

## Minutes, AGM, Millfields User Group

### Wednesday 7 July 2021, Zoom session

Present: Christine Kings (Chair); Bhavesh Hindocha (Treasurer); Harry Hewat; Bettina Maidment; Clare Taylor; Merle White; Adrian Weidmann; Wendy Reid; Lailuma Sakhidad; Anne C; Tom Fry.

Apologies: Celia Coram; Deidre Whitfield; Gill Harris; Tim Evans, Cllr Ian Rathbone.

1. Minutes of the MUG Meeting 13 May 2021  
The minutes were agreed.
2. Matters arising not covered later on the agenda

Bettina said that she'd followed up whether there are any S.106 monies available from the new flats being built north of the tennis courts. She said that she'd checked the Southern Housing application on the Council website and the S.106 wasn't available for public view. She has since emailed the Council Planning Department to request details but has not had a reply. She'll chase this up.

Wendy said that we should check this directly with Southern Housing. Because she is directly affected by the development and is in contact with them she volunteered to ask about S.106 monies.

3. Research project on urban red foxes in Hackney

Tom Fry, a Research Associate at the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, introduced his project.

He is a member of Urban Ecologies, an interdisciplinary research project funded by the European Research Council, which is trying to understand the ways in which cities shape the lives of animals and their relations with people who live there. His research under this project focuses on urban red foxes in inner-city London, and in Hackney and Walthamstow in particular.

Tom is trying to understand how we make cities more sustainable, how people come to know local wildlife, and how people and wildlife live and co-exist together in the inner-city. He is specifically interested in how foxes adapt and use space in different types of gardens and how residents relate to and understand the foxes they share their gardens with?

Tom wants this project to be participatory: he wants people to help him answer these questions, and to share their own knowledge and experiences of living with foxes. The project is pursuing a citizen-science led approach, meaning that local people are vital to collecting and producing knowledge about the environment, and in shaping how this knowledge is used and analysed.

Tom would like to recruit people to monitor the activities, behaviours and lifeways of the foxes they share their gardens and neighbourhoods with, and in doing so produce biographical accounts of their local fox families and individuals. This sort of in-depth data will help us understand the behavioural adaptations of foxes in inner-city London, and highlight the ways in which they can or cannot coexist with people. Where possible Tom's team will be able to supply equipment, such as video camera traps, so that people can

observe foxes (and other wildlife) in their gardens, as well as provide logistical and analytical support.

Tom is looking for people who live in Hackney and Walthamstow who are interested in wildlife, would enjoy keeping nature diaries and/or using camera traps to observe wildlife in their gardens, and who might share in the wider project goal of creating knowledge that can aid in creating environmentally sustainable cities. If you're at all interested please do get in touch with him at [tjf46@cam.ac.uk](mailto:tjf46@cam.ac.uk).

Even if you don't want to participate, but you know of people who feed their local foxes, or try and encourage them to den in their gardens, or interact with them at all, please do let Tom know.

There was a lot of interest in the meeting for this project and several people expressed an interest in participating.

It was agreed that we would invite Tom back to a future meeting to report on how the project is going.

#### 4. Cafe on North Millfields

Christine reported back on her meeting with Ian Holland at the Council and he has agreed that the North Millfields cafe will be included in the next tendering round, whenever that is. She said that the Council had apologised in advance about the tendering form; it is the same form for major council contracts and for small operators - applicants will need to go through it and complete the sections relevant to them.

#### 5. New TFL cycle route along Lea Bridge Road

Following the discussion at the last meeting about hedging along the Lea Bridge Road in North Millfields Park, Harry contacted Ryan Lock, the Senior Traffic Engineer at Hackney Council to find out the latest on the new TFL cycle route which is expected to run just inside the park parallel to the road. Draft plans were circulated prior to the meeting.

Harry took the meeting through the draft plans which detailed the layout of the cycle track in sections and a cross-section of the substrate.

Adrian was wondering about the trees and the planting between the boulders and whether both were needed. There was a discussion about the needs of cyclists (to see the traffic), using trees to screen the view of the traffic for park users, the benefits or otherwise for pedestrians.

Christine was interested to know whether the pavement could be incorporated into the plans as the main use for it is to access the bus stops. If there are boulders and bushes that people can pass through (where the railings are currently) then people will access the bus stops directly from the park rather than through the exits at the ends of the pavement. This will give access to everyone except those in wheelchairs, those with prams and pushchairs, and those with limited mobility. She pointed to the redesign of the paving, bus stops and cycle lane in front of the ice rink and riding school as an example of good integrated planning.

Bettina was concerned about the planting between the boulders because we had expressed a desire to create hedging that was good for biodiversity. She would not like to see small municipal plantings that have little or no biodiversity benefit. Others agreed.

There was also a discussion about bus stops and where they are being moved to but we

had to agree that while this was of concern to park users it was not for this item.

Christine asked about priorities at the circle (River Lea end of the cycle track). Pedestrians and cyclists crossing the Lea Bridge Road may find that there is a lot of cycle traffic.

The meeting agreed that Harry would get back to Ryan and ask him to consider the following points:

- a. MUG would like to be consulted/ involved in discussions on the planting of trees and bushes;
- b. can the bus stops on the Lea Bridge Road be incorporated into the plans to provide easy access from the park;
- c. whether there are any safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the Lea Bridge Road towards the circle/ turning right onto the bridge.

6. Summer and Autumn activities in the park

There was no news about funding for the Tree Circle Cinema.

Christine said that there were plenty of tree events going on in the park but we should be thinking about other activities. Wendy said that she would like to see activities for older people such as ping pong and an exercise park for older people. Adrian expressed strong agreement with Wendy and said he'd proposed table tennis and would like to see outdoor space being used by all age groups. He pointed to other countries and how their park space provides for chess or boules and brings people together.

Because of limited time at this meeting it was agreed that at the next meeting there would be a discussion about what our priorities are for activities in the park and what we want to put to the Council.

7. Dates of future 2021 meetings

The following dates were agreed:

Tuesday 7 September

Monday 1 November

Tuesday 21 December

After a brief discussion it was agreed to hold meetings on Zoom for now because we are more likely to get good attendance. However, there was also a strong feeling that we should find ways to socialise together, perhaps in the pub. Adrian said that it would be nice to meet to walk around the park. Wendy suggested that we could combine socialising in the pub with the proposed tree trail walk or a history walk. It was agreed that we'd suggest socialising activities to each other over the next couple of months.

8. Any other business

Wendy asked about the proposal from Stik that was circulated between meetings. Christine reported that he's thinking about how to take it forward; he received some negative feedback and he wants to think about how to adapt his proposal. Wendy said that she supported the proposal - particularly because of the funding for the marshes, and others agreed with her. Christine said that if anyone would like to email feedback to her then she'd pass it on.

There was no other business.