



## **CLISSOLD PARK USER GROUP CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

**March 2015 - February 2016**

**The Clissold Park User Group has existed for over twenty-five years and is open to everyone who uses or cares about the park. We hold six meetings a year to which everyone is welcome. We work closely with Hackney Council to improve the park.**

### **1. The role of the User Group**

We have had another busy year with increasing engagement from park users. Our focus continues to be on ensuring that everyone feels welcome in the park, that park users' are well informed and their voices are heard, that the park and its facilities are of high quality and are well-maintained, and that we encourage considerate, decent and friendly behaviour from everyone.

2015 was the penultimate year of the five year Heritage Lottery ongoing revenue funding which followed the large capital investment. This helps to pay for the Park Manager (Elle Potter) and the Park Development Officer (Lucy Gijzen) and we have therefore had to start considering what will happen after this funding comes to an end in December 2016. In addition to the loss of this funding, we expect significant cuts to local government funding over the next few years and the resourcing of the park is likely to become a much bigger issue for the user group over the coming years than it has been recently. In 2015 therefore we started to have conversations with Hackney Council and with park users about how we can sustain and maintain the park in the future. This may mean making some difficult choices and we want to make sure that as many park users as possible are involved in these discussions.

We have continued to work closely with the Council and in particular with the Park Manager, Elle Potter. We are well represented on the Clissold Park Development Board which exists to ensure that the Heritage Lottery targets are met and to look strategically at the big issues facing the park.

We held six public meetings in 2014, each one attended by between 20 and 40 people. We know that many people are not able, or do not want, to come to our meetings and we have continued to build profile in other ways as well as holding a number of social and community events. We now have 1150 members of the Facebook page (up by 400 from last year), 868 Twitter followers (up by 479 from last year) and 570 people on our email mailing list (up from 500 last year). Our website continues to be well-used especially for the information it provides about the park and its facilities.

We have a great team of volunteers who have contributed 360 hours of their time to the group by representing particular groups of users such as dog walkers and older people and helping out at our community events.

## **2. Key issues**

- We investigated the possibility of extending the opening hours of the park (sadly in the end the Council was unable to provide the resources needed to do this)
- We worked with the Council to help inform people about the Environment Agency's programme to eradicate the extremely damaging invasive fish species, topmouth gudgeon, from the ponds and the New River and supported the Council's consultation about the future management of the ponds
- We dealt with a number of concerns about dog-on-dog attacks in the park and the Council agreed to provide better information about what to do if this happens
- We continued to press the café for better service and better value for money resulting in a number of changes to the cafe menu including introducing some new cheaper items and reducing the price of some existing items
- The butterfly dome opened more frequently this year thanks to a team of volunteers
- In response to comments and complaints, we started the process of getting an extra baby swing in the playground. We will be consulting on where it should go and will fundraise for it this Spring and Summer
- We worked with the Council to help deal with the water supply issues in the house and toilets and pushed for portaloos to be put in place at busy times until the water problem is addressed (which will, with luck, be later this year)
- We were involved in discussions with various parts of the Council to try to improve cycling habits in the park to avoid the conflicts and dangerous incidents that sometimes occur. New signs were put up and we contributed to a bike pit-stop event held jointly by the Council and the police.
- We had some success in improving links with Stoke Newington School to encourage the pupils to clear up their litter at lunchtimes.
- We have worked with the Council to try to find a solution to the problem of foxes finding their way into the deer enclosure. The enclosure is now to be made more secure from foxes and then the family of foxes will be moved out of the enclosure.

- We have been consulted by the Council on all the events held in the park and have fed the views of park users back to them and to event organisers.
- In response to concerns raised at our meetings, the Council ran a survey of runners. This showed 88% satisfaction with the park as a place to run and support for ongoing maintenance of paths and the laying of woodchip.

### **3. Events and fundraising**

- We ran a very successful fundraising quiz which raised almost £1000 to be spent on providing free events and contributing to the new swings and drinking fountain
- We hosted a sold out talk by our Honorary President Ken Worpole on his new book, The New Jerusalem which featured Augustus Clissold and Swedenborg.
- Amir Dohtan, our park history rep, produced a slideshow of 100 images of the park and house over the centuries. It can be found on our website.
- We produced four postcards with historic images of the park which we have sold for fundraising.
- We contributed to Open House London in September 2015, showing our slide show and taking well over a hundred people on guided tours around the House.
- We ran several free events for families and children as part of the Stoke Newington Literary Festival in June.
- We ran a free evening of live summer music in the café garden which was much enjoyed and raised £50 in donations.
- We hosted a stall at the very popular Christmas Fair providing information and selling books, bags and postcards.
- We began planning a programme of CPUG events for 2016

### **4. Thanks**

Thanks, as always, are due to all the park staff including the park keepers and gardeners. Thanks too to the Park Manager, Elle Potter and Lucy Gijzen, who runs the schools and volunteering programme. We'd also like to thank Emma Finch and her team from GLL for their hard work in running the venue and the other staff working with them. Thanks also to the café for providing refreshments for our meetings and attending the meetings to listen to park users' concerns and compliments.

Finally thanks to all our officers: Ken Worpole our Honorary President, John Hudson and Mark Forsyth our Vice Chairs, Theresa Boden our Secretary, Anna Gualtieri our Treasurer; Delilah Jeary our minutes secretary, Amir Dotan our Park History rep and Isabelle Gore who designs and runs our website. Thanks are also due to: Yvonne Hill and Hilde Oord who set up and ran the fundraising quiz; Daphne Steele our dog walkers' representative; Richard Crawford our biodiversity rep, Alex Knox, our children and families rep, Anthony Larvin our disability rep; Davin Pitcher our cycling rep, Sylvia Anderson our older people's rep, Lee Stacy our runners' rep, John Dye our skaters' rep and Roderick Ryan, Cath Willgress and Theresa Boden for their help events. Finally thanks to Betty Manning for printing and posting the minutes and all the other volunteers who have helped out at different times.