

**Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens
Minutes of Annual General Meeting 3 July 2024
The Look Out Centre, 18.00 – 20.00**

Present: Sue Price Chair (SP); Allyson Andrews (AA); Joanna Clark (JC), Simon Cox (SC); Lynden Easton (LE); Will Gray (WG); Tina Higginson (TH); Christina Shiatis (CS); Simon Walton (SW).

In Attendance: Paul Shelley.

The Royal Parks: Included: Andrew Scattergood (CE); Michael Rowland (Director of Parks); Wesley Kerr (Trustee TRPs); Jason Taylor (PM HP); Andrew Williams (PM KG); Rachel Dowse (Tech Officer KG); Russell Stevens (Head Gardener KG); Beth Handley (Head Gardener HP).

Other: Vinny Kinsler (Met Police); Graham Alderton (the LookOut Centre).

1. Welcome

SP welcomed all Trustees, official guests, staff from TRP and the LookOut Centre and some 50 members of FHPKG. Apologies had been received from a number of members.

2. Introductions

I. Graham Alderton, Operations Co-ordinator, the LookOut Team

He gave a short introduction on the history of the LookOut and its role as a learning centre. There is a Victorian reservoir under the building, and the centre hosted an emergency centre in the world wars. He described the development of the LookOut Centre and its funding. Its role is part of the education mandate of the Royal Parks which is built into the objectives in the charity's constitution.

The centre runs a range of family and community learning programmes, including walking tours and engagement programmes with over 17,000 visitors per year and with 110 schools working with the centre

II. Andrew Scattergood, Chief Executive, the Royal Parks

He thanked the Friends for the support they give to Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens and for all the contributions they make to the successful running of these parks.

The substantial funding available to RP enables it to take on major as well as smaller projects and ongoing maintenance. The planning process involves assessment of whole of life costs and ongoing maintenance to keep the parks and their facilities in good condition. Ongoing work includes the work on the Victorian reservoir on top of which the meeting was being held

Andrew thanked Loyd Grossman for his contribution to the Royal Parks over many years.

3. Approval of Trustees' Report and Accounts

SP commenced by thanking all Trustees for their hard work during the year, mentioning the plant sale and other events enjoyed by several trustees and Friends.

Financial Statement: The annual accounts were approved and signed at the last Trustee's meeting and the AGM has now received the accounts. The accounts are also available on the Friend's website for members to read. The Trustee (CS) who produced the accounts was available for answering any queries at the end of the meeting.

4. Re-election of retiring Trustees on a three-year rotation:

Sue Price and Carol Joseph were proposed, seconded and duly elected.

5. Any other business

There being no other business, the formal part of the meeting concluded.

6. Presentations by the managers of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

Jason Taylor (JT) – Hyde Park

JT provided an update on events in the park over the last 12 months and an insight into future events and plans.

2023

November – January: Winter Wonderland. The previous contractor has been re-engaged. The event was again very successful, and the charges for tickets continued to result in fewer crowds at peak times and in increased income for the parks.

2024

February: The parade ground areas were reinstated following the exit of Winter Wonderland, using the same reinstatement contractor as for the last 14 years.

March: Cannabis 420. There was substantial police presence, and the attendance was lower than in the past at c.3,000.

Major General's Inspection: This involved the event itself and four rehearsals and they went ahead smoothly.

Champions League Fun Zone: some 20,000 people attended this event.

June/July: BST summer concerts. These were extremely well attended by a mixed age group. Open House: One week of free events were held to coincide with BST concerts and was well attended.

Friends Bandstand Concerts: these were held on various weekends and were well attended.

Operations

There was a traffic accident on Christmas Eve with damage to the bridge across the Serpentine. Following an inspection the road was re-opened and repair to the structure will be undertaken.

The trial closure of the South Carriage Drive is continuing.

Horticulture and biodiversity

The park is recognised for its world class horticulture and for the very significant benefit for people's welfare. There is continuing focus on biodiversity and the mowing of the parade grounds generates additional biomaterials.

100,000 bulbs have been planted and there is significant ongoing work at the bandstand shrubbery, the Rose Garden and the Jubilee beds (with substantial volunteer involvement).

The Nursery: The Friends again held a successful plant sale in June after which surplus plants were offered to local schools and communities. The manager of the nursery, Rob Dowling was

thanked for supporting the Friends with the sale. Around 150 volunteers are now registered to work at the nursery in four-hour shifts and the scheme is proving to be very successful for these people and the nursery staff who manage them.

Summer bedding planting: Interpretation boards have been installed alongside some bedding displays with ongoing work by IdVerdi's new park operations team.

Boating and public swimming in Hyde Park: There is continuing good demand for the boating and swimming facilities in HP.

Information Kiosks: These are being established with volunteer support.

JT finished by specially thanking all the teams for their hard work across the park.

Andrew Williams (AW) – Kensington Gardens and Brompton Cemetery

Andrew introduced his team, who work at Kensington Gardens and Brompton Cemetery, including head KG gardener, Russell Stevens who has been developing the volunteering programmes.

Diana Memorial Playground: AW described the £3.5m exciting and imaginative plans for the playground, which was opened in 2000 and now attracts over a million visitors a year. The work will include a new pirate ship, tree house encampment and re-engineering the water play features. The new design will include work on fencing, paving, seating and planting. There will be a closure over winter 2025/6 to enable the work to be undertaken.

Other projects included:

- Buck Hill maintenance
- Work on the Peter Pan enclosure including improvements to the fairy garden.
- The ornamental Kusama pumpkin being constructed by the Round Pond
- Young trees being mapped
- Barely Straw sausages have been installed at the Round Pond as an experiment to neutralise blue-green algae
- New tree and bulb planting – including 15 Sessile Oaks along the Broad Walk
- Moving some plants and features between the south and north flower walks
- Ongoing work on the restoration of the KG bandstand and the commencement of events there
- Ongoing work on the Albert Memorial and Italian Gardens, with replanting of the Albert Bed, including plants taken from the North Flower Walk as part of development of the Pollinator Pathway
- Ongoing discussion about the Broad Walk resurfacing
- Refurbishment of the Buck Hill playground
- The pop-up shop operating periodically in KG
- Ongoing volunteering projects at the allotment led by coordinator, Kat Wojnar with ongoing school sessions and volunteers continuing to grow and manage vegetable planting and harvesting. With the new shed and greenhouse having been completed.

Visitor Services: Ongoing work on noticeboards renewal, new maps and welcome messages being installed throughout the park, including new interpretation boards at the Albert Memorial, South Flower Walk and allotment.

Events: Gorilla Circus at lawn west of Albert memorial and the Carousel at the northern end of the Broad walk now running until early September.

Glade for Theresa: AW reported on the planting day held in October to develop the glade near the Albert Memorial in memory of Theresa Short. The event was attended by a large number of volunteers and RP and IV staff and resulted in the planting of a large number of bulbs as well as new trees and some carving of wooden features.

Policing

There are 6/7 officers involved in policing the parks, with typically two officers on duty between 7am and 11pm.

Issues addressed principally comprise dealing with

- crimes such as robberies and thefts (at 195 in both parks the levels were down this year)
- enforcement of the park regulations, with about 1,150 given in each park; including cycling and e-bikes (about 1,400), in relation to which there has been increased signage
- speakers' corner security (in conjunction with Westminster Police, given the political threats)
- security for military and civilian events
- cycle marking

AW finished by specially thanking his team, the contractors, volunteers and other partners for their work across the park and for their commitment to improving the park for people and nature.

Questions for both managers

1. The absence of a paddling pool.
2. Algae in the water areas – this has been an issue in many places and not just for RP. As our water may be warmer than in some other locations, it may arrive earlier. This issue is continuing to be studied. The KG/HP water supplies come from boreholes.
3. The RP treatment – different from national nature reserve classification
4. Accessibility – consideration being given to introduction of buggies

7. Conclusion of AGM Meeting

SP thanked everyone for the very interesting questions, the speakers for their very informative presentations, the Trustees who organised all the catering and the Friends for supporting the charity in such a committed way. Drinks and refreshments on the terrace concluded the evening.

Simon Cox
29.05.25