

Draft

**Friends of Palewell Common & Fields**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Tuesday 24 June 2025**

**at 7.00 All Saints Hall East Sheen,**

**1. Welcome**

The Chair, Andy Sutch, welcomed all those attending. Apologies were received from Matt Almond, Tasha Worley and Kieran Pierce (however a representative from Cricket was present). He said there were a few paper copies of the agenda, his annual report, the accounts, and last year's AGM minutes available on the chairs (they had also been distributed electronically to members).

**2. Chair's Report for 2024/25**

2.1 Andy invited those participating to approve the draft minutes of the 2024 AGM. There being no comments, these were approved.

2.2 He then gave his annual report. Palewell Common is an important resource for all. It provides a wide range of facilities for sport and recreation but is also a space for informal activities from children's play to dog walking. It is also an important ecosystem for flora and fauna.

Environment and conservation

2.3 Environment and conservation had dominated the FoPC agenda this year. A report on conservation efforts had been shared by Will from Barnes Common Ltd and was summarised by the Chair. The report included updates on habitat work across the year and ecological monitoring including a butterfly transect, bat surveys and continued maintenance of the species list.

Andy reported last year on proposals from Friends of Barnes Common, around flood protection that envisaged a series of "sinks" and raised pathways on the area between the tennis courts and the pavilion and a surrounding bund. FoPC felt this proposal represented an excessive loss of amenity space, particularly for young children, vulnerable users and also a loss of space for the important delivery of personal training on the Common. Subsequent site discussions, visits etc produced a less intrusive drainage scheme linked to the existing sink. Recent discussions appear to suggest that all these interventions have now been abandoned in favour of greater investment around Barnes Common.

The felling of dead and non-native species along the banks of Beverley Brook has now been completed and regeneration has taken place.

Thanks to the donation of two saplings from the Parks Department FoPC has planted these trees adjacent to the orchard.

The maintenance and improvement of the woodland area, again entailing the removal of some non-native and dead trees and “haloing” to allow better light penetration has continued this year with improvements to the footpaths.

The proposed provision of two new public benches, carved out of felled timber, have stalled due to conservation issues around fauna.

Finally, Andy thanked all of you who help to keep the Common clean and tidy; members, friends and local school pupils, for the litter-pick days and reporting conservation issues. Thanks too to the vast majority of our conscientious dog owners who keep them under control and clean up after them.

#### Sports and Physical activities

2.4 Football with Sheen Lions and Little Kickers thrives on the resilient grass pitches on the Common and provide an invaluable opportunity for young people to take part in sport and adopt a physically active lifestyle. Sheen Common Cricket Club continue to play on a square very much improved by their own endeavours. It had been hoped that a new artificial wicket would be installed in the spring to increase the capacity of the ground but this has been delayed awaiting LBRuT planning consent.

The new tennis courts have proved a great success albeit the initial teething problems with the entry gate continue. It is hoped that the proposed solar panel will be installed soon to enable an electronic gate. Boules continues to thrive in the dog-free area at least two or three times a week and many thanks to John Hockley for organising this.

The pitch and putt is open during the summer and operated by the grounds maintenance contractor, but is not actively marketed and remains underutilised.

There is a growing personal fitness regime delivered by the private sector on the common.

The previously unused first floor changing rooms in the Pavilion are now available for wider community use but only at charges commensurate with the original changing rooms. Discussions have also taken place with new owners of the Montessori school.

#### Events and other activities

2.6 Earlier in the year a successful litter pick was held where we were assisted by the local ward councillors whilst last weekend Friends joined the annual Clean Sheen litter pick.

Another very successful Easter Egg hunt was organised this year for well over 50 children. Refreshments were served to the parents and other adults and a prize draw for a tea towel designed by local artist, Rachel Hunt encouraged a significant number of new members to sign up.

2.8 Finally, Andy expressed thanks to all the Committee members and particularly to Sarah our new Secretary and Jess, our Treasurer who has the unenviable role of dealing with the machinations of the bank and also Ken Cook who certifies our accounts

### **3 Go Ape Proposal**

3.1. Julia Cambridge summarised the timeline to date with respect to the proposal submitted by Go Ape to install and run a commercial ropes based leisure activity on the Common. A lively discussion ensued from Committee members, attending members and others present on the night, sharing opinions and concerns. All who spoke were against the proposal on grounds including impact on biodiversity, light and noise pollution and parking stress.

3.2 Andy confirmed that the Committee had already written to the Council with their objections and were against the proposal as it stood being fundamentally opposed to the building on the Common and transport strategy.

3.3. Reassurance was provided that no planning permission had been granted and current indication was that the proposal would not proceed further. Julia Cambridge confirmed The Value Asset Management ('VAM') team were speaking to Go Ape and seeking clarity from the Directors if they wished to proceed with the proposal.

3.4 Questions were asked with respect to the size of the proposal and it was confirmed that it would be a similar size to other Go Ape sites. 3 sites were explored in the Borough and Go Ape considered the best fit to be Palewell.

3.5 A question was asked with respect to commercial developments being approved without planning permission elsewhere but again, reassurance was provided that planning permission would be needed in this case. Julia Cambridge highlighted that the planning decision would be taken via committee and due to the nature of the proposal, public would be invited to speak.

3.6. A member asked where the revenue from the rental would go, to which the response was to the Parks. Jessica acknowledged that the Committee were not fundamentally opposed to commercial operations on the common and understood the need for parks to be revenue generating to ensure upkeep and conservation efforts could continue into the future.

### **4 Accounts for 2024/25**

4.1 The Treasurer, Jessica, said that copies of the accounts had been distributed with the papers for the meeting and were available on the chairs. The accounts showed funds of £3,781 at end year. As ever we were open to ideas from members and others on the use of the funds. The accounts were approved by the meeting.

4.2 Jessica invited the meeting to thank the scrutineer of the accounts Ken Cook and to agree to his appointment for the coming year. This was agreed.

## **5 Membership report**

5.1 Jessica highlighted that the Friends had moved away from subscriptions to a donations model.

5.2. The Secretary reported that currently there were over 100 members on the mailing list, a significant increase over the course of the last year.

5.3. It was confirmed that the best way to contact the Friends was via the email address [office@paleowellcommon.org](mailto:office@paleowellcommon.org).

## **6 Election of Committee**

6.1 The Chair Andy Sutch invited the meeting to move to the elections for members of the Committee. He invited Julia Cambridge to assume the chair temporarily.

5.2 Julia said that Andy Sutch had been nominated as Chair by the present Committee. No other nominations were made and he was duly elected by those present.

5.3 Andy re-assumed the Chair and invited members to consider in turn the nominations for the officers made by the Committee. The nominations shown on the Agenda were as follows -

Deputy Chair	<i>Michael French</i>
Treasurer	<i>Jessica Rettie</i>
Secretary	<i>Sarah Carter</i>
Membership Secretary	<i>vacant</i>

5.4 Oliver Carter stepped forward to fill the vacant membership secretary position and all Committee members were duly elected.

5.5 Andy said that the Agenda set out two nominations as ordinary members of the Committee as follows -

Proposer	Seconder
<i>Rikki Marks</i>	<i>Jessica Rettie</i>
<i>Bernard Adams</i>	<i>Sarah Carter</i>
	<i>Jessica Rettie</i>

John Ancock was also proposed by Andy and seconded by Jessica. There being no additional nominations these three members were duly elected.

## **6 Sports update**

6.1 Andy elaborated on sport already covered in his annual report including the synthetic strip for cricket being held up by planning with a hope it would be operational by Spring 2026 to facilitate wider use by schools.

6.2. Tennis was thriving but again, improvements to the gate had been held up by planning.

6.3 Pitch and Putt contract would be changing in 2026 but the hope was that it remained.

6.4 Boule maintenance was by the boule players themselves. There had been interest in a boule festival at the end of the Summer.

6.5 Blitz fitness now had over 250 clients across 11 sessions on the common.

6.6. Dog walking continued to be a popular activity.

## **7 Any other Business.**

7.1 Andy asked if there was any other business.

- A member asked if there had been an audit of diversity on the Common to which Will confirmed that this was ongoing with the species list continuing to be built. Will mentioned the Saproxylic project and the establishment of green corridors.
- It was confirmed that Barnes Common Ltd has the contract to manage Palewell until March 2026.
- It was suggested by a member that a notice be put up on the board with details on how to contact the Friends.
- A question was asked with respect of the remit of the Friends to which Andy responded that Friends organisations were set up to represent the local people and enable the council to engage with the community. The main areas of focus were flora and fauna, sport and the green environment. The Friends had an increasing role in the Richmond Moves initiative which would likely be a focus for 2026. Rikki confirmed the area included the old Palewell Pond.
- Various members offered resources and help if needed, particularly with any further objections to the Go Ape proposal. Andy confirmed that if the proposal were to move forward, the Committee would definitely hold a meeting for all members.
- Again in relation to the Go Ape proposal, a member suggested that a template objection letter be drafted and circulated if needed.
- Andy requested that any suggestions for other ways to attract people to the common be shared with the Committee by the membership.

7.2 Andy closed the meeting. He invited those attending to continue informal discussions with Committee members over a drink.