

## **FRIENDS OF WINDMILL GARDENS (CIO no. 1176991)**

### **MINUTES OF SPRING GENERAL MEETING**

Held in person at

BRIXTON WINDMILL CENTRE, 100 Blenheim Gardens, London SE2 5DA

At 7PM, 16<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025

### **MINUTES**

#### **ATTENDANCE:**

##### **In person**

**Members:** Annick Alet, Bill Linksey, Carolyn Weniz, Chris Patton, Edgar D'Mello, Edgar Sutcliffe, Emma Smith-Bodie, Jean Kerrigan, John Licence, Liz du Parcq, Lizzie Taczalski, Louis Gonzalez-Lopez, Nick Weedon (Chair), Olivia Christophersen (Minutes), Penny Steele, Robert Adie, Sonam Sikka

**Non-members:** Alissa Abena, Angela Abena, Debbie Cottrell, Lena Augustinson, Sil McQueen, Yaniv Fransez

**Apologies:** Viv Whittingham, Ann Lee, Catherine Hamilton, Marylin Rogers, Eric Harvison

#### **1 WELCOME & INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR:**

Nick Weedon (Chair) thanked all members and non-members for attending.

#### **2 FoWG AUTUMN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES 2024**

The Minutes for the Autumn Annual General Meeting 2024 were presented to the members. It was noted that queries relating to the accounts would be addressed during the financial update. The minutes were approved without comments.

#### **3 CHAIR'S SPRING REPORT 2025**

The Chair, Nick Weedon, presented his Spring Report. He began by thanking all the volunteers for their work and introducing 2 new trustees: Edgar DMello, as treasurer and Yaniv Fransev. It was noted that Edgar Sutcliffe is standing down from the fundraising trustee role. He expressed his thanks to the fundraising committee and the Chair thanked Edgar for all his work. It was noted that recent successes included a National Lottery grant of over £19,000.

The chair summarised some key activities since the Autumn AGM:

- Archive and History - The annual talk is being developed for local history month covering the 12 windmills of Lambeth.
- Museum accreditation - This is a complex process so the establishment of a separate group outside the Archive and History group is being explored. The necessary amendments to the constitution have been drafted.
- Finance - The new treasurer has carried out a detailed analysis of the last 2 years figures, addressing questions from the AGM. Misattribution of funds has been corrected and more rigorous systems will be put in place to avoid similar issues and improve future reporting. A savings account has been applied for, which will earn interest.
- Fundraising - The LHF project finishes next month. There will be a detailed report to the funders, the draft of which is due in May. Other grants, as set out in the chair's report, were summarised. The 2 year funding for the Thursday Community Club, which was received before Christmas, was also mentioned. Future funding priorities include re-establishing the

- education officer role and installing a sliding partition in the centre.
- Maintenance - The sails have been partially restored but the tar/brickwork needs attention. Lambeth Council is developing a new strategy for looking at heritage assets in the parks. A meeting with them highlighted the maintenance requirements, which will be expensive and may require joint funding. A suggestion has been made to the council that a new aspect of the project could involve training apprentices in heritage repair, with this expertise then being used in other parks in the borough. Multiple fractures have been identified on the planks on the sliding doors outside the centre. The chair proposed to the council that these could be fixed by volunteers on a rolling basis if we had spare planks of a suitable material. The council has not yet responded to either proposal.
  - Milling - A new order from the Toad Bakery in Peckham has been received. New labels for the bags have been produced, with both sizes now the same colour.
  - Park - The gardening group continues to meet monthly. There are six new trees, which are hopefully a prelude to a future woodland glade in the area known as 'the sock'. April bearded wheat was planted recently, which can hopefully be shown to visitors in Summer.
  - Volunteering - Abel organised a Volunteer Day alongside four induction sessions, which resulted in several new sign ups including some new trainee guides. Feedback from the volunteer induction sessions was positive. Assemble is now the main touch point for volunteers, with over 70 signed up, and there are plans to start using the reporting function to understand our volunteers and events better which will inform future events. The Chair encouraged people to fill in their diversity information on Assemble to help improve our reporting.

Emma Brodie-Smith asked who will manage Assemble when Abel leaves. The Chair said two trustees are being added to the Admin function to help manage Assemble and also analyse the data.

Jean Kerrigan noted that a funding bid to develop a woodland area had been submitted and was unsuccessful but there are plans to continue to submit applications for this.

The Chair introduced Debbie Cottrell, the new coordinator (and former member) of the community club. She spoke about the importance of this facility.

#### **4 ENHANCEMENTS TO FINANCIAL SYSTEMS/REPORTING**

The new Treasurer, Edgar D'Mello, gave an update of his work since joining in January. He had started by looking at the concerns raised at AGM (high variances for certain items and the level of reserves) and investigating the financial reports that had been submitted.

The variances are largely due to items being misposted in Quickbooks. There will be improved diligence this year and attempts will be made to correct the categorisation for last financial year, ensuring the amounts allocated to restricted and unrestricted funds is correct. Some historic grant money was not spent in full or was not assigned to the right category. He will work closely with the fundraising committee on this. It was noted that it is not possible to correct historic accounts which have been submitted.

Louis Gonzalez-Lopez asked if unspent money has to be returned to funders. This is generally the case but it varies by funders. It was agreed that allocating money correctly is very important.

The treasurer recommended transferring funds from closed grants to unrestricted to increase the reserves. The excess in restricted funds is partly due to misallocation.

Overall, it was noted that the organisation is in a good position financially with a reasonable surplus, which provides a good buffer if necessary.

Jean Keerigan noted that most grant applications require clear budget lines. For example, the community club funding includes an amount for things like venue hire and staff support. While this money has been spent it has not always been allocated correctly in the accounts. Grant applications always ask if we have reserves so it is important to be able to show this.

Jean Kerrigan also said that trustees need to give a steer to the fundraising group on what the priorities are that they should bid for. She noted the challenging fundraising climate, with some large grant funders not currently giving out grants.

The treasurer noted that the focus should be on spending the grants we have knowing we have a sufficient buffer if necessary.

## **5 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

The Comms trustee, John Licence, gave an overview of recent activity. Highlights included:

- a 40% increase in website traffic YOY 23/24, mainly driven by improved SEO, free Google ad funds and free Meta ad funds
- enhanced Social Media posting using fewer graphics, more photos, and an increased focus on Milling, History and other topics
- continued support from our 3 local celebrities, posting on their social media
- free Google ads funds focussed on Volunteering, Venue hire, Education, and occasional specific events
- use of Meta ads with charity funds for various events, trustee vacancies and volunteering, generating 236,000 impressions, which will have raised awareness
- continued promotion of events with local groups, newsletters and websites, including a great article on the Windmill recently in The Londonist
- continued monthly Newsletter
- 2025 spring and summer Events leaflet printed and distributed

The most visited pages on the website were events, visits and 'book a tour'. The most increased page visited was volunteering.

John gave a big thank you to:

- Chris Patton for his continued work on producing graphics for social media posts and leaflets and managing Instagram
- Catherine Hamilton for her posting on FB, twitter, newsletters etc
- Jean and Penny for their support for the committee, ideas and developing our history post program

Louis Gonzalez-Lopez asked if it costs £40 to advertise on Meta, could we do more?

It was agreed this would be good but time resource is limited so activity has to be targeted. An example was activity relating to volunteering, which generated interest leading to some sign ups.

Edgar D'Mello asked if we get value from the people we pay to manage the website.

It was agreed that this was good value for money. Their fee is low for this type of work and John meets with them every few months to make sure they are delivering. They are also responsible for the online shop. It was also noted that they are a small local firm.

## **6 PROJECT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO WINDMILL GARDENS**

The Chair introduced Joe Higson to provide an update on the project.

He described himself as a local resident, good friend of Windmill Gardens and regular visitor

with his family. He made the case for improving the entrance to be more welcoming and inviting, better reflecting the community hub and iconic building. He is working with another local resident on this. He gave a presentation setting out the issues including accessibility, litter, signage and safety and showing examples of improved streetscapes in other areas. He had run a workshop with the Community Club and received very helpful responses. There is general agreement that radical improvement is possible.

Blenheim Gardens estate are contributing to the survey and Danny from their RMO is supportive. It is hoped that Squire and partners will contribute in a limited way, creating prototype visions of what the entrance could look like. He hopes to meet with councillors in May but will need Lambeth Housing on board to provide consent and working out funding as the plot at the end of the street is run by them. They may need to be creative in identifying funding opportunities for Lambeth Housing eg green initiatives in the borough.

Joe requested that attendees provide encouragement to keep this work moving.

There has been a suggestion to ask buses at the nearest stop to say 'alight here for Brixton Windmill'. The chair noted a similar attempt had previously failed as TfL felt this was advertising the Windmill pub but a new attempt using the wording to 'historic windmill' was worth trying.

Sil McQueen noted that wheelchair access is very poor and suggested the council should be responsible for that. She also suggested having a mural as you approach from Brixton Hill like the one on the other side.

Liz du Parcq suggested applying for section 106 money.

Bill Linksey queried whether the street was the responsibility of the highways rather than the housing department. He suggested looking at the public streetworks register of roads as road funding generally comes out of the highway budget. He may be able to help with this.

Action - JH to send the QR code and/or survey promotion to Catherine to include in the Newsletter.

## **7 PRIORITIES AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN 2025/26, Nick Weedon**

The Chair said that the January Board meeting had looked at the 3-year business plan, which runs to 2026. It had noted progress in many areas and identified priorities for this year where more work is needed. This is summarised in a slide which was shown on screen but there was insufficient time to describe it in detail.

He said that in the latter part of this year the Board will work on the next business plan.

## **8 ELECTION OF NEW TRUSTEES**

The Chair invited the two new Trustees in attendance to introduce themselves.

Edgar DMello introduced himself and mentioned his background in finance and his desire to give back to the community now he is retired. Also a trustee of Wimbledon Windmill and very interested in windmills.

Edgar DMello was proposed by Nick Weedon. Seconded by Jean Kerrigan. Members voted unanimously to recruit Edgar DMello to the Board as Treasurer.

Yaniv Fransez introduced himself as an accountant with experience in governance and strategic planning, currently on a career break. He was attracted by the combination of community and heritage.

Yaniv Fransez was proposed by Nick Weedon. Seconded by Emma Bodie-Smith. Members voted unanimously to recruit Yaniv Fransez to the Board as Trustee lead for Risk management, Strategy and Governance.

## **9 RESOLUTIONS**

No resolutions were submitted to the Secretary ahead of the General Meeting and none were raised at the meeting.

## **10 AOB**

The Chair mentioned a visit which was planned to Upminster Windmill at 2.30 on Sunday 18 May. There is some space. Anyone interested in joining the visit should e-mail the Chair.

The Chair thanked Lena for all her work on the Thursday club and extended a very big thank you to the attendees for coming.

## **11 DRINKS AND SOCIAL**

The meeting was closed at 8.32pm and attendees were invited to stay for beverages, snacks and to socialise.