

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Open Spaces, City Gardens and West Ham Park Committee	23rd July 2012	
Subject: Friends of West Ham Park - Annual Update	Public	
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Information	
<u>Summary</u>		
<p>In July 2006, following public consultation on the West Ham Park Management Plan, the Friends of West Ham Park group was formed. This report sets out the projects that the Friends have successfully achieved throughout their sixth year.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report is received and that the important contribution made by the Friends of West Ham Park is noted. 		

Main Report

Background

1. At the meeting of the Committee of Managers of West Ham Park in July 2006, approval was given to the forming of a Friends group to work with the Park staff in implementing the Management Plan through discussion, meetings and volunteer activities.
2. At their first meeting, the Friends agreed that their purpose should be to work closely with the City of London, bringing together the skills, strength and experience of its members for the common goal of assisting the Park management team in implementing the Management Plan for the benefit of the whole community.
3. Throughout the year, the Friends have completed a number of successful projects which have been of great benefit. At present, there are 15 regularly active members in the group and approximately 221 additional corresponding members, an increase of 33 new members this year.

Current Position

4. Over the past year, four public meetings have been held by the Friends at the local Scout hall and on occasion on the bandstand in the Park. At their annual meeting in June 2011, the Friends elected their sixth Chairman, Ms

Nicky Brown and Deputy Chairman, Ms Charlotte Evans. At this annual meeting, the Friends suggest projects that they would like to be involved in and agree a timetable of events for the forthcoming year.

5. On the 5th of November, the Friends assisted in building and hosting 'Newham's Biggest Leaf Pile' in the Park with the help, for the fourth year running, of Newham 11th Scout Group and members of the public. A productive day with over 50 volunteers, both adults and children, raking and adding to the leaf pile.
6. On a very cold December night, with a grant funded by John Lewis in the new Westfield Stratford, the Friends hosted 'Park in the Dark'. Over 120 children and adults were encouraged to create lanterns which were supplemented with glowing bracelets. A glowing procession was led from South Gate to the Bandstand, where the Bandstand Christmas Tree was lit and warm refreshments and biscuits disappeared in minutes. Many remarked that it was a wonderful opportunity to experience the Park at night.
7. In January, as part of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) national survey of birds in parks and gardens ('The Big Garden Birdwatch'), members of the Friends bird watching group spent a morning taking Park visitors around the site and teaching them how to identify various common birds.
8. In June 2012, the Friends held a successful 'Past Times Event' to celebrate 300 years of the history of Dr John Fothergill and 200 years history of the Gurney Family in West Ham Park. A grant obtained from Newham Council's 'Let's Get the Party Started' provided funding for the various crafts events which included making model boats to sail on the paddling pool, peg doll assembly and the creation of colourful flags joined together to resemble a bright patchwork quilt. The event was combined with fun activities and music on the bandstand and attendance reached over 600 members of the public enjoying the day.
9. Throughout the year the Friends have carried out monthly bird surveys in the Park. The information is recorded and then collated with a report to other Friends' members at their meetings. The information is also promoted through the Park's 'What's New' newsletter and provided to the RSPB and Essex Wildlife Trust.
10. The Friends have their own web-site which can be viewed at www.friendsofwesthampark.btck.co.uk. The site is completely managed by the Friends and provides information about the group including membership and promotion of the wide variety of activities available. The Friends have also adopted the strap line 'Friendly, Welcoming, Helpful and Positive' for their FWHP strapline.

11. A selection of images depicting various projects undertaken by the Friends and an example of their web site material is included as an appendix to this report.

Proposals

12. In accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Friends, a new Chairman, Ms Nicky Brown, was elected at their last meeting (Thursday 14th June) as the 2012 Chairman. Nicky has been an active member of the Friends for four years and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge which will benefit the Friends under her Chairmanship.
13. The Friends have agreed on a proposed list of projects for the next 12 months. These projects include the continuation of their current successful craft and wildlife events calendar. A timetable for these projects has been drawn up, circulated to the Friends' mailing list and publicised on the Park notice boards in order to encourage volunteer assistance with site based work.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. The projects strongly link and support four of the five community strategy themes:
 - Supports our communities – by encouraging well-being and participation in volunteer activities
 - Protects, promotes and enhances our environment – by encouraging use and enjoyment of City open spaces
 - Is vibrant and culturally rich – by promoting and encouraging activities happening in our open spaces
 - Is safer and stronger – evidence suggests increasing legitimate use in open space creates a safer environment
15. The projects link to the following three of the five aims identified in the Open Spaces Department Business Plan:
 - Inclusion: Involve communities in the care and management of our sites
 - Environment: Adopt sustainable working practices, promote the variety of life (biodiversity) and protect the Open Spaces for the enjoyment of future generations

- Promotion: Promote opportunities to use and enjoy the outdoor environment for health, learning and inclusion and ensure the value of the Open Space is recognised.

Conclusion

16. Now in their sixth year, the Friends have been extremely successful in providing a diverse programme of activities that has enabled Park visitors to assist in a range of projects centred on conservation, heritage, and community involvement. The Park has benefitted greatly from the support of the Friends, as many of the projects could not have been achieved without their support.
17. The assistance provided by the Friends is much appreciated by the park team. Officers will continue to work with and support them in order to encourage more of the community to become actively involved in park projects and initiatives.

Appendices

- Appendix One: The Friends of West Ham Park: highlights from the past 12 months.

Contact:

Geraldine King | geraldine.king@cityoflondon.gov.uk | 020 8475 7104