

FRIENDS OF THE SCRUBS

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019

Abbreviations used in this Report

"The Friends"	the Friends of the Scrubs
"LCS"	Linford Christie Stadium
"LBHF"	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, also "the Council"
"OPDC"	Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation
"QPR"	Queens Park Rangers Football Club
"WSCT"	Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust

President

Stewart Dalby

The Committee

Elected AGM 26 March 2018

Stephen Waley-Cohen ("SWC") Chairman

Tony Curzon Price Treasurer

Miriam Shea ("MS") Secretary

Nina Hall

Smita Davé

David Jeffreys

Carmel McLoughlin

Chairman's Report

We could not undertake what we do without extraordinary contributions from your Committee Members. They devote a great deal of their free time, and expertise, to protecting the Scrubs we love and want to keep as an open, wild, unparkified, space, with its nature reserves, birds, butterflies, mammals, trees, plants and all its other pleasures and delights. On your behalf I thank them all.

Membership of the Friends remains free; do please encourage as many people as possible to join up so they can receive information and newsletters. Our indefatigable editor Nina Hall was sufficiently recovered from a horrible mugging attack last year to resume producing occasional newsletters, which are always enthusiastically received

You will see from the accounts that our financial resources are quite small. We are now inviting anyone who feels able to do so to make a voluntary contribution to our funds. We are now working to persuade people to respond to the Consultation on LCS, and printing and distributing leaflets costs money. If the Council makes what we regard as a bad decision following the Consultation, we may need to spend quite a lot more on political, public relations, and legal efforts.

You can contribute through our paypal account.

PAYPAL:

<https://www.paypal.com/pools/c/8dDBU5xgT6>

Thank to all our Friends, and the Committee.

Stephen Waley-Cohen
Chairman.

REPORT

At last year's AGM our constitution was amended to provide for the appointment of an honorary President, someone who could act as ambassador for the Friends and enhance our profile. Stewart Dalby had indicated his intention to retire as Chair, an office he had held with distinction for seven years. Stephen Waley-Cohen led the meeting in warmly thanking Stewart for his loyal and devoted service for so long after which the meeting appointed Stewart as President. The committee was elected as above

Meetings

The Committee has met several times during the year to deal with a variety of issues, mostly summarised in this Report.

WSCT Committee

One or both of our representatives (MS and S W-C) have attended all meetings. Kensington Aldridge Academy left the parade ground on the Scrubs last September but the temporary school buildings remain in place and their lease runs until July of this year to the benefit of the Trust. The rent from the Academy has provided a considerable boost to the Trust's finances, albeit temporary. It may be the case that KAA's lease is extended further to give the school the option of returning to the site as and when Grenfell Tower is demolished.

Quadron/Idverde maintenance contract

We continue to scrutinise operation of the contract and whether the contribution made by the Trust goes solely towards maintenance of the Scrubs. LBHF is beginning its evaluation of the broader contract ahead of its expiry in 2021.

LCS and QPR

Rumour and counter-rumour have continued to swirl around this subject in the past year. A delegation of the Friends' committee had what we thought was a helpful meeting with LBHF's leader Stephen Cowan, other councillors and officers on 27 March 2018, the day of our last AGM. We were given important assurances to the effect that

- QPR's then proposal did not meet the Council's requirements for the stadium

- the Council wished to maintain the community use of the stadium
- the Council wished to ensure, with FOWWS's co-operation, the strongest protection of the Scrubs from inappropriate development
- the Council would consult with FOWWS when they received a firm proposal for the stadium which they found of interest

These assurances have to be viewed in the light of events that followed (see below). The principal driver of the debate is of course how to enable the stadium to generate sufficient income to maintain it to an improved and suitable standard without resort to continuing subsidy from the LBHF and WSCT, which is an unacceptable drain on LBHF's resources.

With the financial support of Kensington Dragons FC, a regular user of the stadium with whom we have been in close co-operation during the year, we commissioned an options appraisal by consultants, Campbell Tickell, who reported to us in August 2018. The report was made available to our membership in September 2018 when Nina Hall's helpful summary was also circulated. There were three key messages: the lack of community sports facilities in the Borough; the unique nature and importance of the Scrubs to its users; the necessity for the Council to ensure that all the stakeholders in the Scrubs 'buy-in' to any future development proposals. The report's conclusions were of some use in finding some common ground between the interested parties and the respective merits of the options available, but the report has to a large extent been overtaken by the current Consultation being conducted by LBHF in co-operation with WSCT.

During the week of 18 March 2019 LBHF published its report on options for the stadium, overview and Consultation survey. The survey closes on 12 June 2019. We considered the original draft of the overview and survey to be heavily weighted in favour of Option 3 (see below) and were able to obtain changes that resulted in the final version being considerably more balanced.

The Options (shortened) with which our members will be familiar are

1. Do nothing
2. Improve current facilities through partnership with a sponsor directly by the Council or by a community-led redevelopment
3. Major re-development involving a performance venue or stadium of up to 45,000 seats accommodating sports and entertainment while retaining an athletics track and other facilities

Option 2 would raise additional revenue for necessary work and future management and maintenance. Option 3 would no doubt be the most financially attractive to LBHF but it is hoped, in the light of the assurances given in March 2018 (see above),

the financial attraction is not their only consideration. Naturally QPR favour Option 3.

On 27 March this year we organised a meeting to which interested parties were invited and at which our strategy in answering the survey was discussed. For the remainder of that week, thanks to the heroic efforts of Nina Hall, preparation got under way for the distribution of leaflets locally and a social and other media campaign pointing out the huge disadvantages to local residents and users of the Scrubs of Option 3 and the advantages of Option 2. This process is continuing at the time of writing this Report.

This survey is not the end of the consultation process. Once the findings are analysed, approval of any proposal will have to be obtained from the WSCT and very likely the Charity Commission and Mayor of London (and the Ministry of Defence who still have a say in any alterations to the Scrubs under the Wormwood Scrubs Act). Then there will be further consultation on specific development proposals.

Should something along the lines of Option 3 finally find favour with LBHF, we foresee immense problems for them in overcoming the planning constraints of Metropolitan Open Land ("MOL") and restrictions on the use of the Scrubs under the Wormwood Scrubs Act. Depending on what emerges from the consultation process we shall if necessary obtain proper professional advice, with a view to a political, legal, and public relations campaign against it.

Meanwhile, Kensington Dragons have produced an excellent short-term proposal for the regeneration of the existing sports pitches within the stadium, which they are discussing with the Council.

HS2 Act 2017

Ecological Enhancement of the Scrubs

The Scrubs Development Manager, Richard Gill, has been co-ordinating plans with a number of specialist consultants. He reports to the WSCT committee.

Japanese knotweed removal

The first part of the programme to remove knotweed from Lester's Embankment took place mostly in the summer of 2018 with little evidence of damage to the surrounding vegetation. It was undertaken under the supervision of the London Wildlife Trust to ensure minimum disturbance of our population of nesting birds.

HS2 Surveys

Several boreholes were sunk in 2018 in order to carry out geological checks needed for infrastructure to support the HS2 and Elizabeth Line stations and other

development on Old Oak Common. Two paths were cut in the grassland between the major diagonal path and the path adjacent to the Embankment but with little if any harm to the Scrubs' habitat.

Stamford Brook Sewer Diversion

Digging close to the Embankment took place in March 2019 to ascertain the position and condition of the existing sewer. Fortunately, again, this seems to have had no adverse effect on the habitat. At the time of writing this Report we have been unable to find out when the work proper will start.

HS2 Station on Old Oak

On 9 February 2019 HS2 mounted an exhibition of the proposed Old Oak Common station. It also showed the adjacent Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) station and from the models it is clear that no building above the station is contemplated. The planning of buildings around the station is however the subject of the OPDC Local Plan (see below). We have invited David Silvey, local community engagement manager for HS2, to give us an update on HS2's proposals at our AGM on 9 April 2019.

Scrubs Maintenance

We single out the following: last summer the path below the Embankment was allowed to become completely overgrown. Smita Davé arranged a meeting with Richard Gill as a result of which the brambles were cut back and the path became usable again. We put forward ideas to Richard for a more effective method of maintaining these paths which would not be intrusive, would be ecologically sound and would ensure the paths were also usable in winter. We also suggested a small additional path by the children's play area. We are seeking to ensure that some of the funds made available by HS2 go towards this sort of maintenance.

Overground Stations on Old Oak

In December 2018 TFL published their proposals for the Hythe Road and Old Oak Common Lane stations (go to TFL's website, search "Old Oak", click on "Have your say on two potential underground stations..." and under "Results updated 19 Dec 2018" click on "Response to issues raised report"). The possibility of a bridge to Victoria Road is raised without it being a necessary part of the existing proposal. You will notice that the project is co-funded by the EU and the report strikes a somewhat ominous note when it says "Funding remains a significant constraint on delivering these proposals. We are currently seeking to establish a package of funding that could enable the stations to be delivered by 2016 alongside the new HS2 and Elizabeth Line station".

The OPDC

OPDC Chairman and Chief Executive

After the resignation of Victoria Hills as Chief Executive Officer last April, Mick Mulhern (head of planning) was appointed interim CEO. A permanent appointment was postponed pending the OPDC's bid for £250 m of government funding for Old Oak North. This was granted in the middle of March this year but meanwhile, on 8 March, it was announced that Mulhern had left the OPDC. His replacement as interim CEO is David Lunts, the GLA's executive director of housing and land.

OPDC and the Scrubs

It remains the case that nothing has been done to implement the recommendations of the London Assembly (when OPDC was first created) and the Mayor's review of the OPDC concerning the removal of the Scrubs from the OPDC area, except an internal report pointing out the difficulties. Any removal would require at least an amendment to the LBHF and OPDC Local Plans (if not a fresh Plan). The LBHF Local Plan was adopted in February 2018 and the OPDC Local Plan is likely to be adopted later this year. Neither authority is likely to have the appetite for the process of an amendment even if the OPDC was sympathetic to the idea of removing the Scrubs – which it isn't.

The much-postponed walk on the Scrubs with members of the OPDC took place on 4 October 2018. OPDC representatives included Chairman Liz Peace and interim Chief Executive Mick Mulhern. They made sympathetic noises about the Scrubs, including the retention of Lester's Embankment (at least for the 20 years' duration of the proposed Local Plan) and access from the proposed Old Oak Common Station to the Scrubs. The Draft Local Plan (see below), while accepting that the presence of the IEP Depot stretching along the northern border of the Scrubs prevents removal of the embankment or access direct from the Station, gives no assurance as to the future of the embankment and remains wedded to the idea of direct access from the Station whenever that becomes feasible.

London Assembly

On 17th January 2019, MS, the Friend's representative and other invitees met with Navin Shah, London Assembly Member for Brent and Harrow and member of the following committees – Regeneration, GLA Oversight, Planning. MS voiced our ongoing concerns about the OPDC (accountability, boundary issue, Board composition, Local Plan). Navin Shah suggested more frequent meetings to get on top of the issues and expressed surprise that nothing has been done about the boundary issue.

OPDC Draft Local Plan Consultation

There was a third consultation in June 2018 (the second "Regulation 19" consultation) to which we responded in July. The Examination In Public ("EIP") of the Plan by an Inspector takes place from 2 to 18 April, following which the Inspector presents a report to the OPDC which may suggest changes. The plan is then finally adopted by the OPDC. As a party who has made representations in the consultations we intend to exercise our right to be heard at the EIP.

Grand Union Alliance ("GUA")

We continue to exchange views and information with the GUA. They are representing several local interests at the forthcoming OPDC Examination in Public.

Friends Accounts 2018-19

Income	2018/2019	2017/18
Donations	125	0
Interest	2.53	2.53
Expenditure		
Balances		
Scottish Widows	1268.63	1266.11
Current account	230.83	230.83
Paypal Account	331.5	206.5
Total	1830.96	1703.44

Stephen Waley-Cohen, Chair

April 2019