



Southwark Park Association 1869 Annual Report 2020/21

Introduction

Although the Association's activities in 2020/21 were curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic, far from closing down, we can report a number of positive achievements.

Bees in Southwark Park

The future of bees in Southwark Park produced more public comment than any other issue over the past year. We questioned why the bees had to be removed from their long-standing home within the Nature area, and were advised by the Council that anti-social behaviour necessitated temporary relocation to the Old Nursery while repair works are carried out. The long-term commitment by the Council to having bees in the park remains to be formally secured, and we thank our members, supporters and patrons for their efforts in pushing for that outcome. We also thank Our Rotherhithe for their support. We worked with apiarist Sharon Bassey on a Community Engagement Plan, which was submitted to the Council in April 2021. The plan includes visits to local Primary Schools and the Family Allotment Club and workshops for beekeepers.

'Fifty Not Out' Events and Activities Programme

We were successful in obtaining an award from Southwark Council's Neighbourhood Fund to celebrate half a century of the Council's ownership of Southwark Park. A programme of activities for all ages has been drawn up, and so far guided bird, bat and heritage walks have been put on, and a 'Come and Try' bowls evening. A guided tree walk, a carol concert, a photography exhibition, a *Birds of Southwark Park* booklet, children's cricket, bee activity and a housing estates sports day are in the pipeline. An event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee is planned, and with the help of Trees for Bermondsey a request for a commemorative tree has been lodged with the Council's Tree Officers. Rotherhithe Consolidated Charities have been generous in supporting the programme.

Southwark Park Satellite Tennis Club

In partnership with Poise Tennis C.I.C. Ltd we were successful in obtaining an award from London Sport to run a 30 week project of free weekly tennis sessions for young people aged 12-16. Although Covid restrictions initially impacted upon numbers attending, a core group of ten has been established. The programme runs from May-October 2021 and returns in spring 2022.

Southwark Park Vision

We contributed wholeheartedly to the Council's public consultation on the future of the park. We took views from our members and supporters; participated in Community Southwark's zoom sessions; produced our own detailed Vision Statement and welcomed Cllr. Catherine Rose, Cabinet Member for Transport, Parks and Sports, to speak on the subject at one of our meetings. A concern expressed during the consultation was the need for the Council to take account of a wider range of community opinions over the park. We agreed to apply to the Council's Democracy Fund to hold an event or meeting to get views on this important issue.

Partnerships, Community Engagement and Promotion

As an open and outward-looking group we value partnerships and have been pleased to retain the positive links we have developed with many groups and individuals since 2018. There are too many to itemise, but in the past year it is worth recording that we have benefitted by working with Blue in Bermondsey, Cherry Gardens Estate Tenants Association, Deli Felice, Green Connections S106, Our Rotherhithe Group, Peek Frean Museum, Poise Tennis C.I.C., Southwark Park Bowls Club, Southwark Park Cricket Club, Southwark Park Galleries and St. Peter and The Guardian Angels Church. We have been pleased to form new links with Ballers Academy, British Legion, John and Janet Cadera, London Sports, the North East Local Housing Forum, the Salter Centenary Committee and Trees for Bermondsey. Beyond the immediate neighbourhood we continue to be members of the Southwark Green Forum, London Federation of Green Spaces and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces. For volunteering we have registered with Hands On in London.

While community engagement opportunities were restricted by Covid, we did take part in the Remembrance Sunday event on 8th November 2020 at West Lane Memorial Gardens, and we took a stall at the Bermondsey Bitesize Carnival on 14th August 2021.

We made a firm decision not to close down during the pandemic, believing we should maintain regular contact with our members, supporters and elected representatives. A weekly ‘newsletter’ has been circulated and feedback tells us this has been appreciated, as has our presence on social media.

Watchful Eyes

If anyone ever had doubts, the pandemic brought home the undoubted value of the parks to the community. We appreciate what a task it is to maintain facilities in good order, and thank the staff for their efforts in challenging times. Nevertheless, it is one of our jobs to raise concerns when standards drop, so over the past year we have drawn the Council’s attention to the condition of the lake; poor drainage of certain grassed areas; inappropriate locating of a waste bin by the Queen’s Coronation Tree; and overgrown vegetation around seating in King’s Stairs Gardens. We also registered an objection to the proposed holding of the commercial K-Pop Music Festival, which would have reduced public access to Southwark Park unacceptably. On planning and park events matters we have requested Southwark Council register us as a formal consultee.

Membership

We have 250 individuals in our member/supporter database, a growth of 41 (16%) on last year.

Finances

Our account is in funds.

Our Patrons

We are honoured to have Jenny Bianco, Neil Coyle M.P., Travis Elborough, Mary Gibson and Rt. Hon. Sir Simon Hughes as our patrons.

Officers and Management Committee 2020/21

We thank the following people who served: Sharon Bassey (co-opted); Helen Collis; Dave Fisher; Gary Glover (Chair); Marjorie Hill (Assistant Treasurer); Kerry Hurley (Projects); Jill Jerram; Pat Kingwell (Secretary); Denis McMillan; Gary Magold (Treasurer), Pam Miller; Sallie Rickerby; Tracy Scales (Vice-Chair) and Simon Wilks (co-opted).

Meetings 2020/2021

General Meetings were held on: 23 June 2021 and 28th July 2021.

Management Committee Meetings were held on: 29th September 2020; 29th January 2021; 16th March 2021; 11th May 2021 and 31st August 2021.

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