



The Friends of South Park Gardens

Annual Report and Accounts

1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

THE FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK GARDENS

Address

c/o The Garden Pavilion, South Park Gardens, Wimbledon, London SW19 8PN.

Trustees

Nicholas Evans (Chair from 12th Sept 2024)

Helen Day (Chair to 12th Sept 2024)

Sylvia Lucas (Secretary)

Caroline Threadgold

Helen Rogers

Tony Medawar

Jamie Hay (appointed on 12th Sept 2024)

Sarah Willis (resigned on 12th Sept 2024)

Susan Hook (resigned on 12th Sept 2024)

Katie Gibson (resigned on 12th Sept 2024)

Bankers

Lloyds Bank plc, Chichester Branch, PO Box 1000, BX1 1LT

CCLA Investment Management Ltd, COIF Charity Funds, 80 Cheapside, London EC4V 6DZ

THE FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK GARDENS

ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

The Friends of South Park Gardens is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission under number 1162459. The CIO is a direct replacement of the unincorporated charity with the same name. The CIO was entered on the charities register of The Charity Commission on 26th June 2015.

Charitable objects

The object of the charity is, in summary, to promote, support and assist in the maintenance, improvement and enhancement of South Park Gardens in Wimbledon, London, SW19, as a recreational area to be used and enjoyed by the whole community, including identifying and implementing security measures.

Trustees and staff

The trustees are all local residents and were elected at the annual general meeting. All trustees are volunteers and there are no paid employees of the Friends of South Park Gardens.

Background

The Friends began in 2002 as a campaigning body with the purpose of restoring the Gardens to their original Victorian pleasure garden plan. In 2009, this was achieved through a combination of community activity and funding, a grant obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and council improvements and investment. In 2014 planning permission was granted for the redevelopment of the dilapidated gardeners' compound and toilets. The building was funded using remaining HLF Funds and Council funding and was completed in 2015. This building is now a vibrant and essential part of the Gardens. The Pavilion building provides a community resource, disabled lavatory, and improved Gardeners Compound and work area. In addition, a kiosk serving refreshments opened under a lease arrangement with Merton Council. The kiosk, "Bliss in the Park" is now leased by the Council and is a welcome addition to the Gardens enjoyed by many.

Merton Council

The trustees have regular meetings and are in regular communication with both Merton Council's Head of Parks Services and the Council contractor responsible for the maintenance of the Gardens - *idverde*. The trustees have built up a good relationship with Merton's Green Spaces Manager, Andrew Kauffman.

The *idverde* gardening team have worked in the Gardens for many years and our appreciation of their work is recorded here.

ACTIVITIES IN 2024

The Gardens

South Park Gardens was again awarded the prestigious international Green Flag Award again in 2024. This is an international benchmark standard for publicly accessible parks and green spaces in the UK and around the world.

The knee rails were installed for the new beds (at the entrances) and were painted. The Friends also arranged for the painting of the other knee rails in the park.

Repairs to the paths remain an important requirement and we continued to press Merton Council to action remedial repairs as necessary and to arrange further upgrades to the path surfaces.

Gardening Club

The Friends continue to have an active Gardening Club who both plan and plant as well as assisting with maintenance of the flower beds in the Gardens. They use the nursery area in the raised beds behind the Garden Pavilion for the cultivation and growing of plants for replenishing stock in the Gardens (and for the popular plant sales).

The Gardening Club continued to meet every Sunday morning, maintaining the Heritage Lottery Beds and weeding many of the borders. The Gardening Club volunteers work tirelessly come rain and shine to keep all the beds and borders in good shape and have created new winter borders and planting. Given the changes in weather patterns this team regularly reviews our planting plans to ensure that colour and interest in all the beds and borders continues through the seasons.

The Club also worked up shrubbery schemes, prepared the beds and planted the new beds which have really improved the entrances to the park.

The trustees continue to fund a small budget for the Gardening Club volunteers to obtain refreshments from the kiosk during their time on Sundays.

The volunteers meet regularly to develop seasonal planting plans to reflect the changes in soil and climate to ensure plantings are more drought resistant and require less watering during the summer months. The new plantings have produced beautiful displays throughout the year.

We held two very successful plant sales during the year. Many of the Club volunteers grew plants from seed at home and cuttings were taken from plants in the Gardens and those raised in the nursery beds were also available for sale. All proceeds were reinvested in the Gardens.

The trustees are again very grateful to the Gardening Club for their tireless efforts, and for the contribution of all volunteers for the time they have given during the year. Whilst volunteer hours are not recorded, the number of volunteer hours for this activity is in the region of 1200 hours over the course of the year.

Garden Pavilion

Our community space, the Garden Pavilion, is regularly used for both community and commercial activities. Receipts from lettings are put towards maintenance and running costs including cleaning and replacement of furniture and equipment.

Bookings for the Garden Pavilion continue to increase. It is a popular location used for a broad range of community style activities including art and crafts, chess, mahjong, baking, folk music, yoga and dance classes. Whilst volunteer hours are not recorded, the number of volunteer hours for this activity remains in the region of 400 hours

The trustees would like to record again our gratitude to our volunteer room manager who has looked after or supported the considerable administration needed for the Garden Pavilion for many years.

Following discussions with Merton Council regarding the security, heating, ventilation and safe use of the Garden Pavilion it was agreed that air conditioning would be installed and that installation was completed in December 2024.

Membership

Our membership system is fully automated using a recommended third-party provider for small membership organisations – MemberMojo. This has resulted in a simplified system for members and a considerable workload taken away from our membership secretary volunteer. The membership fee remains at £10 per household and £5 per individual member and represents a small investment in a hugely valued local community resource. The previous introduction of a donation button during the renewal process has again been helpful in generating funds. Whilst volunteer hours are not recorded, the number of volunteer hours for this activity is in the region of 200 hours

Events

Our exciting events programme continued in 2024.

The popular Easter Egg Hunt in March 2024 blessed with sunshine, was well attended and tickets for the event sold out. The large team of volunteers who helped on the day set out the many “sticks” the children are tasked with collecting, decorated the Park and then fulfilled roles such as the Easter Bunny, taking payments, organising and handing out prizes and running the raffle. Our thanks also to the volunteers who prepared the 300 or so prize bags of chocolate eggs.

Our Summer Celebration was held in June 2024. The marvellous Melodians Steel Orchestra performed again for the community during the afternoon, the plant stall, bar and cake stall were a sell out and appetites were sated by food provided by Bliss in the Park.

We were pleased to continue to host our Over-60s Cream Teas. These are for individuals from the community largely based in residential and care homes. They were well attended and gave the attendees a chance to meet others and hear more about South Park Gardens from the trustees.

The income/expenditure from our events is listed in our Accounts, attached to this report.

Benches

In the Autumn of 2021, the programme of refurbishment of the benches in the Gardens commenced. In total 35 benches were refurbished. Enquiries for dedication of benches continued in 2024 and these dedications are a valuable source of fundraising income for the Friends. At the end of 2024 all benches had been dedicated.

The Friends also arranged for all the benches to be cleaned and re-oiled during the year.

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

During the year the Friends assisted a number of local residents with regular volunteering opportunities in South Park Gardens as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award programme. Activities undertaken include litter picking, gardening and event support.

ADMINISTRATION

The trustees continued to meet during 2024. The trustees' communication with the membership has been maintained with PDF copies of newsletters sent by email. There have also been regular updates on the Friends' social media pages.

The Gardens are an invaluable community resource, and the level of use continues to pose some issues regarding littering and multiple parties at the weekends - particularly during fine weather and over the summer. The Friends regularly remind all park users to be mindful of each other whilst using the Gardens and to take rubbish home.

Recurring administration expenses included insurance, Mailchimp, the domain name and ICO registration. These sums were met from reserves. Expenditure by the Gardening Club was a planned use of reserves and was less than the amount contained in the reserves policy.

Debt management for the Garden Pavilion continues to be successful. This has been achieved through the continued use of the automated payment and booking system for all hirers. The debtors list is currently zero.

2024 Full Year Accounts

The accounts are attached to this Trustee Annual Report.

Sponsorship

We were delighted that Ellison continued their valuable sponsorship in 2024. They have been involved with South Park Gardens for many years now. This sponsorship helps us fund elements of our events programme.

TRUSTEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Friends of South Park Gardens is a charity and is run and managed entirely by volunteers. All volunteers give their time and expertise which enables us to do what we do safely and to the best of our ability and resources.

The trustees would like to record their appreciation for all those who give their time to Friends of South Park Gardens. The chair would also like to record his thanks to both (i) his predecessor Helen Day for her leadership and considerable work in her near seven year tenure as chair (ii) and to all trustees for their contribution and commitment to the running of the Friends.

CONFIRMATION OF PUBLIC BENEFIT

The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty to have regard to the guidance on public benefit published by The Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties.

APPROVED by the trustees and signed on their behalf by Nicholas Evans.



Date: 2nd May 2025

THE FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK GARDENS			
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS			
	Note	2024 £	2023 £
RECEIPTS			
Income from subscriptions/donations		1,810	1,982
Gross income from events		4,507	3,787
Sponsorship		1,000	1,000
Garden Room Rent and Takings		9,505	8,122
Bench Plaque donations		1,678	2,307
Interest		3,839	3,164
Sundry- plant sales		654	448
		<u>22,992</u>	<u>20,810</u>
PAYMENTS			
Expenses of events	2	2,627	2,404
Garden room outgoing		1,839	1,249
Insurance		202	274
Website and newsletter		678	209
Sundry- training		-	500
General Administrative Overheads		1,194	962
Plants purchased and new bedding plants		7,990	6,711
Furniture		810	-
		<u>15,340</u>	<u>12,309</u>
SURPLUS			
		<u>7,652</u>	<u>8,501</u>
Balance brought forward		93,478	84,977
Net increase in funds		9,592	8,501
Railings repainting		-5,040	-
		<u>96,090</u>	<u>93,478</u>
THE FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK GARDENS			
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES			
		2024 £	2023 £
Cash at banks - current account		16,921	16,258
- deposit account		78,775	74,936
-paypal account		395	2,204
Trade debtors		-	80
Total assets		<u>96,090</u>	<u>93,478</u>
Represented by:			
Unrestricted funds		96,090	93,478

THE FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK GARDENS
NOTES
1. Basis of preparation

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the receipts and payments basis of accounting as permitted by the Statement of Recommended Practice 'Accounting by Charities' issued by the Charity Commission for smaller charities. This income includes amounts reimbursed by the London Borough of Merton relating to previous years and expenses include items where the relevant income has been recognised in earlier years.

2. Income and Expenditure of Events

	2024			2023		
	Sponsorship & Income £	Expenses	Profit £	Sponsorship & Income £	Expenses	Profit £
Easter Egg Hunt	2,023	(884)	1,139	1,709	(619)	1,090
Summer Picnic	3,484	(1,630)	1,854	3,078	(1,735)	1,343
Over 60's cream tea	-	(113)	(113)	-	(50)	(50)
	£	£	£	£	£	£
	5,507	(2,627)	2,880	4,787	(2,404)	2,383