

FRIENDS OF ROCKLIFFE GARDENS

NOTES AND ACTIONS OF ORDINARY MEETING - 10 OCTOBER 2015

Set out below are highlights of the meeting and actions arising.

Present: Alison Rooke (Chair), Alison Miller, Tessa O'Connor, Richard O'Connor, Kay Bartlett, Heidi Barnes, Tina Hollands, Stephen O'Connor

Progress update

The chair summarised events and milestones of 2015. Friends of Rockliffe Gardens (the group) was reformed at the beginning of 2015, to build on extensive work by Greenwich Council to bring the Gardens back to life.

The meeting thanked Councillors Merrill and Kirby (Shooters Hill ward) for their efforts to raise the Gardens profile and issues within the council, with the effect that work was able to commence refurbishing the Gardens.

The group have introduced regular tidy-up sessions, helped organise a relaunch event in July, arranged a bank account (to allow bids and grants to be sought), progressed talks with Hadlow and engaged with Crossrail for community commitments.

The Council have utilised local employment schemes to clear, repair and refurbish some of the Gardens. The Hills project gave new skills to unemployed local residents. At the Gardens they learned how to lay 'crazy paving', york stone, and how to repair historic walls. The result has been the renewal of pavement areas in the formal section of the gardens. Work has also been undertaken to repair and renew the ornate entrance gates, and to clear much of the bushes and trees that have grown in dangerous or unsuitable places. Council resource is limited, they are keen that the Group take forward the momentum to bid for grants and other resource.

The Council and the Group organised a successful 'Bedding In' event on 4 July 2015. The Gardens were reopened by Norman Kirby who attended the original opening in 1937. A cake exchange allowed people to leave memories, comments and wishes. These formed the basis of our first [newsletter / report](#).

Hadlow - Attended the 'Bedding In' event and provided advice and guidance. They also created our first bug hotel. Hadlow have subsequently run a two day course at the Gardens and created further bug hotels and surveyed some of the species. The course was poorly attended likely because of limited advanced notice.

Crossrail - have visited the Gardens with a view to bringing staff along to help complete one or more pieces of work. This is part of their community engagement program with staff volunteering to help us improve the Gardens. We are hopeful that they will be able to commence painting the railings facing onto Camdale Road.

Opportunities for future funding

It was felt that the Group should target some smaller grants initially. This would allow us to learn how to manage funds responsibly; for targeted projects within the Gardens. We will then be able to better demonstrate our knowledge and experience when in the future bidding for larger funds.

There are a number of potential funding opportunities available to us. Ranging from £300 to £10,000 and sometimes more.

What is next?

We discussed a number of ideas for future uses, reviewed some of the memories and wishes put forward to us in July and debated if we should have a planting strategy.

To help us understand what grants to pursue and inform a future planting strategy, it was determined that we should better understand what already exists. This will also help us decide on future uses for particular areas.

Actions arising from the meeting

Issue	Action with
Continue to talk with Crossrail - establish when they might carry out initial works and whether they can carry out anything else?	Stephen O'Connor
Review Hadlow's assessment of plants, to inform our planting strategy. [what plants should go where?]	Heidi Barnes
Links to the local community. Art Plumstead are planning an Extravaganza for summer 2016. The Gardens should be part of this program of events. Other uses should also be investigated for similar events. (e.g. Fitness classes etc)	Alison Miller
Make contact with Bexley Wildlife Group with regards Owls and Bats using the Gardens	Heidi Barnes
What is the state of the water pipes to the pond or any other locations in the Gardens. This may help determine next steps for the pond	Stephen O'Connor
Start engaging with local schools	Tessa O'Connor
Spreading details of the Gardens beyond Facebook and website. Other sites exist about local community and life / resources. Increase our presence on these sites. 'Street life'	Kay Bartlett
Posters / contact information at local events (Community market stall)	Stephen O'Connor
Investigate having a 'bank of volunteer people' available to provide information or guides around the Gardens should the need arise (school groups etc)	Stephen O'Connor
Develop application for 'Grow Wild' seed bank donation	Alison Rooke
Agree with Council transfer of start-up funding (£150).	Alison Rooke
Establish location of next meeting - Old Mill pub	Stephen O'Connor

AOB: We will meet again in November to ensure 'Grow Wild' application is on track. Deadline is early December for this.

Further investigation is needed, by us and the council, as to the state of the ponds and machinery and then discussion with relevant wildlife groups to establish most practical way forward.

Date of next meeting: Monday 9 November 2015, 19:30 Old Mill pub, Old Mill Road, Plumstead Common.