



L♥VE YOUR GREEN SPACE


Community working together to help shape how our park works, is maintained, & protected

Friends of Firs Farm

Wetlands Park & Playing Fields

AGM

27th August 2020



This report is to highlight the achievements and the aims of the group 'Friends of Firs Farm (FOFF)' for the twelve month period to 31st March 2020.



Friends of Firs Farm Park

Message from the Trustees

For some of the local community, Firs Farm wetlands is considered a 'hidden gem'. This varied green space has been invaluable in recent times due to the challenging COVID-19 pandemic. Many have used the park for the allotted and permitted exercise and as such the FoFF has seen a large increase in footfall. The FoFF have been working with the council to ensure that picnic tables are covered, notices on social distancing are visible around the park.

In regards to sports and educational facilities: FoFF has seen an increase in schools utilising the pond dipping equipment and pond platform alongside the wetlands tour, interpretation and woodland trail. The tennis courts and table tennis tables have proved to be popular. The twelve available football pitches are underused due to the lack of facilities. This will in part be resolved once the community hub is in place. The agreed multi-sport pitch (for hockey, football etc.) is still with the council to be actioned.

Another important role for the wetlands is the link to other waterways around London and making a difference to the quality of that water for wildlife but it is also instrumental in helping London combat flooding (protecting hundreds of homes) and is an early warning system on pollution incidents infecting the waterways.

Community hub developments: The Friends continue to work with the London Borough of Enfield council on finding an ideal solution to bringing this project home. The longer term aim is for a permanent community hub, fit for all the community. Details of this project were shared by Mark Bradbury (Director of Property) at the October 2019 public meeting at Firs Farm Wetlands. MB announced that the aim for delivering the first stage of the temporary hub, would be late spring of 2020. A lack of available resources and the pandemic have resulted in a delay to this much needed project. Major sponsors, have agreed to delay their donations due to the unusual situation.

Events that have been contributing to the success of FoFF this year have been: Halloween – A Spooky Walk in the Woods, National Children's day UK, Easter Egg hunt, Quiz night and a number of corporate events. All of these events attract a wealth of community users, as many are free to enter, and enable people to enjoy the Wetlands. As a result, many help with giving donations to the FoFF and volunteer their time to support the charity.

Unfortunately, working with the council has been frustrating and challenging this year with outstanding actions from both community hub and multi-sport pitch not fulfilled and the potential loss of solid funding, generated by FoFF. In addition, we have missed out on potential funding pots and grants. We are highly optimistic that progress will be made once COVID-19 becomes less of an issue.

As always we must end by saying a big 'THANK YOU' to all the volunteers and supporters for their hard work over the last 12 months. Elaine Hassan and Caroline Wilmer were voted joint volunteer of the year 2019.

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Friends of Firs Farm Park

How our charitable objectives & purposes benefit the public (as per FOFF registered status with HMRC and Charities commission):-

In essence we bring the community together for events, interests, and sporting / other in/outdoor activities, as well as providing volunteer opportunities, reduce loneliness and encourage healthier lifestyles.

Some of the benefits that the Friends bring to the community are:

Environmental protection/improvement benefits. Friend's volunteers support the management, maintenance, conservation and protection of the park for all the community and wildlife to enjoy and benefit.

Wildlife, domestic animals & their owners benefit from a diversified park. Habitat management increases wildlife and this can encourage inspiring new hobbies & interest.

Health Benefits to the local community – A mindfulness space contributes towards improved mental health and promotes wellbeing activities. A mile circuit pathway encourages people to get outside and get active whilst cyclists, wheelchairs, buggies and school children have smooth safe access around the park.

Community development/ ownership - community clean-up/wetlands, festival/seasonal event days all help bring together a varied community from all walks of life to engage with each other and help reduce social isolation, encourages ownership and volunteering for the benefit of all the community.

Amateur sport - tennis courts, outdoor tennis tables, football pitches, cycle paths provide opportunities that will encourage physical fitness but also supports bringing together different groups and, once again, prevents social isolation, encourages people to get out and get active.

Education / heritage – Improved public awareness, promoting the park history, links to education, Science of SUDS and accolades. All community groups benefit from the outdoor classroom/pond. The park 'brings to life' the role of SUDS how it has helped the environment, attracted new wildlife, improved overall awareness of wetlands management, biodiversity & flood relief.

Thank you

The FOFF Trustees



Friends of Firs Farm Park

What has been accomplished during the past twelve months?

In addition to the usual business of the Friends to ensure we further our purposes and encourage all to participate in the park (refer to the 2018 AGM report), we have the following to share with you:

1. **Development of Friends of Firs Farm as a registered charity with the Charities Commission (No. 1177069)** –FoFF, as promised in the last AGM, reviewed the roles and trustees of the charity. Agreed list of persons included in AGM 2019 minutes and we have further enlisted two new trustees during the 2019/20 year: Chris Ferrary, and Simon Jarosch.

FOFF filed their first trustees report and accounts with the Charities commission and on the basis of the filing, FOFF moved the AGM reporting to a new date (as per Covid restrictions would allow) . Bearing in mind the COVID-19 situation, the public AGM may well be an online forum to support social distancing. Invites to be sent out four weeks before the event.

Trustee AGM took place prior to the public AGM 18th May 2020.

2. **FOFF events driving public benefit for local diverse communities**

Local and corporate communities both work to support the FoFF in wetlands and park initiatives and programmes. The work not only maintains the park and wetlands but develops it.

1. Promoting mental well-being, 'Get Out & Get Active', sessions on Monday & Saturday mornings to work in the park e.g. conservation works
2. Encouraging schools and youth groups to use the pond dipping platform and outdoor classroom
3. Hosting fun activities and games throughout the year that bring communities together e.g such as our exciting pond island launch event which attracted many families as did the Easter egg quiz in the new woodland trail.
4. Annual events :
National Children's day in May 2019 – 3rd time held and encourages children to explore and experience the nature in the wetlands. Truly a family day out and promotes 'getting out and active'
Halloween event in autumn 2019 - 3rd time held and promotes family fun, science education and understanding as well as fund raising.
5. Walking group – taking advantage of the mile circuit in the park to help with health and well-being and the woodland trail to encourage more to Get out & Get Active in Firs Farm. In the COVID-19 situation, this mile circuit has been a major benefit to many park users.

3. **Firs Farm (FF) Transformation Project / improvements/ maintenance...**

Key improvements that have been implemented throughout the year from the initial consultation and the FoFF management plan:

- **Four beautiful flood-lit tennis courts launched in October 2018 are now being managed by Primal Health and LBE who are jointly now responsible for the upkeep.**

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- **Tree planting:** Once again, across the year, FOFF has planted a further 100+ new, young trees taking the overall to over 650 planted since 2014 in Firs Farm. The Friends included 10 fruit trees to help with the orchard walk near the football pitches.
- **Wheelchair accessible Picnic Table:** FOFF raised money and donated this to the wetlands to support wheelchair users and the all-inclusiveness of park users. This table was made from recyclable milk bottles.
- **Improved ponds and beds (Wetlands/pond areas):** this includes the stumpery and has attracted funding from Enfield in bloom. In addition, FOFF has added floating islands to support wildlife nesting and also improve water quality.
- **Wildlife:** increased spotting of wider variety of birds and water fowl. Including red data species House Sparrows, sparrow hawk, grebe, and egret. Surveys to monitor this wildlife, delivered to date, will be published onto the website.
- **Signage** – welcome board map in place.
- **Interpretation** - New Interpretation by the Stumpery was installed early May 2019 and new pond interpretation was installed in June/August.
- **Brown Signs** - The Friends have applied to LBE for Brown Signage due to Firs Farm being a tourist attraction in LBE. Ongoing.
- **Signs in the park** –New permanent signs in the park which delivers guidance to users e.g to advise visitors what to feed the wildlife.

Accolades

- **Enfield in Bloom:** Gold winner 2019 'Best Highway/open space planting' (fourth consecutive year)
- **Ann Tott Memorial cup:** winner 2019 (third consecutive year)
- **Japan–England Insurance brokers:** Winner of 30 unique Sakura Japanese trees to be planted at the end of 2020 at the A10 side of the park. This will create a stunning display by the A10 side of the Firs Farm Wetlands site.

Working with third parties/stakeholders/business.

- FOFF continue to work with Enfield council to review the key milestones for Firs Farm transformation.
- Work with schools has included pond dipping, wetlands tour, planting, and habitat improvement.
- Corporate Volunteer Events hosted by the Friends totalled more than 160 hours in the last year. This is an increase to last year.
- International interest. We continue to work in collaboration with Thames Water, Thames 21 and LBE, showcasing what has been achieved with FOFF which has attracted much international interest and visitors..

4. Membership / Volunteers

Despite GDPR, our current membership continues to grow. For FOFF, there are still no fees charged for membership although donations are always welcome.

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5. Social Media / Google maps

We currently have 947 facebook followers, 614 on Twitter and 326 on Instagram. O

Our rating on Googles maps stands at a healthy 4.5

We have received 225 good reviews and one of the comments is below:

We love Firs Farm Land. It's amazing for walking, bicycling, picnic, chilling. Hidden gem. Suitable for families with children & buggies. Disabled too. There's table tennis, bring your own rackets. No toilet but plenty of bushes. Definitely get out there if you live nearby. Parking on the local streets if you must drive

6. Funding/donations

Once again, the Friends raised funds at a number of events including the 'Spooky Walk in the Woods' for Halloween, 'National Children's day' (reference treasurer's report), World wetlands day and a donation of fruit trees from Thames Water (Feb 2020), Quiz night with over a hundred quizzers (April 2019), Waitrose and the Felix project donations and many others.

FOFF has applied for additional funds for the changing places toilet in the community hub and is now in the second phase.

The Friends applied for a number of funds so kindly refer to the Treasurers report for the complete list of all donations received during the past year.

What does the Future hold for Firs Farm and our much loved green space?

- Community hub development which includes the sports facilities is an ongoing project.
- Japanese Tree planting in autumn
- Events that will safely bring our community together (Covid restrictions permitting)

Summary- In summary, FOFF, a registered Charity, dedicated to maintaining and protecting the park and wildlife for public benefit. The friends are an active group which is evidenced by the past 12 month's volunteer hours **in excess of 3000** There is **no membership fee** in order to keep the group 'open to all'.

Come and join us and show that you L♥ve your Green Space.

Thank you

The Trustees of Friends of Firs Farm
Registered Charity 1177069

Please find attached the following:

- Elections of Trustees & Committee
- Treasurers Report
- Membership Form

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