

Friends of Richmond Green (FoRG)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

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

Date: **Wednesday 26 April 2023 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 total attendance count was **26** individuals – comprising 8x committee members in the room (Vivien Harris [VH], Peter Willan [PW], Peter Griffiths [PG], Anna Newton Dunn [AND], Diana Billingham [DB], Gemma Warrilow [GW], Gemma Fumagalli [GF], Juliet Bramwell [JB]); plus 18x residents who attended. Names and email addresses of those present were collected on an attendance sheet circulated on the night and, aside from the 8 committee members named above, 16 people signed the attendance sheet (Brian Pailin, Elizabeth Lanyon, Hilary Parsons, John Lee, Tim Warrilow, Tony Winslade, Brian Fall, Andrew Morgan, Bob Harris, Peter Fisher, Judith Fisher, Philip Emerson, Bobbie Kalsi, Julian Paxton, Frances Bouchier), but two more (including Maeve Willan) were also present.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of last AGM (20 April 2022)**
3. **Matters arising**
4. **Report of the Executive**
5. **Financial Report and adoption of FoRG Accounts for 2022**
6. **Election of Officers for 2023-24**
7. **Any Other Business (general discussion)**

MINUTES of the FoRG AGM 2023

Meeting began at 7.30pm

VH: Welcome & Intro.

1. Apologies

Apologies received from... David MacKenzie;

2. Minutes of last AGM (20 April 2022)

VH: Copies of the 2022 AGM minutes are placed out on chairs; there's also a copy on website for people to read. Asked for approval...

Proposer: John Lee
Secunder: Bob Harris
Minutes agreed.

3. Matters arising

VH: Various items will be covered later under AOB (incl. Charging points for electric vehicles).

4. Report of the Executive

A detailed report on key issues and on-going activities is contained in the recent FoRG Newsletter for April 2023, but the chair summarised various issues as follows ...

- **May Fair/Ball** – VH: this year the May Fair & May Ball are back and they return in their more traditional form, centred on charity rather than corporate interests – favourite Fair elements are there (eg. dog show, kids’ rides, craft fair, etc.) with local performers on stage; the May Ball is now sold out and will benefit two local charities (Home-Start RKH and Skylarks).
- **Coronation Tea Party** – VH: it’s to be held on Saturday 6 May, and if you haven’t told GW you’d like a seat already, then please do so by the end of the evening as she needs to book tables and chairs, etc. Bring your own sustenance and refreshment: it’s a great opportunity to meet and chat to neighbours
- **Old Deer Park** – VH: although it’s on the periphery of FoRG’s area of responsibility, ODP is a local amenity appreciated by all... work on the new pathway link is imminent, providing better access from the A316 car park to the river with decking over the boggy areas near the Thames; negotiations with the CE have taken a long time but the project is now starting; a new Tree-planting project has already begun, with 29 specimen trees having been planted; the Thames Landscape Strategy (‘Wilderness Arcadia’) seeks to open up vistas to Kings Observatory, the Great Pagoda at Kew and the obelisks, etc. plus a re-wilding of the area by the strip of woodland close to Richmond Lock... it’s altogether an exciting project;
- **Toilets on The Green** – VH: the lack of public toilets on The Green has been an issue for several summers and we’ve made repeated noises to get some action; while the unsightly temporary loos on The Green corner served a necessary purpose during lockdowns, we really need a more permanent solution from the council so we carry on campaigning;
- **Jubilee party** – VH: it was a brilliant success last June, thanks to all the work put in by Gemma W (applause in the room): almost 200 neighbours and friends came to brave dodgy weather and have a great time; it’s given rise to plans for this year’s Coronation Tea Party which we hope will be another great success;
- **Heathrow** – VH: PW continues to put in huge amounts of his time on our behalf through Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC), and has been highlighting the environmental impact of Heathrow and its plans for expansion and airspace reorganisation. There are many challenges still, but the work goes on;
- **Friars Lane car park** – VH: planned council improvements are still awaited; we haven’t seen action yet but they say they intend to improve surfaces, lighting, bin provision and add electric vehicle charging points;
- **Council consultations** – VH: FoRG has responded to various council consultations on elements of the Conservation Area, protected views and street trading, etc;
- **Town Centre / Planning** – VH: the past few years have been an uncertain period for everyone, with the escalation of online competition for retail, etc. We have continued to respond against applications for change of use and new alcohol licences (17 cases) and there have been many good outcomes; but continued vigilance remains essential;
- **Anti-social behaviour (ASB)** – VH: according to available statistics, crime on The Green actually decreased over the past year; up to June last summer there were relatively few real problems, although after that weekly crowds of youngsters gathering on Friday evenings brought plenty of nuisance on a large scale. The Police response was slow, as they themselves have acknowledged; eventually, although very late (on 14 Oct), a Section 35 Dispersal Order was authorised; this year a ‘Safe Space’ initiative has already been introduced for and will continue; overall, we’re reminded yet again that it’s very important to report any incident to police by calling 999 – without us reporting things, the police can’t act.
- **Climate Action** – VH: we’re putting together a separate sub-committee to look at an action plan for Richmond Green to help the area improve its ‘green’ credentials.

5. Financial Report and adoption of FoRG Accounts for 2022

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

- DB: there have been some changes since 2021 – but we get most money from filming, although it can be a disruption for people and with *Ted Lasso* booming there's been more than ever; 90% of last year's income came from *Ted Lasso*. This was a slight reduction from the previous year: £2-3k is a normal level for annual receipts.
- Expenditure – PW does a great job representing us all on several fronts (RHC, Licensing, etc), and there are a few expenses arising from that. Another project we've spent money on has been bench improvements around The Green (previously it had been the fountain restoration). There were also some costs associated with the Jubilee picnic last year.
- And there were some legal fees to pay (an amount matched by Richmond Society); we paid to get advice on the Cumulative Impact Zone and the way it was being applied by the council. PW: CIP is crucial to us to limit licences. We found that the council was misrepresenting the law on this, so we got a leading barrister on licensing to help us and we in turn influenced the council.
- £16,000 balance last year. Some of which we have spent, we hope, wisely.

No questions from the floor on the finances. FoRG's Accounts for 2022 as presented were agreed and adopted:

Proposed: Peter Willan
 Seconded: John Lee

6. Election of Officers for 2023-24

VH: offered thanks to all the committee members, and introduced the new faces in the line up (GF, JB). Officially there is a vacancy (Secretary), although PG has been filling this role in all but name.

The current members of the FoRG Executive Committee have agreed to stand for re-election for the coming year 2023-24, including two new faces (GF, JB) who've been co-opted over the past year and now require approval.

Firstly the Chair and Treasurer positions:-

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

Proposed: Anna Newton Dunn
 Seconded: Maeve Willan

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.

Other Executive 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)

And in addition, two new members of the committee – co-opted to join during the past twelve months – now required approval of the meeting to continue in their roles for the coming year:-

- **Gemma Fumagalli** (6 Pembroke Villas)
- **Juliet Bramwell** (3 Chomondeley Walk)

VH asked for approval for this whole group to continue.

Proposed: Bob Harris

Seconded: John Lee

In the absence of other nominations, Peter Willan, Peter Griffiths, Anna Newton Dunn, David McKenzie and Gemma Warrilow were duly re-elected to serve as members of the FoRG Executive Committee for the coming year, and Gemma Fumagalli and Juliet Bramwell were duly elected to serve on the committee for the year 2023-24.

VH: that concludes the formal business of the AGM.

7. Any Other Business (general discussion)

VH: before we get to questions from the floor, certain key issues require brief summaries, starting with PW on Heathrow.

Heathrow

PW: summary of RHC position – RHC was set up in 2010, and achieved some early success... for example, we managed to get DfT's minister Theresa Villiers to meet us and went some way to persuading her that Heathrow expansion (3rd runway) was a bad thing.

Currently, Heathrow's third runway plan is on pause, we're told. But the 'black box' computer element has been introduced to reorganise flight patterns – much to our cost. It's been quite hard to understand completely what is happening – working with other community groups involves differences but also constructive co-ordination and co-operation. But we're going to renew our focus on health impacts – specifically pollution and noise, their negative impact on sleep, on kids, and on concentration of flights over our heads – the new technology (PBN) on flightpath organisation means a concentration of negative impacts on us here in Richmond.

From Heathrow's point of view, PBN allows more accurate flight paths resulting in significantly tighter concentration of planned paths to the runways... this means more concentrated effects over Richmond and Twickenham, involving both take-offs and landings. It represents a big risk for us, but we're battling with LHR still.

On Climate Change – the aviation industry is simply not going to meet its targets, no way. But they're trying to trade-off carbon with noise – while we're saying that's not a legitimate solution.

VH: we are looking for more people to get involved in RHC work – PW is doing so much himself (for which thanks), and we need more hands to help carry the load.

Licensing/Planning /Town Centre

PW: there are typically 10 applications a year on new licences. There's a lot of uncertainty around – with the impact of online on retail, so there's pressure on businesses and the council likes to be sympathetic. The present panel of new councillors better understand the problems we have, such as Anti-social behaviour (ASB). There was the WHSmith off sales case – the police didn't object because they didn't have the evidence to work with, another reminder that people really need to make the effort to report everything, anything; the Police really need to have hard evidence from the public, from us. There can be something like 100 incidents a night – mainly low-level ASB, and only a few of them are actually criminal. Anyway, we made the case against WHSmith and we won.

House of Fraser – we’re disappointed that our objection to the extra floor didn’t carry weight, despite plans for an outdoor balcony and restaurant at roof level being a worry. We couldn’t persuade anyone to see it our way, so we’ve not had great success re-shaping the plan. VH: what’s proposed is an exceptionally large restaurant area with outdoor space, but no contracts have yet been signed for businesses on House of Fraser site.

Consultations – the Local Plan is being refreshed by the Council and we’ve responded to them.

Communication hubs – a proposal for 4x digital screens in George Street is something we’re determined to oppose; they have them in Twickenham and they’re “horrendous”. So far council have turned down two of the 4, but there are still 2 to go – at House of Fraser and Tesco locations. We hope they won’t go ahead.

Q. House of Fraser – John Lee: I talked to their top team a few weeks ago... they hope to pass over the basement area and first floor (gym) to the operator (whoever it is) around October; then £9m is to be spent fitting it out. There’ll be no traditional retail at ground level, but there are to be two restaurants/cafes (eg. Turkish, noodle bar), to open around Xmas time. Then other floors to be primarily offices.

VH: a part of the original permission was for there to be retail on that site. BP/JL: we need more retail here. But is it realistic in today’s climate?

PW: I was invited to a zoom meeting on the night economy last week... Wandsworth have already examined their night economy and produced a report; Richmond Borough is now subject to assessment. We’ve always tried to oppose the late and later hours of licences. An evening economy 8pm till midnight is ok, but beyond that is a problem because Richmond is such a magnet for people from all over London. This will take about a year and a half of consultation, but it is worrying if they want to further open up Richmond town all night.

Old Deer Park

PW: VH has covered it all already, but there is some hope for interesting developments and we are working well with the council to preserve, conserve, improve access and develop sports provision of ODP – all of which is a council objective. Dealing with the Crown Estate has been “extraordinarily difficult,” causing delays and rising costs. FoRG did contribute £1k to the new tree-planting exercise – a figure matched by others (eg. Richmond Society). It’s part of a longer-term tree plan – eg. replenishing the central copse where some trees have died in recent years.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

GF: I’m on Neighbourhood Watch for Pembroke Villas, and on the local Police Liaison group. Last summer was “a complete nightmare” with regular late gatherings on the Green; police admitted that they responded too late, and they’ve promised they’ll do better this year. Some initiatives are already in train to help this summer – eg. the ‘Safe Space’ at the station, and also weekly email feedback with the community safety team at the council who work closely with police. We provide updates on any observed problems – we pass it on and it goes on to the local police team. More than happy for people to email the South Richmond policing team directly (southernrichmond@met.police.uk) not instead of 999 but in addition. Relations are improving, comms are better; improvements to CCTV are good – sadly they’re not monitored enough, but at least the record is there in footage.

There’s to be an extra PCSO for the local team this summer, and now there’ll be a dedicated superintendent per borough – so they’re better resourced than before. Vacancies for the response teams have been filled, so they are in a better place than before to support local needs.

So please please report things – not to 101 (its useless, not answered), just phone 999 – for any nuisance or crime, no matter how small – call 999. At least it gets logged, even if they can’t send someone out to deal with it. That’s evidence they need down the line. So just call – the police themselves say Just Call.

Priorities are target-driven – in Richmond this includes ASB, theft from motor vehicles, burglary (on the increase recently), links with organised crime, begging, shoplifting (increasing nationwide).

One last thing: graffiti – its still increasing in the area and effective reporting is possible on the council website for them to respond and get it cleaned off. There’s a lot of it, but it’s worth reporting.

Q. how do we report? GF: go online (<https://www.richmond.gov.uk/graffiti>) to the council’s graffiti reporting page – file your report there, it’s easily done.

VH: there's also a pot-holes reporting option (https://www.richmond.gov.uk/report_potholes) on the council website. If you report it, they will come out, although it may take some time. It's a tedious process, but the more we report the more likely we are to get a response.

Friars Lane car park

JB: council response has been "we're still looking into it", but while there's no sign of actual movement yet the council says it still has plans to enhance the site and hopefully work will begin over this year.

Coronation tea party

GW: arrangements for Sat 6 May are in place, so please come and pray for good weather.

VH: if you haven't booked a place you need to let GW know pretty quick – by the end of this meeting – if you want to join in and book your place at a table.

General questions

VH: any general questions? – eg. electric Lime bikes that are being left discarded everywhere now. (general murmur of acknowledgement). AND: there is a telephone number (**0800 808 5223**) where you can report any stray Lime bicycles you see lying around.

Q. Licensing – Tim Warrilow to PW: you rightly object to late licencing applications, but what's FoRG's approach to bars/restaurants generally? Because clearly it's still a challenging time for the hospitality industry and the prospect of Richmond opening up further could be seen as encouraging for business, and could be good for everyone especially if good quality hospitality offerings are developed, so it would be good to know what FoRG's perspective is. PW: we typically oppose pretty much all applications in order to constructively engage and seek solutions that suit everyone; these days we get contacted directly by applicants ahead of the licensing process (the council puts us in touch) so that we can begin a sensible conversation about conditions on licences, etc; applicants understandably apply for as much as is possible, seeking the greatest flexibility now and in the future, if nothing else to increase their chances of selling the premises/licence on; our objective is to shape permissions where they are given to better reflect what the applicant actually wants to do and then attach reasonable conditions (eg. hours) to take care of residents interests; so it can be a very positive and constructive process – a good recent example is Scott's restaurant where our engagement resulted in a good outcome for everyone; another example would be Little Dobbies who'd applied for 24hr off-sales; it's all about getting the right balance between the interests of businesses and of residents, and good outcomes are possible.

GW: wasn't there a stat about Richmond being disproportionate in the number of licences granted? PW; recited the arrival of the Cumulative Impact Policy in the town which has been a crucial tool in bring some balance.

VH: an example of a premises seeking what we think is unreasonable leeway is Pizza Express and its new capacity for 800 'vertical drinkers' – that sort of flexibility does not suggest a good impact for residents in our view.

Discussion ended

VH: Concluded the meeting.

Meeting ended at 8.39pm

END