

Friends of Ham Lands

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 16th May 2012

at St Thomas Aquinas Hall, Ham Street

Present 9 Members and 9 observers (non members)

Apologies were received from:

Sarah Howard	Councillor Brian Miller	Freda Hyde
Professor Richard Howard	Vanessa Fison	Geoff Hyde
Alison Fure	Penny Waheed	Sylvia Piele
Paul Bartlett	Sir David Williams	

1. Claire Fifield welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. A significant number of invitations sent out by email had been returned and she asked everyone to notify the Membership Secretary if they change their email account.

2. **Chair's Report**

Claire spoke to her report on the activities to date and expressed the Management Committee's thanks to Colin Cooper (South West London Environment Network) for his help in establishing the group and particularly for his advice on the Constitution. FoHL is still a new group and there is a need to recruit more members and for members to serve on the Management Committee. This need not be a time consuming role but the more people involved the more we will be able to achieve.

The Forum on the website provides an easy means for members to 'talk' to each other and those present were encouraged to use it and to post information and photos so that it becomes an active and interesting forum to follow.

Particular mention was made of the retendering of the Maintenance Contract for open spaces in the borough. In a time of reduced public expenditure there is a danger that maintenance will be reduced or not done well. Nature reserves need active management if they are not to deteriorate, particularly in the case of Ham Lands through the expansion of shrub. The Council's 10 year management plan for the Lands has expired and it is understood that there are no plans to review its impact and carry it forward.

In the future Claire said she would like to see FoHL being more active in the management of Ham Lands starting with litter picking but also including more 'fun' events such as an afternoon picnic. This provoked a

discussion about the need for insurance for those taking part and the efficacy of a waiver if insurance was too expensive. The Management Committee will consider this further, including arranging events jointly with larger and better resourced organisations.

The Chairs report was accepted by the meeting

3. **Treasurers Report.** A copy of the written Treasurer’s Report and a summary of the Accounts are attached to these minutes showing income of £103.00 and expenditure of £122.30. The deficit of £19.30 is covered by loans from Committee Members. A bank account is currently being opened with the Co-operative Bank.

The Treasurer’s report and accompanying accounts were approved by the meeting.

4. **Constitution**

No changes were proposed to the Constitution.

5. **Election of Management Committee**

The following appointments were made by a show of hands

Chair	Claire Fifield	Proposed by Roz Kadir	Seconded by Chris Ruse
Vice Chair	Roz Kadir	Proposed by Steve Fifield	Seconded by Chris Ruse
Treasurer	Steve Fifield	Proposed by Roz Kadir	Seconded by Chris Ruse
Secretary	Chris Ruse	Proposed by Steve Fifield	Seconded by Roz Kadir
Membership Secretary	Steve Fifield	Proposed by Roz Kadir	Seconded by Chris Ruse

Steve Fifield indicated that he would prefer to hand over the role of Treasurer to someone else, although he was willing to carry on for the time being. John Hatto indicated he would be interested in playing a more active role.

6. **Plans for the Future**

The meeting was opened up for a discussion on developing the Friends of Ham Lands which covered the following topics:

- 6..a) Is there a role for the British Wildlife Trust or a similar organisation in managing Ham Lands? Ham Lands is a local Nature Reserve which developed from the rubble of filled gravel pits and is used and enjoyed by a wide range of people. An organisation majoring on wildlife might not be sympathetic to such a wide variety of activities.

It was noted that the Richmond WLT had dissolved following disagreements within the organisation.

- 6..b 'Big Society' threat or potential? Community activism was viewed as a mixed blessing by some. Community orchards were cited as an initiative which could change the character of the Lands, although it was pointed out that 'orchards' did not necessarily mean rows of trees. The introduction of a broader range of activities and uses could eventually change the character and undermine the nature reserve eg 'Majestic Walk' by the Thames Landscape Strategy and the proposal for a bridge over the Thames to Strawberry Vale. Fragmentation of the area poses a potential threat.
- 6..c Neighbourhood Planning. Reference was made to changes in the planning system which could result in local people bring forward proposals for their area. FoHL should ask the Council to keep them informed of planning proposals in the area and Big Society initiatives. It was acknowledged that there is a need to work more closely with the Ham United Group.
- 6..d Understanding Ham Lands. There is a need to understand the eco systems of the Lands, particularly the reasons underlying the loss of wild flowers and butterflies.
- 6..e Footpath from Croft Way to Teddington Lock. This is a well used route which is getting wider and wider. Could it be improved in a sympathetic way to prevent it spreading?
- 6..f Works along Riverside Drive. There was general view that these seemed of questionable priority and value for money. Some thought that narrowing the carriageway was causing problems where cars are parked.
- 6..g New Maintenance Contract. The specification of the new maintenance contract could have far reaching consequences for Ham Lands. It will be important to work with the Council to ensure the new contractors respect the need for conservation of the flora and fauna.
- 6..h Future Communications. There appeared to be a preference for regular email newsletters rather than infrequent but longer newsletters.
- 6..i Dog Walkers The area is well used by dog walkers and we should make efforts to get them involved in FoHL.
- 6..j Evening Picnic The idea of a picnic with optional short walks or talks was floated.
- 6..k Flickr site for Ham Riverside Lands had been established by a member which everyone was encouraged to view.

7. The meeting closed at 9.00pm