



Friends of Wormwood Scrubs

Newsletter No. 4 June 2018

Here is the latest issue of the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs newsletter. Apologies for the delay, which is the result of an unforeseen event earlier in the year. Tony, our Treasurer, did post a briefing in the spring, summarising the very busy time that the FOWWS Committee has had since the last newsletter. Many of you will have caught up further, via the well-attended AGM and the Annual Report.

FOWWS is strongly committed to protecting the Scrubs for both local and wider communities to enjoy and appreciate. We've made good progress so far in 2018 in pursuing this mission, although there are still uncertainties on big issues that we are all concerned about, which the Committee continues to work to resolve.

The Scrubs is looking fantastic, as it always does at this time of the year. *Convolvulus* and other wild flowers can be seen along the southern edge of the Common this year. Lizards have been seen scurrying in the undergrowth; do report any interesting wildlife observations – and the odd photo is appreciated for the website or newsletter.

Below, is a further summary of where we are now with activities and developments.

The Editor

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The AGM and new Chair

The 2018 AGM was held on 27 March in Brickfields Hall, courtesy of Imperial College. The large hall was full, so it was gratifying to see that enthusiasm for protecting the Scrubs remains strong and is growing. Stewart Dalby, who has been Chair of FOWWS for seven years, decided to step down this year – he has been a loyal and active stalwart of the Friends almost since its inception. The Committee was delighted that he accepted the invitation to be ‘promoted’ to President to enhance our profile, and will attend Committee meetings. Stephen Waley-Cohen has taken over as Chair, and will continue to help the Committee to pursue our goals. Our regular Committee meetings are, almost always, fully attended, and are highly harmonious and constructive; we are united in our dedication to the Scrubs.

News about the Linford Christie Stadium

The future of the Linford Christie Stadium (LCS) has been one of our major concerns for the past two years, in light of a prospective bid to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham by Queens Park Rangers football club to take over and develop it into 30,000-seat football stadium, largely for its own benefit. FOWWS and other groups are opposed to this for many obvious reasons. Over the past 18 months, we have been interacting with stakeholders such as the hospital, prison, local residents' representatives, and user sports groups, as well as talking to Council representatives, the Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust, and groups concerned with London's green spaces.

- *Searching for the best future for the LCS*

It seems that the QPR management is still saying that any plans are embryonic (we prefer that they stay that way). Nevertheless, the LCS does need to be improved and made financially viable, and FOWWS has been urging the LBHF and the Trust to consider more suitable options that are strongly community-based.

The Committee has thus been participating in a number of strategies to ensure the optimum outcome for the future of the LCS. As mentioned before, we talked to Imperial College regarding investing in and developing the LCS, while sharing the facilities with the whole community. Following their enthusiastic response, Imperial College says it continues to be in discussion with LBHF (for more detail, see Tony's previous briefing).

- *The Council response to current LCS proposals*

On 27 March, in the afternoon before the AGM, Committee members met with the leader of the Council, Stephen Cowan, and other Council officials. Councillor Cowan said that the Council had to find a way to make the LCS viable, while maintaining community use and the strongest protection against inappropriate development. He said that the proposal from QPR in its present form did not meet the Council's requirements, and that other proposals were, so far, not of sufficient interest to pursue. We gain some hope from the Council's current response.

- *The LBHF LCS study*

The LBHF has, however, commissioned a viability study on the LCS future from Earth Regeneration Ltd, a company that advises on large and small development schemes. The company's website says it advises on 'development and funding structures where the freehold assets are retained for the benefit of the public sector and not simply sold off to the private sector'. We believe that the study must be nearing completion.

- *The Kensington Dragons/FOWWS LCS study*

In the meantime, Kensington Dragons Football Club, which pays to use the LCS and supports local community football, is funding an independent study on behalf of FOWWS. This is being carried out by Campbell Tickell, another consultancy specialising in public/private and community projects. The aim is to help us identify practical options for developing the LCS and running the Scrubs. It will be ready in early July.

OPDC developments

The Committee continues to monitor and try to influence the activities of the OPDC (the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation, which is responsible for planning the ambitious development north of the Scrubs).

Unfortunately, the Scrubs has been included in the OPDC area (but not the LCS, which remains within the LBHF planning area). FOWWS is pressing for the removal of this anomaly by taking the rest of the Scrubs out of the OPDC area and returning it to the LBHF.

- *Access and re-drawing the boundary: meetings with the OPDC and the London Assembly*

At the end of 2017, committee members had a meeting with Liz Peace who is the new OPDC Chairman and Victoria Hills, then OPDC CEO. Assurances were given that the Scrubs would retain its current character but potentially with more usage. They were keen to stress that adequate green space will be provided within the new development and that the Scrubs will not be used as a substitute. Access routes to the Scrubs from the north were discussed and the Committee is pushing to have any new access points limited to the far eastern side.

On the question of the boundary, the new Chairman seemed keen to keep the Scrubs within the OPDC. The Committee, therefore, decided to press the case for re-drawing the boundary further – via a meeting with the London Assembly Regeneration Committee in February. There has so far been no further news on this matter.

- *OPDC Draft Local Plan*

The latest version of the Local Plan is out for consultation from 14 June to 30 July, 2018. This is the second ‘Regulation 19’ consultation intended to take into account comments submitted on the first. From our first glimpse of it, it looks as if we shall still have a considerable battle on our hands. More information is available at www.london.gov.uk/OPDClocalplan, and you can email comments to localplan@opdc.london.gov.uk.

HS2 and ecological enhancement

As part of its legal obligation to foster ecological enhancement on the Scrubs to compensate for loss of habitat on the HS2 route, HS2 has given the Trust/LBHF £3million for this purpose. LBHF has appointed Richard Gill as Wormwood Scrubs Development Officer to coordinate an ecological strategy for the Scrubs.

- *Meeting with Wormwood Scrubs Development Officer*

The Committee met Richard Gill in May. He explained that stakeholders are to be consulted as works proceed from 2019. A series of consultants will be contracted to develop landscape and conservation management plans – identifying distinct types of habitat: woodland, grassland, hedgerows, wetland and heathland, using biodiversity surveys recently carried out and an additional bird survey completed by London Wildlife Trust this spring. A master plan will be presented to the Trust.

The Committee strongly urged Mr Gill not to exhaust funds in employing expensive consultants, so that as much money as possible is retained for actual work and maintenance.

- *Japanese knotweed*

The surveys identified one immediate action to be carried out. Highly invasive Japanese knotweed has taken hold on the embankment and must be eradicated. Following an inspection for nesting birds and other wildlife, and under the supervision of the London Wildlife Trust, a specialised contractor is applying weedkiller this summer. The eradication will take between three and five years – such is the vigour of this unwanted and damaging foreign species.

- *Ground works on the Scrubs*

HS2 is currently carrying out some ground investigation works on the western side of the Scrubs, drilling boreholes to survey the geology of the area around the station and tracks. There is access for this onto the Scrubs at the end of Braybrook St via a temporary gate (Highways England would not give permission for equipment to enter the Scrubs from Old Oak Common Lane because the road was deemed too busy). The gate will remain place until the other works – re-routing the Stamford Brook sewer through the northern edge of the Scrubs – are completed.

A before-and-after survey is to be undertaken to ensure any damage is made good, and an ecologist has been employed with a watching brief to address

any wildlife concerns. We are told that a small metal cover will be the only lasting physical impact.

Scrubs and Charitable Trust News

- *Kensington Aldridge Academy (KAA)*

Following the dreadful Grenfell Tower fire last year, the school next to the Tower – the brand-new Kensington Aldridge Academy building – was closed and pupils subsequently transferred to temporary buildings erected on the MOD Parade Ground on the east side of the Scrubs. The Tower is now covered up, and we understand that there has been significant progress towards re-opening the KAA building in September. In the meantime, the temporary accommodation has had to be expanded. Pupils and staff are keen to return to the KAA building, and we wish them all well.

- *Safety and security*

With the crime wave currently engulfing London, it is a good idea to stay vigilant when walking round the Scrubs or in the adjacent streets. Just recently, there was a stabbing on Braybrook St, and another stabbing and various thefts nearby. Mopeds have been spotted crossing the Scrubs at great speed.

Other illicit vehicles are driven across the Scrubs from time to time, including noisy miniature motorbikes and quad bikes (often driven by children and teenagers). The Parks Police are aware of the problem and do their best apprehend the offenders, although that is not easy.

Less serious but still annoying for early birds on the Scrubs and local residents on Sundays, is that model aircraft and drone flyers consistently ignore the prohibition on flying before 10am (and also on some evenings). If you can, please report any flouting of the rules to the Parks Police. They may not come dashing to the scene but, after receiving a sufficient number of complaints, may be present one Sunday and deter the offenders.

The Parks Police can be contacted on 0300 3655 10/020 7938 8187; email: parkspolice@rbkc.gov.uk.

A new Community Safety Officer, Rumel Wahid, for the north of LBHF has been appointed (tel: 020 8753 2816; email: rumel.wahid@lbhf.gov.uk).

- *Keeping the Scrubs clean*

Rubbish collecting on the Scrubs was particularly bad earlier in the year, and a number of exasperated local residents resorted to clearing up the litter themselves. More litter bins are still needed to help alleviate the problem.

Following pressure from FOWWS members, IdVerde (formerly Quadron), which has the maintenance contract for Scrubs maintenance (only until 2022), is now making more of an effort to keep the Common tidy.

About the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs

All of you receiving this newsletter have signed up to be Friends of Wormwood Scrubs – an active lobbying and pressure group that aims to protect the unique nature of Wormwood Scrubs Common. You have appointed a Committee, which – as volunteers – does its best not only to track and influence any changes, activities or decisions concerning the Common and its environs, but also to monitor its maintenance.

Current committee members

Chair: Stephen Waley-Cohen (stephen@swc-office.co.uk)

Secretary: Miriam Shea (miriamshea@btinternet.com)

Treasurer: Tony Curzon Price (tony@curzon.com)

David Jeffreys (david_jeffreys2@hotmail.com)

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Carmel McLoughlin (carmelmcloughlin@icloud.com)

Newsletter editor: Nina Hall (nina@ninahall.org)

Stewart Dalby, as President, also attends meetings (dalbygray@aol.com)

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham are the Trustees of the Charitable Trust which owns the Scrubs, and the two committee members from the Friends sit on the Trust Committee, along with three Councillors supported by the relevant Council Officers.

If you are not a member of FOWWS, join us and have a say. Membership is free!

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