

Friend of Burgess Park Chairs Report AGM November 2013

Our year in numbers

- 1 Chair and management committee with 9 people in total
- 10 Meetings during the year and lots of email in-between
- 219 People on the mailing list
- 227 Members of the Facebook group overtaking the mailing list this year
- 675 Followers on Twitter built up in the last year

£51,500 grant award was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Bridge to Nowhere project

- 50 Volunteers so far have taken part in the HLF Bridge to Nowhere project contributing about 52 days helping to deliver the projects
- 131 Volunteers taken part in dig the park over the last year – about 36 days
- 400 Visitors to the Passmore Edwards library Open House in September
- 450 Viewers for the two free film events in August
- 3000 People came to the May Fair and
- 1 Map for the temporary heritage trail which was up for two weeks in May and possibly seen by thousands of people
- 6 Indicator species in the LWT report showing how the wild life areas in the park can be improved. The management plan for the future maintenance and development of these areas will have a substantial impact on the biodiversity of the park.

Over the last year we have been continuing to work on a longer term vision and priorities for the future. We presented this to Southwark Council Green Assembly in October.

Priorities for Burgess Park

Burgess Park has been open following the revitalisation for one full year. The results have been impressive with large numbers of people visiting the park.

However, as an active park friends group with our remit to protect, promote and enhance Burgess Park we want to use the opportunity of the Green Southwark Council Assembly to consider the future needs and development of the park.

We want to keep the momentum going to quickly build up a shared view of what we all want to achieve over the next five years or so. Most importantly, the FOBP hope to work with a wide diversity of local people and groups. Burgess Park is in the centre of Southwark, easily accessible to residents from Walworth, Camberwell, Bermondsey and Peckham; a fantastic resource improving the quality of life for thousands of Southwark residents.

Our vision of the future for Burgess Park

The basics of course have to be done: good maintenance is an asset to all. It's vital that park users feel a sense of pride and ownership that will help to keep the park clean, safe and popular.

We'd like to review the masterplan and vision regularly, through established focus groups to ensure it continues to meet the varied needs of the changing park and wider area and ensures that Burgess is a community focused park.

The Friends of Burgess Park want to create a clear forward vision for Burgess Park which has wide support from the Council, park user groups, local residents and local groups.

In five years time, by 2018, the Friends of Burgess Park hope to see six clear strands shaping future activity and investment:

1. A clear focus on nature and bio-diversity

Increased visitors puts pressure on the wild areas, competing for space with sports, play and bbq's.

We want to see a continual programme of enhancing biodiversity – wild spaces have known benefits for people's health and well being.

The environmental and bio-diversity health of the park must be enhanced. Increasing the size of the lake is a wonderful asset, the potential of the wet-woodlands and the small woodlands and grasslands create opportunities to encourage local people to find out about native wildlife. This needs signage and interpretation. The recent wild life survey and maintenance plan by London Wildlife Trust is a good starting point.

2. Recognition and documentation of the history of the park

It won't be long before people will forget the old roads or fail to understand why there is a lime kiln and an old bridge in the park. The bridge will rust away if it's not repaired. We must protect our local heritage. The Friends of Burgess Park HLF funded "Bridge to Nowhere" history project is proving very popular.

3. Community use for learning; schools and other groups using the park.

We want to promote the park as a place to visit and come again for a local event. Local schools should be encouraged into the park to use the resource with study days, field trips, nature walks, practical science and forest schools as well as sport. To make this really work for schools they will need toilets and indoor space.

4. Linking all the areas of Burgess Park together

We still have not put all of Burgess Park on the map, spatially linking all the areas, so that people can see the whole park and use the space. The Saturday Park Run has made a start. Other routes could go across Trafalgar Road. We can follow the example of playstreets and make the sports area on Coburg Road safer and closing the road at the week-ends. Wells Way should be an internal park road; not a road between two sections of the park.

5. A complete and sustainable Burgess Park.

The vision for Burgess Park has changed over the years since the idea began after WW2. Increased population puts huge demands on the open space.

Resolving boundary issues, buying the police yard and returning New Church Rd to parkland and finishing to a high standard all outlying areas will consolidate work done so far and maximise potential.

6. Burgess Park a place for sports, arts, play, community events and quiet enjoyment.

Burgess Park has a fantastic sports offer but also has the potential, space and local talent for the park to be a place for art and culture. The Passmore Edwards Old Library buildings need to be brought back into use, in a way that complements and supports the park and its community. We have some lovely play facilities at Chumleigh Gardens but other play opportunities and natural play are needed throughout the park.

After a year's experience of the new, revitalised park, it is clear all these interests need to be balanced, so Burgess Park remains an accessible and welcoming park for everyone throughout the seasons.

You can find out more about the Friends of Burgess Park on our website, follow us on Twitter or join the Facebook page.