

Friends of Garthorne Road Nature Reserve

Meeting of 9th April 2016 – Devonshire Road Nature Reserve

1. Apologies for absence

Jess Kyle (Lewisham Conservation)
Nick Pond (Lewisham Regeneration)

2. Introductions

Ernest Thomason
Kathryn Lowry
Ami Evans
Ben Morris
Alice Bowen
Rebecca Woodall
Christine Ongsiek
Mia Dalloce
Lloyd Sedman
James Olver
Olga Olver
John Gaughan
Chris Andrews

3. Formation of committee

The following committee of nine people was formed by unanimous vote:

Ernest Thomason (Chair)
Ami Evans (Treasurer)
Ben Morris (Secretary)
Rebecca Woodall (Media and communications)
Christine Ongsiek (Media and communications)
Chris Andrews
Kathryn Lowry
John Gaughan
Alice Bowen (TBC)

4. Constitution

A draft constitution has been considered by the interim committee based upon the document used by the Devonshire Road group. The following changes to the document were discussed:

C (I and ii): The two proposed objectives should be adopted, i.e. to preserve the reserve and encourage community cohesion and cultural enhancement.

D: The “Powers of the committee” section should be removed though it is worth checking with the Devonshire Road group to see if there are any important reasons for retaining it.

E(i): We are keen to open membership to anybody over 16 years of age but there may be practical reasons why the age limit has to be 18. If this is the case then we could consider establishing a form of associate membership for under-18s.

E(iii): It was agreed that a majority vote of the committee should be sufficient to expel a member. Although there is no explicit provision for the removal of a committee member, it was decided that the AGM mechanism would be sufficient here.

The general nature of membership was discussed and it was pointed out that encouraging a large membership is important as it lends influence to the group and may assist in securing funding.

G(ii): The ability to appoint co-opted members may be useful so this clause should be retained.

I: The conflict of interest clause should be replaced by a new clause stating that a committee member cannot vote on an issue on which they may have a personal financial interest.

J(iii): It was decided that the minimum number of committee members required for a quorum should be four. It was felt that this number would ensure appropriate ratification without undermining our ability to make emergency decisions.

P(ii): Annual General Meetings should be held in May as fewer members are likely to be on holiday.

T(ii): It was decided to remove the clause preventing any changes to sections of the constitution. The need for ratification by the Annual General Meeting was felt to be a sufficient control.

A revised draft of the constitution will be produced with a view to having it approved at the group’s first Annual General Meeting in May.

5. Work days

Access to the site and liability insurance

Our understanding is that we will be given the access code to the site once we have formed a committee.

However, we need to ensure that there is appropriate public liability insurance in place before we can arrange any access to the site. The Council have their own insurance which covers any access that they organise. This insurance may not extend to covering activities such as work days organised by the committee.

The exact requirements for the insurance are unclear and should be clarified with the Council. Our understanding is that Devonshire Road organise their own insurance policy to cover use of the site organised by that group.

Buying insurance may be challenging for a committee that does not yet have any funding. If the cost proves to be trivial then we could consider a committee whip-round to avoid it becoming an unnecessary blocker.

If we do need to buy our own insurance, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) offer discounted insurance as part of membership of their "Community Network":

<http://www.tcv.org.uk/community/join-community-network/community-group-insurance>

Settling the insurance issue by the next AGM should be a priority for the committee. This will enable us to open the site over the summer for work days and social events such as a summer picnic.

Tools and storage

We do not have any tools and should consider obtaining some funding to buy them. In the meantime, we should be able to borrow tools from Devonshire Road and Jess will provide them for Council-run work days.

The green storage shed at the site entrance is currently used by the William of York School and Little Seedlings groups. The shed belongs to the site so it should be possible to come to an accommodation with these groups. We expect that we will need to invest in appropriate lockable containers to store any tools there.

6. Open Days/Guided Walks

Ernie is leading a guided walk on the site on 14th May 2016 from 2.30pm arranged in collaboration with the Council.

The committee will take the opportunity to meet and take a walk around the site.

7. Logo and Branding

This will be discussed separately with Rebecca who had to leave the meeting before this item could be raised.

8. AOB

Site entrance

The group discussed options for improving the appearance of the site entrance and immediate surrounding area.

The Stanstead Road Community Garden on the south wall of Travis Perkins was cited as an example of what could be achieved. This was created with the active support of the Forest Hill Society.

Less ambitious ideas of sprucing up the fence and creating some signage were discussed. The idea of getting local street art group to decorate the entrance also interested the committee.

Jessica Kyle and Nick Pond at Lewisham are the most obvious people to raise this issue with in the first instance. The Forest Hill Society may also be able to provide advice.

Site security

Concern was raised over the security of the site and the number of recent burglaries that involved access via the reserve.

Improved fencing is expensive but may be a viable long term solution. Other options could include encouraging natural barriers via climbers. Ernie has examples of natural structures created in reserves that can be shared with the committee.

Schools liaison

As a committee member and school teacher Chris Andrews has offered to provide any necessary direct liaison with school groups who are interested in the reserve, including Olga Oliver's school group.

9. Date of next meeting

The committee will attend the guided walk on site on 14th May 2016.

We also hope to hold an inaugural Annual General Meeting on 21st May 2016.

The AGM could be held in Devonshire Road but if that is not available a number of local alternatives have been suggested, e.g. Ackroyd Community Centre, the General Napier pub – even the reserve itself if we are insured!

10. Actions arising from the meeting

Ami Evans

Produce a draft version of the constitution incorporating the agreed points.

Run the new draft constitution by Jake (Secretary of Devonshire Road) and Andrew (an expert recommended by Jake in our last meeting) for any advice.

Ask Jake about Devonshire Road's insurance and seek advice around what sort of policy might be necessary.

Ernie Thomason

Clarify the following with Jessica Kyle:

- If there is any reason why we should limit membership to people aged 18 or over.
- What are the public liability insurance requirements for events organised by the committee, i.e. do we need to buy our own policy or can we come to a short-term arrangement with the Council?
- Can we have administrative access to the Wordpress blog hosted at garthorneroadnaturereserve.com.
- What are our options for improving the entrance to the site and who is the most appropriate person at Lewisham Council to liaise with?

Check the availability of Devonshire Road for the AGM on 21st May – if it is not available then the committee can discuss an alternative.

Ben Morris

Organise a group forwarding email address for the committee.

Chris Andrews

Attach a noticeboard to the site gates as an interim measure.

Speak to the Forest Hill Society to see what the options might be for improving the appearance of the front of the site.

Committee

Confirm availability for the AGM on 21st May.