



Waterlow Park Trust

Report of proceedings at a Waterlow Park public meeting

On Wednesday the 7th December 2016 about 55 people attended a meeting hosted by the Waterlow Park Trust at the newly re-opened Lauderdale House to hear from all the principal organisations involved in Waterlow Park and about the future.

Oliver Myers from Camden spoke first, **representing the Trustee**, giving a brief history and an overview of Trust activities.

The Waterlow Park Trust was registered in 1995 with the Charity Commission. The Trust was originally set up following an 1889 indenture whereby Sir Sydney Waterlow presented Waterlow Park as a gift to the London County Council as a public park for the people in perpetuity. This was transferred to Camden Council on the demise of the Greater London Council.

The Council (as the sole trustee) has the responsibility to both govern and provide services to manage the park.

Over the last four years The Waterlow Park Trust has been looking at how the Park can be made more sustainable in the face of cuts to future public sector funding. There have been a number of initiatives:

1. Working with Camden Council to refurbish Swains Lane Lodge and Dartmouth Park Lodge. Both lodges are now being rented and the income is coming back into the Park, subject to Camden reclaiming their refurbishment costs, interest free, over 8 years.
2. Working with Camden Council to put in place a six year lease on the Waterlow Park Centre with LUX. This will bring in an income to the Park and offset costs of managing the building.
3. Working with Camden Council and the Lauderdale House Society on a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to refurbish and extend Lauderdale House.
4. Working with groups local to Waterlow Park to form the Waterlow Park Trust Advisory Group. Local groups include:
 - Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Action Committee
 - Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum
 - Friends of Waterlow Park
 - Highgate Neighbourhood Forum

- Highgate Society
- Lauderdale House Society

The Trust Advisory Group will act in a strategic and advisory capacity to the Waterlow Park Trust.

Ian Henghes, the Interim Chair of the **Trust Advisory Group** (TAG), spoke about this new body. TAG functions as the ‘think tank’ for the Trust. Its purpose is to look at strategic issues to safeguard the future of the Park, and to advise on areas of policy about how the Park is managed.

TAG is not another layer of management, already ably handled by Camden Parks Department. The new website at www.waterlowparktrust.org.uk is not designed to be a primary point of contact for the public. Much of the function of the website is to signpost other organisations so that the appropriate connections are made. Everyone interested in the life of the Park is encouraged to join the Friends of Waterlow Park, if they are not already a member. The Friends are the “Voice of Park Users” and will always be part of TAG. One measure of TAG’s success will be helping to ensure that the different parties involved in the Park are communicating appropriately and aware of each other’s activities as well as looking for possibly synergies.

TAG are overseeing the formation of working parties to report back about different aspects of park life. The first is concerned with ‘Trees and Views’. These issues are being taken together, as one very much affects the other, given the important views in the Park and the contoured landscape. Other working parties to be constituted in due course may include events, sports, wildlife and biodiversity, memorials and more. Such working parties will always have representation from the Friends of Waterlow Park and may include others from the park community as appropriate along with Camden officers. Each such working party will have an initial brief provided by TAG. Members of the public with particular interest and expertise are invited to join. (*n.b. Two new prospective members of the trees and views working party came forward at the end of the main meeting*).

Andrew Wright, Camden Park Services Manager spoke about the various aspects of management that the council provides:

- *Grounds Maintenance*: Through a contract with OCS the soft landscaping in the Park is maintained by onsite staff including a park attendant, two static gardeners, a Head Gardener and an apprentice. Duties include locking and unlocking the Park, and undertaking safety inspections of the Park and playgrounds.
- *Waste collection*: Through a contract with Veolia Environmental Services Ltd, managed through the street environment team, the Council provides a waste collection and cleansing service for the Park.
- *Tree maintenance*: Through Camden’s arboricultural team the trees in the Park are surveyed every three years and necessary works undertaken by the Borough’s tree contractor City Suburban Tree Services Ltd. The Council also manages a programme of tree replacement in the Park.

- *Parks Security:* Through Camden's contract with CE Security the Park is patrolled by a team of parks security specialists. The Council also has a Parks Ranger service whose many duties include patrolling the site and dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour.
- *Parks Maintenance and improvements:* Through the repair and replacement of all site infrastructure, as well as improvements to the site through the Green Space Investment Programme.
- *Tennis provision:* Tennis provision through the six onsite courts
- *Events and filming:* Managing all events and filming on the site
- *Memorials:* providing members of the public with the opportunity to commemorate through memorial trees and benches.
- *Officer support for Trust activities:* Through assisting the Trust with leasing the lodges/Park Centre; liaison with the Waterlow Park Trust Advisory Group; supporting the refurbishment of Lauderdale House.

Katherine Ives, The Director of Lauderdale House gave an update on the restoration project and plans for the future.

Builders have only just finished work on the House. Katherine thanked Camden for their great support and partnership in the renovation project. There is a three year schools programme starting now that the new education centre is built with four secondary schools, and collaboration with local community centres. Integration with local communities is very important to Lauderdale including Archway and Highgate Village.

Merrilees Parker of Pink Food explained that they are just opening the newly refurbished cafe at Lauderdale House. Whilst not fully open until the weekend they are already catering for events in the House. The menu will evolve and become longer. Pink Food are providing British, ethically sourced food. They have reasonably priced coffee and home-made cakes, some food with a modern twist, along with sandwiches and soups. Pink Food specialise in events and hope to contribute to the House being an attractive events venue. The kitchen is designed to best facilitate a variety of overlapping requirements.

Ceridwen Roberts, Chair of the Friends of Waterlow Park (FoWP) explained that the Friends had a long history, initially picking up on the neglect of the Park in the 1980s and subsequently working through a Heritage Lottery funded project for the millennium. The Friends are now the Voice of Park Users and have a variety of activities. Under the leadership of Patricia Walby there are regularly FoWP volunteers in the park. Volunteering presents an opportunity for anyone who may be interested in a horticultural activity to be

active in the Park. The Volunteers have particular responsibility for the Sensory Border by Lauderdale House, as well as the Rose Circle, and have been active in a number of other designated areas, working in collaboration with Mark Walters, the much-appreciated Head Gardener who looks after the Park. FoWP have been responsible for the development of the Orchard and the Kitchen Garden.

FoWP ran the very successful Lark in the Park in September 2016 to commemorate the 125th Anniversary of the opening of the Park. It is not envisaged that this will be an annual event as it involved a very considerable volunteer effort to bring together. About £20,000 had to be raised to stage the event.

FoWP work with 6 Highgate Primary Schools who have been particularly involved with the Kitchen Garden and growing sunflowers. FoWP attended the Christmas Craft Fair at St Michael's Primary School. Children also took part in the Lark in the Park in specially written plays.

FoWP also review many issues in the park such as ponds, security and much more. Camden deserve every praise for the efforts they continue to devote to parks. Waterlow Park is fortunate to have the protection afforded by the Trust which includes properties such as the Lodges. Everyone is encouraged to join the Friends and to get involved. Consider joining the Committee to be really involved.

Ben Cook. Lux are the new tenants of the Waterlow Park Centre having taken it over in July. Lux are an agency and archive for artists working with moving images. Lux are supported by the Arts Council and are in the process of becoming an accredited museum. Lux are celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. Lux was based in Primrose Hill for 30 years. The Park Centre is now an exhibition and events space and houses an archive; there will also be a library. Lux is a public organisation and resource and have the largest collection in Europe of works by visual artists with about 7,000 works. There will be greater interchange with the Park with artists in residence and workshops, so Lux becomes a public space connected with the Park. Lux are keen to be part of the community. Knock on the door any time to visit.

Peter Hutchins. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) work in London delivering the Green Gym project. TCV have been working in Waterlow Park for 8 years and built the Waterlow Park Kitchen Garden, which is a great success story. They undertake practical gardening and conservation, building on fitness benefits. Maria is now the lead person in Waterlow Park. TCV works across 30 sites in Camden with their focus on conservation and improving spaces for biodiversity. TCV do a lot of work around the upper pond in Waterlow Park. David Attenborough recently planted an elm tree in the Park by the "new" play area to celebrate his 90th birthday and the work of TCV, as he is a Patron. TCV are in the Park every month.

Q&A

Q. There are no signposts to Lauderdale, Waterlow or the Cemetery around. What might be done?

A. Buses do say Lauderdale House; Waterlow Park. Archway has direction boards which indicate the Cemetery, and the Park. The Neighbourhood Forum is also discussing this issue for the local area. Community Infrastructure Levy money may be available. The FoWP have discussed signage. Do we need signage in the Park? Not reached a conclusion yet. Time is spent guiding people to the lavatories. Signage should be integrated, with thought put into design. There are maps at the gates but people have complained that they can be confusing.

Q. What is the extent of the financial challenge facing Waterlow Park?

A. Costs are, in part, offset by income from rental and saving, now that the Park Centre and Lodges are rented. FoWP should perhaps re-attempt to quantify the time spent in the Park by volunteers as this represents saving. This was an exercise done some years ago. Council has made cuts and will only have 50% of the 2010 level of funding in 2018. The new Grounds Maintenance Contract will be awarded in April and the budget has been largely protected, with the level of cost reduction limited to 10% which will see the quality of maintenance maintained. Events as income generating activity that people might complain about has not become a problem as yet. The Friends will always speak for park users on these matters.

Q How are Haringey and Islington implicated in Waterlow Park and are residents engaged?

A The Highgate Neighbourhood Forum, of which Waterlow Park is a part, looks at open spaces in both Haringey and Camden. It has encouraged exchanges between the two boroughs to join up thinking about green spaces. Conversations are ongoing between boroughs, and Local Residents' Associations are involved, and many local volunteers. The Park was given to "the people of London" and all park visitors are equal regardless of place of residency.

Q. What is the policy on leaf blowers? They are banned in some European countries as they can spread disease.

A. There are now quieter electric leaf-blowers in the park. Leaf blowers do have operational and health and safety at work benefits for operators. Discussion after the Q&A was encouraged if this topic warranted further exploration

Q. Who decides between Waterlow Park Advisory Group and Camden?

A. Jessica Gibbons is the Camden Trustee and the Trust makes the final decision. The Advisory Group may not have final say but will have significant influence in the decision-making process. There may, for example, be opportunity for local variations of Camden borough policy in some aspects of park life.

Q. With the Trust coming to the fore will it help to co-ordinate things between the different parties involved in decisions and policies?

A. The Trees and Views working party will involve a representative from Camden; Jessica will be coming to a couple of the Advisory Group meetings during the course of the year. We have a great partnership with Camden so the future augers well.

Q. Will the Trust hold further public meetings and provide reports?

A. We hope to hold an Annual Meeting and bring together the community of park organisations and users. People are encouraged to come forward to participate in the Advisory Group. The process of selection will be similar to finding Trustees for a charity. We are looking for a proactive group. If anyone would like to volunteer for a role on the Advisory Group they are encouraged to come forward.