



FRIENDS OF VAUXHALL PARK

Chair's report and future park activities

My report covers a review of the Friends of Vauxhall Park (FoVP) events for the year to 31 October 2024 and a summary of future activities after that date.

The Friends have continued to be actively engaged in many aspects of the upkeep, running and development of the park over the year.

The volunteer gardening sessions continue to be run almost weekly with attendance regularly between 10 and 20 volunteers, around the same as last year. The sessions tend to be attended by the same core group; it would be good to encourage others to join us who have not attended a session before.

We now have several, more knowledgeable volunteers, which has helped in splitting activities on gardening sessions. The sessions are a significant time commitment for me, Tessa, Polly and Sarah Macdonald. The group continues to diversify, reflecting the changing demographics around the Nine Elms area and has increased to 133. The social activity after each session is an important part of the enjoyment of our work and are well attended. We again funded a social event at the Parco Café in October to thank the volunteers for their hard work and to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the FoVP, which was very well attended with more than last year with many former trustees there. It was generously supported by Ardian and his family at the Parco Cafe. Thank you to Polly, Louise and Laura for organising.

As in the previous year, our group worked throughout the winter clearing leaves and continued to maintain the entire Fawcett Garden, the ornamental beds, the garden areas around the Parco Café, the rockery garden and the conservation area next to the Montessori school. Due to the wet summer, we did not have to carry out any watering duties, but that situation looks to be changing in 2025.

The gardening input from the Lambeth Parks' department gardener at two days a week continued to be minimal and was withdrawn completely in early 2025. The Parks' department's main activities are grass cutting, hedge trimming and litter picking.

We ran the third lavender harvesting of the new beds in September, and we were able to arrange for the flowers to be used to make lavender oil, unlike 2023. The event was a huge success due to its organisation by Laura and Louise. As a result, we attracted many new volunteers and new members and, helped by the introduction of the card reader by Tom, significant donations were made. We continue to sell the oil through the Parco Café.

Following pressure from the FoVP on behalf of the tennis coaches and tennis players, the tennis court had another 2-day power wash in late autumn 2024 with the result that the court flooding of 2023 has not recurred.

Vauxhall Park retained its Green Flag and the London in Bloom gold award (in the challenging category of 'park of the year'). In addition, Vauxhall Park has been given Green Heritage Site status by the Green Flag Awards body in 2025.

The most significant event of 2024 was the approval of the Phase II project. This was reduced in scope from the original plan to replace the under 5s' play area behind the pavilion building. The work was planned to start in June and to be completed by September 2024. It started in July and remains unfinished, a delay of 8 months on a 4-month project. This has been hugely annoying for the local community with the Fentiman Gate closed for 5 months, the lack of toilet facilities and the FoVP having to use temporary storage facilities. The layout of the building was substantially changed from the one that was signed off by the FoVP in early 2024. The communications with Lambeth Council on the project have been extremely frustrating and time consuming with few discernible outcomes. There has been little change in the lack of communication by Lambeth Council with the FoVP on this and other matters, an issue that we continue to raise.

We are running the lavender harvest over the weekend of 30 and 31 August with a distillation of the oil at a third party to follow. We had planned to purchase our own still, but as we still do not have our storage facility due to the new building being closed, this is being put on hold for another year.

Subject to committee approval, we plan to hold another social event to thank all the volunteers for their continued hard work later in 2025.

The 2 annual events of the Nigerian and Eritrean festivals are being held again in 2025. On 7 July, the park is being used as the start and finish of the Kidney Research London bridges walk involving 1,750 people with food facilities, entertainment and toilets being erected in the park. We were not consulted on this and, despite many emails since we were told about it in March, we still have not had a meeting to raise our concerns. Initially we had councillor support on this, but this has disappeared, so we are now trying to engage with the Lambeth Council events' department to limit damage to the park and try to secure revenue for the FoVP from the event as it must now be a fait accompli. There is an 'Afro Fit' park event on 26 July that we also have not been consulted on.

We continue to press for the 'witches hat' in the playground to be repaired. In anticipation of the ornamental fountain being switched on, FoVP paid for the fountain to be repainted.

Spring 2025 has been very dry. We need to start a watering rota, as in 2023, but this will be severely hampered by our watering equipment continuing to be in temporary storage.

We continue to hope that the new building will be opened in time for the summer, but we have serious doubts about this. It is too late now to plant out the beds to the side and the front of the new building – we hope to do this in the late autumn.

FoVP have been invited to be part of the selection panel to choose the operator of the new kiosk from the 25 expressions of interest received by Lambeth. To date, the selection panel has not met.

We intend to hold the 2026 AGM in March or April to align better with the start of our gardening year.

Sarah MacDonald has decided to stand down as secretary, but remain as a trustee, at this AGM. I am pleased to welcome Kate Losowsky who will take over from Sarah as the new secretary. The board would like to thank Sarah for all her hard work and welcomes Kate.

John Roome

21 June 2025

Friends of Vauxhall Park Accounts Year to Oct 2024

<u>Income</u>	<u>Year to 31.10.24</u>	<u>Year to 31.10.23</u>
	£	£
Membership Subscriptions and Donations	1,227.00	841.00
Ring-fenced Donation for Phase II works	-	1,000.00
Gift Aid	184.38	551.78
Bank Interest	1,001.16	106.85
Lavender Sales	577.00	2,745.00
Amazon Smile donations	-	23.70
Total Income	2,989.54	5,268.33
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Insurance	157.00	157.00
Gardening Tools / Hose & reel	353.39	-
Website Hosting and Email Domain	268.85	60.32
Plants	94.99	-
Refreshments volunteer groups	512.50	251.70
Social Evening	-	550.40
25th Anniversary Event Costs*	290.00	-
Card Reader Purchase	46.80	-
Card Reader Service Charges	12.69	-
Lavender Harvest - Oil Bottles	165.43	-
Lavender Harvest - Still Donation	100.00	-
Total Expenditure	2,001.65	1,019.42
 Excess income over expenditure	987.89	4,248.91
 Balance Brought Forward from last year	<u>38,179.08</u>	<u>33,930.17</u>
Balance at Year End	<u>39,166.97</u>	<u>38,179.08</u>
 Lloyds Current account at year end	5,237.02	5,830.56
Lloyds Business Saving account at year end	3,929.95	3,037.29
Fixed term deposits (mature 24/3/25)	<u>30,000.00</u>	<u>29,311.23</u>
Total	<u>39,166.97</u>	<u>38,179.08</u>
 Unrestricted funds	38,166.97	37,179.08
Restricted funds	<u>1,000.00</u>	<u>1,000.00</u>
Total funds	<u>39,166.97</u>	<u>38,179.08</u>

*Balance paid in Nov 24 (£350)

