



Friends of Wimbledon Park

Annual Report 2016

(Covering the period April 2015 to March 2016)

Master Plan for Wimbledon Park (the Grade II*Heritage park 61 ha, not just the public park)

Since formation we've focused on a Conservation Management Plan for whole Wimbledon Park Heritage area. This can be described as follows:

- **'In caring for, or managing change in, historic parks, there are often many features, historic layers and diverse interests like biodiversity to consider as well as the business and economic viability of the park. Conservation management plans have been developed as tools to help pull together an understanding of what matters and why, and how to conserve and manage it. From this informed basis, plans are then used to guide programmes of restoration or to draw up proposals for improvement¹'.**

We've discussed this with the owners, users and admirers of our Heritage landscape to develop this concept. We're now at the point where a Master Plan for the whole Heritage Area should be feasible. Unfortunately LB Merton decided to brief consultants to produce a Master Plan for the public park rather than the whole Heritage Area.

Having met both English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, we were concerned at their identifying the heritage status of Wimbledon Park 'as likely to be at risk'. We should be able to work on a project that resulted in a unified management and maintenance plan for the whole site based on a whole park approach, or master plan. Having defined the overall master plan, work consistent with it could then be done in phases.

We met Cllr Stephen Alambritis (leader Merton Council, Labour) on the 22nd September together with Cllr Oonagh Moulton (leader of Merton Conservatives). This was in response to Merton's tender document for their Masterplan. We made a presentation of about two hours. The purpose was to explain the benefits to all from The Wimbledon Club's stadium proposal and the need to treat the Heritage park as a whole when writing a Master Plan. The Heritage Lottery Fund would assist and guide, and projects could be phased in whilst conforming to the overall Master Plan. In spite of all this, neither the Friends' nor The Wimbledon Club's proposals were included in the brief.

Extract from Merton's reply: *'We have instructed our consultants to plan for our area within the wider landscape which will include the railway line and local streets as well as the neighbouring green spaces. I am not proposing to change the brief in any way as that is what we tendered and that is what the consultants have been appointed to do, but I do think that there is opportunity for you to shape what is best in what locations etc. by working with our consultants sharing your ideas and thoughts, listening to their suggestions and others etc.'*

Therefore this is likely to be a significant year for the Wimbledon Park Heritage landscape. We have engaged with the consultants and will continue to do so when the opportunity arises. We're also consulting widely on the possibility of setting up a Wimbledon Park Community Trust.

Another unknown is the effect of the outsourcing of parks maintenance on Wimbledon Park.

Capability Brown Tercentenary 2016

This is progressing well with 1000 trees planted by over a hundred volunteers over 3 days in Horse Close Wood in February 2016. We were very grateful for the help and guidance given by Jane Plant and her Merton Tree Wardens (all volunteers) and also the assistance from Dave Lofthouse (Merton Tree Officer) and other park officers in dealing with site preparation and other difficulties.

Unveiling of plaques at the five entrances to Wimbledon Park is scheduled for Saturday 13th August 2016. More details of this event will follow but we anticipate that the walk will start at the



Friends of Wimbledon Park

Wimbledon Park Road entrance and follow a clockwise route with the fifth unveiling at The Wimbledon Club.

Biodiversity strategy

A strong biodiversity element could contribute significantly to the strength of an Heritage Lottery Fund bid. This should include learning and community participation. A management plan for Horse Close Wood (one of the biodiversity highlights) has been completed. We are currently working on a biodiversity strategy for the whole park. A draft report on this is available for comments.

Educational opportunities.

Wimbledon Park has a wealth of assets and some of these are ideal to be used in school projects. Discussions are underway with St Cecilia's School. The park is suitable for projects towards the Duke of Edinburgh award.

Good news is that **Revelstoke Road** is now part of the 20 mph zone.

FOWP Forum

- The Executive Committee (EC) continued to improve its knowledge and expertise. Tony Borkowski joined during the year, otherwise the Executive Committee remains unchanged.
- There are four London Borough Council wards surrounding the park. To provide further free flow of information 11 of the 12 councillors are ex officio members of the FOWP Forum. We hope the remaining one will join in due course.
- Richard Tracey, GLA member for Merton and Wandsworth remains an ex officio member. He isn't standing for re-election in May so now is an opportune moment to thank him for his interest in the park and the help he has given us.
- Dave Dawson (environment and ecology adviser) and Brian Lehane and Dean Humphries (angling advisers) are also ex officio members of the FOWP Forum.
- Paul McCue (officer from Wandsworth Council) is ex officio and will help liaison between the two boroughs.
- Ulrika Hogberg is the Community Officer for All England Lawn Tennis Club. Although not part of the FOWP Forum 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

A word on associate membership

Under our constitution, we have a membership category called 'associate membership'. This includes: individuals in an organisation which joins as a corporate member; park officers; and members of the three local residents' associations (Southfields Grid, Wimbledon Park and Wimbledon House). We would be delighted if associate members would consider upgrading to full membership, which will entitle you to a vote at our AGM and to receiving our quarterly email newsletter. You can find out how to join by visiting our newly redesigned website <http://www.friendsofwimbledonpark.org.uk>

The regeneration of Wimbledon Park is a 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 2016

¹ Similar definitions can be found on Heritage Lottery Fund & English Heritage websites.