

CLISSOLD PARK USER GROUP NEWSLETTER AND MINUTES OF MEETINGS

May/June 2009



Next meeting: Saturday 4th July 2009
11 am to Noon
Red Room in rear of Clissold House Café

With many changes and new things happening in Clissold Park (lottery bid decision coming up soon) make sure that YOUR views are heard, The meetings of this group are the main forum for airing public concerns about the way the Park is funded, managed and developed in the future. Whatever your main interest in the Park (playground, children, trees, wildlife, fun, football, tennis, running,...) you can influence future developments

To join the Clissold Park User Group (CPUG) mailing list and for this newsletter by email, contact
clissoldpug@yahoo.co.uk
Or see www.clissoldpark.com

Meeting of 9th May 2009

Caroline Millar, Co-vice Chair opened the meeting in Ken Worpole's (Chair) absence. There were a large number of park users expecting a meeting specifically about dogs. The group was welcomed to the meeting along with other park users.

Dogs

Caroline explained that while it had been intended as a follow up item to previous meeting, dogs as a focus of a major meeting had not been planned for this meeting and this is actually something that we are hoping that Hackney will be setting up. Caroline made it clear that this was a regular two monthly meeting to discuss **all** park issues. CPUG exists for Park Users to express their views and pass these on to the Council and to allow us to contribute to relevant consultations. CPUG does not have the authority or power to, for example, enforce byelaws.

Dog owners expressed concern about a rumour that dogs were to be forced to wear leads at all times. Caroline reiterated that this issue was on the agenda only as a matter arising from the meeting of 7th March, where the park manager had reported that there had been an increase in complaints from users about the behaviour of a small number of dogs and some incidents where users had been threatened by dog owners. Since then, the issue had been discussed further in a general meeting between CPUG officers and the Council on 23rd April and the Council have said that they are taking the

issues and concerns seriously and are developing a policy taking advice from Crufts and the RSPCA. The User Group representatives had stressed the need for proper enforcement to ensure that dogs were kept under control.

Michael Dixon, Park Manager, explained that there have been complaints about dog owners and that dogs have to be “kept under control.” There was consensus on this point and all agreed that just a small minority of irresponsible dog owners caused problems.

Issues aired included: Problems such as tree damage. Could apparent dog fouling actually be caused at night by foxes? Could there be more dog-free and/or dog-only enclosures? Could the current enclosures have effective gate closures please and planting or fencing which dogs could not get through? Could the mud puddles be eradicated to prevent mud baths... could there be dog showers? Has the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid consulted dog owners? Did the recent census of the park count the number of people with dogs? Could there be a proportionate compromise re the ‘dogleads’ issues with busy summer periods seeing ‘on-leads’ times, as on beaches?

It was re-emphasised that it is Hackney Council’s job to manage these issues, formulate policy and enforce existing byelaws. For example, it is a criminal offence to allow a dog to put people in fear and breaches can result in spot fines. **ACTION:** A meeting will be arranged by Cllr Karen Alcock with Hackney on dog issues, and CPUG will try to advertise the date.

Back to Introductions and Committee members...

Approximately 40 park users introduced themselves (list of those present available on request).

Committee members were confirmed as
Chair: Ken Worpole
Vice Chairs: Caroline Millar and Matt Jeary
Newsletter Secretary: Yvonne Hill
Communication Secretaries: Penny Crick and John Hudson
Post Secretary: Betty Manning
Lottery Bid Reps: Caroline Millar and John Hudson
Treasurer: Barbara McFarlane

Special Interest Leads:

Dogs - Simon Lissner, and Mark Forsyth (agreed at this meeting)
Children: Caroline Millar and Lisa Gormley
Senior Citizens: Sylvia Anderson (agreed at this meeting)

Park Manager’s Report

Michael Dixon reported that **The Water Fountain** is damaged and will be repaired once parts arrive. The boom on the river is containing the duckweed and apart from some algae at the bottom, the waters are relatively clear. **The Green Flag** inspectors will now arrive unannounced in ‘mystery shopper’ style, which will add pressure but is welcomed as this ensures a continuous striving for excellence.

John Hudson reported the following email **communications** not yet discussed: donation of trees; possibility of food recycling skip; and visibility of rangers and transparency of their job descriptions.

Michael Dixon explained that, following the restructuring of the **rangers' service**,¹ there were still staff shortages but there had been progress in some areas: there is a more stable staff rota; all are wearing ID vests and one ranger always carries a mobile for accessibility.

Park Users queries following Park Manager's Report:

- With only one ranger on locking duty it is easy to get locked in
- The toilets are closed well before closing time. Michael explained that they need to be cleaned 30 minutes before the end of the rangers' working day
- Michael confirmed that the long-leaking drainpipes for the House were now fixed.
- Discussion ensued re advantages and disadvantages of seating around trees versus shelters (to be discussed with HLF architects)
- The urgent and oft-repeated request for a handrail for easier access to the House was raised again.
- Was it necessary to prune hedges so fiercely? Biodiversity versus sightlines /health and safety was discussed.

Michael explained that, in his professional opinion, hard pruning was the best strategy in the long run, it fitted in with the long term vision for the HLF bid and nests had been preserved etc. There was a need to consider the horticultural, as well as management, issues. The HLF designs would include extensive areas of informal, as well as formal, planting.

ACTION: The User Group pressed very strongly for increased visibility of rangers and for details and quality of services provided to park users to be on display.

The Heritage Lottery Fund bid

There has been no formal announcement yet (hopefully by end of June) but if successful, work would start 10th January 2010, café would close end of October 2009 (not summer – hooray!). However, **the park needs decent, temporary provision** for café, tennis club and toilets. There were requests for adequate notice and well-planned, advertised consultation meetings and time lines. In addition 3D visual diagrams were needed to ensure clarity.

ACTION John Hudson to liaise with Cllr Karen Alcock, and contact Cllr Khan.

The café lease has already come to an end but is being extended until the house closes. There will be an open tender for both the temporary and permanent café.

Debate continues over the **café terraces**. The loss of flat terraced area to a grassy slope as envisaged in the original HLF plans has resulted in a petition signed by 450 in favour of preserving a large, terrace in front of the house, as well as a new terrace in the rose garden. The petition had been presented to the council. Cllr Karen Alcock stated that the council has listened and is revising its plans to extend the hard-standing at the front of the house, in consultation with consultants and council officers.

Concern was expressed over the placement of inevitable **site huts** during HLF works. In particular, reassurance was sought that 'temporary' but likely to become 'semi- permanent' huts would not be sited near residential areas. Correspondence had been received from a local resident who was particularly concerned about the location of any temporary accommodation for the tennis club once decanted out of the house.

Cllr Alcock said that in such a case planning permission would be needed. Uncertainty and disquiet remained on this issue. We have been promised detailed information about how the park and users will be affected and the user group will do all it can to make sure park users are kept informed. ACTION Cllr Karen Alcock to take back to Hackney.

AOB

“Rooted in the Earth” is a competition to find a name that will be planted in a floral display. Nominate someone to see your chosen name, as an accolade, in a flower carpet, in Clissold Park! Visit www.rootedintheearth.co.uk
Closing date 22nd May 2009.

Events: **Stoke Fest has been cancelled**, as the large scale is not suited to our park, and had become a safety issue. There will be a summer **Children’s Festival**.

There was a **proposal/** request for “Open Air Studio” to set up Yurts (tents) on the bowling green for an arts exhibition, working with reusable and renewable materials.

Artist to liaise with Michael Dixon.

Request was made, again, for **prior information please**, on events and activities so that they can be well advertised via CPUG website, newsletter and on the noticeboards.

ACTION Michael Dixon

Next meeting of CPUG:

Saturday 4th July 2009

11 – noon

Red Room Café

ALL WELCOME!

www.clissoldpark.com

Park Contacts

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For general park enquiries
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Council contacts:

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Lead responsible parks and
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Councillor Nargis Khan
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Councillor Linda Smith,
Clissold Ward

Matthew Coggins,
Lordship Ward