

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

Friends of Firs Farm Wetlands Park & Playing Fields AGM



8th June 2022

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 2022.

Message from the Trustees – Thank you for your support on saving our green space!

Over the last year, Firs Farm wetlands has continued to thrive despite the rumblings of the green space being used for a crematorium as seen in the Enfield draft local plan (published in Summer 2021). This proposal galvanised many of the community e.g. over 2000 signatures in objection to the proposal and we are still awaiting the council's confirmation that this is not going ahead. We will keep you informed but the solid and overwhelming response from this community has really been heartening in its support. A big thank you to all.

As usual, and since the pandemic, this green space has proven to be a 'life saver' for families and many of the community who need to experience and engage with wildlife and fresh air. The park volunteers have continued to carry on with the planting plan and have seen more than 300 saplings as well as numerous statement trees being planted. Long term this planting mitigates some of the climate change and attracts and supports further wildlife. Fun was had by all including local councillors, school and nursery children and another thank you to all those who have been watering the 'Japanese Sakura project' cherry trees. This year it has also seen the orchard improved and we have added another 10-12 fruit trees.

Despite lock downs, the volunteers have continued to develop themed trails for children to enjoy and they have continued to maintain the whole of the green and blue space. Without this much valued team of dedicated people, firs farm would not be so beautiful.

Many of you have been asking about the community hub which will be a community asset for all to enjoy. This is being progressed behind the scenes. The trustees have been working hard on planning permission (now granted), raising further capital as costs escalate and exploring potential building and catering contractors. We want to thank our sponsors for their patience who include Sport England, Enfield council, and Thames Water.

Other long term projects are the multi-sport pitch and this is still in limbo with the council. Sadly, this project would have made a difference to the local hockey and football teams this year and we continue to encourage the council to now progress this project. The councils Enfield Sports strategy – adopted in April 2018 has yet to be progressed by the council. Gating and fencing is another project which the FOFF are hoping to progress but looking for support post-hub development. There has been success in increasing the number of bins in populated areas to reduce litter.

The wildlife has thrived again this year and we are seeing a wealth of species within the boundaries. Protected species such as water voles, slow worms, and stag beetles plus many other species: newts, frogs, swans, Egyptian geese, cormorants, hedge sparrows, swallows, song thrush, gold finch, herons, woodpeckers to name a few.

Thank you

The FOFF Trustees

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 2021 AGM report), we have the following to share with you:

1- Awareness of crematorium plans from the Enfield draft local plan (Summer 2021)

Having not been informed by the council of the proposal to site the crematorium on the green space, the FoFF decided to set up an information day for the community on Sunday 5th September. Thank you again to all the volunteers who delivered flyers and posters to the local businesses and households when we set up an information before the consultation finished (end date 13th September), FOFF gathered more than 2459 Signatures and sent them to the council. Further letters and emails have been sent separately from concerned residents (about this proposal to have a crematorium in the park) especially when the trustees have been working hard on developing a community hub. Following the submission of these signatures, the FOFF did meet with the leader of the council and other officers to discuss the future plans and vision for the park and the possible impact of the proposal. The scrutiny meeting took place in December (CF/HO to update this section)

2- Launch of urban wetlands design guide with Zoological Society London

August 2021, FOFF joined an event with the council, Thames Water, Thames 21 organised by the Zoological Society to showcase the Wetlands and to launch this Guide. Copy available using this link https://www.zsl.org/sites/default/files/2021_Urban%20Wetlands_FINAL%5B125594%5D.pdf. This event celebrated the work of both the FOFF, local community and the council and what can be achieved when all stakeholders work together.

3- Celebration of past year Trustees achievements including new members

As a charity we are only as good as our Trustees and members and so we thank all members who got involved in the last year's sessions. We encourage others who feel that protecting a green space is important for the community to come forward whatever skills they believe will support the charity aims, particularly if you have fundraising, admin, sport, events or legal skills that will support the charity.

The Japanese Sakura project Cherry Trees planted earlier in 2021, now have added protection of stakes and cages which will remain in place for the next 3/5 years to help prevent damage to these special young trees. Tasks to water, weed and mulch these continue to be carried out by regular volunteers and local residents.

The annual Blue/Green space 'Walkabout' with the council parks officers, councillors and the FOFF last took place in August 2021. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss concerns and aspirations for the park. Sadly this has not progressed since the previous years walkabout due to the council staff changes. We have arranged a further meeting to review with the council and will share the updates on what will happen in terms of future maintenance and future improvements / changes once this has taken place.

Children at play— It is important for us to encourage families to 'Get out and Get active'. The 'children's area' remains a favourite for local families to spend time in a space, that helps to engage and keep them amused. New additions include a chess table and new seating.

FOFF Eco club—The last year has seen the return of this popular activity in Firs Farm. No matter the weather, children have flocked to attend these events.

Wildlife: Sadly with the growing number and size of the terrapins that were literally dumped in the wetlands almost 4 years ago, remains a problem. We have lost many eggs and small invertebrates which is having a serious impact on the water wildlife numbers. The plan is to try to capture these and have them shipped out to a more suitable space for them to live out their predator years.

Working with third parties/stakeholders/business.

- FOFF continue to work with Enfield council to review the key milestones for Firs Farm transformation. This includes progressing the community hub and delivering a temporary structure in the next year.
- We encourage corporate volunteering in Firs Farm and have led a number of groups in the past year which has supported the work, tools and equipment for volunteering.

1. Membership / Volunteers

There are no fees charged for membership, although donations are always welcome.

2. Social Media / Google maps

We currently have 1700 facebook followers, 700 on Twitter and 1,460 on Instagram.

Our rating on Googles maps remains at a healthy 4.5. (501 good reviews).

Google reports that the average time spent there by visitors is 45 minutes. We expect this figure to change once the community hub is built. Watch this space for the upcoming changes later on in 2022!

3. Funding/donations

Funds/pledges have increased this last year particularly around the community hub. Please refer to the Finance report for further information. Thanks to an anonymous donor, we were in a position to fund our campaign against the councils proposed crematorium. In addition, donations to us via social media go towards supporting our family initiatives.

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?

- The community hub development is an ongoing project please bear with us.
- Events that will safely bring our community together.

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 volunteer hours since inception **in excess of 20,000**. 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