



Annual Report 2023 – Friends of Windmill Gardens

Welcome to the 2023 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Windmill Gardens and Brixton Windmill (FOWG). This year, FOWG celebrates 20 years of a successful community campaign that has enabled the restoration of our beloved 200-year old Windmill, flour milling to begin again, the commissioning and opening of a new community centre, the restoration of the park's playground and our popular programme of engagement events and activities to come back stronger after the pandemic. We have been recognised for our efforts in many quarters including the award of another Green Flag Award.

As we celebrate our 20th anniversary, we have a lot to be grateful for; we owe special thanks to our “pioneer volunteers” that started this campaign and first raised awareness of this unique treasure at the heart of Brixton. They have inspired us all to dream about what role we could each play in its future. If you had a chance to attend our Annual Talk this year, you enjoyed the fantastic exhibition that Jean, Penny, Nick and Annick put together telling the story of how FOWG was formed, the key movers and shakers and how we've become a thriving community and heritage organisation in Lambeth. Over the years, their aspirations have evolved from “putting the wind back in our sails” to “the only working windmill in central London”. We are proud to continue their legacy.

With that in mind, I am pleased to launch our new 3-year Business Plan 2023-26 which sets out the 3 year strategy to deliver on the Strategic Objectives and the priorities our local community, volunteers, members and partners told us were important.

Launching a new business plan at this time is not without its challenges – high inflation and the cost-of-living crisis are expected to adversely affect household incomes and therefore impact our ability to generate revenue from events, activities, hires and donations. However, this doesn't mean that we stop being ambitious about the future – in fact our Action Plan 2023-26 includes 8 SMART objectives that will support our efforts to continue to embed the windmill, the park and the community centre into lives of our local community through our engagement and work with our local partners including Lambeth council, BGRMO, CEFL, Share and funding partners to do this.

As a Charity we are dedicated to preserving and showcasing the historical significance of the 200-year-old windmill, providing educational and leisure opportunities, and fostering community engagement. Our vision is ***to continue to increase awareness of the windmill and its historic significance and strengthen our offering of activities aimed to improve the wellbeing of the local community.***

We ask our voting members attending the AGM to endorse the Business Plan 2023-26 and the leadership team responsible for its delivery.

SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Membership:** increased from 115 to 138 paid memberships
- **Grants:** secured £30,000 grant from City Bridge Trust
- **Donations:** raised c. £14,000
- **Business Plan:** new Business Plan launched with 3-year Action Plan.
- **Reserves policy:** Increased our reserve to £20,000
- **Volunteers:** Delivered spring volunteer training programme and expecting to launch Volunteer Management System imminently.



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- **Brixton Windmill Education Centre:** Generating 50% of trading income – £25,336.
- **Engagement:** events and activities generating c.£15,000 income and increased audience including c2500 visitors to B&B Festival this Spring and 1000 visitors attended our Harvest Festival in September. Trialled paid entry event – Alice in Aerialand Show.
- **Guided tours:** Over 850 visitors have been given guided tours of the windmill
- **Social Value:** Secured new funding to support activities. Engagement with local families with Easter Family Day and Art in the Park and older residents through Tai Chi, Wellbeing Community Club and working with partners including Share.
- **Shop:** generating 13% of our trading income – £6,409.
- **Communication:** newsletters going out at least once a month, updates on social media and positive coverage in Brixton Bugle.
- **Milling:** Looking forward to welcome new trustee – Liz to lead the milling subgroup and volunteers.
- **Governance:** We have recruited 3 new trustees to support milling, events and visitor attraction and Comms.

DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES

BRIXTON WINDMILL

We have raised the issue of damp and water ingress into the windmill to Lambeth Council's Parks Department. The council is now undertaking fresh surveys to understand next steps options to protect the building and enable us to continue our activities.

BRIXTON WINDMILL COMMUNITY CENTRE

The community centre continues to support activities throughout the week as well as events. The centre continues to generate important income for us.

EDUCATION

Centre Manager Catherine and Mags are leading our education engagement working with two delivery facilitators Chloe and Allen. Education continues to also be an area of focus for fundraising.

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

We are continuing to work on our long term ambition to obtain Museum Heritage Accreditation. We have requested a letter of support from Lambeth Council's Parks Department to aid in this process and to enable us to access more funding.

PARKS

We are very pleased that Windmill Gardens has retained its Community Green Flag, first awarded in 2015, for a further year. Thanks, must go to our dedicated group of gardening volunteers and also to Lambeth Council who refurbished the children's playground this year. The new equipment is extremely popular and a great addition to the facilities of our park

We are pleased that, thanks to our fundraising sub-group, FOWG have been awarded £30,000 grant from City Bridge Trust for 3-year gardening workshops programme with members of [Share Community](#) our Community Club for over 55s and FOWG



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volunteer gardeners. Sessions run from Spring to Autumn each year and started this September. The plan is to totally refurbish the herb bed creating a sensory garden. Our volunteers will be working with professional community gardeners from Urban Canopy.

IMPROVING PARK ACCESS

In June this year, we applied for a £22,850 grant from Changing Lives – Lambeth Social Fund to support the installation of lighting in the park and the resurfacing of the main path into the park. We are waiting to hear back if we have been successful and have raised this with local councillors and Lambeth CE at recent visit.

MEMORIAL BENCH

Two new benches were installed in Windmill Gardens this year.

The first is in memory of Jane Clifton a young barrister who, with her partner Tetteh Turkson, became a windmill tour guide in 2012. Jane's life was cut tragically short when she died of brain cancer aged just 39. The bench is a much-appreciated donation by her family to mark Jane's love of Brixton Windmill.

The second memorial bench is in memory of Jeff Thomas, who died of cancer in January 2022. Jeff was only 55. He became a windmill volunteer in 2016 and trained as a tour guide

and miller. He was a very active and supportive FOWG Trustee. His bench was installed next to the windmill in July and was dedicated on 30th July in a small ceremony where Jeff's sister Julie, his niece and their friend who had travelled from Bridgend, were joined by a group of FOWG millers, and FOWG members. Thanks to members and supporters who donated to the cost of this bench (£2,288.89).

TRUSTEES

This year we are looking to welcome three new trustees: John, Liz and Tori, to our board, subject to AGM vote. John if successful will lead on comms, Liz will take on Events and Attraction and Tori is stepping in to support milling.

This year we also say a huge thank you and goodbye to Mark who has dedicated his time to making our comms smarter and more visible including in Brixton Bugle, Brixton Buzz and ensuring regular news and updates are disseminate to our membership and partners.

THANK YOU

On behalf of the board of Trustees, I want to say thank you to our volunteers, our members, our staff, our keyholders and our local partners including Lambeth Council, BGRMO, CEFL, Share, Brixton BID, Brixton Brewery and the local shops who sell our flour and merchandise.

Toussainte Reba
FOWG Chair
October 2023



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Julie Thomas and her daughter on right with millers and FOWG members at the dedication of Jeff's bench on 30 July 2023 in Windmill Gardens.