Final Minutes

The Friends of Kennington Park AGM
Held at Durning Library
Tuesday 23rd September 2025

Apologies

Apologies were received from 3 trustees and 9 FoKP members; 7 Proxy Forms were received.

Voting

Marietta reminded the meeting that only current members were eligible to vote.

1. **Welcome and Chair's Annual Report for 2024/2025**

The Chair, Marietta Crichton Stuart, welcomed everyone to the AGM, explaining that the papers had been published on the website in advance of the meeting to give everybody the opportunity to read them and to reduce costs and paper usage.

Marietta updated the meeting on the issues relating to the Capital Development Programme. She said that she had hoped to present positive news about the skatebowl as we had expected the contract to have been signed and work started by the summer. Sadly, this is now far from the case as Lambeth Council imposed a budget freeze on all capital programmes in April, with the outcome of the review due in the Autumn. The skatebowl and the newly launched Save Kenny campaign will be discussed in more detail later in the agenda. She reminded the meeting that of the original Capital Development Programme, only the children's playground had been completed together with the repair of a small area of adjacent pathway. Other elements of the programme included the restoration of the skatebowl, the modernisation of the toilets by replacing existing facilities and the development of a Youth Zone. Despite repeated attempts it has proved impossible to move the Council's planners from their position that the toilet buildings must be saved and modernised despite the facilities being repeatedly vandalised and their proposal being more costly and more complex to deliver. The funding originally dedicated to the toilets was therefore moved across to the Skatebowl project, in discussion with Lambeth, to ensure that enough funding was available. It later proved necessary to do the same with the funding for the Youth Zone. We believe that this project is likely to attract external funding which will be considered in due course.

The 5th Annual Festival was again a success although the number of people attending was less than in previous years as it was an exceptionally hot day. As in previous years, fundraising had been a challenge. The event provides an excellent link with the communities in both Southwark and Lambeth through the participation of local businesses, community organisations and sponsors as well as performers and visitors. Southwark Council provided financial support this year for the first time. Other activities during the year included RSPB Bird Watch, Easter Egg Hunt, two Bat Hunts, a Chartist Walk and of, course, volunteer gardening. The inaugural Dog Show took place in early Autumn and was a huge success despite very heavy rain. Counting the volunteer hours put into all these events is itself a massive task. We estimate that 166 hours between February and September was done this year in gardening alone. The park was again awarded the Green Flag award for the 15th time! Also, Kennington Park was awarded two London in Bloom awards this year - gold for the park and Silver Gilt for the Flower Garden, which is a credit to the hard work of the park's staff and volunteers. All these activities and others are promoted through the regular Mailchimp bulletin, posters in the park and social media.

A less positive feature of this year has been the Council's decision not to lock the park gates overnight – a cost saving feature which FoKP had previously successfully opposed but this time was imposed. The trial period finished many months ago but, despite repeated requests, we are yet to see the outcome report. There has been a noticeable increase in rough sleepers since the decision to leave the park open overnight. It is hard to assess whether there is a direct correlation, but it seems likely that easier access has contributed to the increase in numbers. Referrals are frequently made by FoKP to Street Link, the charity which supports homeless people, and we are made aware of their visits. Despite this people frequently choose to stay with a variety of resultant issues relating to damage to park property, hygiene and litter concerns, health and safety issues, etc.

The poor management of the dog walking area remains an issue although there does seem to be some progress in the discussions between the council and TfL. It remains to be seen whether matters will be concluded successfully and a full return of the site to the council takes place. Other matters of concern are irresponsible use of bikes, e-scooters, etc and discussions are taking place with parks management to put up Pedestrian Priority signs. We understand that the Council are seeking authorisation for their staff to have the legal right to award fixed penalty fines.

Marietta referred to the 409 Campaign – 409 being the address of the old Job Centre which is now subject to a planning application for a new tower with 17 storeys. A local resident campaign was launched and has received much support. A large number of comments have been submitted to the Council, the vast majority opposed to the scale of the building. The focus of comments by FoKP relate to the impact on the Heritage Park and the Grade 2 listed Prince Consort Lodge. A short presentation has been included as an AOB item.

An unexpected visitor to the park arrived in the form of Benson's Funfair. The council had previously made a commitment that it would not return to the park, but exceptional circumstances meant that it could not go to its original location and no other substitutes were possible. We have been assured again that it will not return to the heritage park.

Marietta thanked Committee members for their continued contribution reminding the meeting that a lot of work fell on a small team of volunteers. She also highlighted the importance of keeping up the pressure on Lambeth Council to prioritise further improvements to the park despite the financial challenges it faces. She emphasized the positive working relationship with the events team and with parks officers, commenting particularly on the support received from Kevin Crook, the Assistant Director. Marietta also acknowledged the excellent contribution made by Ruth Morgan, and since Ruth stood down, by Catherine Morland in leading the gardening sessions. Also, the generous financial support given by one of our members in funding the expert gardener time. She also mentioned the contribution of Ann Dolan, the Family Volunteering Club and Roots and Shoots for their work in helping to improve the park.

In relation to other planned events and activities, she explained that, sadly, it had not been possible to organise a Dog Show this year due to lack of resources, but that a Tree Walk (and tree hugging) had recently taken place. Plans had been in place for a Summer Music afternoon, but the illness of the chosen provider meant that this did not occur. In terms of projects, the possible creation of a new Nature Trail is still being explored but is subject to securing funding. Marietta emphasized the continuing need for FoKP to attract people who can be proactive in improving the park and in championing projects, as well as those with other skills such as social media expertise who can help promote what we do and increase membership.

Other issues covered in the presentation included information about the Trees for City lease on Prince Consort Lodge – due to expire in 2027; an outline description of the Council's plans to advertise this and the area covered by the basketball court, booking office and short court as commercial ventures to secure much needed funding.

The following comments and questions were raised in relation to Marietta's report:

- Reference to the increase in rough sleepers and the negative impact on various areas of the park
- Question about the feasibility of volunteers closing the park gates? The response given was that it was not feasible due to the large number of gates around the park which would need to be secured each night and opened each morning.
- Notification that fireworks have been heard/seen in the park on a number of occasions recently after the hours when the park would previously have been closed
- An update on use of Prince Consort Lodge - Trees for Cities lease is until 2027, but it has been largely empty since they moved to Brixton; FoKP will be involved in assessing a new leaseholder hopefully from 2026

A copy of Marietta's full report can be found on the FoKP website.

2. `Minutes` of the 2024 AGM and matters arising

The minutes from the 2024 meeting were submitted for approval. **Jill Johnston** proposed that they be accepted and was seconded by **Brenda Wheeler**. There were no matters there were no matters arising.

3. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Vilde Aageneas, had prepared the accounts for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. These have been audited and a copy is available on the website along with the other AGM papers.

Vilde introduced the report highlighting the current financial position and confirming that the auditors had approved the accounts. She also explained that it was important for FoKP to take action to secure its longer term financial position and that the committee were starting to explore new ideas to achieve this. This will include developing a new engagement strategy to attract more members, more commercial supporters, etc.

She also highlighted the need for the committee to be able to spend funds to help bring in people and resources to support existing activities, to develop new projects and events and to secure additional funding through corporate engagement, sponsorship, grants, etc.

The accounts were proposed for acceptance by **Priscilla Baines** and seconded by **Jill Gregson.** The meeting voted to approve the accounts.

4. Trustees Report to Charity Commission

Rita presented this report, emphasizing that its purpose is to demonstrate to the Charity Commission that FoKP was fulfilling its objectives through its events and activities. Also that it was being properly managed by both trustees and committee members. The Commission also expects us to have clear policies and statements on key issues such as health and safety, equalities, etc and we have worked hard to ensure that all these are in place.

She explained that the format used was as for previous reports and to date no queries have been raised by the Charity Commission.

The report was endorsed by vote from attendees.

5. Election of Office Holders and Committee for 2025/26

The Secretary briefly took over the management of the AGM and asked the meeting to agree to the re-appointment of Marietta Crichton Stuart as the Chair. The meeting unanimously voted to support Marietta's re-election.

The re-appointed Chair then advised the meeting that all the committee had agreed to stand again and said that election would be through a block vote. The meeting unanimously agreed to the re-election of the committee.

The full committee for 2025/2026 is therefore:

Name	**Post**
Marietta Crichton Stuart	Chair
Vilde Aagenaes	Treasurer
Sonia Wilson	Secretary
Marnie Searchwell	Committee Member
Rita Sammons	Committee Member

The meeting voted unanimously to support the election of all the nominated officers

6. Appointment of Trustees for 2025/26

Marietta introduced the report identifying the continuing trustees and those required to stand down this year but were eligible for immediate re-election.

The trustees proposed for 2025/26 are:

Rita Sammons (standing down, available for re-election)
Andrew Horsler (standing down, available for re-election)
Rachel Papps Williams
Marietta Crichton Stuart
Marnie Searchwell
Jill Johnston
Mark Engel

The meeting voted unanimously to support the appointment of all the nominated trustees

7. Skatebowl Restoration

Rita updated the meeting on the restoration of the skatebowl. She added further detail to the points introduced by Marietta regarding the Council's decision to freeze the project in April and the more recent decision by officers not to support its reinstatement. She gave an overview of the actions being taken in the Save Kenny campaign, including direct mailing to Cabinet Members, a Change.Org campaign and an extensive social media campaign on FoKP Facebook and Instagram, alongside posters in the park and other skateboarding locations like the Southbank.

The aim is to secure as much publicity and support as possible before sending a further email to all councillors ahead of the Council meeting in mid-October. The campaign has been going well and is already attracting support.

8. FoKP Membership and Engagement campaign

Vilde gave a quick update on the plans, referred to earlier to put together a strategy to help us get more financial support and more volunteers to organise events.

9. Any Other Business

Andrew Roberts had requested the opportunity to give a brief on the latest position regarding the campaign against the proposed development of the previous Job Centre site, opposite the Kennington Park Post Office. This had been approved by the Chair.

Andrew introduced the **BBK 409 Campaign**; describing the professional nature of the work being done to support the campaign to oppose the existing plans, the funding raised, etc. He commented on the impact on the park, an issue raised by FoKP in its submission, and stated that a GLA planning report had assessed that the project would cause some harm to the area/environment. He made the point that the campaign was not opposed to additional housing, the need for this in Lambeth was well recognized, but that the scale and nature of the proposal was unacceptable by a conservation area.

At the meeting Sarah Honey, explained her company's interest in a potential investment in the park specifically a proposal for a Lido. She had previously contacted FoKP and been in contact with Kevin Crook, the Assistant Director whose responsibility covers parks.

The meeting was closed by Marietta at 8.55pm

Rita Sammons
FoKP Acting Secretary
September 2025