

# FR IENDS OF BLYTHE HILL FIELDS

## MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING 12 February 2015

Meeting held 12 February 2015 at 7.30 pm at the Honor Oak

action

**Present** : James Cross, Chair (JC), Nicholas Taylor, Secretary (NT), Gavin Bolam (GB), Cathy Ashley (CA), Alan Bailey, Anne Scott, John Tookey, Fionna Gibb, Judith Hendley (JH), Brigid Macleod (BM), Martin Moss (MM)

**Apologies** : Marcel Jenkins (MJ), Hugh Brown (HB), Zaria Greenhill (ZG), Jim Smith (JS), Ellie Rogers (ER), Sydney Couldridge (SC), Leo Stevens (LS),

1. **Welcome by outgoing Chair** : NT welcomed another good attendance (which included another new member, Martin Moss). He explained he would take the Chair only for this item and the election of the new Chair.

2. **Election of Officers** :

(a) Election of Chair : James Cross was moved, seconded and unanimously elected.

(b) Election of Secretary : Nicholas Taylor was moved, seconded and unanimously elected.

(c) Festival Organiser : NT indicated that, in the wake of Hugh Brown's resignation, collective action would be needed, co-ordinated by the Secretary. GB pointed out that last year's introduction of a Festival Sub-Committee to deal with detailed matters had been very successful.

(d) Minutes Secretary : NT stated that his acceptance of the Secretaryship, given the need to co-ordinate the Festival, was dependent on the recruitment of someone to take the Minutes of meetings. He appealed for a volunteer and, as no one responded, it was agreed that for the time being the task would be shared between those who attended.

NT

3. **Minutes of General Meetings and matters arising** :

(a) Minutes of meeting held on 13 November 2014 (the Annual General Meeting). The Minutes, prepared by the previous Secretary, were circulated and approved.

(b) Minutes of meeting held on 29 January 2015 : NT said he had not yet done any Minutes, but would present along with those of the current meeting. It had been a single-issue meeting, the one item on the agenda being the future of the Festival and the ability of the Friends to secure sufficient new support to run it. The only decision taken was a unanimous vote to hold this year's Festival on 4 July. Other discussion led to the proposals for elections to officer posts contained in Item 2 above.

(c) Matters Arising : a question was asked about the missing figure in the AGM Minutes of the accumulated surplus on the accounts. NT said the surplus of £6,577 at October 2013, resulting from seven years of successful Festivals, had been reduced to £5,518 at October 2014, as a result of the deficit of £1,059 in 2013-14. NT agreed to re-circulate the Statement of Income & Expenditure 2013-14 presented to the AGM.

NT

#### 4. 2015 Festival - review of Festival Plan

**action**

A copy of Hugh Brown's Festival Plan 2014 was circulated. Although HB himself was unable to attend - nor were LS or MJ - a very full discussion of the Plan ensued, in which the following points were made :

##### (a) Finance & Funding

1. Grants : NT reported that two of the three grants totaling £1250 for the 2014 Festival had been approved again : £500 from the Ward Assembly and £250 from Catford Rotary (who would be given a free stall in return). The remaining £500 was expected from Sebastian Roche's sponsorship (to be negotiated later - NT volunteered for this). **NT**
2. Stallholders : NT welcomed an offer from LS to deal with the letting of pitches, but he needed to know asap what the charges would be. It was pointed out by FG that stallholders at Brockley Christmas Market were charged £50. **Decided** that raised charges suggested on the Agenda should be amended upwards : for standard stalls from last year's £25 to £40, for food stalls from £60 to £75, and for the Babur from £300 to £350. **LS**
3. Raffle : GB and BM agreed to organize this on basis of high quality prizes, so that tickets could be £2 each and books £10. Local shops and businesses to be canvassed for prizes. **GB/BM/JC**
4. Sale of Alcohol : Following the discussion at the meeting on 29 January about the possible lifting of the previous ban on the sale of alcohol, **Decided** that the sale of alcohol should be permitted, on the basis of a strictly controlled franchise in a single tent, carefully located. An approach would be made to the Blythe Hill Tavern, who would sell a variety of beers and ciders - whereas the Brockley Brewery might be too biased towards their own brew. There would be issues in relation to the Council's Food & Alcohol Licence and to the extra policing and stewarding required. **JC**

##### (b) Health & Safety

1. First Aider : Required in place of Jo Ireland. **Decided** that Kathy Cruise be approached. **JC**
2. Refuse and Insurance : costs to be confirmed with Sam Kirk (LBL) and TCV (via LS). **NT**
3. Generators : NT to speak with Chris Thompson (Glendale). **NT**
4. Police Cadets : NT to check availability with Katherine (Police). **NT**
5. Toilets Hire : GB to contact usual supplier. **GB**
6. Traffic Control : see under Site Management below : (c) 4.

##### (c) Site Management

1. Site Layout : To be reviewed, particularly re beer tent and toilets. NT to distribute 2014 Map. MJ to advise. **JC/LS/NT**
2. Ice Cream van inside park in 2014 successful - useful income.
3. Straw supplier (Speedgate Saddlery, Sidcup) to be contacted - also Sedgemoor Allotments Association to take bales away afterwards. **NT**

**action**

4. Traffic Control : volunteer stewards needed to sort out Blythe Hill Lane entrance / exit and prevent danger to pedestrians and performers.

**(d) Applications & Licences**

1. Glendale : Large Event and Entertainments Licence to be applied for. MJ / LS to advise. **NT**
2. Council : Food & Alcohol Licence to be applied for asap, in order to assess implications. **NT**
3. Temporary Event Notice : form from Council?

**(e) Entertainment : Music**

1. Hire of Stage Equipment (incl PA) : GB to get quotes. **GB**
2. Professional Performers : GB reported. Last year (2014) £700 spent, previous limit £500. **GB**  
**Decided** that Blues Patrol (some local members) be hired at a cost of £300 to fill 2.00-3.30 spot and Siobhan Parr (lives close to Park) be hired at a fee of £100 to fill spot at end of afternoon. Other performers to be sought. GB agreed to circulate a programme, showing spots still available. No overall budget limit set until review of Festival and budget to take place in April. Chair asked for Rhiannon (who lives locally) to be considered.
3. Community Performers : CA to contact schools and to contact Brenda Rattray (Goldsmiths). **CA**  
 NT to contact other community choirs (Horniman ?) ; small size of stage to be borne in mind, **NT**  
 also the difficulty of amplifying sound of larger group standing in front of stage.

**(f) Children's Activities**

1. Lead Volunteer to co-ordinate : anyone interested ? **All**
2. Story Telling Tent : possible (or desirable)? MJ to advise **NT/MJ**
3. Circus Skills : book Tea Dances for Little People. **NT/JC**
4. Craft Tent : HB's Plan says 'Tiffany Stall'. Check with HB/LS/MJ. Catherine for Kites ? **NT**
5. Lewisham Toy Library : contact Alan McKinnon **JH**
6. Face Painting : need to talk with Mouse – her unofficial stall in 2014 competed with the 'official' face painters. Seek advice from HB/LS/MJ. **NT/MJ**
7. Punch & Judy : Geoff Felix now booked elsewhere on 4 July. Molly Bertrand says he can recommend others. Contact Molly. **NT**
8. Surrey Docks Farm : contact them and book them, subject to review of charge /profit-share balance. **JH**
9. Fun Fair : book Jimmy. **NT**
10. Running Races : ensure Josh Smaller is available. **NT**

**(g) Publicity & Promotion**

1. Posters : SC has confirmed he is available to do posters and flyers as usual. First poster (to recruit volunteers) needed by 1 March if possible. SC to do draft design and circulate it. **SC**
2. Printing : Done free of charge until 2014, when it cost £548.80. BM volunteered to research possible free (or at least cheaper) alternatives. Posters and flyers could be photocopied or computer-printed. **BM**
3. Flyers : Need to locate Jo Ireland's list of delivery rounds and deliverers. Does LS have it ? ER has offered to contact LS and take over delivery (The meeting noted that she had also offered to help on other Festival tasks - NT to talk with her). **ER**  
**NT**
4. Sebastian Roche - posters in gardens. NT to talk with Mr Wimperley-Dixon. **NT**
5. Media : Lewisham Life and SE23 magazine to be contacted with Festival info. **JC**

**(h) Stalls**

1. Last Year's Stallholders : Leo has offered to rebook them **LS**
2. New Stallholders : various members offered to contact local shops and businesses. Results to be fed in to LS. **All/JC/LS**
3. Info for Stall holders : Infopack, site map, vehicle pass to be prepared nearer the time.

**(i) Friends Tent**

1. Last year's rain raised questions about the possible provision of a number of smaller gazebo-type tents which could provide instant temporary shelter. It was suggested that they could be sponsored - although there were worries that the environment of the Festival could become over-commercialised.
2. Other matters - BBQ ; tea,coffee and cakes ; display and merchandise ; local history - can be dealt with by the Festival Sub-Committee when it is re-established at the next general meeting. **All**

**(j) Volunteers**

1. ER has offered to get involved with publicity and recruitment. NT will talk with her. **NT**

**5. Secretary's Report**

- (a) Lewisham Parks Forum : NT reported that he had attended a series of meetings of representatives of Friends and User Groups around the borough to discuss the implications of the Council's drastic cuts of the Parks budget ; two of the meetings were with Councillor Rachel Onikosi, who is the Cabinet Member for the 'Public Realm' (which includes Parks).. The 12 largest parks (which include Ladywell Fields) are losing 50 per cent of their park keepers ; Blythe Hill Fields is the largest of the 34 smaller parks, which all lost their park keepers in the cuts of the 1980s and are served only by the mobile team.

**Action**

There may now be a reduction in service to us, because the mobile team will have to spend time in the 12 large parks. NT was the principal author of a letter from the Forum sent to the Mayor on 9 February - copy to be emailed to members.

**NT**

The most interesting, but also least plausible, of the Council's proposed cuts is a strategy of handing over management to Friends and user groups - yet without any proposals for training or support. There were two relevant websites on co-operative management of parks, which can be found by Googling 'NESTA parks' (NESTA is a charity specializing in community action) and 'Lambeth Parks Co-operatives' (in June 2013 Lambeth Council adopted a policy of handing over parks to co-operatives and one at Streatham Common is already up and running).

- (b) Facebook page : The Friends Facebook page (270 names) has in the past month been dominated by increasingly abusive posts from a Mr Austen Jones, Chairman of the Ravensbourne Park Gardens User Group (that's the little park between Montacute Road and Ravensbourne Park). His particular obsession is with the two very small memorial plaques placed (by Cathy Ashley and the Garcia family) next to two of our newly planted trees. He is particularly incensed by the discovery that the Garcias had buried their father's ashes under their tree, and is obsessed with our approval of a 'burial' in our park (although the interment of ashes is not legally a burial and involves no permissions or paperwork). NT pointed out that Mr Jones moved house on 20 January (according to one of his own posts) to Ludlow in Shropshire - but he intends somehow to remain involved with Ravensbourne Park Gardens, and so will probably haunt us for some time to come. JC said that we needed to have a moderator who could intervene to delete inappropriate material. Ellie Rogers had already volunteered at the previous meeting (29 January) to take over responsibility for updating the Friends' website ; it was proposed, and agreed, that she should be asked to be moderator of the Facebook page as well and that she should talk with Molly Bertrand, who is currently in charge of the Facebook group.

**JC/ER****6. Park Environment (People & Wildlife)**

- (a) Phase 2 Tree Watering : NT stated, on Zaria Greenhill's behalf, that the weekly watering of the Phase 2 trees (planted 15 November 2014) would start on 14 March, provided that weather in the preceding fortnight had not been very wet. There is one problem : there is no viable water connection on the Brockley View frontage and to provide one would cost £8000, which the Council cannot afford. So we shall either have to bring our full watering cans over the hill from the standpipe at the Blythe Hill Lane entrance, or use NT's two outside taps just across Brockley View at 62 Duncombe Hill - or Glendale will have to bring a bowser (a vehicle with a water tank) each Saturday. **ZG**
- (b) Phase 1 Tree Watering : watering of the Phase 1 trees (planted 22 March 2014), which are close to the standpipe, will also start on 14 March and, as this is their second year, will be on a more relaxed fortnightly regime. **ZG**
- (c) Bench : The bench we have agreed to donate will cost £786 (incl VAT). We need to agree this sum rapidly, as it is at a discount - so, as our next meeting is not until 19 March, can we agree it by email ? **NT**

**action**

- (d) Signposts in Disrepair : NT said he would ask Chris Thompson of Glendale what action they propose to take over the flimsy signposts put up five years ago, the lettering on which is peeling off. The Friends opposed them at the time, saying that they looked more suitable for a hospital car park and that they appeared to be far too flimsy for our exposed hillside, as has indeed proved to be the case. **NT**
- (e) Mowing Programme : NT is about ask Angus Fraser of Glendale when the 2015 mowing programme is likely to start, as the boundary of the park needs to be clearly marked to guide the mowers into providing wider verges and wildlife areas, as agreed with ZG and other members last summer. **NT**
- (f) Drones : NT drew attention to the item on the Friends Facebook page, showing an 18-minute video of the all-round views from the summit of the park, taken from a drone. In this case the filming was discreet (away from the houses), but it might not be in future.

**7. AOB : Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Plan for Crofton Park / Honor Oak Park** : This needs to be discussed at a general meeting soon.

**8. Date of Next Meeting** : 19 March agreed (7.30 at the Honor Oak).

NT 16.02.2015