

THE FRIENDS OF RICHMOND PARK

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held at 10.30am on Saturday 13 April 2019 at the Kings House School, 68 Kings Road, Richmond, TW10 6ES

Ron Crompton, Chairman took the chair and welcomed approximately 110 members to the 58th AGM. He thanked the school for providing the accommodation for the 12th year running.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Geoffrey Boulton, Peter Burrows-Smith, Richard Gray, Rachel Hirschler, Sue Lindenberg, Vivienne Press, Christine and Peter Menhennet, Steve Sandham and David Scott.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2018

Daniel Hearsum proposed and Chris Mason seconded the acceptance of the Minutes of the 2018 AGM. The Minutes were duly agreed.

3. Annual Report and Accounts

The Trustee's report had been circulated in advance. David McLaughlin, Treasurer, presented the audited accounts for the year to 31 December 2018, also previously circulated. He said that the financial resources were sound and the reserves were healthy which would mean the charity will be able to fund projects that will address some of the threats faced by the Park. Max Lankester proposed and Stephen Scott seconded the adoption of the accounts, which were agreed nem con.

4. Election of Officers

James Loch proposed and Sheila Hamilton seconded and the following were duly elected:-

Chairman: Ron Crompton
Secretary: Richard Polson
Treasurer: David McLaughlin

5. Election of Trustees

The following people, proposed by Kate O'Malley and seconded by Diane Peake were elected as Trustees: Janet Bostock, Nick Coleman, Teresa Grafton, Richard Gray, PJ Greeves, Chris Mason and Vivienne Press.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner

The appointment of Feltons was proposed by Karen Scott and seconded by Florence Mitchell and they were duly appointed as Honorary Independent Examiner. The Chairman thanked Richard Rhodes who had kindly acted for the Friends pro bono.

7. Chairman's Report

In answer to a question from the floor about whether the change to the charity status of the Royal Parks had made any difference, the Chairman replied that they were now easier to deal with due to the quality of the appointments that they had made. There was more co-operation, more flexibility and less bureaucracy.

The Friends of Richmond Park – Minutes of the 2019 AGM held on 13 April 2019

The Chairman referred to the following activities and events that had occurred during the last year:-

- The Elm Walk. FRP had managed to get sponsors for all 48 trees, the last one being on the closing day. There had been four planting days. There is a board at the start of the Walk with descriptions and the names of sponsors.
- Three fencing projects to help protect wildlife were funded by the Friends at Ham Gate Pond, at Pen Ponds (a deer fence to protect the perimeter hedge and provide a habitat for birds/insects etc), and at three restored gorse enclosures (to provide pollinator and bird habitats).
- Robin Hood Gate where a badger sett had undermined the road which needed to be repaired and the badgers relocated
- In the autumn a Great White Egret and 67 cormorants as well as some peregrine falcons were sighted in the Park.
- Voluntary Community Rangers wearing distinct orange jackets were now patrolling in the Park and should have a huge impact on the behaviour of visitors, although their job is to educate rather than enforce.
- The Friends' Nick Coleman had carried out extensive research on signage in the Park and found that there were 1156 signs, mostly traffic or cycle-related but some 300 'environmental' signs. Many signs had different designs. Other research done by Vivienne Press into international best practice showed that signs were most effective with new or infrequent visitors, should be positioned where people pause, and should be readable from five metres away. TRP are reviewing and re-designing signage, taking into account these conclusions.
- Other campaigns have involved selling reusable cups in the Visitor Centre, information about the danger from ticks and Tread Lightly.
- The St Paul's view campaign in 2017/18 had its first major success when an application for twin towers in the City was redesigned to reduce their height.
- FRP now has 250 volunteers who together contribute about 14,000 hours which would equate to £150,000 worth of work to the Park. This includes over 50 volunteers collecting litter, (including a group clearing litter from Beverly Brook). There has been an increase in sales at the Visitor Centre and Discoverers are now in their seventh successful year.
- We now have a new website, thanks to Steve Sandham, which is much more colourful and is easier to navigate and keep up to date, as well as making it easier for people to become members.
- The calendar sold all 850 copies this year, and thanks were due to Vivienne Press. There is now a greater variety of articles about wildlife in the Newsletter.
- The priorities for the current year are:- to ensure that the Rangers scheme and new signage proposals are successful; a push to get major conservation projects under way; to address the main threats to the Park over the next ten years; to bring in new people to help run the Friends.
- It is hoped that a survey with The Royal Parks of light pollution and what could be done about it will be undertaken.

The Friends of Richmond Park – Minutes of the 2019 AGM held on 13 April 2019

- The proposals relating to the third runway at Heathrow, which involve a large right turn over the Park, with flaps and undercarriage down, and with 47 arrivals an hour at over 70 decibels, are the greatest threat over the next five years and beyond. The Friends has launched a campaign and achieved considerable publicity.

8. Questions

In response to questions to the Chairman and Simon Richards the following replies were given:

- It would be difficult to translate signs into other languages but more pictograms might be possible.
- TRP will be looking again at parking charges but in the meantime donation meters will be introduced.
- A new map of the Park is in the course of being produced.
- The use of drones in the Park is unlawful.
- There were no plans for more than three large events a year in the Park.

9. Talk by Tom Jarvis, Director of Parks for The Royal Parks

Tom Jarvis has worked in various parks including Kensington Gardens and Windsor Great Park. Although each Park had its own character and challenges, there were many that they shared with Richmond Park. Parks are for people to use and the landscape needs to be conserved for future generations. There is a lot The Royal Parks does well, but there is still room for improvement, and standards for TRP and their contractors need to be maintained across all parks.

The change in status to a charity will enable a number of improvements to be realised. All of the aspects – horticulture, landscape, the environment, wildlife, and education – were all important, and it was necessary to get the right balance. He referred to the fact that a number of directors lived locally to Richmond Park and felt a special connection with it.

He appreciated that volunteering was a valuable resource and Richmond's volunteer scheme was more advanced than others.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm.