**The Friends of the Scrubs Trustees Meeting**

**Tues 11 May at 6pm**

**The Meeting Room W10 6BT**

**Present:** Stephen Waley-Cohen (chair); Smita Davé (treasurer); Carmel McLoughlin (secretary);; Sarah Johnson; Ben Novak; Jack Perschke; Emma Ranson; Miriam Shea

**Apologies:**  Faye Thomas and Stewart Dalby-Gray

1. All welcomed to the meeting and in particular the newly elected Trustees Ben, Emma and Jack. General consensus was it was good to have our first ‘physical’ meeting of the trustees’ in over a year - so much better than ‘virtual’ ones. SWC confirmed that although David Jeffreys had stepped down as a trustee after many years on the committee (latterly the trustees), he was willing to be involved or consulted on all large-scale planning development matters likely to have an impact on the Scrubs (see below).
2. We re-affirmed at our meeting that our main job is to hold the Council (LBHF) to account on the maintenance, improvement and upkeep of the Scrubs, and we acknowledged that they were showing good signs of progress over recent months in that respect, but there is still room for improvement.
3. We reviewed the **Report of the AGM.** The trustees agreed that **Dr Tilly Collins’** involvement with the Scrubs as our honorary ecological consultant was to be warmly welcomed and much appreciation was expressed for her contributions to date. It is so useful to have an expert on hand when there are divergent and diverse views on the maintenance of the ecology of the Scrubs.
4. We discussed whether we needed to co-opt any additional Trustees and agreed that this would not be appropriate following the AGM, and hoped that the proposed sub-groups would enable interested Friends to participate.
5. We discussed the large number of professional dog walkers using the Scrubs, all delightful individually, but potentially alarming when they stand or walk in groups, meaning that there can be as many as 16 or 20 dogs creating a ‘pack’.  (Each walker is permitted four dogs).   We agreed to ask LBHF how many dog walking licences had been issued, realising that they are Borough-wide licences, and asking about limiting the ability of walkers to form groups.   (Note:  SWC during the week has approached about six dog walkers to discuss this, and they seemed OK with the idea of limiting it to 2 walking together, understanding the thinking, but also pointing out that two may be from the same organisation working together, hence they would strongly resist trying to stop two being together)
6. We discussed **hedging** and access to and use of the meadow area.  We agreed the urgent need for a joint statement from all the Trustees. (Note: This was agreed by email following the meeting, and issued on 13 May. It said:

*Your Trustees had our first meeting since the AGM earlier this week, and we have a lot to tell you.  There will be a full report within a few days as soon as we can compile it, but to confirm that it will contain suggestions for sub-groups to focus on specific areas of concern.*

*We re-affirmed at our meeting that our main job is to hold the Council (LBHF) - who are the sole trustee of the Scrubs and provide its management -  to account to do their job better, and we acknowledged that they were showing good signs of improvement over recent months in that respect.  There’s still some way for them to go on many fronts.*

*Ahead of our full report, we all thought it would be a good thing to clarify where we stand on the question of hedging and access to and use of the meadow area.  Your Trustees agree that the in-filling of the hedges on the east and south side (as far west as the southern end of the diagonal cross path) is approved by the Council and will remain, and noted that the guideline logs and sticks in the ground on the north side, and on the south side to the west of the southern end of the diagonal cross path, and the temporary hedging at the western end, are all due for removal in late July following the nesting season for any ground nesting birds.  We therefore strongly encourage all Friends to join us in accepting this position, whatever your personal views on the rights and wrongs of the hedging, which was a response of some volunteers among the Friends to provide greater protection for possible ground-nesting birds in the face of the greatly increased footfall during Covid and the creation of the new ‘desire lines’ through the meadow as a result of two consecutive wet winters and inadequate management and maintenance by LBHF of the paths around the meadow.  On signage, we would suggest that no further signs are taped or otherwise put out, pending the Council’s more permanent signage, and that those that are in place should remain until the new more permanent signage.*

*As a reminder, usage of the Scrubs is governed by its own Act of Parliament, and as it is a common also by the Commons Acts, as well as by a series of Bye-Laws, of which the most relevant for this statement are numbers 5 and 29.*

*Bye-law 5 prohibits the erection of structures (‘no person shall without the consent of the Council erect any post, rail, fence, pole, tent, booth, stand, building or other structure). The appearance about ten days ago of a large number of substantial wooden posts about 4ft high and firmly embedded into the ground, to which notices relating to the ‘emergency protection for wildlife as a result of HS2’ were heavily taped would appear to be in contravention of this and LBHF have confirmed that****Some more permanent signage will soon be installed to the meadow area.  Once this is in place, all other temporary signage and the posts will be removed from the Scrubs.***

*Bye-law 29 is about obstruction (‘no person shall intentionally obstruct any other person in the proper use of the ground, or behave so as to give reasonable grounds for annoyance to any other persons’.  The Council have said: “****We remind users of the Scrubs that this site is for the enjoyment and recreation of all and that while users can be requested to avoid certain areas, this must be a request only****.”  They will also put this on their own website.*

*Your Trustees also appreciate the great passion and enthusiasm of Friends, and urge everyone, whatever their views, to respect the right of everyone to enjoy the Scrubs as they wish within the bye-laws, which as the Scrubs is a Common is also the legal position, and that any requests to users to consider taking a different route must be in moderate terms, and, similarly, for anyone receiving such requests, if they do not welcome them, to moderate their response, in both cases in recognition and acknowledgement that other views to one’s own can be equally firmly held and be equally valid.*

*We understand that the final consultation on the further revised Ecological Biodiversity Plan will begin shortly, and once this is approved, only activities within its framework, hedging or otherwise, will be possible.  We hope that this will enable the existing hedge on the east and south side to be properly ‘laid’ during the coming winter, which may be a good project for volunteers under proper guidance.  This will maintain its effectiveness as a hedge while reducing its height and thereby improving the open nature of sightlines and views.*

*I am sending this on behalf of all your Trustees, who have all agreed this statement.*

*Stephen Waley-Cohen*

1. The new maintenance contract for the Scrubs which is currently being tendered was discussed. It is hoped that the benefits of it being an outcome based contract which is specifically for the Scrubs (rather than LBHF wide for all publicly maintained green spaces managed by LBHF which the current contract is) will lead to improvements. Miriam and Emma are to be on the panel for evaluation of the specification and tender applications, submissions, etc.

1. On **signage**, the trustees felt no further temporary signs should be taped or otherwise put out, pending the Council’s more permanent signage, and that those that are in place should remain until the new more permanent signage is erected in the next few weeks. We discussed additional signs which are proposed at the entrances to the Scrubs paid for from the Ecological Masterplan HS2 £3.9m budget as seen as having an educational aspect, and expected that there would be further consultation on these by LBHF.
2. **Sub-groups** was something which many Friends have expressed an interest in to enable more active participation by Friends and users.

Trustees noted each sub-group will need to decide its scope of interest, decide how often (not too often!) each should meet, and devise means of communication (whatsapp/googlegroup/other) for within each sub-group; and work out how the sub-groups would report their views and proposals to the Trustees and then to the Friends. It may be most effective for each sub-group to work these questions out for themselves, once formed, as there may be different ways forward which work best for different groups.

**We propose the following sub-groups, and** **invite all Friends to put themselves forward to join one or more of the groups. Please click** [**on this link and then complete the form**](https://forms.gle/wNozk7f5XJ6zFaA78)**\*. Could we have all responses by May 31st please.**

Unless some group attracts far too many volunteers to be workable, we hope to say yes to all offers.

**Communications and Education** – internal and external comms, building networks with other like-minded groups including attending their meetings, etc. Education about the Scrubs is for schools and other interested groups. Sarah Johnson and Faye Thomas will be the Trustees leading this group.

**Ecology** – all things to do with ecological and environmental issues, and how those who want to implement agreed work programmes can do so. Dr Tilly Collins, as our honorary ecologist and a real expert, has kindly agreed to lead alongside Trustees Smita Davé, Jack Perschke and Emma Ranson.

**Volunteering Work** - the practical work on the ground of those who want to join in agreed work programmes to help implement the ecological biodiversity masterplan or in other programmes, in conjunction with LBHF/WSCT. Trustees Ben Novak and Emma Ranson will be the Trustees leading this group.

**Planning** – all planning development proposals in the wider area (OPDC, Ealing, LBHF, HS2, RBKC and others|) likely to impact on the Scrubs. David Jeffreys would be available for consultation but not be a member, and Henry Peterson, with his long experience and knowledge and existing involvement, has also agreed to participate with Trustees Smita Davé, Carmel McLoughlin, Ben Novak, Emma Ranson, and Miriam Shea.

**Young People** –15-25 year olds who might want to get actively involved in various volunteer activities, whether those with Emma as under Ecology above, or otherwise. This group might also create a forum for young people, perhaps including from local secondary schools. Their activities might include litter picking. Sarah Johnson and Faye Thomas will be the Trustees leading this group, which has obvious connections with the Communications and Education group.

**Linford Christie Stadium (LCS)** – it was felt that this group should be formed, but need not yet be particularly active as there are no imminent proposals. Smita Davé, Carmel McLoughlin, Miriam Shea and Stephen Waley-Cohen will be the Trustees leading this group, with David Jeffries kindly continuing to make himself available for consultation.

(In connection with LCS, Imperial College’s possible interest was briefly referred to and whether there are other groups with similar status. However, it is important that the community groups such as Thames Valley Harriers and Kensington Dragons are able to continue with their usage of the facility. A lido was one of the proposals from the Friends which has come up recently and seems to have support from the community. Could also provide toilets and café facilities.)

**Facilities and Equipment** – there are a number of areas where there is equipment eg Childrens’ playground, exercise equipment, dog training area, etc. Jack Perschke and Faye Thomas will be the Trustees on this group.

1. **Finance and fundraising** Fundraising through Justgiving was much appreciated and had already provided some funds. There is no current urgent need for fundraising. SWC informed the trustees that a donation of £10k has been offered by a Foundation which does not wish to be publicisedfor the purpose of enabling FOWWS to prepare to campaign against any inappropriately large proposed development on LCS. A loan of £3.6k (which had been made to the Friends by a small charity, with which SWC is connected, to ensure it was in funds to take legal advice on LCS which we are in the process of doing) can therefore now be repaid. That charity was willing to make a contribution of £1k to the Friends, so the sum of £2.6k was repayable to that charity. The repayment of the loan was proposed by MS and seconded by CMcL and unanimously passed by all the trustees, with SWC not participating. The trustees expressed their gratitude for these generous donations.
2. SWC thanked all the Trustees for their considerable time and effort devoted to the Scrubs and FOWWS.
3. **Date of Next Meeting: Thurs 17th June at 6pm if required via Zoom – dependent on agenda for the WSCT meeting 24th June.**

Meeting ended at approx. 8pm

\*Here in full is the link to the volunteer sign-up form:

<https://forms.gle/wNozk7f5XJ6zFaA78>