



# The Friends of Cator Park & Alexandra Recreation Ground Annual General Meeting 2023 Minutes

7pm - 9pm - Wednesday 15 November 2023  
West Beckenham Bowls Club, Alexandra Road

1	<p><b>Present</b></p> <p><b>Friends Committee:</b> Millie Knights (Chair, MK); Gill Cawdron (Secretary, GC); Tali Emdin (Treasurer, TE); Gareth Parker (GP); Siobhan Caswall (SC); Colin Naphthine (CN); Claudia Rios (CR) Lou Thompson (LT)</p> <p><b>Apologies received:</b> None</p> <p><b>Members:</b> Helen Parker, Sandra Honeysett, Sarah Tucker Ian Jerome, Sue Jerome, Jenny Naphthine (JN); Merryn Fergusson; Mat Knights, Chris &amp; Lesley O'Shaughnessy; Kevin Kennedy Brooks, Jon Caswell, Jenny Czezowski, Paul Curran.</p> <p><b>Guests:</b> Anita Zambaldo (AZ) <i>idverde</i> Community Parks Manager. Julia Grollman, Riverfly Monitoring Project Anna Taylor, CPRE, Chris Trantum,</p> <p>The Chair, Millie Knights, welcomed everyone to the 2023 AGM, and thanked LT, GC &amp; SJ for providing refreshments and the Bowls Club for the use of the clubhouse.</p>
2	<p><b>Minutes of the 2022 AGM on 17 November 2022.</b> These were accepted as a true record of the meeting – Proposed by LT and seconded by Sue Jerome</p>
3	<p><b>Introduction</b> MK reminded everyone of the purpose of the Friends – to preserve and enhance what is in our parks for the enjoyment of all, in partnership with <i>idverde</i> and LBB. 2023 has been our 15<sup>th</sup> year and it was good to see the Founding Chair, Chris O'Shaughnessy, at the AGM tonight. MK also thanked Anita Zambaldo, our <i>idverde</i> Community Manager, for all the enthusiasm, input and impact she has made in her first year here. The Friends group is made up of volunteers who undertake a wide variety of tasks – planting; weeding; guided park walks; fundraising events; flora &amp;</p>

	fauna surveys; painting; litter picking etc. and MK thanked everyone for their enormous effort. We also work in the parks with other groups such as Good Gym and Gambling Rehabilitation charities.																				
4	<p><b>Financial Report</b></p> <p>Tali Emden briefly summarised our financial position for the financial year 1/10/22 to 30/9/23. We have a healthy bank balance and spend the money we raise in the parks. Our opening balance was £7,841 and closing balance £6,990 so our expenditure over the year was slightly higher than our income. Our income mainly arises from fundraising events – our smaller events (Easter, Carols) typically raise £400 and our larger ones (Paws, Music, Pride) raise £1000 - £2000. TE thanked all those who generously donated raffle prizes, baked cakes and give up their time to run stalls etc. As Paws in the Park (PITP) had to be delayed due to the heatwave, much of the expenditure fell in 22/23 while the income was generated in 23/24. Holding PITP in late October had also seen a reduction in footfall by c50%. Our other source of income this year has been a GoFundMe appeal to raise money for a memorial bench, Tree and defibrillators in both parks in the name of Chris Richardson, past committee member and volunteer.</p>																				
5	<p><b>Election of Committee &amp; Officers</b></p> <p>MK had circulated information regarding the various activities undertaken by committee members, demonstrating the many ways in which people can be involved. We have had two people come forward – one to lead on social media support and another on membership which is very welcome.</p> <p>Four members of the Committee (CN, SC, LT &amp; GC) are stepping down this year after a combined length of service of over 12 years, so this leaves us with vacancies on the committee -please do think about joining us!</p> <p>Our constitution requires all Committee Members to put themselves up for re-election each year:</p> <p>2023 -24 re-election</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Name</b></th> <th><b>Role</b></th> <th><b>Proposed</b></th> <th><b>Seconded</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Millie Knights</td> <td>Chair</td> <td>GP</td> <td>LT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tali Emdin</td> <td>Treasurer</td> <td>LT</td> <td>GC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gareth Parker</td> <td>Member</td> <td>TE</td> <td>JN</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Claudia Rios</td> <td>Member</td> <td>MK</td> <td>TE</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>MK thanked the retiring Committee members for their hard work and presented them with plants.</p>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Seconded</b>	Millie Knights	Chair	GP	LT	Tali Emdin	Treasurer	LT	GC	Gareth Parker	Member	TE	JN	Claudia Rios	Member	MK	TE
<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Seconded</b>																		
Millie Knights	Chair	GP	LT																		
Tali Emdin	Treasurer	LT	GC																		
Gareth Parker	Member	TE	JN																		
Claudia Rios	Member	MK	TE																		
6	<p><b>Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (RMI)</b></p> <p>MK introduced our first speaker - Julia Grollman, coordinator of the Ravensbourne RMI (R RMI)</p> <p>Leaves falling and sinking to the riverbed are the basis of the food chain supporting life in our rivers. The RMI is a nationwide project started in the</p>																				

early 2000s by a Natural History Museum ecologist who asked anglers for their help in monitoring the health of rivers. More aquatic life means more fish! There are many parameters that could be measured but the Ravensbourne RMI samples invertebrate numbers in the riverbed. The Ravensbourne catchment area demonstrates its largely urban environment, and this is likely to cause a reduction in river health. The RMI started in June 2016, originally with only six sites – Sutcliffe Park; Manor Park; Linear Park; Beckenham Place Park; Ladywell and Brooke Mill Parks, covering some of the tributaries (Quaggy & Pool rivers) of the Ravensbourne. This year has seen the recruitment of four new sampling sites (including us). The sites have to satisfy certain criteria, including accessibility! The RMI sites now cover the whole catchment area. Any visible pollution breach is reported to the Environment Agency.

The sampling process - we do a 'kick sample' – using a flat-bottomed net and sample tray, scuffing up the riverbed above the net for three x one-minute samples. As the survey is nationwide, only some of the survey invertebrates are found here – typically we are measuring numbers of Gammarus (freshwater shrimp); Olives (Mayfly larvae) and Caddisfly larvae. For each sample the numbers of each type seen are counted/estimated – 1-9; 10 – 99 & 100 onwards. These data, along with information regarding weather conditions, date, time and a photograph up and downstream are recorded and sent in each month. The central database is available to environmental professionals. At least six other London rivers including the Wandle have an RMI so we are in good company and providing important and nationally useful information.

Member Jon Caswell expressed an interest in joining the monitoring team

**7 Biodiversity Surveys in our Parks**

Ian Jerome explained the importance of undertake biodiversity surveying in both parks so that we can measure the impacts on pollution, damage to the biodiversity and the effects of any interventions we make to try to improve the environment such as the butterfly scrape, tiny forest and mixed hedgerow projects. Monitoring responsibility is included in our constitution.

The three types of survey we have formally commenced this year are: Butterflies (Apr – Sept); Bats & Flora – we would like to add Birds to the list. We have been helped by idverde staff with identifying butterflies & trees, and Dr Judith John undertook a flora survey in Cator Pak for us. This was in eight diverse (by ecological type) sections, with 16 different species being the most found in any one sector.

The butterfly survey makes use of an ID app (IRecord) which feeds into a national database and helps with ID. We spend 15mins pcm on a warm sunny day recording the largest number of any one species seen in our three sites – CP woodland NW corner; CP butterfly scrape and AR orchard

	<p>area. This year we have seen Meadow Brown; Skipper; Red Admiral and Common Blue butterflies.</p> <p>We are particularly keen to create a baseline and annual survey of AR to add to the information regarding the biodiversity impact of our 100m mixed hedgerow planted this year.</p> <p>We do the annual RSPB birdwatch in January but would like to do more. Jonathan Lynch (idverde bird expert) has encouraged the use of the Merlin app to aid our bird id skills.</p> <p>Bats: 2022 saw two bat boxes installed in Cator Park (CP) and in 2023 we have had two installed in Alexandra Recreation Ground (ARG). No bats are using them yet, although our bat walks do detect bats in both parks.</p> <p>MK thanked both Julia and Ian for their interesting talks and encouraged everyone to volunteer to participate in the surveying.</p>
8	<p><b>Tiny Forest Project Update</b></p> <p>MK gave an update: There are 210 Tiny Forest sites in the UK so far. Our nearest is in Ladywell Park. London Borough of Bromley (LBB) are keen to have one at least. The positive impacts include: Decreased flood risk &amp; global warming; increased biodiversity, CO2 capture and public engagement in green spaces.</p> <p>A Tiny Forest comprises 600 native trees (of 25 different types) and shrubs covering the area the size of a tennis court (although it can be any shape). Significant groundwork is undertaken in advance, including digging to a depth of 1 metre. The saplings are planted densely to accelerate development and the maintenance is watering, weeding and monitoring in years 1 &amp; 2 and from then on they are largely self-supporting. The Tiny Forest provides an accessible green space with the options for a pathway and an open air classroom area where local schools and other groups can study growth etc, participating in a national Citizen Science Project for the Tiny Forest project.</p> <p>The Friends are working with LBB, idverde and Earthwatch to create a Tiny Forest at the Lennard Rd end of Cator Park. Planting Day will see 100 volunteers each plant six saplings. Some of these volunteers will become treekeepers and monitors, helping to maintain the Tiny Forest through its early years.</p> <p>A standard Tiny Forest installation costs £32,000. Ours requires an additional £4000 watering system, so we need to raise £36,000. A small Tiny Forest Committee (Councillor Simon Jeal, Graham Walder, Ju Owens and Millie Knights) has worked with LBB to make an application to Veolia for £25k. And concurrently undertook an extraordinary fundraising programme– raising nearly £32,000 in 40 days to take advantage of matched funding opportunities via an Aviva campaign. We've held a quiz, Lucky Squares competition, sold homemade mulled wine at the Maple road market, Southey Beer brewed a Tiny Forest beer with 50p donation per pint sold, a Halloween Ghost &amp; Bat hunt and undertook a social media and door to</p>

	<p>door fundraising campaign . The energy of the Committee has been remarkable. Planting will be on Saturday February 24<sup>th</sup> and all are welcome.</p>
9	<p><b>Cator Woodland Update</b></p> <p>Anna Taylor (CPRE) gave a brief update. Anna started by stressing the importance of standing up for threatened green spaces. CPRE have been pressing for maximum fines (in the range of £250,000) for breaching Tree Preservation Orders to serve as an example. CPRE also want to see the land reclassified. The area has been used by the public for over 20 years. The current leaseholder has owned it for 15 years and, as they breached the TPO have been ordered by the Council to replant the area with c2m high trees (i.e not replacing 20-year-old trees with whips) but have not done so. It is possible that this will force the owner into a “distress sale” to meet the costs and we would need a philanthropist to buy it for the community.</p> <p>Councillor Kevin Kennedy-Brooks gave an insight into the formal processes – the TPO is now permanent. The owners applied for the TPO to be removed but were unanimously refused. The TPO might well decrease the land value to the owner who claimed an historical sporting use was being reinstated, but failed to apply for planning permission, which would probably have been refused anyway. The owner has taken no action to meet the Council's replanting stipulation to date so the Council will now probably undertake this. This is actually quite helpful as the Council contractors will do it properly and charge the landowner. Unfortunately, the Council has no ongoing maintenance responsibility as the land is privately owned. MK asked KK-B to investigate with LBB how this will work in practice as clearly there is no point replanting and then there being no ongoing care, particularly in the early stages.</p>
10	<p><b>Highlights of this year in the Parks and plans for 2024</b></p> <p>MK summarized some of the highlights of our year (see slides for more detail). These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARG Hedgerow planting and maintenance – made possible by a £2800 grant from CPRE &amp; tree Donations from the Woodlands Trust &amp; TCV</li> <li>• Park Bathe walks –10 have been done so far</li> <li>• Spring bulb planting in both parks</li> <li>• Bench installation &amp; refurbishment – three rainbow benches in ARG, seven memorial benches and three Friends benches.</li> <li>• The Chris Richardson memorial bench has been installed on CP and a plum tree ordered for ARG fruit orchard.</li> <li>• The defibrillator installations are now with idverde to overcome some practical difficulties.</li> <li>• Watering over the very hot prolonged summer – thanks to <i>idverde</i> for securing us an outside tap in ARG which has been invaluable</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thursday Group – 2-4pm every Thursday in one or other park. This has seen a definite uplift in both parks with over 414 hours of gardening work.</li> <li>• Jubilee Grant award – Permanent dog agility equipment installed in CP and play site in ARG. The play site in ARG had cost significantly more than expected so the Friends had contributed a further £3.5k to facilitate installation of a permanent table tennis table in ARG.</li> <li>• We held very successful events – Easter, Pride Picnic, Music and Paws in the Park and have Carols in the Park (AR) on 10 December which will see the Bowls Club Bar open and a collection for Living Well.</li> <li>• The year closes with our traditional Santa Paws Walk.</li> <li>• 2024 gardening dates are on our website</li> </ul>
11	<p><b>Vote of thanks</b></p> <p>Everyone present joined in thanking Millie for her energy and commitment throughout the year.</p>
	<p>The meeting closed at 9pm</p>