

Friends of Preston Park Annual General Meeting

13 November 2013

Held in the men's bowls pavilion

Minutes

Apologies

Joe McNulty, Clive Shepherd, Keith Upton, Emma Keane

Introduction and welcome . . .

. . . by Tony Benton as Chair.

Committee re-election

The committee was nominated for re-election by Alan Griffiths and seconded by Jan Bateman. The committee comprises: Tony Benton, Chair; Sue Shepherd, Vice-chair; Clive Shepherd, Treasurer; Keith Upton, events and Joe McNulty, fundraising.

More committee members would be welcome. Anyone who'd like to put their name forward can contact the Chair via

info@friendsofprestonpark.org

Chair's report on 2012/13 and outline forward plan

During the year there was a reduced but successful program of events including an excellent Easter-egg hunt and a very soggy but enjoyable PrestFest.

We helped to promote two popular after-dark events searching for bats and other park wildlife.

We continued to lobby the council about issues such as inconsiderate parking in the park. We have assisted with consultation about how the

parking monies will be spent, helped to communicate park concerns and successes via email and newsletters. We have also facilitated liaison between the council and other stakeholders about park issues – particularly where the integrity of the park is perceived to be under threat, for example the proposed re-development of Anston House.

Proposed programme of events for 2013/14

- Wreath-making in conjunction with *Healthwalks* – Monday 9 December 11am men’s bowls pavilion
- Wreath-making – Saturday 21 December 11am to 3pm men’s bowls pavilion
- Easter-egg hunt
- PrestFest 2014
- Halloween Lantern Walk

Other suggestions are welcomed, as are offers of help to expand the programme.

Finances

The Treasurer’s report listed expenditure and income throughout the year. Our starting balance (September 2012) was £1,736.92: our ending balance (November 2013) is £1,147.85.

The year 2011 to 2012 saw a surplus of roughly £700 - it was hoped that this year would see at least a comparable figure that we could use to benefit the park. However, bad weather prevented PrestFest 2013 from being a financial success and this proved our biggest loss.

PayPal has been set up on the website for donations to our group.

We are currently pursuing a possible funding opportunity.

The possibility of taking subscriptions for membership was raised but was thought to be not relevant for our group.

Membership

Our membership is currently 214 and we’ve produced four newsletters this year.

Management of the tennis courts

Dan Travis, a tennis coach who has worked with players on the courts for some time, described the history and current position of this.

Up until early Spring of this year attendants (council staff) had been on hand to collect fees for the courts and manage bookings. However, the council realised that the income from the courts was about £6,500 pa whereas providing two attendants cost about £11,000 pa. The council are looking at all possible ways to avoid losses and so it seemed right to bring in the Lawn Tennis Association to provide an on-line service for booking and fees. Unfortunately, technical problems prevented the LTA from setting up this system until well into the tennis season. This meant a gap of time during which people were playing for free. The confusion was compounded by the absence of consultation or communication by the council to interested parties such as local tennis clubs. Vandalism of the posters which gave the booking details added to the problem.

A meeting was called at which all the interested parties gave their views and aired their concerns, and people were asked to consider viable proposals for a solution. A second meeting will take place next month at which these proposals will be considered and it's hoped that one will be accepted.

Plans for the park in 2014

Alan Griffiths, Operations Manager for CityParks North, explained that he intended to continue the wild flower spectacular on the old bowling greens (a round of applause was given for this year's beautiful display). The areas will be mown, the ditches filled and, in the Spring, the weeds will be sprayed off and the area re-sown. A new mix of flowers may be tried.

There continues to be a struggle with weeds in the Rose Garden, and rose plants need to be replaced. Alan met with a representative of David Austin roses and a list was made of new roses for the garden. It will be too expensive to replace all the roses in one go so a 2-stage operation is planned. It was noted that the volunteers do a really good job but more are needed.

One of the remaining two bowling greens will go and the hope is to get it filled-in this winter. There will then be more green space in the park.

Proposal to address the graffiti problem on the grandstand

Simon Turvey, a Police Community Support Officer whose remit includes the park and who has been a familiar figure for 1½ years, explained the problem. He proposed that the grandstand be painted with sophisticated street art of the sort which is seen in the North Laine. It was acknowledged that the code of graffitists is not to paint over someone else's work so there should be no further problem.

Those present agreed with the plan on condition that the views of residents whose houses overlooked the grandstand be consulted and, if agreed, the art should be of a high standard.

Plans to expand the demo garden

Jo Glazebrook, Volunteer Co-ordinator for Harvest, outlined the plan. The idea is to incorporate the two existing growing area to make one L-shaped plot. The plan was agreed to make sense as the two plots currently appear disjointed. The idea of planting fruit trees in the lawned area where the demo garden is located was discussed. The Friends' committee voiced their concern that this would be inappropriate for the park. The grassy area is well-used by families for games and the committee felt that fruit trees in this lawn would not be in keeping with the park's unique history and identity.

An image of the proposed extension to the demo garden and a chance to have your say can be found on Harvest's site: <http://www.harvest-bh.org.uk/latest-news/325-garden-expansion>

Any other business

It was noted that the new pond in the Rockery has been a real success and continues to look fantastic.

A suggestion was made to organize a 'tree walk' in the park where both trees and other flora could be explained and admired. This was received with enthusiasm and will be looked into as an event for next year.

The Rose Garden volunteers continue to tackle the weeds in the Rose Garden. They are finding the work disheartening as, after a month's absence, the weeds are back again so they are re-doing the same patch of ground. There is, therefore, little time for any more interesting gardening work. Volunteer numbers are dwindling, partly because of this. The volunteers have asked that mulch be supplied to help suppress the weeds. Alan Griffiths agreed to do this and Emma Keane, Park Ranger, has, in absentia, agreed to oversee the process.

Complaints have been received about the state of the ground at the entrance to the park beside the Rotunda. Because of inconsiderate car and van drivers who use that area it has become a 'mud field'. Alan Griffiths confirmed that a solution has already been decided on: a picket or chestnut pale fence will be erected across that area to prevent car access and an arc of posts will be installed to allow parking for one car.

The Friends' response to Pride's request to the council to extend the event from one to three days is that, although we welcome the event to our city, we feel that one day is enough. We are mindful that the park is in the heart of a residential area and, during the school summer holidays, the park's priority should be for the enjoyment of families, dog-walkers and local residents.