

This year has without doubt been the hardest year on the FOSP committee for me and I have been on the committee since the foundation of FOSP. We have had some successes, the biodiversity garden and promised improvements to the paths.

However we have witnessed a sea change in our relationship with the council and there have been a lot of discussions within the committee about how to continue to be effective whilst working alongside the development of the NW corner of the park into a community centre.

For the past few years we have had main points of contact with council officers who have assisted and guided us in trying to implement the masterplan for South Park. During this past year we have had to adjust to a different landscape as our main points of contact with the council have shifted.

Communication of intent and discussion of our plans and concerns for the park and its derelict or unused buildings have continued but there is no single point of contact or clear message from the council which we can rely on for any length of time. This is not the fault of any one group of people involved in the planning of the future of the park. The planning of the community centre has been taking place and there are lots of moving parts for those planning it to consider, consequently the information we have received has been changing, contradictory or non-existent.

It hasn't helped that representatives of FoSP have not been involved in any of the meetings and no minutes are provided on the council website, essentially all the planning has taken place behind closed doors so all we receive is verbal or brief email communication of the direction the project is taking.

We have tried throughout the process to remain true to the principals of FOSP, to protect the park facilities and lobby to improve them where possible. It would be fair to say that our relationship with the council officers and the council has not improved because of this. We have not and do not stand in the way of the community centre being built and welcome the promised wider improvements to the park however we have not seen much progress in areas where we have offered cheap or free solutions to the problems with some of the park buildings and progress seems to be linked to the community centre project by one thread or another.

I would like to make it clear that FOSP do not oppose the community centre, we welcome it. We had hoped for a new building in the centre of the park as was put forward by Tideway at the last AGM but that will not happen, hopefully the facilities being built into the community centre will provide an adequate alternative. In the meantime we await the promised public consultation, as the planned completion date is February 2018 there is very little time left for proper public consultation.

One success this year was the campaign led by a local wheelchair user who spent many hours collecting signatures requesting the pathways be repaired following an incident where his mobility scooter tipped over because of the poor condition of the paths. FoSP were able to connect him with the relevant parks departments and added our voice to the complaints. We had been told prior to the change in council administration that s106 money had been allocated to new pathways, then when the current administration came into power that money disappeared. It was actively denied after this that the money had ever been allocated, until our local councillor Robert Lorgan asked the question directly and the parks department sent confirmation that this was the case. This is just one example of the communication problems we have been having with the parks department recently.

We are taking part in a parks commission which will decide whether it is useful to place all the boroughs green spaces into trust with Fields in Trust. We will report in due course on the progress but it does seem likely that this will happen. Essentially no real change would take place, it simply limits the ability of any council administration to make decisions unchecked.

The highlight of the Community Garden this year was the early to late spring display of wild poppies and daffodils which reflected the earlier efforts of local school children.

The Community Garden has two missions – to provide a haven of biodiversity for both the public and wildlife and a functioning garden for food through the cultivation of raised beds. The food grown in the raised beds and the herbs grown elsewhere in the garden are available to the public. The garden also has two bee hives. The honey yield was down on the previous year primarily as a result of the poor spring weather which prevented bees foraging when food supplies were at their peak.

Efforts to increase the number of voluntary gardeners at the annual fair in June yielded disappointing results, but we hope to be more successful this year. Raising awareness of the garden's existence for the public is something we need to address.

Elsewhere in South Park, efforts were made to improve biodiversity through encouraging contractors not to aggressively prune shrubs and over zealously compost the roots of shrubs and trees. The latter has caused rotting of trunks and roots and the death of some shrubs.

It is vital that South Park provides sufficient habitat for nesting birds and discreet untidy spaces for insect proliferation to help counter the adverse impact of garden "grabbing" for building extensions within the area. The creation of the Ecology Garden is a landmark gesture and will greatly improve biodiversity within South Park.

Events & Fundraising

Since last AGM FOSP have held their two annual events, Halloween and the Picnic in the Park.

Halloween 2016 was very popular and the Haus Trick or Treat Trail went the length of the WBR! The children and parents gathered in South Park, around the Paggs Cafe where there was face painting & tattoos, hot chocolate, balloons, spooky games and music before Jamie led the Trail through the park and down the WBR where the retailers provided Treats outside their shops for all the little ghouls and ghosts. The party ended up at the Haunted Haus, Haus properties headquarters for yet more spooky treats! The weather was fantastic. The event raised £1,025 in sponsorship from Haus properties.

Picnic in the Park 2016 was kindly sponsored by Haus properties and Tideway. There was some fantastic music, funfair, stalls with games and shopping, the famous Paggs BBQ, bar and ice creams, with delicious Thai street Food from Thaiphoon. A visit from the fire engine coincided with a torrential downpour but we pushed on through and the party carried on! The raffle did very well and the event raised £1,830. The date for Picnic in the Park 2017 is Saturday 10th June 12 - 4pm and we will be teaming up the Parks Police Fun Dog Show for the earlier part of the day.

Ecology Garden

Finally, after 6 years, the South Park Ecology Garden has been built and is open to the public thanks to grant from SUEZ and a match funding from the council. A pond, orchard, fruit wall, wild flower banks, learning and woodland areas have been developed; in an aim to build the biodiversity within our park. The planting is still at a very early stage but seems to be taking well to date and a pair of mallards have made their home on the pond amongst the marsh marigolds. We will be sending a letter to all the local schools to advise that the area is their for school use and learning and a small opening will take place on Wednesday 17th May.

Bees

We have been in touch with the London Bee Keeping Association (LBKA) to see if they could help us find people to look after the bees.

Stuart Kennon, backed up by 2 other local beekeepers and the London Bee Keeping Association will be taking over the looking after the South Park Hives.

We are hopefully meeting up w/c 24th April to introduce them to the bees.

Changing Room & Loos

Tests are being done on the soil surrounding the one sound building (housing the current loos) to work out the depth of foundations need to underpin the building to make it structurally sound. This will determine the cost to underpin the building and determine whether or not it is beyond economic repair like the other two buildings next to it. This work is being paid for by the council. We await the results of the test.

Non Turf Pitches and Cricket Nets

The NTP's and Cricket Nets have been refurbished and paid for by the Council over the Easter Holidays. It will be important to try and add their ongoing maintenance to the idVerde contract as consistent maintenance will prolong their life!