



## **Annual Report to Members for 2010 - presented in March 2011**

Your committee is pleased to present this report as required by our Constitution.

### **The Committee and Meetings**

The officers and committee members elected at the launch| AGM in January 2009 were all re-elected at the second AGM in January 2010:

Anthony Williams - Chairman  
David Lamping - Vice-Chairman  
Alexandra Schniewind - Secretary  
Priscilla Ladha - Treasurer  
Kyra van den Bosch  
Teo Catino  
James Cooke  
Andy Jones  
Julie Lane  
Paul Wild

In addition Beth Patrick, Gloria Guy and Andrea Street were all again formally co-opted on to the committee.

During the year two members of the committee found it necessary, for different reasons, to resign, David Lamping and James Cooke. The constitution provided for such an eventuality and the committee accordingly appointed Julie Lane as Vice-Chairman, with the two ordinary committee member vacancies being filled by Beth Patrick and Gloria Guy.

Although many categories of park user are represented on the committee, we believe that wider representation would be desirable. We also recognise if there is to be continuity, some new members of the committee need to be appointed at the 2011 AGM as our constitution specifies a maximum period of service for officers of three years. To enable these new appointments we are creating some vacancies so that not all members of the current committee are offering themselves for re-election.

The Constitution requires the committee to meet not less than four times in addition to the AGM. We have met 11 times since last year's AGM: in 2010 in February, March, April, May (twice), July, September, October and November, and in 2011 in January and March..

The Constitution also calls for no less that two open general meetings each year in addition to the AGM and these were held on 16th June 2010, when we presented our proposed formal Response to the Master Plan and members approved a minor change to the Constitution

which widened the time period in the which the AGM must be held, and on 1st November 2010, when the sale of Clancarty Lodge and adjacent depot land which was still being pursued by the Council once again had to be reported to members.

We have produced nine e-mail briefings and published these and other information on our web site. We are grateful to Candida Boddington for acting as our web master.

Park walkabouts have been held with Cllrs. Greg Smith and Frances Stainton, our MP Greg Hands and the Council's Parks Department.

### **The Master Plan and the proposed sale**

At the end of the open meeting in November 2009 members unanimously mandated the committee to continue to oppose any sale of the north west corner of the park and to work with the council on securing the necessary sources of funding for the implementation of the master plan. Our efforts to do this were not meaningfully reciprocated until the beginning of April when we were presented with a copy of the Master Plan as it was at the end of December.

The Friends Response to this plan, approved at the Open Meeting on 16th June, largely commended it with the main exception being the disposal of the north west corner which had been rejected the previous November. We provided two options for this area. Complete retention of Clancarty Lodge, adjacent buildings and the depot for public use with outline proposals of what this use should be or, if it was impossible to obtain regeneration funding any other way, a sale of a limited part of the area but still retaining the Lodge.

We were then invited by the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services to a meeting on 29th June at which we were told that our Response was accepted except for that concerning the north west corner. We were asked to consider some form of sale on the basis that a substantial proportion of the sale proceeds would then be used for the benefit of the park.

The committee debated this request at length, partly because a number of potential funding sources, such as the Building Schools for the Future Programme, were no longer available and partly because it would involve breaking the existing covenant on the land. We considered that the sale suggestion should be put to the full membership as soon as we had obtained sufficient information on which people could meaningfully form an opinion. However, when we requested written details, including how the undertaking that a proportion of the sale proceeds would be guaranteed, and what would be the effect on the rest of the park if the covenant were broken, we were advised that no such written undertaking was possible.

We therefore faced a potential worst case scenario in which we agree to a sale based only on an assurance that, at some unspecified time in the future, some monies would be made available for park improvements. As the main reason for the sale put forward by the Council is the need to reduce debt, we could find that, when that time comes, no money is forthcoming for the park or much less than expected. Although alternative funding sources have diminished, some do still exist. One potential avenue is the redevelopment for housing of the vacant wharfs in Carnwath Road and a large residential scheme being proposed by St. James for a site which runs from the south side of Carnwath Road through to Sullivan Road.

There was thus the possibility for a sale to be agreed only to find that alternative funding, which would negate the need for any sale, become available soon afterwards.

One argument for supporting a sale was that it would enable work to commence sooner rather than later and would deal with buildings that are currently an eye sore. Externally the condition of the Lodge and original refreshment room looks poor, but when the Friends Committee were given the opportunity to inspect all the buildings in the north west corner internally, it was encouraged to find that they could be suitable for public re-use especially as we understand that the buildings are structurally sound. However, with no timetable for a sale and a major process to go through in order to make any sale legally possible, there seems to be no likelihood of any cash for this area forthcoming in the immediate future.

The situation has been further complicated by the publication at the beginning of October of the Council's proposed Local Development Core Strategy. This is a planning policy document which, after external approval, becomes binding on the Council. The proposed Core Strategy included a proposal to remove the Open Land designation of the north west corner of the park which would enable all the land to be used for other purposes such as a housing development. The justification given was that neither the depot nor Clancarty Lodge are in open space use or accessible to the public. We considered this to be disingenuous.

The Lodge and its adjacent building are not in public use because the Council has failed to respond over several years to requests to bring the buildings back into use. Part of one of these buildings and the depot land and buildings are in continual use by council staff and park contractors and could be in public use if the Friends' proposals are implemented. The Proposed Core Strategy also did not disclose that the plan shown in a subsidiary document indicated that the land proposed for disposal includes some land that is in public use.

The Council's prime motivation for promoting their proposed sale was to raise money to help reduce the Borough's debt. Whilst we sympathised with the council's need to reduce the debt, we did not consider that Open Space land should be lost forever to solve a short term problem. The proposal was particularly strange considering that the Borough has relatively little open space per person and in the Proposed Core Strategy, Borough Wide Strategic Policy OS1 has the fundamental objective "To protect and enhance parks".

The Committee considered it our duty to report this latest situation to members and called an urgent Open Meeting on 1st November 2010 at which the discussion was independently facilitated by Bishop Walter Makhulu. Two members of the Friends Committee explained their objections to the sale of Clancarty Lodge and the adjoining depot and land, the implications of any sale for the protection provided by the covenant, and detailed proposals for the future use of the north west corner. Greg Smith put the Council's case, which was the lack of any Council funds for the park master plan unless there was a sale, and the need to reduce Council debt.

Our four main objections to a sale are that it:

- (1) Breaks a 107-year-old covenant that intends the land for open space and public use
- (2) Realises a permanent loss of open space
- (3) Offers no certainty of any income in or for the park

#### (4) Alters the designation of land from open space and conservation areas

The many local residents and Friends members who attended the meeting overwhelmingly voted again to oppose the sale of any land in the park — even if this severely limits public sector investment in the park by the Council in the short- to medium-term. The Friends have always recognised that the regeneration Master Plan could take up to 10 years to complete and remain committed to its eventual implementation.

The Committee encouraged members to respond to the public consultation on the Proposed Core Strategy. Of the 110 submissions that were made, 42 were objections to the removal of Open Land designation for the north west corner of the park. We also formally asked Cllr. Smith to delete this removal from the Core Strategy. Sadly we have never received the courtesy of a reply to our letter and our request has been ignored. The Council submitted their Core Strategy Development Plan to the Inspector on 31st January with the removal of the Open Space designation still in it.

The Inspector will be conducting Public Hearings at Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, London W6 9JU as part of his Core Strategy Examination, with our submission scheduled to be discussed on the morning on Thursday, 14th April 2011. The session will commence at 9.30am in the Playfair Room on the first floor. The Inspector has specifically invited members of the Friends to attend. Five members of the Friends will be participating in the discussion and we encourage as many members as possible to be there as well.

We have continued to seek legal advice on the Charlotte Sullivan Covenant. We have received an Opinion from a specialist barrister which concludes that the Covenant is effective, enforceable and binding upon the Council.

Meanwhile, the committee has been working on plans for a community market garden to replace the rose beds in the north west corner, the new rose walk along the Settrington road boundary and most significantly the expanded and improved children's play area. All are agreed and approved elements of the Master Plan.

We are delighted to be able to record our appreciation for the immense support provided by Cllrs. Stinton and Smith for the play area and market garden. Innovative efforts by Council officers and our Secretary, Alex Schniewind, who has spearheaded the play area initiatives, secured additional external funding after the cancellation of much of the Government's Playbuild programme. This resulted in the Council commissioning the necessary design work. The final design was put out to consultation in December and was strongly supported. It is hoped work will commence in the Spring and be completed by the Summer.

#### **Other matters**

The very wet winter of 2009/10 caused considerable damage to both playing fields, partly because the condition of the south field became so bad it was necessary to move both football pitches to the north field. The Council and Quadron responded to our lobbying by agreeing to jointly fund repair and re-grassing works. In May the majority of the north field was fenced off while this took place but poor weather extended the period required and the start of the cricket season had to be delayed. Subsequently the south field received similar remedial treatment which delayed the start of autumn football season. The state of both fields remains

far from perfect and only very substantial investment will restore them to the condition in which players, who pay to use the facilities, have a right to expect. New cricket squares on both fields were also fenced off in order to allow the grass on them to grow properly.

We are saddened to report that Thomas's has unfortunately withdrawn their offer to fund the renovation of the floodlight hard court games area in the south west corner of the park, although developments may occur in the future. It is very regrettable that this important element of the Master Plan is now postponed indefinitely. Since it was proposed some four years ago Thomas's offer has been actively backed by the local community and the Friends, and we had expressed our concern to the Council two years ago of the possible consequences of the excessive time being taken to resolve the various issues involved.

In spite of the closure periods of both playing fields sports activities continued to take place, both informally by residents and others and formally by the various local schools who collectively organised their respective use in a manner that avoided any conflict. Polo in Hurlingham Park again displaced some schools sport to South Park but this year three temporary portaloos were installed which benefitted not just these events but all park users. The remedial work did not prevent this year's young person's football tournament organised by Il Pagliaccio Restaurant with the help of the Sands End Safer Neighbourhood Team, which took place in June. The Friends were fully consulted by the organisers and the problems experienced last year were avoided. It was a very successful and enjoyable event.

Tennis continued to be a very popular recreational activity. The park continues to be enjoyed by many others on an informal basis including the large number of regular dog walkers for whom the park is a community social space. We consider that the park's popularity is such that it is enjoyed by most if not all sectors of the local community.

7th March, 2011