

THE FRIENDS OF RICHMOND PARK
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Via Videoconference at 11.00 am Saturday 22 August 2020

Ron Crompton, Chairman, took the chair and welcomed approximately 50 members to the 59th AGM; the first to be held as a virtual meeting using Zoom technology.

Ron Crompton explained that Richard Polson had stood down as Honorary Secretary earlier in the year. The trustees had appointed Roger Hillyer Honorary Secretary. He lives in East Sheen and is a qualified accountant with expertise in governance and data protection.

Roger Hillyer explained that attendees had received the agenda, the summary review of the year, the minutes of the last meeting and the Annual Report and Accounts for 2019. Ron Crompton explained that voting would be carried out using Zoom polling which enabled members to vote online.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from eight members.

2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM

Max Lankester proposed and Chris Mason seconded the acceptance of the Minutes of the 2019 AGM. The minutes were agreed.

3. Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019

Ron Crompton explained that the accounts had been prepared by David McLaughlin who had stood down as treasurer after nine years earlier in the year. He had professionalised our finances and been a very valuable contributor to the Friends.

The trustees had appointed Hugh Deighton as Honorary Secretary. He qualified as an accountant and then became a physicist, lives in Putney and is an Adopt-an-Area volunteer.

Hugh Deighton presented the 31 December 2019 accounts and provided an update on the 2020 financial position. He summarised that the financial position remains strong and growing and the Friends can continue making substantial contributions to the Park's conservation activities.

Peter Burrows-Smith proposed and Steve Sandham seconded the approval of the 2019 Report and Accounts. The 2019 Report and Accounts were agreed.

4. Election of Officers

Roger Hillyer chaired the election of the Chairman. Sheila Hamilton proposed and Max Lankester seconded Ron Crompton for Chairman. Ron Crompton was elected.

Nick Coleman proposed and Vivienne Press seconded Roger Hillyer for Honorary Secretary. Roger Hillyer was elected.

Chris Mason proposed and Peter Burrows-Smith seconded Hugh Deighton for Honorary Treasurer. Hugh Deighton was elected.

5. Election of Trustees

Diane Peake proposed and Sheila Hamilton seconded the following as trustees: Janet Bostock, Nick Coleman, Teresa Grafton, Richard Gray, PJ Greeves, Chris Mason, Vivienne Press and Steve Sandham. All were elected as trustees.

6. Election of Patrons

Sir David Attenborough, Baroness Kramer and Dame Jacqueline Wilson had come to the end of their three year term as patrons. Dame Jacqueline Wilson had stood down as she had moved from the area. Ron Crompton thanked Dame Jacqueline for her support for the Friends.

Vivienne Press proposed and Richard Gray seconded Sir David Attenborough and Baroness Kramer as patrons. They were both elected.

Ron Crompton noted that the Friends could invite persons of renown or with expertise of value to the Friends to become patrons and that he welcomed suggestions for more patrons, which should be sent to him.

7. Election of Vice-Presidents

Peter Burrows-Smith, Sheila Hamilton, Max Lankester and John Collier had come to the end of their three year term as Vice-Presidents. John Collier, who was Chairman before Ron Crompton, had stood down and Ron Crompton thanked him for his useful and supportive role as a vice-president.

Peter Burrows-Smith had been a Trustee and Vice-Chairman for many years and led the Friends conservation efforts; he is also Chair of the Parks Police Panel. Sheila Hamilton had been a Trustee and Vice-Chairman for many years and set up the Visitor Centre; she still helps with volunteering. Max Lankester had been a Trustee and the Honorary Secretary before Richard Polson; he is an ex-planning lawyer and leads our work in responding to planning applications and provides wise legal advice generally. Richard Polson had been our Honorary Secretary for seven years until May this year. Ron Crompton said that the Friends were very grateful for everything Richard Polson had done for the Friends.

Richard Gray proposed and Diane Peake seconded Peter Burrows-Smith, Sheila Hamilton, Max Lankester and Richard Polson as Vice-Presidents. They were all elected.

8. Election of Honorary Independent Examiner

Steve Sandham proposed and Nick Coleman seconded Feltons as the Honorary Independent Examiner. Feltons were elected. The Chairman thanked Richard Rhodes of Feltons for his work.

9. Chairman's Report

Ron Crompton provided an overview of 2019 and the lockdown implications of 2020 which included:

- The Heathrow campaign against proposed flight path changes;

- The Year of the Tree to raise the profile of trees in the Park;
- Conservation Projects including the completion of Beverley Brook Phase 2 and the eight year Ponds and Streams programme, and the Year of the Tree veteran tree protection and other tree projects.
- Volunteering noting the 250 volunteer roles;
- Lockdown including winding down some Friends activities in March 2020; and
- Priorities for 2020/21 including restarting activities, monitoring the through-traffic trial and increasing online sales

10. Questions to the trustees

The following questions were raised and answered by the trustees.

(i) Wildlife

What can be done about members of the public being increasingly close to wildlife? Nick Coleman highlighted this had increased with the increasing number of visitors and that there were three actions required: education (the growing volunteer rangers scheme should help), enforcement (the police have powers and do intervene) and signage. Vivienne Press explained that signs can be effective in changing behaviours of new and infrequent visitors if they have clear messages, are designed to stand out and are placed where people naturally pause. However, frequent visitors with harmful behaviours tend to ignore signs.

(ii) Acorns

What is the new kind of growth on acorns such that they appear to be diseased? Janet Bostock explained that it is a knopper gall caused by a tiny gall wasp. It doesn't harm the oak but it does deform the acorn which reduces the food for deer.

(iii) Ice cream van

What do the committee think of the decision, presumably by The Royal Parks, to allow Colicci to have ice cream van concessions operating in the Park, particularly at East Sheen Gate? Ron Crompton agreed that aesthetically that is not the right place for an ice cream van but with cancellation of various events The Royal Parks need the money it provides. The van has been moved to Petersham playground which, although not ideal, is a better place.

(iv) Cars

While the recent changes are a step in the right direction, is there more the Friends should do with respect to the trial, for example on lobbying? Ron Crompton responded noting that much had changed recently with the new six month trial following the Movement Strategy. The Friends had always been in favour of reducing through traffic. He urged members to respond to the Royal Parks consultation in November. The Friends would monitor the trial.

(v) Litter

What can be done about the amount of litter seen in the Park recently? How much is the Adopt-an-Area scheme reducing litter? Steve Sandham responded. The Royal Parks have a team of seven who empty litter bins and do litter picking when they can. The Friends now has over 100 volunteers collecting litter as part of the Adopt-an-Area scheme introduced three years ago. Adopt-an-Area restarted in June and that continues to make a significant difference.

(vi) Visitor Centre

When is the visitor centre going to open and will calendars and Christmas cards be available this year? Diane Peake responded that an opening date has not yet been fixed but a risk assessment has been carried out, changes have been implemented and a rota has been prepared. Approval is required from The Royal Parks. Vivienne Press noted that there were record Calendar sales last year and this year the calendar and Christmas Cards will be available online from the second week of September using a professional fulfilment company.

(vii) Cycling

It is wonderful to see families enjoying cycling in The Park as my family does but why are cycling events allowed to continue in The Park and why are lycra-clad racing cyclists dominating The Park? I am a regular cyclist but could more be done regarding club and group cyclists? Has a specific time limit been considered for cyclists, for example mornings?

Ron Crompton answered these questions. By cycling events it's assumed that this refers to Ride London and the Duathlon. While not appropriate for a National Nature Reserve they make a lot of money for The Royal Parks. The Friends have worked with The Royal Parks to monitor these and other events and the Friends feels the impact on the Park is as small as it can be.

In terms of cycling, the Friends are in favour of leisure cyclists enjoying the Park, but the Park should not become a velodrome and all cyclists should obey the 20mph limit. The fast cyclists comprise both clubs/groups and individuals. The clubs are a small proportion but are more visible and we liaise with them. The bigger problem is some individuals attempting personal best times or using the Strava app to record their time. Communication is harder with individuals and restricting individual cyclists to a particular time of day would need a larger police presence.

The Friends are concerned to ensure vulnerable users are properly protected. In particular, we are seeking more pedestrian crossings and cycling restrictions on the middle road.

(viii) Conservation projects.

How do the Friends choose what projects it should be funding? What projects are in the pipeline? Richard Gray responded the Friends did not fund maintenance which is the responsibility of The Royal Parks. The Friends considers critical areas such as ecology and biodiversity. The Ponds and

Streams project typified this and involved restoring 700m of Beverley Brook. The Friends considers education projects such as The Year of the Tree. Projects in the pipeline include further enclosing of veteran trees this winter; beyond that it has been difficult to progress further projects with the Park management this year as they have been involved with Covid related issues.

(ix) Speed bumps

Could more speed bumps be put on the roads? Ron Crompton responded that there are some speed bumps which do slow down cars but speed bumps don't slow fast cyclists. Increasing the height of the bumps to slow faster cyclists has often been proposed but would cause big problems for the Paralympic cyclists who use the Park.

(x) Ladderstile Gate

Should Ladderstile Gate ever be left open? Ron Crompton said he did not know the exact position here but this incident may have been because of a delivery.

(xi) Cyclist restrictions

Can cyclists be restricted to certain paths? Ron Crompton responded that cyclists are already restricted to the peripheral road, the Tamsin Trail and the three roads radiating from Pen Ponds car park. He said that he was concerned that by providing cyclists with dedicated paths across the parkland it would open up other areas of the Park to cyclists, with more off-track cycling.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.