

Trustees & Annual General Meeting Minutes

The Priory Rooms, Birmingham

Saturday 16 March 2019



[A] Trustees Meeting

Present:

Dave Morris (Chair)	Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, and London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN)
Michelle Furtado (Vice Chair)	Green Tides (Adur & Worthing Green Spaces Partnership)
Martin Willis	Nottingham Open Spaces Forum (NOSF)
Roland Bruce (Treasurer)	Bristol Parks Forum
Michael Straw	Greenwood Forum
Nigel Sharp (Secretary)	North West Parks Friends Forum (NWPFF)

Apologies:

Sarah Royal (CEO)	Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF)
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Minutes of previous meeting (26.1.19) & Matters Arising	
Minutes were agreed.	
Organisational Matters	
MF helped progress the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) application circulating trustees to update details and MW agreed to provide support with the final submission	MW
NFPGS Development	
NFPGS Co-ordinator Post This post – with MF to be appointed to the role - has now been agreed by the Parks Action Group, funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government with a total of £40k to cover the post and related costs. DM has met with Locality and Groundwork to discuss the workplan, to include working with these organisations to develop and deliver a programme of regional events for community groups and parks sector bodies.	All
Funding RB confirmed KBT will continue to cover regular meeting costs with additional support from Love Parks Week related promotions.	
A Just Giving page has been set up for the London Marathon fundraising (our treasurer Roland is our runner!) and all need to circulate and promote.	
Resources and Promotion DM is co-managing the development of the new www.parkscommunity.org.uk website which is informed by the Rethinking Parks project and has input from ten park 'pilot' sites to determine the information and support required by parks	

<p>community groups. The site is in construction which includes material designed to support the strengthening and empowerment of Friends Groups (case studies, How To guides, signposting to wider support etc) with a view to this being transferred to the NFPGS site before the end of the project. This was welcomed. This information will link with NFPGS strategic aims covering networking and campaigning.</p> <p>NFPGS Strategy It was agreed to review our 2016 strategic business plan / Action Plan at the next Trustees meeting.</p> <p>Additional discussion and comment included consideration of alternative meeting options (eg venues) and the potential to extend member input through phone in or on line methods using web platforms such as Zoom (details at https://zoom.us).</p>	<p>DM</p> <p>All</p>
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[B] Annual General Meeting

Attendance details as Trustees Meeting, with additional representatives:

Keith Elder	South Staffordshire Network
Melanie Davies	Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum
Liz	Friends of Alder Coppice, Dudley
Simon Biggs	Friends of Alder Coppice, Dudley
Paul Todd	Keep Britain Tidy (KBT)

Apologies:

John Kerr	Edinburgh Green Spaces Forum
Kerri Lloyd	South Staffordshire Network
John Ridgewell	Green Space Wales
Tony Burton	Independent Merton Green Spaces Forum
Paul Campbell	Sheffield Green Spaces Forum
Jennifer Kirkby	Leeds Parks Forum

Previous meeting & Matters Arising	
DM noted that the meeting was effectively the first AGM of a new regime following the NFPGS EGM in November 2017 which adopted a new constitution to enable the NFPGS to progress towards CIO status.	
Officer reports	
<p>Secretary (NS) Since the EGM NFPGS has responded to 60 enquiries, of which around a third relate to concerns associated with development threats to green spaces. Although mostly housing proposals, other developments on parks include a sports centre, crematorium, museum and several road schemes. NFPGS has provided advice on campaigning including signposting to links with case studies and information.</p> <p>Additional support has been provided to organisations and students requesting information and there are also regular enquiries regarding membership with groups encouraged to develop links - either with existing local area forums or through initiating new contacts and coordination efforts to add to the national network.</p> <p>NS noted that the NFPGS network has developed with new area forums and similar clusters or hubs of activity now active from Sunderland to Norwich and South</p>	

Gloucestershire, in addition to continued regional co-ordination in Greater London and North West England. We have continued our good relations with Scotland mainly through Greenspace Scotland and the Edinburgh Green Spaces Forum, and in the last year have liaised with the Wales-wide organisation Llias y Goedwig. We remain unaware of any area Forums in Northern Ireland.

Chair (DM)

DM reported that following adoption of a new constitution and general consolidation NFPGS has been very active alongside other greenspace organisations at national and Government level, notably working in a voluntary role to represent communities at the Parks Action Group. The aim is to speak up for our vibrant, growing Friends Groups' movement, lobbying for and supporting initiatives which support community empowerment as well as the long term funding and protection of the UK's green spaces..

This has been supported by the launch of the Parks Charter last summer gaining media publicity eg BBC1 Countryfile – we coordinated the development of the Charter, the founding coalition of 12 organisations, and the launch (backed by KBT press office, thanks!). 24 national bodies are now backing the Charter.

DM noted the great significance in these developments bringing the parks sector together, with the NFPGS community voice now amplified alongside other influential national bodies. This extends to the adoption of a number of 'Memorandum of Understanding' – which now link NFPGS with KBT, Groundwork, Fields in Trust, The Conservation Volunteers and The Gardens Trust. We also continue to be an advisory partner of The Parks Alliance which advocates and lobbies for the parks sector.

Our media profile has increased especially in relation to park sector funding raising awareness of the challenges facing the sector and the profile of the friends group movement. KBT and ourselves advised the Mail On Sunday for their national 'Save Our Parks' press campaign throughout last winter, in which they adopted word for word many points from the Parks Charter (although they failed to publicise or even acknowledge the Charter!). This added to the pressure on the Government.

The Friends Groups movement is clearly now making waves at all levels!

NFPGS officers continue to attend local and national events and conferences with SR and MF providing regular updates and bulletins including social media with over 1000 twitter followers. DM thanked his fellow officers and NFPGS representatives for their continued efforts.

Treasurer (RB)

Although accounts for 2017/18 showed a small deficit, following a donation from the Diana Whitworth Trust, accounts for 2018/19 show a current balance of £7,288 (as at 4.3.19). RB noted gratitude for the continued support from KBT for general meeting costs and expenses.

Election of Officers

NFPGS officers formally stood down and following a nomination and election process:

- DM was re-elected as Chair
- NS re-elected as Secretary
- RB re-elected as Treasurer.
- MW was elected as Vice-Chair.
- SR will continue as (unpaid) CEO.

All officers and MF will continue as Trustees.

DM invited additional nominees from regional representatives to become Trustees.	
Area reports	
<p><u>Greenwood Forum (MS)</u> Established to support a Community Forest project for the Midlands, bringing together 20+ groups with support from the Nottinghamshire County Council local improvement fund. Activities include providing training for groups – from first aid to hedge laying. Now expanded to cover the wider county area but issues due to reduced resources. http://www.greenwoodforest.org.uk/index.php https://www.facebook.com/FOGCF/</p> <p><u>Bristol Parks Forum (RB)</u> Long established Forum (over 15years) with 40+ groups. Now involved in a 'Rethinking Parks' project. The Forum has consulted with member groups to prepare an aspirational Vision statement. http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/</p> <p><u>Green Tides (Adur & Worthing Green Spaces Partnership) (MF)</u> Initially set up with TCV and local council, 46 member groups, Lottery funds to support website creation. Issues include changes to parks staffing and communication, but working more strategically local meetings covering key areas – including public health and biodiversity. https://www.facebook.com/AWGSPartnership/</p> <p>MF has also co-ordinated a SE region conference to bring park managers together, also noted positive network development along the South coast with an Eastbourne Forum in development, the Green Havens group (Newhaven) and Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum (see later).</p> <p><u>South Staffordshire Friends Network (KE)</u> A relatively informal link between 6 local green space groups – initiated following SR support for a local authority meeting of Friends groups. There is an annual meeting and informal meetings at different sites to maintain connections but no formal Forum structure. Concerns about level of knowledge and support from local authority with current focus on 'street scene'. Additional links to Parish Councils and other bodies such as KBT Waterside Care team and Wildlife Trust.</p> <p><u>Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum (MD)</u> Established with Council support, 83 groups. Limited collaboration between groups, events include a biodiversity seminar, issues include LA cuts, communication and lack of officer contact. A student led survey has identified insurance and training (to support additional activity) as areas of need. http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/</p> <p><u>North West Parks Friends Forum (NS)</u> Regional network established by reps from Wirral, Liverpool and Stockport area forums in 2013. Awards for All (A4A) funds supported a series of events to develop and support the network. Subsequent events linked to NFPGS and a current programme supported by A4A. Issues include resources, capacity and communication, exacerbated by the logistical challenge of coordinating a network over an extensive and diverse region on a voluntary basis. Core areas/ activity in Merseyside & Gtr Manchester, with similar pockets of activity in Cheshire & Lancashire. https://en-gb.facebook.com/NWPFF/ https://twitter.com/nwparksforum</p> <p><u>Nottingham Open Spaces Forum (MW)</u></p>	

Was relatively loose, now 60 groups around the city area. Austerity issues and increased demands due to deprivation - some strong Council parks support including Green Flag progress but issues with planning and development threats. Also parks now integrated with street scene. Links to officer led East Midlands Parks Forum. Forum is lobbying prospective councillors re. local elections, working with local CVS on a citywide volunteer strategy and a Lottery bid for a development worker. Positive partnership with Trees for Cities – 4K trees planted locally.

<http://nosf.org.uk/index.html>

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/NottinghamOSF/>

Dudley

The Council has previously set up a Forum it is relatively inactive although there are 21 groups and there is a facebook page. Generally groups are more focused on local site matters and not prepared to commit to the area group, with capacity issues. There are issues relating to support for parks in preference to more natural landscapes and green spaces, funding, training and insurance cover are concerns.

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/Dudley-Open-Spaces-Forum-652876618126463/>

It was suggested that the Group consider the benefits from area forum work to highlight common issues and lobby for support and that networking by e-mail may help sustain group links.

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum (DM)

Established in 2001, now around 45 groups – approx. 15-20 reps attend meetings every 2 months with Council officers present for part of the meeting. The Group campaigns for more resources, and the impact of 2011 budget cuts (50%) is now becoming a clear staffing/maintenance crisis. Some of the 22 green flag parks had their status suspended by KBT. The Forum has successfully lobbied for all parks to be covered by Fields in Trust protection now agreed in principle with a phased approach to cover administration costs for the designation. The Forum continues to produce a range of walking guides and booklets. DM provided a detailed update – more details at: <http://www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk/>

London Friends of Green Spaces Network (DM)

Now established 10 years, a focus for Gtr London's 700 Friends Groups for parks & green spaces, and their 17/18 borough forums, and partner organisations including CPRE who helped deliver a campaign of short park films for a film night. The Network is trying to influence planning issues, London-wide policies, and access funding for building and promoting the network. <http://www.lfgn.org.uk/>

Additional Area Forum updates were provided and circulated with the Agenda.

Edinburgh Green Spaces Forum

Annual report (2018/19) noted there are 46 groups, with a further 15 to join. There is a Committee of 6 with 3-4 meetings each year covering general topics including budget concerns, GDPR, biodiversity and local initiatives. The Forum liaises with other bodies and there are good relations with the Council. Evidence of good joint working is reflected with 42 Green Flag Awards. The Forum supports new Friends group development and lobbies for resources. Took the lead in launching the new Parks Charter at Holyrood, Scotland last summer.

Leeds Parks & Green Spaces Forum

The Forum has linked with Leeds Community Foundation and the Council to set up the Leeds Parks Fund to encourage donations and support for parks projects – this 'Rethinking Parks' project is being shared with others at a workshop (30.4.19).

<http://leedsparksfund.org/> <http://www.leedsparksforum.org/>

Norwich Outdoor Projects Network

Established in 2013, this encourages Friends of parks groups to share ideas and awareness of activities. Additional support includes social media training and

<p>meetings at different sites enables sharing of information with further discussion on joint working, in training and resources. Over 50 groups are involved and the Council uses the network to show support and appreciation for their contribution. The NFPGS Chair attended a recent meeting to support the development of the loose network.</p> <p>Review and General Comment</p> <p>Common issues identified include austerity concerns and development threats. Reduction in Green Flag programmes was another concern with a lack of management planning expertise to sustain applications an issue, and local authorities unable to sustain standards with reduced quality. PT noted the need to protect the ‘brand’ and not drop the quality standard of awards.</p> <p>The benefit of capturing case studies to summarise different Area Forum approaches and potential models for others to follow – including examples of partnership working such as with university, or wildlife trust support for forums – was noted and this approach will benefit from MF and a new role to support.</p>	
<p>Lobbying and Influencing Policy</p>	
<p>The impact of the Mail on Sunday ‘Save Our Parks’ campaign was noted, including an excellent double page spread about the great work of Friends Groups. This follow up to the work of the PAG and the Charter led to a Government response of £13m pledge to parks improvements. Although a very small measure the provision of any additional funds is welcomed and a measure of some progress. NFPGS press response was widely quoted in the media – it highlighted the scale of the national shortfall requiring around an extra £1 billion per annum of Government funding, ring-fenced for parks.</p> <p>Parks Action Group (PAG)</p> <p>DM noted that this has demonstrated an important progression towards the parks sector working together. The Parks Charter has helped create a focus on real needs and develop additional national links within the sector, and with others like Friends of The Earth, Unison and the Sports and Recreation Alliance.</p> <p>The next challenge for the Friends Groups movement and all those who want to reverse the deteriorating crisis is how to lever in more national government funding at ground level. The PAG Funding Group has reviewed the level of funding need, with a reporting system drilling down into the level of committed resources and need to establish a more accurate picture. There is an alarming reduction in funds since 2010 and a huge shortfall to be addressed.</p> <p>Following lobbying by the NFPGS and other national bodies, the Chair of the Select Committee which undertook the Public Parks Inquiry has written to the Parks Minister to express concern at the lack of progress in carrying out their recommendations. The Minister’s response to Parliament highlighted Govt support for certain PAG and sector projects, including support for community empowerment events and the NFPGS networking post. (This correspondence was included in the agenda pack). But failed to address the key issue – the massive underfunding gap Local Authorities are facing.</p> <p>DM stressed a need to use the Parks Charter to continue to lobby and encourage parks groups to write to politicians for their commitment to green spaces, for more resources and ring fencing of funds.</p> <p>The potential to link to social prescribing and the Government’s 25 year Environmental Plan were also identified.</p>	
<p>Strengthening the Network</p>	

<p>The value of local networking with partner organisations was stressed, and local examples could be used as models to show wider application nationally. The need to collate evidence to support campaigns – from volunteer hours to park impact and benefits was also noted.</p> <p>APSE has prepared a report of a major survey to Local Authorities, including input about local friends groups and Forums (most LAs indicated their support for groups and Forums) and it is to be hoped this 'Nurturing Skills for 21st Century Parks' report will be made available soon.</p> <p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DM provided a brief recap noting that there will be a series of regional community engagement and empowerment events developed by NFPGS (MF) in association with Locality and Groundwork. - Discussion followed about the practical challenges of effective and ongoing local / regional / national networking noting the potential to encourage greater input through Skype, Zoom or other new technology platforms on line. - MW agreed to help progress the NFPGS CIO registration with the Charities Commission. <p>All wished RB well for the forthcoming Marathon to help promote NFPGS and MF agreed to help promote and circulate links for the relevant details to forum contacts.</p>	DM
Date of Next Meeting	
A Trustees and Committee Meeting will be arranged for late June / early July.	All