of the overall project is that it wasn't possible, despite repeated efforts, to replace the children's toilet block, a facility considered by FoKP committee members to be in a poor condition and not fit for purpose. This issue remains part of an ongoing debate with the Council's Planners about the need for modern toilet facilities on the site.

Early progress is now being made on the design of a **youth zone**. Consultation has begun with local youth groups based on the concept of a modular design featuring both activity and social space. This consultation process is seen as important by both FoKP and the Council.

Work on the **pathways** which are prone to flooding will take place alongside the development of each individual project.

Another time-consuming issue has been the re-opening and restoration of the resized **dog walking area**. This area was made available to park users again in 2022 having been requisitioned for use

by TfL some years ago to complete work on the Northern Line Extension project. The site will remain under the management of TfL for 5 years beyond the handover date and this is the source of a number of ongoing concerns and complications.

Securing the full restoration of the dog area facilities, which included park benches and litter bins, has proved difficult. An added problem is that the maintenance of the area is very poor. Complaints have been registered with the Council, individual councillors and Cabinet Members and in turn, via Parks senior management, with the TfL contractors. However, little progress is being made in resolving numerous issues. The formal agreement between the Council and TfL covering the handover and the 5-year period has very little in the way of enforcement protocols meaning that what was agreed in theory at the start of the project several years ago is not happening in practice. There are ongoing problems with the condition and maintenance of the dog area surface - flooding, bare patches, litter etc and the agreement to provide benches is not being fulfilled. The committee is not confident that matters will be resolved and are concerned that the parks budget will have to meet the cost of the work that has not been rectified by the contractor.

### **Large Commercial Events in the Park**

A tricky issue of a very different nature arose in February following the Council's decision to allow Burberry to use the park as the venue for its London Fashion Week Show, an event which caused both delight and dismay with local people. Delight because of the international profile of the event and celebrity attendees. Dismay because mounting the show involved the erection of a temporary structure which occupied a significant area of the park's south field for 4 weeks, also requiring considerable traffic movements through the park. Many saw this event as an inappropriate use of a public parks, and it resulted in a small number of strongly worded objections being received by FoKP. Although these were predominantly handled by the Council's Events Team, the committee had the task of trying to steer a path through the two sides of the argument. From the Council's perspective its advantage was income generation. A proportion of the income will be invested directly in the park and therefore benefit all users. For park users there was a commitment that no further large commercial events would take place during the remainder of 2023.

### **Events and Activities for Local People**

10<sup>th</sup> April 2023 marked the 175th anniversary of the 1848 Monster Chartist Rally which took place on Kennington Common. To mark this important milestone, we launched an audio trail, written by one committee member, narrated by another, and involving others in promotion and design. Posters containing information and QR codes are located around the park allowing visitors to listen to the recording and imagine the events unfolding in the field all that time ago. The recording is available on the FoKP website where it has already been accessed well over 200 times.

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 Walk to mark the International Dawn Chorus Day and a Chartist walk to commemorate the 1848 Rally. The Easter Egg Hunt and the Summer Festival, both bigger and better than in 2021, were very successful as were all the monthly gardening sessions. The Committee recognises the need to arrange events which will appeal to all ages and communities and has plans for a possible dog show, tree hugging competition and an outdoor art event through the Autumn.

## **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 which support parks and the environment helping us to keep in touch with developing issues, legislative requirements, etc. The Park was awarded a Green Flag for the 13<sup>th</sup> year, has accreditation as a Green Heritage Site and received Gold awards from London in Bloom. Later this year, extensive hedging will be planted on the park extension supported by grant funding and designed to improve biodiversity in that part of the park. 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.

## **Governance**

### **Financial Reporting**

As the result of commercial sponsorship for some of our events and the generosity of new and existing members our budget position is strong. The usual financial protocols have been followed. Although on maternity leave overseas, our Treasurer has prepared the final accounts which were submitted to our Auditors for review prior to the AGM.

### **Membership Numbers**

Similarly, our membership levels are also healthy, having been strengthened by new members joining at recent events, both those we have organised and those we have attended.

### **Committee Membership and Trusteeship**

A long-standing committee member stood down this year, although she agreed to remain a trustee for the remainder of the year. Two new volunteers were co-opted to the committee, one helping to strengthen the all-important area of social media, the other taking on the responsibilities of the Treasurer while the office holder is on maternity leave. One is sadly leaving the area, but the other has agreed to stand for election as committee members at the AGM as have the remainder of the committee.

Unfortunately, this year it has been necessary to consider the removal of one of the trustees due to a lack of participation in meetings and failure to respond to any communication, despite communication by mail, email and text. Due process has been followed in accordance with the Constitution. The trustee was advised in writing of the intended action and given the appropriate notice to respond explaining any mitigating circumstances. No response was received by the given deadline and there has been no response to email communication on other issues.

The AGM is therefore recommended to remove Colin Hunte as a Trustee.

If approved, the number of trustees for 2023/24 will therefore be 5. The minimum requirement is 3 and our aim is to restore the number to 7.

## **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 built on the success of our 20th anniversary year and added a new feature to the park. We plan to extend our calendar of events with new activities such as tree hugging and a dog show. There has been a significant increase in membership applications in recent months and our partnership working has extended beyond previous partners.

Progress on some of major developments in the park have been slower than anticipated mainly due to technical difficulties while one has been completed and launched. Work continues with FoKP Committee members well represented on the Council's Capital Programme working groups. Consultation with local people is taking place on some key design elements of the remaining programme.

We have had additional committee members this year which has strengthened our capacity to act. Unfortunately, as reported above, our trustee numbers for next year will be reduced by two. We will seek to recruit new trustees in the coming year and to engage those new members who have offered support in developing new events and activities as well as supporting our established calendar of events.

**Marietta Crichton Stuart – Trustee and Chair of FoKP**

**September 2023**

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