

Minutes of the Friends of Vauxhall Park's AGM on Saturday 21 June 2025 held at Bonnington Square Cafe and Community Centre, 11 Vauxhall Grove, London SW8 1TD

Trustees

Charles King-Farlow
Tessa King-Farlow
Sarah Macdonald
Polly Freeman
John Roome
Laura Jaeger
Faith Boardman

Members and others present

Sarah Chambers (Membership Secretary)
Cllr Tom Swaine-Jameson (Vauxhall Ward)
Cllr Martin Bailey (Vauxhall Ward)
Paul Smith (Lambeth Parks)
Susan Smith
Charles Vyvyan
Liz Vyvyan
Nick Bence-Trower
Lyn Woodcraft
Rob Jaegar
Emma Robb
Robert Harwood
Pauline Gaunt
Frances McClellan
Annabelle Boys

1. Apologies (chair)

Apologies were received from Jill Gregson, Louise Norwood, Kate Lowowsky, Tom Anstey and John Scardino.

2. Minutes of the last AGM (6 July 2024)

No corrections.

3. Matters arising

Outstanding action: Asking the local pizza parlour about collecting their boxes from the park.
(Action: JR)

4. Chair's report and future park activities

John Roome's report was circulated with the AGM papers. Points of note were:

Volunteering: The WhatsApp group continues to grow but is not reflected in the number of volunteer gardeners. It was agreed that advance notice and provisional dates could encourage attendance. **(Action: JR, TKC, PF)**

Drinks event: The success of the 25th anniversary event was noted. It was suggested that a similar event take place in 2025. **(Action)**

Gardener: The loss of a permanent gardener was noted. Kevin Crook (Lambeth Council) sends in gardeners when suggested, or every 6-8 weeks.

Lavender: The harvest date (30-31st August) was noted to be in jeopardy due to hot weather as lavender bloomed a month early. The possibility of changing the date was noted, though there were concerns it would also impact distillation at Carshalton **(Action: LJ)**

Tennis courts: The success of the cleaning programme to prevent flooding was noted.

Awards: The park received a new green heritage site award.

Events: Concerns raised about future events in the park, notably the Kidney Research walk.

Kiosk: Friends of Vauxhall Park have been asked to be part of the selection panel for the operator of the new kiosk **(Action: PF)**

Secretary: Kate Lowowsky to start as Secretary after the AGM **(Action: KL)**

5. Phase II works update and future works

Polly Freeman updated the members on the new Pavilion.

Snagging issues: Works have now finished but a long list of snagging issues was raised by Polly, including major problems like the useability of the kiosk kitchen for an operator and the electricity set up. One issue with resolving these is issues with Lambeth Council's building control department and the need for signoff from the London Fire Brigade. The need for the back of the building to be closed off was also noted. A list of issues will be finalised in the coming days and noted to the council. **(Action: PF)**

After the list is submitted, Polly will meet with Dan Thomas, Head of Capital Projects, to discuss the timeframe for completion and opening of the kiosk. **(Action: PF)**

Toilet: On the issue of the kiosk within the pavilion, and the related toilet, Polly noted a complete breakdown in communications between the council and the Friends of Vauxhall Park. Vendors competing to run the kiosk have been told by agents that toilet maintenance is not included. This is not what we were promised by the council, and the Friends remain convinced that the toilet must be maintained by the vendor as leaving it to the council will lead to disrepair and disuse. We are keen to avoid a situation as when Parco opened and toilet use was separated out and made customers only.

Future works (under fives play area): Getting the play area off the ground is complicated by issues with capital projects and council funding, but the play area should be fully funded by section 106 monies. It still needs to be signed off, however. Paul Smith of Lambeth Parks promised to follow up in the coming weeks. **(Action: Paul Smith)**

6. 2025 Park events

Kidney Research Walk: It was agreed that this was the right cause in the wrong place and that capacity exceeded what was rational for the park. It was confirmed that the capacities for Vauxhall Park and Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens were mixed up by the council but by the time this was noticed Kidney Research had begun marketing the event. It was agreed that observers would be sought to report back on the conduct of the event. **(Action: JR/PF/TKF)**

The Friends will, however, receive money from this event that will be used to replace a number of dead lavender plants. It was also noted that Kidney Research (and all events organisers) are required to return the park to how they found it and if not, pay to make it good.

Other events: Members asked how events' calendars were circulated. Lambeth Council emails them on a regular basis. Sarah offered to send them on to whoever wished to see the most recent one. **(Action: SM)**

7. 2025 Lavender harvest 30/31 August

It was once again noted that the lavender harvest was potentially in jeopardy due to hot weather, which would reduce the oil pressed from the flowers. It was agreed that moving the date was likely not possible due to the availability of Carshalton still.

Laurie Rudham's passing was noted. As the founder of the Carshalton still, he was a great friend to Vauxhall Park and is immortalised in the Vauxhall Park fountain.

8. Duke of Edinburgh award scheme

Seven students have volunteered with the Friends of Vauxhall Park so far; the Friends would like to ask John Scardino to run it to attract more volunteers. **(Action: JR)**

9. Receipt of annual report and accounts (year ended 31 October 2024 – copy attached) and current financial position

The accounts were circulated in advance of the meeting; it was noted that the number at the bottom of the accounts was wrong and that this would be corrected before submission. **(Action: JR)**

Total income in the year was £2,989.54 while expenditure was £2,001.65, a surplus of £987.89. Expenditure in 2024 was diverse, covering new tools, hoses, refreshments for volunteers, website hosting, and the purchase of a card reader. The impact of the card reader was noted positively as it has made taking membership payments and donations much easier.

Bank interest of £1,001.16 was noted. It was taken into account that interest rates falling will impact future earnings.

Ardian from Parco's contribution was noted with thanks, as he covered some of the costs of the 25th anniversary event. Thanks were also offered to Faith Boardman for a generous donation to fit out the Friends of Vauxhall Park room in the new pavilion.

Repainting of the fountain is the main expense since the accounts were finalised at year end.

The total bank balance is currently £39,777.

10. Membership report

Sarah Chambers noted that there were 60 members, many of whom had been signed up with the card reader. There have been no complaints about increased fees.

The eternal issue of trying to set up standing orders was noted, as only 25% of memberships are standing orders. The possibility of charging people for several years at once was raised.

Laura Jaeger proposed setting up a table in the park to capture donations on the fly.

(Action: LJ)

11. Report from representative of Lambeth Council Parks' Department

Paul Smith, of Lambeth Council's Parks' Department, gave his report.

Pavilion: Paul expressed his support for the Friends' thoughts on the building and acknowledged the list of snagging issues was not ideal. He said he would look into the communication issues between different Council departments and the Fire service.

Concession kiosk: There have been 24 bids to run the concession kiosk, and a shortlisting process is taking place to narrow this to 4-5 potential vendors. Applications closed in March. Paul invited Cllr Martin Bailey to join the selection board, which Martin accepted.

Park staffing: Council finances mean that staffing in the park has fundamentally changed, and parks management has changed to reflect this. Grass cutting, for instance, has changed across the borough, with long grass now left under trees: this saves the council money and is better for the trees by reducing soil compaction. Grass cutting is on a fortnightly schedule across the summer, and the main focus is to reduce scrub ingress.

Trees: Trees are on a 4-5 year inspection schedule, though this is quite behind. They are hoping to get back on track soon with tree works, though this may make it appear that there is an influx of tree surgeries, removals, planting et cetera. The changes to grass cutting should also improve tree health, and it was noted that no-one should be driving vehicles under trees to reduce soil compaction (council vehicles included). Paul stressed the council's commitment to new trees and hedgerows.

Garden waste: Concerns were raised about clippings left lying and large branches too heavy to move left where they were cut. Paul confirmed that waste should be removed as it is produced; confirmed he would raise on Monday **(Action: Paul Smith)**

12. Election of trustees

Three trustees needed to resign by rotation at the AGM. Two trustees who have been longest in office, Louise Norwood and John Roome, and a third trustee, Laura Jaeger, determined by lot, accordingly retired as trustees and were accordingly re-elected unanimously.

It was noted that there are currently two people interested in becoming trustees in due course. New potential trustees were encouraged to come forward.

13. New Secretary

It was noted that Sarah Macdonald is standing down as Secretary and that Kate Lowowsky would be taking over the role after the AGM. The trustees thanked Sarah for her work and were pleased that she would be staying on as a trustee.

14. Other business

A watering schedule was discussed. John Roome was asked to run a session on effective watering. **(Action: JR)**

A statue of Fanny Wilkinson, who designed the original park, has been raised in Coronation Gardens. This joins her Blue Plaque on Shaftesbury Avenue in raising her profile.