

Friends of Queen's Wood AGM 12 July 2023 at Queen's Wood Lodge at 7.00pm

Present: 12 members

1. Introduction Ismael Hayden and Sarah Eagleton, the new lessees of the Lodge were welcomed and thanked for their hospitality.
2. Apologies Laura Dekker, Sarah Graham Brown, Jane and David Warren, Marcus and Sarah Setchell, Mary Hogan, Melvyn Jones, John Roots, Richard and Morag Fowler, Mike Hacker.
3. Minutes of AGM 2022 Agreed
4. Chair's report. John Dorken said the year had been dominated by the Council's unsatisfactory flood mitigation scheme but they had recently informed FQW that they were not going to proceed with the original scheme. Investigations continued, in particular around the retaining wall by the Wood Vale entrance, so we would need to remain vigilant, although the Council had promised to work with us in co-production mode. They did appear to recognise that FQW had a lot to contribute. In response to a question from Ismael Hayden, he explained that we had not been in a position to propose a full alternative scheme but we had offered suggestions and comments on individual features. Lucy Roots said that improved clearing of the drains in neighbouring roads had helped to reduce the risk of flooding and Jonathan Samuels said that dead hedging by FQW working groups helped to retain soil in mild flooding events.

There were also indications that the Council, with their conservation officer, Annabel Foskett, were keen to take actions to protect the ancient woodland as a community asset, starting with fencing off some areas to prevent erosion. There had been some talk of a strategy for improving the paths. Both these were positive developments though resources would remain a constraint.

Membership was around record levels and a good programme of events had been delivered. There was a need for a new generation of committee members to come forward.

5. Treasurer's Report Michael Johns said that income from subscriptions had held steady though we had received a bit less money in donations. Expenditure had exceeded income because we had incurred expenses on legal advice about the flood scheme on top of the post-Covid restoration of events. This was not a problem as we had robust reserves and subscriptions could remain unchanged.
6. Resolution to increase the maximum size of the committee.

Michael Johns explained that the constitution needed to be amended to allow a maximum of 12 elected committee members. The motion:

“Clause 6.2 of the constitution shall be amended to read:

The Committee consists of at least three and not more than twelve individuals, all of whom must be members (but must not be paid employees) of the Association, i.e.

6.2.1 the Chair

6.2.2 up to eleven other elected Committee Members

6.2.3 up to three members co-opted by the Committee to hold office until the next AGM (‘co-opted Committee members’).”

was passed unanimously.

7. Election of committee Lucy Roots, David Warren and Alison Watson had come to the end of their terms and were re-elected to the committee. Thunder Raven-Stoker, who had been co-opted during the year was also elected.
8. Election of Chair John Dorken was re-elected. Michael Johns expressed the committee’s thanks for the polite, constructive but persistent way John had dealt with the Council, which had led to effective results. The meeting added their thanks.
9. Future plans for the Lodge Ismael Hayden explained that the Lodge had undergone a large renovation since February with the aim of creating a beautiful space and an asset for community activities. He and Sarah Eagleton would provide the strategic direction but were recruiting managers for day to day management. A café manager and team were now in post, who were being trained to support the ambitions for the community. They would be holding a lot of parties, including evening parties, to supplement the income from the café but also to draw in younger people to the wood. Alison said there was need for lighting on the path from Muswell Hill Road when there were evening events on dark evenings.

They would be happy to host FQW events and hoped that more environmental groups would use the Lodge. They hoped to increase the diversity of users. They had a background in mental health and wanted to provide a space where the healing properties of woodlands could be brought to bear. They wanted to link to NHS plans for green social prescribing. John Dorken drew their attention to plans the Council had put forward for a welfare facility. These had not been appropriate for the wood, but FQW would be happy to work with the Lodge to see if more suitable developments were possible.

They planned to refresh the play area and make it suitable for both play and education. They were still attempting to recruit a manager for the garden and were researching what other local organisations had done for community gardens. They aimed to use more home grown produce in the café. They also hoped in due course to use the living areas of the building for community activities.

They wanted to learn from FQW how best to work with the Council. John Dorken suggested they could build on the Council's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, which was expected to be published in final form soon. Alison Watson suggested they might like to make contact with the Friends of Parks Forum.

They said they were not focussed on profits and were considering becoming a Community Interest Company. They intended to look at applying for grants. They wanted to champion the wood more and would like to find space to showcase FQW, eg posters or summaries of surveys like the bird survey. They would be happy to invite donations for us and put a plug for FQW at the end of their emails. They would welcome ideas. They could be reached at info@queenswoodcafe.org. Alison Watson suggested one possibility was provision of courses in ecology.

On a narrower issue, they wanted professionals to assess the safety of the trees around the café. Lucy Roots agreed to chase the Council's tree officer and Jonathan Samuels said he would try to make contact with operatives who were visiting the wood for similar purposes. It was impossible to close the wood when there were high winds, but it was suggested they might like to ask Cindy Blaney of Highgate Woods to provide a warning service of when they were shutting those woods down for safety.

John Dorken thanked them for their presentation and said the next step should be meeting between them and some members of the committee to focus on specific actions.

10. Any other business None

Michael Johns

16 July 2023