

The Friends of the Scrubs
Registered Charity No. 1187120

Minutes of the second Annual General Meeting of
The Friends of the Scrubs (registered charity no. 1187120) held at
Brickfields Hall, Shinfield Street, London W12 0HN

At 6.30 pm on Tuesday 10 May 2022

Stephen Waley-Cohen, Chairman (SWC) welcomed all the attendees to the first in person general meeting of the Friends since 2019. The trustees each introduced themselves. SWC introduced Stewart Dalby who served as Chair for a number of years, and has since held the role of President. Stewart has now decided to step down and the Friends warmly thanked him for his contribution over the years.

The first item on the Agenda was formal approval of the minutes of last general meeting previously circulated to all Friends. These were unanimously approved. There were no matters arising not also in the Annual Report.

The next item on the Agenda was the retirement and election of trustees and SWC explained that the Constitution of the charity required that a third of the trustees retire by rotation each year at the AGM which meant that the three longest serving trustees had retired and all three had offered themselves for re-election. In order of length of service they were Miriam Shea, Smita Dave and SWC. There were no other candidates proposed. The re-election of all three was agreed unanimously.

The meeting then turned to the Trustees' Annual Report 2021-22 which had been previously circulated and hard copies were distributed. Meetings of the trustees are held throughout the year, always in advance of the Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust (WSCT) meetings and at other times as necessary to discuss items of concern and interest to the Friends. The main purpose of the Trust is to hold LBHF and the contractors on the Scrubs, IDVerde, to account.

The WSCT is a sub-committee of LBHF with responsibility for the Scrubs, and meets quarterly. Stephen and Miriam attend as non-voting representatives of the Friends. It has 5 members altogether, with 2 members from the ruling party and one from the minority party. Miriam went on to

speak more specifically of the work carried out by WSCT and the importance of ensuring the Friends voice is heard and LBHF is held to account. For example, on finances, due to our diligence we found that rent paid by the Pony Centre was going into LBHF general coffers instead of being credited to the Scrubs account. The new Grounds Maintenance contract with IDVerde is seen as a big success for the Friends as we fought for a number of years for a specific contract for the Scrubs. SWC welcomed Kate McVay, the Environment and Biodiversity Manager for IDVerde (in association with RSPB) under the contract. Friends are encouraged to watch the meetings of WSCT on the LBHF YouTube channel. Links are posted on both the Friends website and the LBHF website.

HS2: the sewer diversion work on the Scrubs is ongoing, predictably behind schedule. Restitution of the land will be negotiated between LBHF and HS2 at HS2 expense but this is not yet in place. The UTX works which involves the lowering of the Old Oak Common road (so that the buses to the new Old Oak Common station can get under the bridge) will continue for a number of years.

Emma Ranson spoke about the volunteer hedgelaying which had taken place earlier in the year on the eastern boundary of the meadow and Kate McVay spoke about the future hedgelaying event again with volunteers which she hopes to lead (after training) on the southern hedge. She also spoke of the importance of managing brambles and scything the grasses to allow other growth to flourish. There was a brief discussion about the need to do more than just cut brambles back to achieve effective management.

SWC then moved on to a related topic - **Martin Bell's Wood**. Amanda Grender a long-standing Friend, who couldn't be here tonight, was aware of the work which twins Stuart and David Wise had undertaken voluntarily in the Wood over a number of years. However, Stuart died in 2021 and David is shattered by this and is not responding to approaches from Amanda. An excerpt from Amanda's letter to the Friends was read out: "When I visit the wood I see the brambles, which the brothers spent hundreds of hours digging out, re-emerging everywhere. The best thing anyone could do to preserve the Wise brothers work is keep the brambles down. Otherwise they will suffocate all the butterfly friendly plants, kidney vetch, violets and many others that were so carefully planted and nurtured to encourage butterflies and the wood will return to a thorny wilderness." To get this important recovery work recognised and underway, **a walk with LBHF officers (including Steve Hollingworth, Stefan Czeladzinski) and Kate McVay will take place on the**

30th June at 5pm meeting in the Scrubs Lane Carpark adjacent to Martin Bell's Wood. All Friends are invited to join this.

The Ecological Masterplan is the subject of a fresh Consultation and all Friends are invited to contribute their views. Details will be put on our website as soon as they are available.

The plans for a big stadium or other inappropriate development at **Linford Christie Stadium** seem to have abated. The main users Thames Valley Harriers have plans to extend their clubhouse, and Kensington Dragons FC have negotiated to improve the football facilities at the Stadium with WSCT making a contribution towards the cost. Plans for a lido in West London have identified LCS as a potential site – where the Artillery Wall, some car parking and brambles could be removed to accommodate. It will reduce car parking (and hence a loss of income) but would be an invaluable addition. There has been a lot of enthusiasm for the project from Friends. Edward Morgan spoke about the West London Lido group.

Henry Peterson, as a member of our **planning** sub-group, spoke about the OPDC (the planning authority for the Scrubs) being still without a Local Plan. The OPDC are hoping to get the Plan finalised later in June once the hundreds of major modifications required to the draft have been suitably incorporated. As the OPDC has to achieve a certain number of new dwellings, and with the loss of the Car Giant site, developers have been piling in offering high rise sites which has led to a proliferation of planning applications for high rise buildings in the Acton and Park Royal area, which are visible from the Scrubs. Some of these are 55-57 storeys high with a single staircase! Due to losses with speculative building in Nine Elms and the Grenfell disaster, some of these applications are being relooked at as to viability and safety. RBKC have pushed back on the Kensal Canalside application which they are saying must not be taller than Trellick Tower which is 29 storeys high. Friends were encouraged to object to these applications for high rises, particularly in view of the lack of community spaces. There is a clear danger that they will tend to rely on the Scrubs to provide that.

The Friends' Activity Day is on Sunday 22 May and details have been circulated, to include early morning bird watching, a butterfly workshop and a talk on hedge and scrub management from Kate McVay. Trustees also intend to set up a number of 'stalls' adjacent to the main entry points to encourage users to join the Friends. We have a few hundred members and it

would be great to have even more. The more members we have the stronger our voice to maintain the Scrubs.

A question from the floor mentioned that with the number of **professional dog walkers** using the Scrubs, there is a real threat to both wildlife on the Scrubs and to other users and solo dog walkers. In addition to licensing and enforcement of their provisions, to encourage responsible dog ownership **the Friends are organising a Dog Show on the 31st July**. This is intended to be a fun family day out. The Mayhew are supporting us with this and Ben Novak is taking the lead. If Friends are aware of dog walkers breaching their licence conditions they should contact the LET (ideally by sending photos or other evidence to letnorthwards@lbhf.gov.uk) *Post meeting note: we have heard that on the 25th May LET will be running an operation on the Scrubs between 08:00 and 17:00. With teams of officers on the Scrubs conducting reassurance patrols, weapon sweeps, engagements with dog walkers, promotion of the LET. As part of this officers will be handing out a flyer about the requirement for a professional dog walker to hold a license (we are already building a data base of who we have spoken to)*

The meeting closed at 7.45pm with thanks to the Trustees for their efforts over the last year. Friends were encouraged to stay and chat over a glass of wine or water after the meeting.