

FRIENDS OF LILFORD PARK

General Meeting Notes
4th April 2017 : 7.00pm
Tesco Community Room, Leigh

FOLP Director attendees

David Sykes (Chair)

Stephen Aspden (Treasurer)

Linda Sykes (Secretary)

Barbara Wright (/Vice Treasurer)

Pauline Aspden

FOLP Member attendees:

Chris Unsworth

Chris Garnsey

Gerry Ridings

John Garnsey

Bettine Norton

Julie Hall

Debbie Mellan

Eric Lancaster

Sarah Peyton

Joseph Welch

Apologies received:

Sam Brown

Dave DuBois (Strike a Chord)

Bevan Thompson (Strike a Chord)

Reg Vereycken (Green Crew)

Wayne Lancaster (Env. Agency)

1. Welcome, apologies and housekeeping:

Dave Sykes welcomed everybody to the meeting and acknowledged apologies received. He also gave a short overview of the evening's proceedings. The housekeeping rules were explained to the meeting.

2. Treasurer's Update :

Steve Aspden provided an overview of the FOLP accounts to date that have resulted in a current balance of £3898.72

He reminded the meeting that £1650 of this money is currently ring fenced for specific expenditure, leaving a balance of £2248.72 available for future projects

A vote of thanks to Steve Aspden for his work as Treasurer was proposed by John Garnsey and seconded by the whole meeting.

3. Review of FOLP actions from Feb 2016 to present :

Changes to FOLP: From Feb 16 the Director's took the decision to move FOLP forward by engaging as much as possible with local business and other voluntary organisations to develop a wider use of the park's facilities and also to try and work together with them to develop future park projects.

The Wigan Deal: in March 2016 Wigan Council invited expressions of interest from local groups to apply to become the leaseholders of the Ranger's Hut, Bowling Hut and Toilet Block. After a feasibility study around this proposal the Directors of FOLP CIC took the decision to decline this invitation and were happy to subsequently learn that Green Crew from Hindley had been successful in their application to take over the lease of the Ranger's Hut.

Green Crew CIC: work to support learning-disabled adults with or without a mental health problem, or those with other support needs to volunteer in horticultural activities, community gardening, community landscaping and community nature conservation.

FOLP are delighted to be working alongside the members of Green Crew to look after and develop the park and thank them for their kind offer of the use of the Ranger's Hut for FOLP activities on evenings and weekends.

Park Drainage : DS reminded the meeting of the devastating flooding that took place in the park and surrounding area in December 2015 and was glad to be able to say that as a result of this, a positive outcome has been achieved which has resulted in the park's flooding problems being fully investigated and a new and upgraded drainage system being installed by Wigan MBC

The Environment Agency has worked closely with FOLP to investigate issues around the flooding and also Andy Burnham MP, who took a personal interest in the park's flood problem and encouraged and supported closer working communications with all concerned.

TfGM: FOLP has worked from the beginning with Transport for Greater Manchester and the guided busway project to secure the installation of 400m of fencing and also a kissing gate at one of the most vulnerable entrances to the park to deter off road bikers. Other ways of deterring entry to the park will be addressed by a joint effort from FOLP, TfGM, Wigan MBC and the Environment Agency in the coming weeks.

DMR provided labour and expertise in constructing the flagged seating area, which has proved to be very popular with park users.

Leigh Ornithological Society continue to work with FOLP and use the park for various 'young birder' events. LOS have provided seeds and planted out a wild flower area to the side of the old rugby field, which we will be able to enjoy this summer.

Toilets & Litter Picking : FOLP members at tonight's meeting wished to place on record their much appreciated thanks to **FOLP members** John & Chris Garnsey and Jerry Ridings, who ensure the toilets continue to be opened and cleaned daily. **Browns of Leigh** continue to provide us with their support and maintenance to the toilet block, for which we are all very grateful.

A vote of thanks was also raised to **Bettine Norton** and all the other FOLP volunteers who litter pick in the park on a daily basis. Lilford Park is recognised by Wigan MBC as one of the cleanest parks in the borough and we have much to thank our volunteers for on behalf of all the park's users.

North West Boroughs Mental Health Trust: chose Lilford Park to mark the start of their Mental Health Awareness Trail and after discussion with their patients, designed and installed a piece of artwork entitled 'Standing Tall' which was made up of three beautiful sunflower structures representing Respect, Compassion and Understanding. Unfortunately these sentiments were not reflected by some park users, who managed to vandalise the statues to such an extent that they have currently been removed for safe keeping by Wigan MBC.

NWB MHT is determined to refurbish and replace the structure back into Lilford Park and the Design Artist is currently looking at ways to modify and strengthen the sun flower heads in order to try and make them more robust and vandal proof. FOLP CiC has started a 'GoFundMe' campaign to try and provide some financial support towards the cost of the refurbishment project.

4. Other events and actions : Dave Sykes gave an overview of other actions that the FOLP has been involved in over the past few months:

- Staff volunteer days : Environment Agency, Wigan MBC and Green Crew worked together with FOLP to clear Autumn debris from the woodland pathways, greens and thickets and we are hopeful that this joint venture will be repeated again this year
- Zoo Meadow : after months of emails and downright pestering, Wigan MBC eventually agreed to cut the zoo meadow grass on a regular basis and as a result it has transformed this area of the park and made it available for many types of activity and also a better area to accommodate the annual Pont's funfair.
- 2016 Milestones:
 - ✓ Completion of the Basket Ball court restoration (funded by Leigh Round Table) and a new net has recently been installed thanks to Justin Radcliffe (R&R Scaffolding)
 - ✓ The addition of a second 5-a-side football pitch (funded by Leigh Round Table)
 - ✓ The installation of outdoor Gym Equipment and a new inclusive roundabout in the children's play area (Section 106 funding from Wigan MBC)
 - ✓ The Mental Health Awareness Sunflowers Trail (FOLP donated £250 towards installation)
 - ✓ Two more picnic benches (a third bench was vandalised but has been repaired thanks to FOLP volunteers Tom and Adam Carter-Bailey)

FOLP 2017 Events planned so far:

April/May : FOLP volunteers are planning to provide a refreshment stall over the Easter weekend and also the May Bank Holiday weekend, when Pont's fun fair will also be in the park.

29/7/17 Rock 'n'Stroll diary date: A local new formed Community Interest Company – Strike a Chord – is proposing to hold a rock concert in the park on Saturday the 29th July. The event, which will involve a 'best of the bands' competition between rock groups representing local schools - the winners of which will perform at the Rock'n'Stroll event in the park alongside other professional bands. More information about this can be found on the 'Strike a Chord' website.

FOLP will be supporting this event and publishing more news about it in the coming weeks.

5. Retirement of current FOLP Directors and future management of FOLP CIC

The current FOLP CIC Directors gave notice to the meeting that they all intend to retire from their duties as Directors at the end of the current financial year 13th December 2017. Members acknowledged and thanked the current Directors for their management of FOLP CIC over the last five years and accepted their decision to step down.

This action was discussed at great length by the members present and the following outcomes were agreed:

- There was no wish by any member present at the meeting to see the **Friends of Lilford Park** disbanded.
- it was agreed that an appeal should be made to any members of FOLP who may be interested in taking over the roles of the FOLP CIC Directors to contact the FOLP Secretary by email at folp.leigh@gmail.com to arrange to discuss what this involves further.
- As a result of this appeal, should no FOLP Members be available to replace the current Directors, then they (the current Directors) give notice to tonight's meeting that they will cease formal **FOLP CIC** activity from the 31/7/17.

- It was further agreed by the members present that under these circumstances another general meeting will be held in August 2017, where all members present will be asked to discuss and decide – in line with the current FOLP Constitution - how to proceed with the closing of FOLP CIC and the continuation of the Friends of Lilford Park.

Any FOLP members who may be interested in finding out more about the roles and responsibilities of a Community Interest Company Director are very welcome to contact the secretary to arrange to meet the current Directors to discuss this further

please email enquiries to - folp.leigh@gmail.com