

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

NO 100
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FRIENDS' MEETING, 24 MAY 2015, TERRACE ROOM, SMALL MANSION

All members are welcome at this informal get-together over tea and cakes in the Terrace Room between 3 and 4.30pm. The two main topics of conversation will be the proposals for changes to the governance of Gunnersbury, especially the Community Interest Company, and the significance of the planned changes to sports provision in the Park.

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT ADVISORY PANEL, 6.30pm, 5 JUNE 2015

The next meeting of the Joint Advisory Panel will take place in the Terrace Room of the Small Mansion. The meetings usually include an update on the regeneration; members of the public may attend.

THE PUBLIC MEETING ON THE FUTURE OF SPORT IN THE PARK

Jonathan Kirby, Assistant Director in Ealing's Major Projects Team, gave a presentation on the future of sport in the Park; this is on our web-site at gunnersburyfriends.org/the-future-of-sport-in-the-park.

A new building and facilities

The proposal is to build a two-storey Sports Hub building with basement on the disused bowling green (between the car park and the children's playground) and bring all the new outdoor sports near to it, at the top of the large field. The pitch and putt course will now be moved to the bottom of the field, near to the Potomac Lake. The Greenscene depot behind the walls may become additional car parking. The building will be modern in style with a high-roofed multi-use sports hall on the path side and on the field side a café, eight changing rooms, showers and rooms for officials, with locker space in the corridors. On the floor above will be two multi-use studio spaces, offices and other rooms. The basement might be made available for Museum storage, as long as there is no danger of water flooding in from above.

Nearby will be 8 full size natural grass football and rugby pitches, with some junior-sized pitches, and 3 adult cricket pitches, 2 artificial grass pitches and a multi-use games area. Eight tennis courts will be laid out with floodlighting which will also illuminate the artificial grass pitches. There will be an out-door gym, distance markers and a trim trail to help people use the park for exercise as well as sport. This choice of sports and facilities had been led by a consultant's analysis of what this area most needs.

Jonathan's team have consulted funding bodies who seem to be supportive. There are two "prices" for these proposals – a "minimum viable option" for £5m and a larger scheme for £8m. Both schemes will require finding a commercial partner, and expressions of interest are now being sought.

Though the session lasted 2½ hours, with questions and discussion involving the 25 or so people attending, some important topics were not covered. For example, no proposals were made for the existing changing rooms in the former farm buildings (though we learnt that they are in such poor condition as to be unusable). We learnt that the placing of the pitches on the slope of the park is still being worked out. Fencing and CCTV will provide security. Fears of light pollution were expressed. Car parking was discussed on the basis that the facilities would attract more parking of two sorts – for regular use throughout the day and heavy use at times of peak demand; the existing car park is too small.

The likely impact on the Park

The concentration of park users around the Café, Round Pond, children's playground and car park area has already made the whole experience difficult for visitors on busy warm days, while large sections of the park are hardly visited. This sports plan may well intensify that concentration, especially as it seems to require a significant expansion of car parking. With hopes of increasing visitor numbers to 1 million,

some master-planning for the park landscape as a whole has become urgent and surely must be a pre-condition for seeking planning approval for this sports proposal. The Project Team aims to finish the consultation in May then apply to LB Hounslow for planning permission, aiming for completion in 2017. A longer version of this article is on the Friends' web site. *Report by James Wisdom, Friends' Chairman*

GUNNERSBURY'S PROPOSED COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

Despite promising HLF that they would devise a better model for the long-term management of Gunnersbury, the Project Board's current proposals replicate the existing state of affairs. The Friends and others have said for years that it is the model of management and ownership which has been at the core of Gunnersbury's decline. Failure is always blamed on another party, funding cuts are always doubled, the inability to align both Councils' plans and priorities, and parks and museums being non-statutory, discretionary services up against other services which Councils are legally obliged to deliver.

A recent HLF report warns that refurbished parks all over the UK could decline rapidly in the next few years. The Project Board first talked about a Joint Venture Company when they were putting in their applications – now we are being offered a Community Interest Company (CIC). The Friends committee wrote to the two Councils underlining how important it was that the constitution of this private company ensured that it was open to public engagement, was able to gather widespread public support and warning of the dangers of secrecy in its operation. (See the article on this in *Newsletter 99*).

The Community Interest Company

The draft Memorandum and Articles of Association of the CIC have been published. A CIC can hold public or community assets under an "asset lock" to ensure they cannot be sold or given away. For Gunnersbury this will be only the income (from sports, café, tenancies) which will be committed to the estate and not returned to general council funds. One object of the CIC is the very specific one of aiding and supporting the Local Authority members to deliver the Ealing & Hounslow 2026 *Masterplan*.

Local Authority Control

The Articles ensure that the Local Authority (LA) members are in ultimate control of the CIC. The intention is to appoint two LA members as Directors (one from each council) and no more than five "representative" Directors, although the two LA members can change that number. The LA members reserve powers to themselves to veto any changes to the Articles, to include or expel additional members, to change the number of directors and to appoint or change the representative directors. An incomplete clause in the draft ("The quorum for Directors' meetings is specifically reserved the LA Members by a resolution") seems to suggest they will have power to vary the quorum for Directors' meetings, which is planned as a minimum of three, of which 2 must be the LA members.

Membership of this company appears to be open to all, but only the LA directors can approve and terminate applications. There is a reference to member organisations and how they can be represented at general meetings; if the intention was (is) to appoint the representative Directors from member organisations rather than as individuals, this has been lost. The LA members can approve the calling of general meetings of members at short notice and the two of them form the quorum of such meetings

This model is much the same as the current governance, with power and ultimate responsibility lying with the LA members. The other Directors will share the responsibility and the work, appoint the Chief Executive, employ the staff, run the services, manage within the funds coming from the councils and raised from the estate, and deliver the *Masterplan*. But if push came to shove, the two LA members are in control. Will this model attract independent Directors of the right calibre to take on arduous and responsible service over a reasonable period of years especially when things get difficult and controversial decisions have to be made?

Sustainability and Community Engagement?

The Councils have worked well together at some times in the past, and have fallen out at others. This is one of the positive times, and the rewards of collaboration have been to unlock HLF grants and possibly other external funds. The challenges now are long-term sustainability and developing public engagement. Can we be sure that this model of the CIC will be able to respond to those challenges?

A longer version of this article with links to the Friends' letter and the CIC's Memorandum & Articles can be found on the Friends web-site here: tinyurl.com/k3oth2f. *James Wisdom, Friends' Chairman*

THE DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Applications were invited towards the end of 2014 for board members of a Gunnersbury Museum & Park Development Trust. Its role will be to raise funding and support for the regeneration project and beyond; an application will be made for charitable status during the summer. Four trustees have so far been appointed and two further trustees are being recruited by the Gunnersbury Project Board.

The new trustees are Hounslow Councillor Sachin Gupta and Ealing Councillor Josh Blacker plus two independent trustees, Howard Simmons (a director of BHPR Associates, an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission and former Assistant Chief Executive of Hounslow Council) and Val Bott (*Friends' Newsletter* Editor, museums and heritage consultant and a trustee of three heritage charities).

STUMPED FOR GARDEN INSPIRATION? HOW ABOUT A STUMPERY!

Capel Manor College staff and students are turning the garden world upside down with their plans for the prestigious RHS Chelsea Flower Show. This is the place to go for the brightest new ideas in gardening, the latest trends and the newest fashions in garden design. But horticulture students from Capel Manor College at Gunnersbury have this year looked to the past for inspiration for their garden, which will be on show in the Great Pavilion. They have brought a Victorian idea up to date with their modern take on a stumpery.

This is an arrangement of tree stumps, logs and timber with appropriate planting such as ferns, mosses and fungi, in and around them. Typically the tree stumps are placed upside-down or on their sides to show the beauty and complexity of the root systems.

The stumpery garden appears to be a peculiarly British idea – the first one recorded was built at Biddulph Grange in Staffordshire in about 1856 for James Bateman.

Stumperies were particularly popular in the 19th century as they set off so well the new varieties of ferns being brought back by plant hunters. They were also popular with women as ferns and mosses do not flower; some thought it was inappropriate for 'nice' Victorian women to be involved with flowering plants owing to the sexual nature of flower reproductive systems!

Sarah Seery, Head of Horticulture and Landscaping at the College, explains: "Our Chelsea garden was garden was inspired by the remarkable Stumpery that we built at our Gunnersbury Park campus last year with our Level 1 Horticulture students.



Entrance to the Stumpery at Capel Manor, Gunnersbury

A stumpery can add an attractive and interesting dimension to a garden and is the perfect spot for many shade-loving plants. It is also an ideal way to recycle tree stumps rather than having to have them removed from your garden. By re-using logs and old stumps you can create the perfect habitat for beneficial insects, decomposers and micro beasts like the endangered stag beetle." **The Gunnersbury Stumpery will be open to visitors as part of the National Gardens Scheme on 13 June.**

EVENTS AT GUNNERSBURY

Though the Museum is closed for the refurbishment programme, the outreach officers and learning team are still running events and activities. Those for the next few months are listed overleaf. Most events start from outside the main door of the Museum. Where it is necessary to book in advance, please contact gunnersburylearning@ealing.gov.uk. **Please note children taking part must be accompanied by an adult at all times.**

Beautiful Birds, Wednesday 27 May, 11.00am – 3.00pm

Admission £2.00 per child, payable in cash on the day. Advance booking essential

Join community arts group, APPLE, for a fun and creative art workshop to create beautiful birds for a nature trail installation. The workshop is suitable for children aged 7 – 11 years.

Mini-Beast Safari! Thursday 28 May, 11.30am – 12.30pm and 1.30 – 2.30pm

Admission free. Advance booking essential

Come on a walking safari with us through Gunnersbury Park and see what mini-beasts you can track down! Suitable for all ages. Please dress in suitable outdoor clothing and footwear as the walk will be going off the paths.

Make your own Mini-Beast! Thursday 28 May, 11.00am – 12.30pm and 1.30 – 3.00pm

Admission £2.50 per child, payable in cash on the day. Advance booking essential.

Join the ever-popular members of the Embroiderers' Guild to make your own mini-beast using materials and embroidery. This activity is suitable for children aged 4+, but everyone welcome. Please note that younger children may need adult help to complete the activity.

Chelsea Fringe at Gunnersbury, Sunday 31 May, 11.30am – 4.30pm

Admission free, open to everyone, no advance booking.

Celebrate our beautiful park with a day of free activities and music. Part of the Chelsea Fringe alternative garden festival which runs from 16 May to 17 June.

For full details of all events in London see www.chelseafringe.com

Hot Flush Ladies' Barbershop Quintet, Sunday 7 June, 2.00 – 2.45pm Small Mansion

Admission free, open to everyone, no advance booking.

Seats will be allocated first come, first served.

FRIENDS' NEWSLETTER

We are very proud to have reached *Newsletter 100!* The next *Newsletter* will be compiled in June 2015 and will include notice of the AGM in July. Short articles, Gunnersbury stories, photos and memories are always welcome. Send contributions to The Editor, 25 Hartington Rd, W4 3TL or to info@gunnersburyfriends.org.

MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions fell due on 1 April 2015 and renewal forms are enclosed with this Newsletter. Many thanks to those who have already renewed. Please note that we agreed at the AGM in 2014 to increase the subscription to £10 per person, the first increase since the Friends were established in 1981. Send your completed form, with a cheque made out to *Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum*, to The Membership Secretary, 55 Park Drive, London W3 8ND. Please do encourage others to join at this exciting time for Gunnersbury, or buy membership as a gift. More members ensure a stronger voice.

**The Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum is
a Registered Charity number 286310**

