



Friends of Wimbledon Park

Annual Report 2015 (covering the period April 2014 to March 2015)

Heritage Lottery Fund

During the year we met Michael Murray from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) who said Wimbledon Park was an interesting and historic park, which perhaps should be on the English Heritage At Risk register. He gave us detailed advice as to how proceed with project. This included: "A project would need to be a partnership bid with all the operators/land owners of the park and the Friends to be truly effective in sustaining the level of changes needed for the park".

We also met with Zosia Mellor from English Heritage and she is supportive of our approach.

We've been encouraged by responses from Richard Lewis (Chief Executive, AELTC), Clare Wood (Director, The Wimbledon Club) and Wandsworth Council, which has provided a named officer. This means the project can proceed subject to support from Merton Council.

The complicated nature of Wimbledon Park and its location is likely to mean that Merton Council will need time to formulate their response. However we can undertake to do work so that their involvement is limited to a project officer. This would be a major challenge for our volunteers and would include fund raising.

A key first step would be a survey of the condition of the lake.

Capability Brown tercentenary 2016

We now have widespread community support for our involvement in this tercentenary and plan to set up a subcommittee to lead on this once we receive official support from Merton Council.

Biodiversity strategy

A strong biodiversity element could contribute significantly to the strength of an HLF bid. This should include learning and community participation. We are putting together a biodiversity management plan for Horse Close Wood, and a consultation on this will be launched at our AGM. The finished plan will form part of the biodiversity strategy for the whole park.

Gardening group

Horticultural improvements to the park with community involvement would also help support an HLF bid. We're liaising with Tom Kilduff and Martin Cowdroy (park officers) to agree a gardening programme.

Green Flag Award

The objective of the Green Flag Award scheme is to encourage the provision of good quality public parks and green spaces that are managed in environmentally sustainable ways. We intend to work with the park officers to work towards the attainment of this award. Points that we need to keep in mind include:

- Proper thought is given to how children, including the often neglected 10-16 age group, may enjoy the green space.
- Walking is vital to reducing heart disease and to reducing health threatening obesity, particularly in young people.
- All types of horticultural wastes should be composted for use as a replacement for peat based products. Brushwood should be chipped and used as mulch.
- Many local conservation groups have been involved in the management of streams and other ecological areas within parks and other green spaces.
- The principles of an environmental management system are being followed.
- Herbicide use should be very circumspect and fully justified.



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- Community groups need to be in active partnership with park management.

Understanding Wimbledon Park

We spent quite a lot of time researching the public park's assets and finances and we're currently looking at the ownership of the whole park. This together with the biodiversity strategy will give us a greater understanding of what matters and why. This will help guide the implementation of the conservation management plan.

English Heritage

We mustn't forget that this is a Grade II* Heritage Park and restoration with agreement from the owners is a priority or the listed status could be at risk!

Last year our priority programmes were:

- Wimbledon Club and the stadium.** The planning application was expected last August but there have been delays. This has meant we can't properly discuss the proposals
- Revelstoke Road.** The 20 mph zone consultation has commenced on the Wandsworth side and if supported will be extended to the Merton side. Improving the ambience to both sides of the entrance to the park proposals should be considered in Merton Council's forthcoming masterplan for the park.
- Trees.** The Horse Close wood consultation commences at our AGM. It's hoped we can make progress to protect trees throughout the whole park in due course.

FOWP Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) continued to improve its knowledge and expertise. Mary Buckley isn't standing for reappointment at our AGM

- Mary had a big input into our Capability Brown tercentenary deliberations. Thank you Mary.

Cllr Kim Caddy leaves the EC and becomes ex officio of the FOWP Committee where she'll continue to help with environmental tasks.

There are four wards surrounding the park. To provide further free flow of information 11 of the 12 councillors are ex officio members of the FOWP Committee. We hope the remaining one will join in due course. Richard Tracey GLA member for Merton and Wandsworth remains an ex officio member.

Dave Dawson (environment and ecology adviser) and Brian Lehane and Dean Humphries (angling advisers) are also ex officio members of the FOWP Committee. Paul McCue (officer from Wandsworth Council) is ex officio and will help liaison between the two boroughs.

Helen Parker is the Community Officer for AELTC. Although not part of the FOWP Committee she is kept up to date with developments and we meet from time to time.

We're pleased that the Rt Hon Justine Greening (MP for Putney) and Stephen Hammond (MP for Merton) have again agreed to be Honorary Friends of FOWP.

We continue to liaise with park officers both formally and informally. These interactions will become more important as community involvement in the park increases. From the start Doug Napier has been a regular attendee at our quarterly meetings and this is appreciated

We communicate directly with our members and through the corporate member or website to associates. Our website <http://www.friendsofwimbledonpark.org.uk> provides the opportunity to join as members.



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Looking ahead

It's worth looking at the proposal for the stadium from The Wimbledon Club in more detail. The delay is unfortunate as it leaves discussion in limbo. David Johnson (Chairman, The Wimbledon Club) wrote to Stephen Alambritis (Leader, Merton Council) on 19th March 2013 outlining their proposal for hockey in the stadium and the sharing of facilities with the Hercules Wimbledon Athletics Club. His letter included:

- a. I would like to emphasise at the outset that we are not looking for either ownership or exclusive use of such a facility. We believe that it could be the catalyst for a significant improvement in the sports offering to a very wide range, including local schools and disabled sportsmen and women.
- b. This is a significant and expensive project and it is impractical to cover all its ramifications at this point. We are convinced that it is deliverable and can be delivered in such a form that all stakeholders will benefit, including many who currently make no use of the Athletics Stadium facilities at all.
- c. The Wimbledon Club, through its management, full and part-time staff and hockey coaching staff, would undertake to be part of the management structure of the Stadium's activities in order to ensure their success. We would also expect to play a major part in the delivery of the project.

Stephen Alambritis wrote back 'to encourage you to move on to the next stage of your plans'.

As well as providing extra income this presents opportunities for improvements on a much wider scale. These include:

- a. Relocating the water sports building to one merged with the new stadium so making use of shared toilets, changing rooms etc; with the possibility of a café overlooking the lake.
- b. A boardwalk could run across the lake without interfering with water sports. This would provide access between the stadium and The Wimbledon Club and also could be open to walkers from the public park through to Church Road.
- c. Acting as a catalyst for further discussion amongst the owners regarding the lake and landscapes and habitat action plans.

Further cuts are on their way and one consequence is that Merton Council is seeking the joint procurement of an outside contractor for the maintenance of parks and green spaces with the London Borough of Sutton. This has the potential to deliver substantial savings through economies of scale. We'll keep abreast of developments and how they'll affect Wimbledon Park.

As we said last year the regeneration of Wimbledon Park is a daunting challenge but if we all work together we should end up with a magnificent place that our grandchildren will cherish.

Nick Steiner
Chairman FOWP
March 2015