

DRAFT Annual Report 2021 – Friends of Windmill Gardens

Charitable Incorporated Organisation with voting members other than its Charity Trustees – number 1176991

The sharp rise in Covid-19 infections during the winter of 2020-2021 created a difficult period for the charity sector and for the Friends of Windmill Gardens (FoWG). Despite this difficult environment, we have made some significant progress during the past twelve months.

In response to decisions made at the 2020 AGM our trustees concentrated on strengthening FoWG's leadership team. We advertised for new trustees to join the board and fill the skill gaps we had identified. Eight applicants were shortlisted for interview and three were encouraged to join the board. They have helped focus the work of our leadership team. The board reviewed and agreed our values, identified our key priorities, and our trustees are now working hard to deliver on these.

We ask members attending this AGM to endorse this strengthening of our leadership team.

The financial report presented to this AGM shows that despite the difficulties of the pandemic that have severely affected our ability to implement our business plan we have managed to work in new ways and keep our charity solvent. We are very aware that we face serious financial challenges and are currently re-writing our business plan having reviewed the four months since the government lifted Covid-19 restrictions. We have reflected on the current grant giving environment and the income generation strategy that we are submitting for agreement at this AGM reflects this.

2021 is the second year when our ability to deliver the education and community activities we are committed to under our legal agreement with Lambeth has been profoundly affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Despite that we have delivered some successes. The most significant is establishing the Brixton Windmill Centre (BWC) as an important new asset for our local community. With the easing of social distancing restrictions in the last four months, our part time staff, supported by a strong team of FoWG volunteers, have established the BWC as a well-used community venue.

BRIXTON WINDMILL

Building: FoWG continue to monitor the significant water ingress into the brick tower and the wooden cap and report these problems to Lambeth Council who own the Grade II* windmill. The next step is for the Council to produce a feasibility study and seek external funding. The building is checked bi-monthly by Lambeth's millwright contractor. This year the millwright did some minor repairs on the sails and spent three days dressing the French Burr millstones that FoWG use to grind Brixton Windmill Flour

Windmill Visitors: Visitor numbers during the past 12 months were low because until September 2021 only limited and pre-booked guided tours booked were available. A total of 140 guided tours were delivered over eight weekends. On the Sundays when the windmill was open to the public approximately 40 people joined the Brixton Hill heritage walks led by a volunteer who is a trained Blue Badge Guide. A fee is charged for these walks and all money raised is donated to Brixton Windmill.

Brixton Flour: Throughout the year our volunteer millers have produced wholemeal Brixton Flour at

the windmill using the set of stones installed in 1902 that are now powered by electricity. They have milled every week (excluding a period of six weeks when the stones were being dressed and re-calibrated) providing flour for sale at the BWC shop, our pop-up café and by shops and cafés.

Our millers continue to regularly donate flour to local foodbanks.

EVENTS

The government's Tier 3 social distancing measures negatively impacted our annual events programme. During the short period they were lifted we delivered our first open air Winter Market in December 2020. The event was well attended despite poor weather.

Tier 4 lockdown and the follow up restrictions meant that the only event of 2021 was our very successful Harvest Festival attended by 350 local people in September. That Harvest event, along with four open days at the windmill, our monthly heritage walk, and our annual windmill lecture '10 years since the 2011 Restoration of Brixton Windmill' was FoWG's contribution to this year's Lambeth Heritage Festival.

We will be holding our second Winter Market in December 2021 and have planned to deliver a full programme of free and low-cost community events in Windmill Gardens and at the BWC during 2022.

BRIXTON WINDMILL CENTRE

Finally, in July 2021, we were able to open the BWC for regular public activities as we had planned before Covid-19 hit us. Built by Lambeth Council in 2018-19 FoWG signed a 20-year lease to manage the building in July 2020 but were unable to fully open the centre.

Education workshops: The centre's primary purpose is to accommodate education workshops inspired by Brixton Windmill's history and technology.

It has not been easy to engage local schools in this programme because of their need to catch up from the extended period of school closures. However, since September, we have seen a return of school groups and hosted four school workshops and one adult ESOL group during October. We have more bookings for this term which is very welcome.

During the extensive lockdown months, we did work in partnership with a local education charity CEFLynx. They deliver school holiday play schemes in Windmill Gardens park. FoWG organised a wide range of skills training workshops to engage teenage attendees. Starting in the October 2020 half term break this workshop programme continued through the Easter, summer and autumn half term holidays culminating in a successful exhibition of the work produced by the young people. Our staff organised the programme and arranged the educators. The centre was used to deliver these workshops.

During lockdown FoWG adapted and improved the resource pack on sale in our shop. We designed a colourful new activity pack containing 12 creative projects for children of families living in digital poverty. 2,000 packs were printed and distributed via foodbanks, schools catering for the children of essential workers, and on local housing estates. The project was funded by a grant from City Bridge Trust.

Visitor centre: The BWC also serves as the visitor centre for Brixton Windmill. When the windmill was closed to visitors because of social distancing restrictions we successfully applied for a grant to produce a virtual tour. The film script was written by Ann, one of our volunteer trustees, and the project was managed by Mags our part time staff PA. The 30-minute virtual tour, funded by City Bridge Trust, has been shared with local residents and will be used in the future by visitors unable to access the steep stairs and ladders inside the windmill. We also produced a short version of the tour for use in our Windmill schools and adult education programmes.

Pop-up Café: We now have a committed team of volunteers who manage a pop-up café at the BWC. During the summer months this opened each afternoon Monday-Friday and also on Saturdays. During winter months it opens at weekends. The café has provided a steady source of income and, more importantly, has been a great way to meet and engage new volunteers and recruit FoWG members. When the café is open it means there are toilet facilities available for park users.

Windmill Shop: On all our open days and whenever the café is open our volunteers open our shop to sell FoWG's wide range of colourful windmill-themed products. These items can also be bought online and are another important income stream for our charity. We are grateful to Chris, our talented volunteer designer, who has introduced new lines in 2021.

BWC for hire: In January Lambeth Council hired the centre for eight weeks as a Covid-19 lateral flow test centre. This provided welcome revenue at a time when we were unable to hire the BWC to local residents and groups. Since July Lucy, our part time Business Development Manager, has successfully promoted the centre in our neighbourhood. Other charities and corporate groups as well as local people have found it an ideal space to hire. This has provided an extremely important revenue stream.

WINDMILL GARDENS

FoWG's volunteer gardeners continue improve the park. Monthly Saturday afternoon workshops suspended during lockdowns resumed in May 2021.

That month we also re-started weekly socially distanced tai chi classes in the park on Saturday mornings and their return was warmly welcomed by regular members of the group.

This year we also saw the completion of the major park landscaping improvements funded by a generous £10,000 grant from WREF and some small grants from Awards for All and Power to Change.

These improvements include: a new terraced food growing space at the west end of the BWC; a wildflower strip behind the windmill with hops planted along the fence; installation of a new FoWG noticeboard and a flagpole to fly the Green Flag Community Award retained for the sixth year (2015-2022); and the mini orchard of seven fruit trees planted along the north boundary of the park.

As well as our own volunteer gardeners we have benefitted from the generous support of Lambeth GoodGym charity whose runners regularly help improve the park.

Over the summer officers from Lambeth Landscapes consulted with playground users about new equipment. We are pleased that the Council have agreed to invest £100k in playground improvements next year.

Throughout the summer our gardeners have donated fresh vegetables to the local foodbank that provides food parcels to those in need on the neighbouring Blenheim Gardens housing estate.

VOLUNTEERS

Our windmill volunteers are our life blood. During the pandemic lockdowns we experienced a big increase in volunteer applications. Our volunteer policies are available on our website and those interested can apply online to join our team. We offer induction training to all, and specific training for tour guides, stewards, millers, gardeners, volunteer café staff and bakers as well as educators, and those that sign up to help with delivering our events. Anyone interested in PR, IT or website development can join our Comms sub-group. We need a strong team of volunteers able to support our part time staff with basic admin tasks and/or to greet BWC visitors.

I want to warmly thank all our regular volunteers. Particularly those that help on open days, mill flour, and always turn up to open the café. Your support is very much appreciated. Thank you all, and thanks to our volunteer coordinator, herself a volunteer!

STAFF

Over the past year we have employed two part time members of staff a Business Development Manager (BDM) and a Project Administrator (PA). Staff salaries are currently 75% funded by a two-year Power to Change grant. This grant ends in on 30th November. We are currently working hard to retain both staff posts but because of the pandemic delays we are not yet in a position to totally fund the posts from earned income.

Under the direction of FoWG's board of trustees our staff have worked to put our business plan into action and start to move FoWG from a local group of volunteers to a successful social enterprise run on a firm financial footing. Working with consultants funded by the Power to Change grant they organised a community consultation to gather information from park users, visitors to the windmill, and local stakeholders to find out what they think we do well, and what they want us to do in the future. Using online surveys and face to face discussions as well as a community leader consultation this information is help helping our forward planning. Working with

SuperHighways our BDM is also developing a social impact data collection framework.

It has been a great asset to have paid staff working at the centre. To keep them in post we need to continue to raise grants until our trading income increases. Our trustees are mindful of this and are currently preparing a new forward budget to inform a revised business plan.

FOWG ORGANISATION

Trustee Board: Our trustees have reviewed progress made by FoWG over the past year against the business plan which was drawn up pre-pandemic. The board concluded that most of the aims 'were a work in progress'. During the past year our trustees looked back at our original charity objectives and carried out a SWOT analysis to review FoWG's strengths and weaknesses as an organisation.

Priorities: From this review the board produced a list of draft priorities for the coming year and decided that the board had to think more strategically. A discussion was held with all trustees about their accountability, decision making, and their key responsibility as an elected trustee to ensure that FoWG is a financially sustainable organisation that can really meet its organisational aims.

Income generation: The board concluded that our first priority is to agree a clear strategy for income generation. That is why this is an item on the agenda of this AGM.

Community assets: The second priority is to preserve and promote the windmill, the new centre and the park as community assets. FoWG needs to maximise these, in particular the BWC, making sure that we make it a useful space for the whole community.

Volunteers: Our third priority is to empower our volunteers ensuring we have a clear strategy for both encouraging new volunteers and supporting our existing ones.

Sub-groups: We work with our volunteers in a number of sub-groups and teams. Trustees have the responsibility to lead in these groups and teams to ensure that all of them work to deliver on our key priorities.

Members: We need to increase FoWG's membership to ensure we are democratic and accountable to the local community.

Crucial to all of this is for our trustee board members to be clear about their trustee role and to make sure they support our volunteers, members and staff in achieving our agreed aims.

Strategic partners: are really important and the board needs to consider how to link with local organisations such as schools, charities, the corporate sector in order to meet our aims and maximise the benefits that FoWG can bring to the local community.

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

FoWG has various sub-groups and our Comms group is one of the most important. They manage the Brixton Windmill website and this year launched the online shop. They are also responsible for producing our monthly e-newsletters. They keep Brixton Windmill in the public eye via our facebook, flickr, Instagram, twitter, and YouTube accounts. The sub-group is also responsible for building FoWG membership and developing partnerships.

FUNDRAISING

Our 2020-2021 accounts show a substantial part of FoWG's expenditure is still funded from grants.

Our aim is that the grant fundraising profile will shift from raising grants to cover the core costs of staff salaries and building management expenses to grants that fund new projects. However, in the coming year we still need the core cost support from grantees. Our fundraising sub-group volunteers work very hard and over the past year have successfully raised a number of small grants and continue to seek core funding.

THANKS

One of the best things in an annual report is to be able to thank all our supporters; our members, our growing number of volunteers and our trustees for everything they do for Brixton Windmill, Windmill Gardens and at the Brixton Windmill Centre..

Our CIO constitution states that at each AGM three of our board of 12 trustees must step down although they are able to seek re-election. This year of the three trustees standing down two are not seeking re-election.

I want to thank Liz du Parcq for her hard work as a trustee. She has been an important member of the board for several years and helped steer the FoWG's transition from an unincorporated charity to becoming a CIO taking on the responsibilities of employing our first part time members of staff. Liz has been important in establishing good practice in our financial management and of course she set up and delivers our monthly Windmill heritage walks

We will miss her on the board but are very pleased that she will continue to lead the Windmill walks.

Jeff Thomas has also been a trustee for several years and is our IT specialist. He managed the introduction of GDPR and has supported our lead miller Abel in developing our team of milling volunteers. Because of ongoing hospital treatment, he is not seeking re-election as a trustee

I want to thank him for all his hard work on the board, in particular his work as a member of the Comms group resolving IT glitches during the establishment of the new website and the online shop.

We wish Jeff a successful recovery and all the very best for the future.

I want to thank all our trustees for their hard work and commitment. They bring their particular skills and experience and volunteer a great deal of time to enable everything we do at Brixton Windmill

This year our board of trustees was strengthened when three new trustees were co-opted onto the board. It is for this AGM to confirm their membership of the board of trustees

We have benefitted from many generous donations from FoWG members and members of the public and we thank them. But we could not have successfully managed the opening of our new centre this year without the support of our main funder Power to Change. Their £95,806 two-year grant award enabled FoWG to employ our two part time members of staff and helped cover the running costs of the new building over the past two years. This funding was supplemented this year by the £4,000 Trade Up grant that paid for the training for our lead miller, Abel at the School for Social Entrepreneurs and a further £8,000 to employ consultants to help us develop a social impact framework. The Power to Change grant ends at the end of November.

We must also thank Blenheim Gardens Resident Management Organisation (BGRMO) who have again this year provided financial support for our events programme in Windmill Gardens.

We also thank the Ecclesiastical Movement for Good, City Bridge Trust, the the London Community Relief Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund for their generous grant support during the past year.

Finally: This is the last report I will present to the Friends as FoWG's trustee chair. After 11 years as FoWG chair, and following this AGM, the board will appoint FoWG's officers, including a new chair, at their December meeting.

Jean Kerrigan
FoWG Chair
31/10/2021