

Friends of Queen's Wood AGM 7 July 2022 via Zoom at 7.30pm

Present: 22 members

1. Introduction Zoom instructions.
2. Apologies Jonathan Samuels, Ruth Edwards, Glynis Law, Deborah Perlin, Michael Elwyn, Alison Steadman
3. Minutes of AGM 2021 Agreed
4. Chair's report. John Dorken said it had been very frustrating working with Haringey Council on the flood mitigation scheme. The council now claimed to be working as a co-production with the Friends and had agreed to significant changes after an enormous amount of work by the Friends, often to very tight time limits on our side and delays on theirs. The scheme was once more up in the air because further reviews had cast doubt on its effectiveness in meeting its objective of reducing the risk of flooding in Wood Vale. We were waiting for new proposals from the council. Hopefully the work we and others had done would also feed into the new management plan which was being drawn up by the council. We had resumed a programme of walks and events following the hiatus caused by Covid. John was very pleased that new and younger members had come forward to volunteer in work groups and join the committee; there would need to be a handing on of the baton to a new generation in the fairly near future.
5. Treasurers Report Michael Johns said that income from subscriptions and donations had risen substantially, probably due to increased footfall in the wood because of Covid restrictions and also because of publicity for concern about the flood mitigation scheme. We had spent significant sums on legal advice on the scheme but other expenditure was reduced due to most projects being on hold. We had accumulated a reserve of £8,500. In reply to a question, Alison said we had 283 members.
6. Election of committee John Dorken, Michael Johns and Alison Watson had come to the end of their terms and were re-elected to the committee. Jonathan Samuels, who had been co-opted during the year was also elected.
7. Election of Chair John Dorken was re-elected. Michael Johns expressed the gratitude of the rest of the committee for all his work over the last decade and particularly with the flood management scheme. The meeting added their thanks.
8. Haringey Council's Volunteering Officer John welcomed Michelle Lindson, newly appointed volunteering officer. Michelle explained that it was a new post and would work to encourage volunteering in parks. She would be

working closely with the engagement officer in strengthening volunteer groups and encouraging involvement from communities which at present made less use of the borough's green spaces. Mike Hancock said that the paths in Queen's Wood needed improvement to make the wood more accessible to people with mobility disabilities.

9. Flood Mitigation Scheme. David Warren gave an explanation of the current plans, which were designed to reduce flood risk downstream of the wood, rather than in the wood, by holding back flood water temporarily with berms and leaky dams. We had managed to remove some of the most objectionable features but still had concerns. We still had not seen the council's analysis of the cause of the flooding in July 2021 but in part it appeared to be blocked drains at the Wood Vale entrance and the council had called in contractors to look at the drains. We had got the council to agree in principle to enhance the scheme by improving the Wood Vale entrance as part compensation for degradation of other areas of the wood. This was welcome but we still needed to see more detail. The council had also wanted to open up a culverted part of the stream which became the River Moselle. We initially had thought this might be a good idea but were now opposed because further work had revealed that it could bring polluted water from the Muswell Hill Road into the frog pool and the wood and might make flooding worse. We did not know what the council would propose now that the measured benefits had reduced.

Lucy Roots said that we seemed to have got the project team to understand that they had to give special consideration to the ecology of ancient woodland and could not treat it like a routine flood prevention scheme.

Mike Hackett asked whether it was legal to do works like this in view of the legislation which set up the wood as a space for public enjoyment. John Dorken explained that often general legislation on matters like flooding overrode private legislation and it would be impossibly expensive and of doubtful success to spend resources challenging the scheme on these grounds.

Mary Hogan asked if we had informed Catherine West MP of our concerns; John confirmed that we had. Mary asked who was on the new project team. David explained that the project, like all flood schemes, came under the Highways department. The new project team still reported to Highways but were drawn from a special unit and were engaging with us more seriously than the original team.

Geoff Hunt asked what the position was on funding for the scheme. John explained that there were two sources of funding – Haringey Council and the Environment Agency - although the latter money was now in doubt because work had not started by their target date. Thames Water were said to be contributing as well, but we had no details of that.

Richard Fowler proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair and Committee for all they were doing on the scheme; this was passed unanimously.

10. Any other business Paul Perlin asked if the council consulted the Friends before work was done on trees in the wood. Lucy explained that they were supposed to do so, but she had to keep pressing them to keep to their agreement. She had been given a list of proposed works at one stage, but had not received details of exactly what was proposed and when. They were not supposed to remove fallen timber from the wood as it was needed for dead hedging and encouraging insect life.

Michael Johns

16 July 2022