



Friends of Wimbledon Park

FOWP Executive Committee Position Paper No 1

Barbecues in Wimbledon Park

1) Definition

- a. ¹**Barbecue** is a cooking method and apparatus. While there is a vast degree of variation and overlap in terminology and method surrounding this form of cooking, the generally accepted difference between barbecue and grilling is in the cooking time and type of heat used: grilling is generally done "hot and fast" over direct heat from low-smoke fuels (with the flame contacting the meat itself), while barbecuing is usually done "low and slow" over indirect heat from high-smoke fuels (with the flame not contacting the meat directly).

2) The problem

- a. Many people are careful and do not allow their cooking to burn the grass or leave cooked food waste which is very hard to clean up.
- b. Unfortunately fires are caused by ill supervised barbecues and much damage is caused to parks.
- c. One cannot rely on common sense and responsible usage amongst the whole population of park users unless there is enough staff to monitor use of barbeques across the parks.
- d. So in the interests of park users and in order to maintain our parks to a good standard there is a choice to be made between well regulated barbecue usages or they are banned.

3) Views on BBQ use in parks.

- a. This is a controversial issue countrywide with some Councils supporting well regulated use of BBQs and others simply taking the view they shouldn't be allowed.
- b. Use of gas in parks seems limited although it is common on camping sites.
- c. A selection of views from authorities is included in the Appendix.

4) BBQs in Wimbledon Park

- a. BBQs have been tolerated in Wimbledon Park for many years.
- b. The use of metal structured barbecue frames² in Wimbledon Park during summer 2010 was considered but didn't go ahead.
- c. Gas cooking hasn't been reported as being used.
- d. Most use appears to be the disposable type which sits directly on the grass. Conducted heat from these destroys the grass underneath and once removed a bare patch of earth is exposed which takes a long time to recover.
- e. Short legged BBQ appliances are also seen and the radiated heat from these is likely to scorch the grass beneath the appliance. The grass may recover from this damage.
- f. Larger groups tend to use higher standing BBQ appliances and, used sensibly, cause little fire damage.
- g. BBQs are seen close to Horse Close Wood and there is a small risk that these may cause an uncontrolled fire in the wood. The consequences could be disastrous.
- h. In order to try and control the damage (e.g. tree stumps) caused by careless disposal of hot coals BBQ disposal points were introduced in 2014. These are also used as litter bins. Consequently fires occur inside and there are two hazards that need to be considered:
 - i. Contact burns from touching the hot casing.



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- ii. Flash burns from opening the bin and allowing air ingress to an oxygen starved fire within.

5) Consultation

- a. FOWP carried out a consultation in September and October 2014. It asked whether:
 - i. I would like to see well-regulated BBQ use in Wimbledon Park
 - ii. I am opposed in principle to allowing BBQs in Wimbledon Park
- b. 17 replies were received with roughly half for well regulated and half for a ban.
- c. A comment box was also provided and a selection from these is copied below.
 - i. I think it is a great attraction of the Park that BBQs are permitted.
 - ii. Because the park is one of very few local public spaces that tolerate BBQs, it has caused the park to be over-used during sunny weekends making it unpleasant and smelly for other users.
 - iii. On the whole I think BBQs are not desirable in public places- the smell of food cooking is not something I want to experience whilst walking and enjoy anywhere.
 - iv. I'd ban the on-the-ground-, one-off BBQs as they are very difficult to use responsibly.
 - v. I am opposed in principle to BBQs in WP.
 - vi. I can imagine on the one fine day of summer several families turning up to use the one or two barbecues and find they are already in use.
 - vii. I appreciate people like to eat outside on sunny days but they can always bring a picnic rather than having a BBQ.
 - viii. I think it is unrealistic to ban them altogether
 - ix. How they will cope with the large BBQ groups I do not know.
 - x. It is very sad to see the damage currently caused by BBQs.
 - xi. It would never be possible to control any BBQ activities in WP.

6) Anecdotal evidence

- a. Anecdotal evidence is defined here as good evidence received usually through conversation but not formally recorded.
- b. The maximum number of BBQs seen so far in this park is ten.
- c. Most park officers would prefer their parks to be free of barbecues.
- d. Large groups tend to act responsibly and clearly enjoy the event but these can displace other activities.
- e. A dog owner reported her dog had eaten the remains of a fire lighter which caused illness and large vet bills.
- f. Use of a liquid accelerant was seen by Horse Close Wood.

7) Fireworks & Bonfire night

- a. Two bonfires are held on the same day each year.
- b. It is well attended and is profitable.
- c. It is well regulated and controlled.
- d. Each bonfire destroys the grass but this can then be reseeded.
- e. The benefits out way the damage caused.

8) Comment

- a. Where damage is caused then this should be rectified. This is impractical with disposable and short legged barbecues. The damage is normally restricted to the grass but tree stumps and pieces of equipment can also be damaged by fire. Normally fire spread is limited but if not confined can spread rapidly.
- b. Greenwich highlights the contribution of barbecue smoke to air pollution.



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- c. Provision of BBQ coal bins give rise to two hazards:
 - i. Contact burns
 - ii. Flash burns
- d. Control of BBQs requires staff to ensure responsible behavior and this has a cost.
- e. Provision of BBQ facilities in London parks is limited and websites exist to direct people to locations where these are allowed. Wimbledon Park is not on the list of the websites listed here but if it does get listed then greater numbers can be anticipated using BBQs.
- f. The evidence points towards either fixed BBQ provision with proper facilities and staff control or a ban on BBQs.
- g. Ten fixed BBQ stations would be needed to meet current demand.
- h. BBQs cause fires and if located irresponsibly, such as by a wooden structure or dry undergrowth an uncontrolled fire could occur with consequential severe damage and subsequently incurring huge costs.

9) Conclusion

- a. The risk of injury from fire and unwanted fire damage maybe low but the cost implications of legal liabilities and remedial action could be very high.
- b. In our view disposable BBQs should not be allowed.
- c. The capacity of our park to meet demand is questionable and suggests that charges should be introduced to control demand and defray staff and other costs.
- d. Banning BBQs is cost free although there may be enforcement costs.
- e. A better approach would be to ban BBQs and provide a nice picnic area with trees and seating such as that in King Georges Park.
- f. This addresses the principle of replacing a valued facility with a different but equally valued facility.



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Appendix

10) Councils views on BBQs

a. Tower Hamlets

- i. Having given much consideration to the issue of permitting and controlling barbeques in parks we have decided on a blanket ban across all our parks in **Tower Hamlets**.
- ii. We appreciate this may seem extreme to those people who are careful and do not allow their cooking to burn the grass or leave cooked food waste which is very hard to clean up. Unfortunately however we have had numerous fires caused by ill supervised barbeques and much damage caused to our parks, sadly we cannot rely on common sense and responsible usage amongst the whole population of park users and have nowhere near enough staff to monitor use of barbeques across our parks.
- iii. So in the interests of park users and in order to maintain our parks to a good standard we have had to take a hard line on barbeques. We hope you can appreciate the wider issues involved and thank you for your co-operation.

b. Camden

- i. From 21 July 2014 individuals are welcomed to barbecue in Camden's parks and open spaces for a one year trial so people can enjoy outdoor cooking with their family and friends. Many people living in Camden do not have their own gardens and we want as many people as possible to enjoy our parks over the summer. We will only be allowing portable, reusable charcoal barbecues, disposable or gas barbecues will not be allowed. Full BBQ guidelines and bins for cooled charcoal will be provided in our parks and open spaces where BBQs prove most popular.
- ii. BBQs are not allowed in cemeteries or nature reserves.
- iii. We do not manage Hampstead Heath (www.cityoflondon.gov.uk) or The Regents Park and Primrose Hill (www.royalparks.org.uk) and barbecues are strictly not permitted at these sites.
- iv. We need people to use barbecues responsibly:
 - v. Use BBQs safely and responsibly
 - vi. Take some water to put out the BBQ
 - vii. Be considerate to other people
 - viii. Dispose of all litter properly and recycle your rubbish where possible
 - ix. Keep children, pets, games and sports well away from the BBQ
 - x. If you intend to hold an event with more than 20 people, with promotion, music, sale of food or alcohol please refer to <http://www.camden.gov.uk/events>

c. Greenwich

- i. ³What would summer be without at least a couple of barbecues and (depending on your preferences) some freshly grilled burgers, steaks or a vegetarian alternative. Unfortunately, barbecue smoke, though fragrant to some, isn't particularly healthy to breathe. The smoke contains fine particles that can aggravate your lungs and the lighter fluids contain volatile organic compounds that add to air pollution. This air pollution has been linked to many different illnesses and can worsen chronic heart and lung disease



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- ii. The most common problem with barbecues is complaints from neighbours - as the smoke and smells drift into their gardens, or into their homes. Barbecue smoke can be a legal nuisance, usually if it is very regular and/or if the smoke is very bad. So, to avoid nuisance to your neighbours, please think about these simple tips:-

d. Wandsworth⁴

- i. Special areas have been established in two borough parks as part of a trial allowing people to use disposable barbecues in the open spaces.
- ii. Barbecue stations - large tree trunks with metal plates fixed to the top - have been installed in Wandsworth Park , off Putney Bridge Road, and Fred Wells Gardens , in Battersea, to enable members of the public to use disposable barbecues while outside enjoying the summer sunshine.
- iii. The initiative is due to begin later this week purely on a trial basis to see whether it proves popular with local people. During the trial, disposable barbecues only are permitted to be used on the barbecue stations.
- iv. Three barbecue stations have been installed in Wandsworth Park while Fred Wells Gardens has one.
- v. In all other parks across the borough - and elsewhere in Wandsworth Park and Fred Wells Gardens - a byelaw remains in place prohibiting fires being lit or barbecues being used. Anyone who contravenes this byelaw could be prosecuted and fined.
- vi. Barbecues tend to leave behind a scorched area of grass, which spoils the area for other visitors and creates unnecessary work for the parks service - and there is a risk that some of the bigger 'cook outs' could get out of hand. The barbecue stations have been designed to prevent such problems.
- vii. Wandsworth Council's cabinet member for environment and culture, Councillor Jonathan Cook, said: "Residents have expressed to us a desire to be able to enjoy summer barbeques in our parks and we have duly listened.
- viii. "Having finally had some long-overdue sunshine, and with the Olympics arriving in London, I hope to see people celebrating and enjoying themselves in our open spaces.
- ix. "However, I must urge people using the new barbecue facilities to do so responsibly.
- x. "I would remind them to only use disposable barbecues on the barbecue stations provided and please take any barbecue litter home to dispose of it safely.
- xi. "In past incidents, park-goers have put their hot barbecues in the public litter bins when leaving and this has sparked fires. The result is a lot of flames a lot of smoke and a damaged litter bin that has to be replaced at taxpayers' expense."
- xii. Public notices will be put up at Wandsworth Park and Fred Wells Gardens explaining the trial further.

e. Merton

- i. ⁵**Recommendation 11** (Paragraph 85) We recommend that the Greenspaces Service trials the use of metal structured barbeque frames in Wimbledon Park during summer 2010 so that residents can continue to enjoy barbeques without the attendant litter and damage to the grass.



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- 11) <http://londonist.com/2014/04/where-to-barbecue-in-london-parks.php>
- a. Few of us in London are lucky enough to have gardens, so if we fancy a barbecue then we need to be more creative about where to hold it. While pesky by-laws banning the barbecue in most green spaces across the capital don't seem to stop everyone, finding somewhere legit to light-up is no mean feat.
 - b. Here's some inspiration on where to sizzle those sausages in the form of a few parks (mostly in Islington) where barbecuing is allowed, at least in designated areas. We wish there were more.
 - c. We're sure there are some privately owned spots around London where barbecuing is just fine. If you know of any, please let us know in the comments below and we'll add them to the list.
 - d. **Islington**
 - e. Currently the only council in London to have [lifted its blanket barbecue ban](#), any green space in Islington is fair game for firing up — so long as you do so responsibly. These are a few of the best spots.
 - f. **Highbury Fields**
Mere minutes from Highbury & Islington station, this tree-lined 29 acre park has swimming and fitness facilities, an orchard and a children's play area complete with sandpits to entertain, as well as the option of a barbecue.
 - g. **Caledonian Park**
Complete with basketball court, woodland areas, this [Darwin Trail](#) and a Grade II listed clocktower, there's plenty to see in this park near Caledonian Road station. In between eating your sausages, of course.
 - h. **Gillespie Park**
Large, bridged ponds and overgrown grass make this park in the shadow of Arsenal football stadium feel much more rural than it is. Parts of it are a designated nature reserve, so be careful where you light up.
 - i. **Hackney**
 - j. **London Fields**
A large swathe of these ever-busy fields towards the Broadway Market end are designated as barbecue-friendly. There's even a [handy map](#) to show you exactly where.
 - k. **Southwark**
 - l. **Burgess Park**
There are eight purpose-built barbecues and 10 more spots for disposable ones built around the picturesque fishing lake of this Camberwell park, and the area can get a communal smoky buzz of a sunny day.
 - m. **Sutton**
 - n. **Beddington Park**
The park contains a number of barbecue stands in a specially designated area close to the cafe. Thanks to @LondonWebMaps for the tip.
 - o. **Wandsworth**
 - p. **Fred Wells Gardens**
Not far from Clapham Junction station, between Battersea and Wandsworth bridges, is this tucked-away lesser-known park not far off the Thames. As of 2012, it gained a designated area where you can use your disposable barbecues.
 - q. **Wandsworth Park**
Set right on the Putney riverside, this large open park was given a designated



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barbecue area at the same time, and is an ideal spot for grilling some fish by the water. Given the Thames is tidal here, it's practically the sea, right?

12) Advice on BBQ use

- a. In order to assess the risks from BBQs advice should be sought. That from the London Fire Brigade is pertinent in part.

13) London Fire Brigade-Barbecue safety

a. All you need to know to barbecue safely

- i. When the sun comes out or it's dry for a while, Londoners love to fire up their barbecues and cook outdoors.
- ii. Marinating your chicken and making sure your sausages don't burn isn't the only thing you need to be thinking about. If you follow our tips you'll be able to barbecue safely until your heart's content.

b. What chefs need to know

- i. Never use a barbecue indoors or on a balcony
- ii. Make sure barbecues are placed on level ground where they will not tip over
- iii. Keep barbecues away from your home, sheds, fences, garden furniture, trees, shrubs and tents
- iv. Don't drink too much alcohol if you are in charge of the barbecue
- v. Don't put the barbecue where people have to squeeze past it
- vi. Keep children, pets and garden games well away from the cooking area
- vii. Never leave the barbecue unattended
- viii. Follow the safety instructions provided with disposable barbecues
- ix. Only use approved barbecue fuel or fire lighters - never use petrol or paraffin

c. After you've cooked

- i. When you have finished cooking, make sure the barbecue is cool before you try to move it
- ii. Empty the cold ash onto bare garden soil – never put it in the dustbin
- iii. Where possible, keep a bucket of water, sand or a garden hose nearby for emergencies

d. Tips for gas barbecues

- i. Take extra care when turning bottled gas barbecues on and off
- ii. Make sure the controls and the gas cylinder valve are turned off before you change the cylinder
- iii. Make sure all joints are tightened, safe and secure
- iv. Change the gas cylinder in the open air
- v. When you have finished cooking, turn off the gas cylinder before the barbecue controls; this makes sure any leftover gas in the pipe is used up
- vi. Store your gas cylinders outside and protected from frost and sunlight
- vii. Never store gas cylinders under the stairs- if there is a fire they might explode and block your escape route
- viii. If you think there might be a leak in the gas cylinder connections or pipe, brush soapy water over all of the joints and watch out for bubbles



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- ix. If you have a leaky joint, try to tighten it (but don't over tighten it) and test for bubbles again. If unsure do not use the barbecue – seek specialist advice

References

¹ Wikipedia

² Report and recommendations arising from the scrutiny task group review of parks and open spaces in Merton. March 2010.

³ Air Quality-Have a nice barbecue, Environmental Protection Team, London Borough of Greenwich

⁴ Release date: Monday 30th July 12 (Wandsworth)

⁵ Report and recommendations arising from the scrutiny task group review of parks and open spaces in Merton. March 2010.