

# Chair's Report



Registered Charity no 1188922

## Activities 2019-2020

AGENDA ITEM 1

### Introduction

**The aim of** the Friends of Kennington Park (FoKP) is to make the park the best it can be. We are all local people, volunteers, determined that the park doesn't slip back to how it was in 'the bad old days'.

For the first time since FoKP was formed 18 years ago, there's no normal AGM. Because of

Covid, this year's AGM will be 'virtual'.

Since last July's AGM, FoKP has had eight months of activity and events, followed by the lockdown at the end of March. The lockdown has so far prevented us arranging any further activities. But on the plus side, it has brought a mass of new users to the park!

### Activities and Events in 2019-2020

**At the last AGM** you gave the committee the go-ahead to become a Charity. On April 3rd, charity status was granted. Details of the process are included separately: see Agenda Item 2 on Charitable Status.

**Since the last AGM** we planned a busy programme of park events and managed to run a few of them but sadly, many had to be cancelled. Here are just a few that we lost:



Spring Bat Walk



Dawn Chorus Walk



Chartist Anniversary Walk



Inaugural Easter Egg Hunt

**Undeterred**, now that 'normality' is beginning to return, we will reprogramme some events.

### Volunteer Gardening

**Thanks to** a generous anonymous donation, we ran our busy, enjoyable monthly gardening sessions led by **Amanda Rew** until the early Spring. Help also came from outside groups of volunteers including Brixton **Good Gym** and, under the management of Lambeth's **Alex Draper**, corporate groups such as **Network Rail**. I am delighted to report that on July 12th, we restarted the **Sunday gardening sessions**, now to be run in accordance with the Council's new requirements.





## Communication

**Communication is key** at the best of times and even more so during the lockdown. In the past year our work has involved:

- keeping the **FoKP website** up to date about park facilities and new government guidelines. Over 1000 people a month visited the site – that’s twice as many as usual;
- responding to many **emails** from park users, advising them on issues and concerns – from toilets (or the lack of them), through to trees, football, dogs, etc. As a result, we have been able to keep people informed and update Parks managers regularly about concerns and expectations;

- **keeping in touch** with regular MailChimp newsletters to members, and posts on Facebook and Twitter. Many thanks to our friends at **Winkworth** Kennington for their kind sponsorship of **Parklife**, our annual printed newsletter which appeared in the spring;

- **linking** with others. FoKP attends the **Lambeth Parks Forum** where we have a useful information exchange with other **Friends groups** and an opportunity to share the views and ideas of park users and the FoKP Committee with senior Council officers. We are also part of a number of local and national networks.

## Big events

**Last Autumn’s** FriendsFest event left behind a mudbath. FoKP were involved immediately but wet weather, winter and virus restrictions meant that the proper repair work didn’t happen. It will – and it will be paid for by FriendsFest.

There are no large scale events planned for 2020 and for the future, Lambeth seem to have got the message that our heritage park is not suitable for large, fenced events. We will continue to liaise closely with the Lambeth Events team.

## Thank you ...

Thanks to Lambeth officers **Kevin Crook**, Assistant Director for his support; **Ian Ross**, Parks Manager for listening to us and taking action; **Dr Iain Boulton**, Environmental Compliance Officer (and our Bat Man), **Theresa Hoare**, Park’s Development Officer and **Helen Firminger**, funding and grants expert, for their help.

And on the ground, our thanks to **Kevin Wallace**, Park Operations Manager and **Mick Penney**, Operations Supervisor, and to **Reece** and **Martin** and all of the **Lambeth Landscapes** team, who’ve had to work extra hard over the past few months while the park served as the neighbourhood gym, restaurant *and* pub! This resulted in a massive increase in **litter**.

So big thanks to them for all they do to keep our park looking good. We’re very grateful for the excellent efforts made by all at a time of increased use and financial restrictions.



## Accolades

**It seems** like a long time ago, but the park was awarded a 2019 **London in Bloom** silver gilt, and the Flower Garden a gold.

And the park won a **Green Flag** for the 9th year running.

## NLE & dog area

**TfL’s** Northern Line Extension work is ever present in our park and the reinstatement of the **dog walking area** is approaching.

FoKP will continue to work to make sure the new dog area is at least as good as the original.





## Partnerships

We always strive to work effectively with Lambeth. This year we've worked to develop a **new Partnership Agreement**, scrutinised the **Grounds Maintenance** specification, and negotiated on a number of **operational issues** including the proposal to leave the park open at night.

We're in touch with **local councillors** and the much-reduced **Oval ward police** team. And we look forward to welcoming our new MP, **Flo Eshalomi**, to the park.



## Park investments

FoKP has spent a considerable amount of time and energy this year, and in previous years, trying to secure the investment into the park of the promised **£800k** from the sale of the old Park Keepers Lodge to TfL for the Northern Line Extension head house.

Lambeth undertook to **ring-fence** this for the park at the time of the sale, but the promised investment has not so far been received.

After extended correspondence with council officers, Cllr Hopkins, Leader of the Council, has confirmed the additional £800k is included in the proposed **capital programme** for the park, due for consideration by councillors this month.



## Vandalism & repairs

Like most Lambeth Parks, Kennington does suffer from incidents of **anti-social behaviour** and **vandalism**, with open air drinkers and drug dealing, but we always hope that increased usage of the park serves as a deterrent.

There have been repeated problems with the park **toilets** being closed and/or vandalised and the slowness of **repairs**, especially in the children's playground.

And we hope to see the new **toy train** fully installed very soon.

## And thanks ...

To all who have been involved with FoKP over the past 12 months. Firstly, thanks for the amazing work of the **Committee: Rita, Marnie, Adam, Rachel, Nikki, Andrew, Vilde, Nichola** and **Colin** – plus **Ian** and **Matt** for help on finances and membership. A special shout out to **Marnie** and **Frank** for their work on the upcoming **History Boards**.

Secondly, thanks to **Amanda Rew**, our Expert Gardener, the brilliant band of **volunteer gardeners**, to **Anne** and **Julie** who tend the planters by the war memorial.

Not forgetting **Cllr David Amos** for sharing our park news in his weekly community email.

The Friends continue to work with our park neighbours the **Park Café** (aka Collective), **Trees for Cities** and **Bee Urban**.

Thank you also to all the FoKP **members** who have supported us this year, and in some cases over many years. We are extremely **grateful** for your support and encouragement, challenge and ideas and offers of help.

See **Agenda Item 6** for details of our plans for 2020/2021 and beyond.

Rita



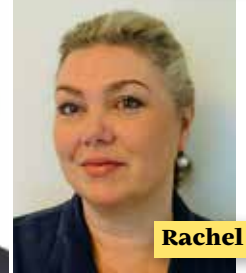
Marnie



Adam



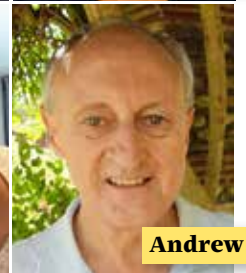
Rachel



Vilde



Andrew



Nikki



Colin



Nichola



Marietta Crichton Stuart, FoKP Chair

