

Friends of Blythe Hill Fields

Review of 2015/16



This year has been very productive, in terms of park improvements, partnership working and increase in awareness and involvement from local residents.

Park improvements: Eight fox proof bins have been installed, a real team effort between the friends, Glendale, and support from Crofton Park ward assembly that addressed a serious issue in the fields. Two new benches were also ordered, one now installed and the second in due course.

Festival: Despite the worst weather in the build-up ever recorded was well attended and ran just about smoothly. I loved the fact that during the two spells of heavy rain, people just ran for cover, and came back out to continue to enjoy themselves rather than head home. The new approaches to the reduced funfair and redesigned friends tent also worked well. Dave will update on the figures. A big thank you to all involved especially new recruits including Alex who did an excellent job with the raffle having not attended the festival previously. Also thanks to our sponsors, whom are essential to keeping the festival afloat.

User survey: this was the first survey undertaken for some years and was down to the hard work of Ellie. The survey stands us in good stead for demonstrating the local support for park improvements. Further updates from Ellie.

People and wildlife: new trees were planted, a stag beetle loggery was built in the December cold when we also held our first carol singing event that even warmed the heart of the Christmas humbug that I am. It really brought everyone together at a time when the fields are generally quiet. There was also a bat walk and a number of community meet ups to help establish some barrier between Glendale's mowers and the hedgerows. The Friends also took part in the government's consultation on the future of London parks, such as the fields and their importance to community and biodiversity. Also we must not forget the cohort of tree adopters, and all-round waterers who planted them and kept them going through a very wet, then very dry summer. Thanks to Zaria for co-ordinating and leading on all the people and wildlife aspects.

Filming: the Fields continue to be a popular choice for promo and advertisement makers, this drew a lot of interest on our Facebook page and also added to the coffers as for each item of filming we were able to secure a donation.

The trim trail: I see this being used more and more as the year has progressed, and the fields are often a hub of activity most mornings and evenings as people come to the park to use it and enjoy the views.

Partnership working: it was great to have our first LBL representative at our last meeting, Peter Maynard. (organised by Ellie, thank you) and an update from the walkabout will follow. As funding is cut it's never been more vital to seek and maintain relationships with the management of our park and help us stand out from all the other friends groups and user groups in the borough.

Member ship: We were joined at the last AGM by a new treasurer, Dave Lowry, whom has taken on the role with much enthusiasm and is trusted with all our financial dealings. A big thank you to Marcel for his previous work in this role and the handover support he continued to provide.

2016 also saw the revision of our constitution, where we looked at our purpose and structure. The revisions at time of writing were being prepared for presentation and vote in at the next meeting and should be in place late 2016. It can be found on our website.

We have 456 members on our Facebook page. Our online mailing list which signifies membership of the group also has a healthy 417 members up from 390 in 2014/15. We also have 336 followers on Twitter. If you are not connected up and following us it's the best way to find out information and support what we do.

We have seen several new faces over the last year, whether people new to the area, regular festival attendees wishing to assist more or those with an interest in trees and ecology. It's not always easy to commit with the pressures of modern life and we always need new members but I feel that we are steadily moving in the right direction.

Thanks to all involved and here's to a successful 2016/17.

James Cross
Chair
October 2016