

Friends of Richmond Green (FoRG)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

(contact details: Chairman – tel: 020 8948 3384 / email: mail@FoRG.org.uk)

Date: **Wednesday 20 April 2022 at 7.30pm**

Venue: **The Cricketers pub** (upstairs), Richmond Green

Attendance: names and email addresses of those present were collected on an attendance sheet circulated on the night. The attendance count was **24** individuals – comprising 6x committee members in the room: Vivien Harris (VH), Peter Griffiths (PG), Anna Newton Dunn (AND), Diana Billingham (DB), David MacKenzie (DM) and Gemma Warrilow (GW); 1x committee member on ZOOM: Peter Willian (PW); and 17x residents who attended.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of last meeting (14 April 2021)**
3. **Matters arising**
4. **Report of the Executive**
5. **Financial Report and adoption of FoRG Accounts for 2021**
6. **Election of Officers for 2022-23**
7. **Any Other Business (general discussion)**

MINUTES of the FoRG AGM 2022

The meeting began at 7.33pm

VH: Welcome & Intro.

1. Apologies

Residents who sent their apologies for not being able to attend: Tony Winslade; Nick Coleman; Lord (John) Lee; Graham Nugent.

2. Minutes of last FoRG AGM (14 April 2021)

The Minutes of the 2021 FoRG AGM were agreed.

Proposed: Bob Harris
Seconded: Bill Newton Dunn

3. Matters arising

- VH: various items (eg. ASB, loos on The Green, tourism, riverside, e-bikes, benches, etc.) will be included in the chairman's report or in general discussion later in the meeting.

4. Report of the Executive

A detailed report on key issues and on-going activities is contained in the recent FoRG Newsletter for March 2022, but the chair summarised as follows ...

- **Jubilee** – VH: on Sunday 5 June, FoRG is organising a picnic lunch event on The Green, with tables & chairs, live jazz, etc. Gemma W to say more in due course.
- **Opening of Drinking Fountain** – VH: FoRG's restoration project has been concluded: the fountain has been turned on, it's in working order, and was formally opened at an event in September by the Deputy Mayor of Richmond.
- **Telephone kiosks near Paved Court** – VH: one was bought by a local resident; our plan for some time has been to acquire the other one and we continue to work with the Council to get to this point; their purpose once acquired is still to be decided; having fought off some inappropriate plans for their use, there must be some good use of them and this work is ongoing.
- **FoRG WhatsApp Group** – VH: this is up and running to keep everyone informed on local developments; new subscribers (free) are welcome.
- **Benches around the Green** – VH: FoRG has been funding improvements to the benches, extending plinths and relaying turf to tackle the very worn ground around and in front of many of them; the work has gone very well with Continental having laid the turf and new paving in Jan-Feb this year. (We notice that now the sloping lawns on the Riverside are being re-turfed.)
- **ODP** – VH: the Old Deer Park Working Group is chaired by Peter Willan of FoRG; projects include a refurbished path from the A316/Twickenham Road carpark down to the riverside, with decking installed to better manage access over boggy ground. The work is yet to be done; some barriers have been raised by the Crown Estate but were hopeful of making further progress.
- **ODP telecoms masts** – VH: FoRG has opposed three separate applications for very tall and unsuitable masts near the ODP car park and a further two telecoms mast applications on ODP near Twickenham Bridge; many residents also objected and all applications have so far been refused. But there may be further applications and we'll need to keep an eye out for this.
- **ODP Thames Landscape Strategy** – VH: there is a plan for a 're-wilding' project on the far side of the park, next to the golf course; volunteer help is sought and FoRG can help put willing people in touch with the organisers.
- **Local Plan** – VH: FoRG is working with the Council on drafting this update to the Local Plan for Richmond.
- **Heathrow** – VH: Peter Willan continues to work very hard on our behalf and has done so much already in recent years; FoRG is a part of the Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC), along with the Kew Society and Richmond Society; expansion is still Heathrow's ambition, although it's currently on pause; RHC has argued that expansion makes no sense in relation to current and future carbon zero targets, and there is much good detailed material available on the RHC website.
- **Town centre** – VH: it's been a busy 12 months; we have kept close to the Council's 'town enhancement' plans; FoRG is at odds with the Council's dedication to encouraging a busier 'night time' economy; and we objected to some the proposals for House of Fraser (eg. an extra upper floor) although our objections were basically ignored; the proposals have evidently proved impractical because the site/building is now on the market (for c.£23million), which is sad to see.
- **Planning & Licensing** – VH: there's been much activity (see Newsletter) and Peter Willan has led our comment on and opposition to various developments; the Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP) on licensing has now been renewed for a further 3 years, which is pleasing.
- **Old Palace Yard re-surfacing** – VH: there is at last some progress now; AND: new tenders to the Crown Estate are in hand and we're now waiting to be notified of the distribution of costs among leaseholders before work can begin.
- **Loos on The Green** – VH: the temporary loos placed on the Duke Street corner last summer were not the most attractive, but the availability of a power source dictated their location; there has been some talk of a permanent facility being installed on that site, and FoRG will oppose it because we think there are better solutions to be found; the Council is relying on their idea of a 'community access' toilet scheme

using existing premises, although it's questionable whether that will work as very few businesses in Richmond have signed up for the CT scheme; FoRG hasn't yet been consulted so the status of the discussion is not clear at the moment.

- **Richmond Green Working Group** – VH: this group was set up as result of the bad ASB summer of 2020; it was initiated by South Richmond Police Liaison Group; work has been done on objectives and how to avoid any repeat of 2020 ASB and crime; this could involve more uniformed presence (both SNT Police and Park Guards under contract to the Council), more use of Fixed Penalty Notices, better data collection and other initiatives, etc. Last year was better, though, and we hope this year will be improved again. Easter weekend was not so bad except for Good Friday. On the other hand graffiti is definitely on the increase, so we need to watch this.

5. Financial Report and adoption of Accounts 2021

FoRG Treasurer Diana Billingham summarised FoRG's accounts as follows:-

- The FoRG accounts for 2021 are relatively simple and based on cashbook accounting principles; FoRG's main income again came from donations from film companies working in and around The Green – for example, the *Ted Lasso* production filming locally yesterday.
- By comparison with 2020 when filming activity fell away dramatically during the pandemic, 2021 film income went up to £9,450 (from £1,200 in 2020) and came from several companies using Richmond and The Green as a location. Filming activity is definitely now recovering compared with 2020.
- Local residents are generally very tolerant of the impact of this activity. A couple of years ago FoRG helped the Council put together 'best practice' guidelines which film companies in general seem to be following.
- Costs – FoRG's main cost item was the final payment of £3,336 on a plaque for the now restored Drinking Fountain; the Deputy Mayor came to open it and there was a reception cost of £116; Richmond Heathrow Campaign expenses of £107 were in line with annual expenditure of what is an ongoing campaign.
- Overall there was a surplus of £5,890, contributing to a healthy balance of £19,119.
- Ideas of how FoRG might best spend this money on local projects for general benefit are always welcome.

There were no questions from the floor on the finances, so FoRG's Accounts for 2021 as presented were agreed and adopted:

Proposed: David MacKenzie

Seconded: Hilary Parsons

6. Election of Officers

VH: the current two Officers of the FoRG Executive Committee have agreed to stand for re-election for the coming year 2022-23.

Firstly the Chair and Treasurer positions:-

- **Vivien Harris** (8 Pembroke Villas) – as Chair
- **Diana Billingham** (21a The Green) – as Treasurer

Proposed: Gemma Warrilow

Seconded: Anna Newton Dunn

In the absence of any other nominations, Vivien Harris was duly re-elected to continue serving as FoRG's Chair and Diana Billingham was re-elected as FoRG's Treasurer for the coming twelve months.

Secondly, other committee members also standing for a further year were:-

- **Peter Willan** (7 The Green)
- **Peter Griffiths** (26 The Retreat)
- **Anna Newton Dunn** (29 Old Palace Lane)
- **David MacKenzie** (4 Pembroke Villas, The Green)
- **Gemma Warrilow** (Old Friars, Old Palace Place)

Proposed: Bob Harris

Seconded: Sir Brian Fall

In the absence of any other nominations, Peter Willan, Peter Griffiths, Anna Newton Dunn, David McKenzie and Gemma Warrilow were duly elected to serve as members of the FoRG Executive Committee for the year 2022-23.

NB. the formal position of FoRG Secretary remains vacant for the time being.

VH: before open discussion under Any Other Business, a few words from Gemma Warrilow about our plan for a Platinum Jubilee picnic get together on The Green on Sunday 5 June.

GW: we thought the Platinum Jubilee provides a great opportunity for people to come together, between 12 and 4pm on the Jubilee Sunday 5th June. FoRG is providing a budget for the hire of tressle tables and chairs and a live Jazz band to create a nice atmosphere for the afternoon. Residents are invited to bring their own food and drink. But it would be good to have a rough idea of numbers – so please use the email address to let me know. Any additional ideas for the day would be welcome.

7. Any Other Business (general discussion)

Q. May Ball – Philip Soar: asked 'Will there be another May Ball?' VH: there won't be one this year, but we're still not sure about 2023; we've asked to meet Be Richmond to discuss as they organise the May Fair. Bob Harris, as chair of the May Ball committee, said the issue is expenditure and will celebration seem appropriate with other events (eg. Ukraine war) happening, etc? A big outlay of time and money is needed and therefore we'd need the support of sponsors and local charities and that all depends on confidence; we're optimistic the Ball could return in 2023... this discussion has yet to be concluded, but we'll probably have a decision sometime around September.

Q. Traffic/Friars Lane car park – Chris Smith: living at top of Friars Lane, CS said his attempt to get the Council to restrict parking and the use of the tight corner from Old Palace Place has come to nothing; he queried the use of the Friars Lane car park – it was never intended as a carpark (it used to be a factory) and improving it would just encourage more visiting cars not fewer; can we raise this with the Council, because, he says, the car park generates hundreds of car/van/truck movements up and down Friars Lane and, consequently, around The Green. Is this the right place for a car park? Wouldn't it be better if it were residents' parking only?

VH: residents who live closest to that car park are keen on improvements being made, rather than allowing a redevelopment of the site (proposals for housing there were not well received by residents at the time); also it has been a car park for a long time and was an important facility for those using the major retailers in the town (eg. M&S, House of Fraser) and taking it away could have a negative impact; there are admittedly some problems associated with night-time activity there, however.

James Devlin (Retreat Road): there's just been silence from the Council following the consultation 12 months ago; they just don't reply to our approaches; consultation has died away; nothing is happening.

PW: just to add that the Council hasn't really commented much on this, but FoRG has been part of a review of all parking around the town and didn't want to take strong position on Friars Lane without taking advice from those living closest; evidently more parking there does put more pressure on The Green and it would be better to encourage more use of the ODP and Paradise Road car parks if possible.

(Among other views expressed is that if you take parking capacity away then problems on The Green will just multiply dramatically.)

CS: The Green is already full of cars; and that dangerous corner at the top of Friars Lane is still dangerous; when approached the Council just does not reply and it's very frustrating; because nothing goes down Water Lane and everything comes down Friars Lane – rubbish collection, deliveries, etc and on top of that the public car park.

VH: the pandemic may have slowed things up and bit and FoRG will again take up the issue of that corner between Old Palace Place and Friars Lane and the idea of a 'no entry' from the King Street end.

Bill Newton Dunn: local elections are coming up; there'll be 3 new councillors elected; now's the time to grab them, brief them and get them on side.

JD: but they just do nothing; BND: but if you don't even try you certainly don't get anywhere.

CS: how does anyone turning into Friars Lane know if the FL car park is already full? There's no indication available.

VH: FoRG will continue the conversation with the Council.

PW: the Council's modelling of through traffic in Richmond town does not yield a clear picture of where displaced traffic might go. We'll keep asking for detail. Watch this space.

JD: at Chiswick bridge there's an example of no left turn off the A316 unless you're a resident – why not have something similar here?

VH: I understand that particular restriction is not popular with locals.

Q. Easter weekend ASB – Gemma Fumagilli: last Friday night a large group gathered on the Pembroke Villas side of The Green; by 11pm they were quite rowdy, smashing glass, etc; there was "the usual smell of drugs", lots of cars arrived and departed in a way consistent with dealing; the noise went on till around 1am; I reported it online and direct messaged 'Met CC' on Twitter and had a response within 5 mins; Friday was not a great night. Advises people to join the Link initiative with the Council – weekly reports/summaries on activity observed helps to back up the on the night reporting – it really helps local police get first-hand information and context; it's a promising development for the summer ahead; Richmond station is also a known locale for drugs and dealing in the early morning; would encourage anyone to report anything they observe.

VH: reporting is key to getting more resources in Richmond from local police and the park guards etc.; the Link initiative is a useful thing to engage with – could attract more resources

GF: we've been told we have an extra PC assigned to the town for the summer – which is a significant increase in manpower. So please report anything – even if it's retrospective – use the online forms and get a reference number – experience shows it definitely makes a difference to police resources being here, and it adds to the overall statistical picture of ASB in the town.

Bob Harris: two years back at Easter we had continuous rowdiness Thursday through to Sunday, but this year by Sat/Sun it was quieter than it had been. We can only hope it continues that way.

VH: when asked, the Met say there's just no funding for restoring a local police station in Richmond.

PW: for the Police Liaison Group, Easter brings the annual start of the ASB cycle in the town and on the riverside, although Richmond is considered by police a 'low crime' borough and that's why we don't get the resources... Richmond however still experiences one of the highest amounts of low-level ASB anywhere, but police don't have the resources to even monitor it properly, so Gemma's suggestions are helpful; police need to focus on actual crime, so our reporting is essential.

Gemma: observations of actual drug-dealing does change the police's view – in their mind it escalates the seriousness of the situation above ASB.

Jan Stevens: as a magistrate working in court, I've noticed that police have shifted from providing their own evidence to relying on public to provide evidence because the police are so undermanned and underpowered; they are certainly relying more and more on public-generated video and photographic

evidence (ideally from two sources), so people should take photos and videos wherever they can – this material is used in court far more now than before to support cases.

James Devlin: but why is there so little CCTV around?

VH: the refurbishment plan for Friars Lane car park includes more CCTV.

PW: there is CCTV in Brewers Lane, but the main problem is lack of people to monitor it; we have continued to challenge every licence application that comes forward; at least we have the renewed Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP) but it needs to be augmented by a solid study (April time) to provide more hard evidence of ASB; yet the Council is reluctant because of the costs of such a study, although the renewal of CIP is better than had been expected.

Jan Stevens: I used to be on licencing panel for Richmond and among conditions applied there had to be sound-proofing of premises after midnight so that noise doesn't escape from inside the building, but those kinds of restrictions can have the effect of simply displacing customers elsewhere – eg. onto The Green; that's the challenge.

Q. Richmond as tourist destination – query raised by from Lord (John) Lee in 2021: JL says it seems obvious there's been an increase in tourism in the town; are there any statistics to confirm this? VH: according to Angela Ivey (Tourism person for the Council) these figures don't exist; Richmond BID is apparently responsible for tourism figures and they say they're putting in place technology to provide such figures, but they're not available yet; their estimate of the figures having halved since pandemic are disputed.

Q. More seating around the Green? – written query from Graham Nugent: as suggested at our last AGM, GN would like there to be more benches around The Green; VH: but other local views are that there are already enough benches.

Q. Speeding – written query Graham Nugent: speeding around The Green is still an issue; could there not be raised bumps (aka 'silent policemen') to discourage speeding at certain key points such as Portland Terrace; VH: there is already a raised zebra crossing on the Portland Terrace side; James Devlin: but those who are inclined to speed just don't take any notice of the 20mph signs. Those present at AGM are not keen on speed bumps.

Q. Electric cars – Julian Paxton: J said he would like to buy an electric car but, he asks, where would it be possible for its battery to be charged? What plans has the Council for providing charging points locally for residents? PW: this is a question for the Council, and it's not yet clear what they're plan is. James Devlin: why are there no electric parking/charging spaces on The Green already? PW: again, we need to find that out from the Council.

Q Tree pruning – Julian Paxton: the trees on Greenside are just too enormous; when can they be pruned? VH: we know from experience that if the trees are touched, the Council will simply slap Preservation Orders on them; they're sensitive to any possibility of risk to them; their position is not very helpful because we'd like to prune them a bit, but our hands are tied. PW: at ODP we're working with the Tree Officer Craig and we're hoping that we can get to know more about their thinking and then have some more influence.

Q. Thanks to FoRG – Jan Stevens: offered thanks to the FoRG committee "for all you do" (echoed by applause from the room).

Discussion ended

VH: Concluded the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.47pm.

END of FoRG AGM 2022