

FRIENDS OF RICHMOND GREEN (FoRG) – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

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

This FoRG Annual General Meeting was held at 7:30pm on Wednesday 10th April 2019 in the upstairs room of The Cricketers pub, The Green, Richmond.

Attendance note: In total, **23** people attended the meeting: 17 attendees plus the 6 members of the Executive Committee (Vivien Harris, chair; Diana Billingham, Treasurer; Peter Willan, Peter Griffiths, Anna Newton Dunn and Linda Christmas).

NB. Attendees names and email addresses were collected on a prepared Attendance Sheet, with a GDPR disclaimer clearly displayed at the top of the page (ie. declaring that personal data will only be used by FoRG solely for FoRG communications, plus a guarantee that data will not be shared with others). In addition a third 'I agree' column invited all attendees to actively demonstrate their choice to participate in this way.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of last meeting**
3. **Matters arising**
4. **Report of the Executive**
5. **Financial report and adoption of Accounts**
6. **Election of Officers for 2019-20**
7. **Any Other Business**

MINUTES of FoRG AGM

The meeting began at 7.30pm

1. Apologies

Those who sent their apologies for not being able to attend: Nick Coleman; Julian and Nelly Paxton; Chris Smith; Bill Newton Dunn

2. Minutes of last AGM (10 Apr 2018)

The Minutes of the 2018 FoRG AGM were agreed:-

Proposed: Anna Newton Dunn

Seconded: Richard Peirson

3. Matters arising

- VH: these items will be picked up in general discussion today under AOB.

4. Report of the Executive

A detailed report on key issues and on-going activities is contained in the recent FoRG Newsletter for April 2019, but in summary the chair noted the following:-

- **Fountain** – VH: we are poised to move ahead with this, not just restoring the brickwork & masonry, but now also restoring the water-flow to restore its function as a public drinking fountain. It was last restored in 1977. With the council's help, we think we've identified the right source of drinking water. We have quotes that are acceptable to the council. Work is scheduled to begin after this year's May Fair.

- **May Fair** – VH: this event is this year to be held across three days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), organised by Be Richmond (Richmond BID). Heading a new regime following Liz Carron’s 40 years of organisation and service, Be Richmond are investing significantly in this, but with the same core objectives. There’ll be two days of activity on The Green; the charities have been consulted and are comfortable with this. Their pitches on The Green will be subsidised. The Book Picnic is back this year.
- **New Cycle Hub** – VH: a facility is planned for the car park behind Richmond Station. This plan should remove the unsightly locking of bikes on the railings along the Kew Road in the front of the station. Furthermore, locking a bike up there will become illegal once the hub is in place.
- **Filming** – VH: a major feature film *Peter Rabbit 2* has recently been filming in locations around Richmond town and riverside. The large marquee sited on The Green is now dismantled (the grass is yellowed, but will recover). FoRG did well out of this project, having received a donation of £7500 from the film company. This income is to be invested in useful community projects, such as the Drinking Fountain restoration.
- **Rough Sleepers** – VH: this is still an issue in Richmond, although those occupying tents under the rail arches at the bottom of Old Palace Lane have been moved on, except for one lady who chooses not to be helped.
- **Old Palace Yard** – VH: the re-surfacing proposal remains ongoing. One resident present Lisa Marlowe (AND to confirm) says she’s been in touch with the Crown estate (19March) but that they’ve shown themselves to be really unhelpful and uncommunicative. AND to follow up with Lisa.

VH then called on Peter Willan to report on Heathrow, Old Deer Park, Licensing and other Town Centre issues.

- **Heathrow** – PW (chairs Richmond Heathrow Campaign): RHC has conducted 15 years of detailed research and has engaged in regular discussion with all the main players, and attended official meetings. RHC’s focus up to last June was on the arguments leading up to the vote in Parliament on the case for a 3rd runway at Heathrow. RHC remains opposed, having developed detailed arguments to show that there is no need for it. The “Heathrow is full” claim is demonstrably a total myth; 30% of passengers are transfer passengers bringing no economic value to the UK. Contrary to claims made by Heathrow, existing capacity is ample and there is no need for expansion. But unfortunately the vote in Parliament went against us, with a majority of MPs indicating their support for a 3rd runway. A Judicial Review is currently underway, with it’s outcome as yet unknown. Since June – RHC’s focus has been on airspace redesign – the first big overhaul for fifty years. So even without expansion at Heathrow, changed flight-paths could still bring negative change to residents here in Richmond – we are likely to be heavily-affected as manipulations of the geography are being undertaken to increase the numbers of flights. We will be vigilant as things develop.
- **Licensing** – PW: on behalf of RS we examine all proposals & applications for alcohol licences in the town and we negotiate changes and conditions that form part of the evening economy. This does affect us all in the form of noise, anti-social behaviour, etc. Policing in the town is much reduced – there are no police personnel actually based in this town; they’re all now based in Twickenham. Retail is falling, entertainment outlets are on the increase.
- **Town Centre** – PW: we are working with the council on rationalising street furniture, with the aim to strip out redundant signs and improve those that need to be there. Modest improvements have also been made to Wakefield bus station.
- **Old Deer Park** – PW: five local societies have combined since 2012 to work with council to effect improvements to the park and access to it, especially via the path near the river under the A316 which is often flooded and if not flooded, very muddy.

5. Financial report and adoption of Accounts

VH: Sadly, last June FoRG’s treasurer Mark Sebba died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Crete. Since then Diana Billingham has agreed to be our acting Treasurer, and we hope her position will be fully approved at this meeting.

FoRG's acting Treasurer Diana Billingham issued the FoRG accounts for the period 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2018, summarising as follows:-

- FoRG's income, which comes entirely in the form of donations arising from filming projects around The Green, is shown as £3,020 but already this year our income has leapt as a result of recent filming activity (eg. *Peter Rabbit 2*; other filming – eg. *The Bodyguard* etc.)
- Expenditure for the year, totalling £1,506, included items such as Richmond Heathrow Campaign costs (£789), Old Deer Park Improvement Project costs (£612), and FoRG's AGM costs (£104);
- With a surplus for this accounting period of £1,513, FoRG's balance overall, as of 10 April 2019, stands at **£9,598**.

This year the Drinking Fountain will mop up some of our money (the overall cost is near £30k, and FoRG will be making a significant contribution).

There were no questions from the meeting. FoRG's Accounts for the period Jan-Dec 2018 were therefore agreed and adopted:-

Proposed: Diane Bond

Seconded: Maeve Willan

6. Election of Officers

The current Officers of the FoRG Executive Committee agreed to stand for election or re-election for the coming year 2019-20. They are:-

- **Vivien Harris** (8 Pembroke Villas) – Chair
- **Diana Billingham** – acting Treasurer in recent months seeking formal election

Proposed: Bob Harris

Seconded: Tony Winslade

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

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

The remainder of the committee also agreed to stand for re-election. They are:-

- **Peter Willan** (7 The Green)
- **Peter Griffiths** (26 The Retreat)
- **Anna Newton Dunn** (29 Old Palace Lane)
- **Linda Christmas** (16 Queensberry House)

Proposed: Bob Harris

Seconded: Maeve Willan

Therefore, again in the absence of other nominations, Peter Willan, Peter Griffiths, Anna Newton Dunn and Linda Christmas were duly re-elected to continue serving as FoRG committee members for the coming year.

This concluded the formal part of the meeting, with questions/comments now invited from the floor.

7. Any Other Business

Various questions from the floor then raised issues for discussion.

House of Fraser – Richard Peirson: what are the known plans for the future or the business and building, as we've had very little information distributed to us? PW: Richmond Society has been involved in confidential talks with the architects and developer. The idea is to retain the ground floor as retail, and possibly the basement (uncertain); then the rest of the building will be converted to office space for let. The property company owns the whole block (excluding The Princes Head pub). It is envisaged that the entrances in Paved

Court and Golden Court will be used as entrances for offices. Possibly an extra storey could be added to take utility plant, although there'll be controversy over raising the height of building. The owner lives in Richmond and is keen to retain the building. Redevelopment will take time. On the face of it, the proposed changes won't radically alter 'the centre of gravity' in the town.

VH: I heard comments that were more critical from people who went to the architectural exhibition to view what was proposed. Richard Peirson: we live 50 yards away, and have heard nothing. PW: 2500 leaflets were distributed, apparently, but we don't know where, and there are 10,000 people in this town. LC: is there anything online for people to see? PW: brochures are out today, so we can add them to our website.

VH: please do give us your email addresses, if you haven't already, then we can send you the FoRG AGM Minutes plus any link to website carrying details of proposals for House of Fraser.

Q: when will the store close? PW/AND: Mike Ashley has the lease and hasn't yet declared his hand.

Q: we heard there are significant problems with asbestos in the building, and this may be slowing the developers down. PW: it is an issue and it'll take time to deal with.

PW/VH: any other comments?

Steve Smith: the top storey is a bit of an eyesore already, so to increase it wouldn't be good.

VH: is any of the building listed? PW: yes. There is also a plan to use the roof space / balcony for customers – but use of roof spaces in this way is discouraged by council and by the Richmond Society (eg. the Ivy Café's original idea).

VH: we'll circulate what we can. Comments can be directed to the developers or FoRG can co-ordinate them and pass them on.

Q. Friars Lane / King Street junction – VH: Chris Smith (absent from the meeting, but resident at No.4 Friars Lane) is concerned by the dangers of the Friars Lane / King Street junction and specifically lorries using the unnamed road on LH side– he shared photos of some inappropriate vehicles making the sharp turn there and damaging the pavement. Lorries' satnavs often take them there by mistake, despite signage, but recycling lorries also use Friars Lane (Be Richmond are working on a plan to reduce the number of recycling lorries that use this Water Lane-Friars Lane route). The matter was discussed at last year's AGM and there was a suggestion of closing the unnamed road completely to traffic. (outside former Attenborough house) which was not acceptable to the residents. This year's AGM discussed making it one way from Friars Lane and thus no entry from King Street. The AGM was totally in favour and VH was asked to take this up with the council and to contact Richmond BID regarding their plans to reduce the number and size of recycle lorries using Water Lane and exiting via Friars Lane.

Frances Bouchier: it's a "blind corner", as John Lee has been arguing for some time. Chris Smith did a petition that I signed, for the council. Could the Richmond Society's transport representative lend their backing to this petition? I'm surprised nothing has been done about it.

VH: the petition so far has little weight because of there being so few signatures. VH to take up with our Councillors and specifically Cllr Peter Buckwell.

LC: could not smaller lorries be used? VH: Richmond Bid has this aim.

Q. Heathrow – Sir Brian Fall: we need to wait to see what happens with the Judicial Review, of course, but I wonder if we're suffering from under-funding the work that's being done to counter Heathrow's pro-expansion propaganda. Could the Richmond Society not take the lead in fund-raising? Richmond Society has accumulated "absurd" reserves and could use this to help; but there should be a fund-raising campaign also. It would be a great pity to find that we've under-publicised the great deal of work that RHC has done.

PW: good point. The available, mandatory public forum doesn't always get anywhere. Heathrow are good at manipulating the requirement of public engagement, but they're not good at revealing feedback. RHC assessed that some dimension of legal backing was necessary – and this is ongoing. But given the inevitably escalating costs of any legal action, we need to be very targeted in our approach. So, how to fund it? The three societies have already shared costs recently. Crowd-funding may not be the right thing for this, but we do need to find a way. Heathrow is about to agree an independent advisor for residents (as at Gatwick). A couple of Dutch consultants who are expert in the aviation sector are already in the frame.

Q: Graeme Munro why not use the £30k raised for the Drinking Fountain to fund the fight against Heathrow? Surely this is a higher priority? PW/VH: regarding the Fountain money, any grants from donor bodies are restricted funds, specifically intended for the fountain, therefore this money couldn't be used to support RHC. FoRG's £7000 contribution to the £30k cost of the Fountain project wouldn't go far. DB: in any case, diverting FoRG's film income (intended for the general benefit of the local community) to an issue like fighting Heathrow could create problems.

DB: how long have we got? PW: we are maintaining a tracking of letters/communications across all five or six societies. The 2026 opening is planned, but there may be need for another Judicial Review.

Q. Speed limit around The Green – Maggie Jones: how long do we have to wait for the 20mph limit to be installed, because speed around The Green is a problem. VH: the council has expressly asked us to wait because of Borough-wide plans for a 20mph limit. AND: we are still waiting for detail on which areas are going to be 20mph and which are to be 30mph. But a 20mph limit around The Green and Town Centre is fully expected. PW: the town centre enhancement is being computer-modelled, to try and draw traffic away from the town. But they may not be able to do very much. Also where are all the electric car charging points going to be located and installed? There may be a move to embed them into existing lamp-posts. VH: we'll take up with councillors that The Green should definitely be a 20mph zone.

Q. ODP improvements – VH: ODP Working Party recently went on a walk-around and heard plans for building decking over the water-logged ground under the road bridge in the south-west corner of Old Deer Park. As at Ham House, it would be a raised decked area to make access easier in wet, muddy conditions. This would be a positive change. Also, the sight-lines from obelisks close to the tow-path, with the recent King's Observatory improvements, need further clearing particularly on the RMS boundary. The ODP Working Party is engaged in such things. The towpath footbridge over the 'Ha Ha' has twice suffered damage – wooden planks need to be replaced entirely rather than just a few individually (having had two breaks in recent months/weeks). The council has acknowledged the problem and agreed to replace all the wooden planks. PW: other projects also need work, near the Pools on the Park for example, and at the Richmond Athletic Ground. The level of work required to, for example, dredge the Ha Ha is still to be decided, taking various environmental concerns into account. PW said he hoped people had seen the significant improvement at the Park Lane entrance to the ODP car park where metal barriers had been replaced with wooden barriers, new wooden bollards introduced, signage rationalised, a bed of flowers introduced and the pathways surfaced with heritage gravel. This is the Working Group's first sizable project undertaken with the Council.

Q. Benches on The Green – Graham Nugent: I've just arrived in Richmond.. It's a wonderful place. But I notice that the benches on The Green, although well placed, suffer from terribly worn areas around their footings that gets muddy in wet weather and hampers access. Surely we can argue to improve these areas to make the benches more hospitable, clean and secure for people to enjoy them... perhaps extending the paving stone pavements to secure the ground surface for better use?

Frances Bouchier: Yvonne Kelleher might be able to help, because I agree that access to the benches on The Green could be improved.

VH: we will take this up and improve facilities; good idea. We'll ask the council's Head of Parks what their policy is regarding bases for benches.

Q. Evening economy: Graeme Munro: I notice that some pubs advertise customers to take their drinks on the Green. Is this allowed? PW: yes provided they only take out plastic glasses.

VH: called meeting to an end and invited all attendees to have a glass of wine.

The meeting ended at 8.49pm.

END OF FoRG AGM 2019