

A Objects of FOLP

The constitution sets out the Charity's objects – though, as elsewhere in the constitution, this might better read 'The objects of FOLP are'. I set out the specified objects below – though I have added new references to our Conservation Area status and the idea of being an umbrella organisation.

The Charity's objects ('the Objects') are:

- to act as a voice for local people, residents, and users of the Park, and act as an umbrella organisation for groups in the Park (see B).
- to contribute to the preservation of the Park, in line with its Conservation Area status, and encourage new facilities/activities/events which are in keeping with the Park's history and tradition,
- to encourage local interest in and responsibility for the Park, and to promote the use of the Park as a focal point and educational resource for the local community,
- to undertake/promote activities which protect and enhance the ecological environment of the Park,
- to explore and seek new sources of funding to achieve the above aims.

B Groups in the Park

There is a wide variety of groups and organisations based in or adjacent to the Park, or which organise activities and events in the Park. While each will have its own aims and objectives, there is a role for FOLP to act as an umbrella organisation, liaising with and providing support for those groups, for example by sharing information which could be mutually beneficial (eg grant funding opportunities). An excellent example of this process in action is Jean Byrne's leaflet on groups in the Park.

A way forward here would be to ensure each FOLP committee member is designated one (or more) groups to work with, so they would act as a point of contact, and check with each before a committee meeting if they have news/concerns they want to share. The revamped FOLP website also would be useful, as we can offer space on our website for them, and possibly supply copy if they are unable to do so themselves.

A very practical way in which we could work together with these groups would be to enter the Park as a whole into the annual Stretford In Bloom competition, in the Community Effort category, which is about making your neighbourhood better and having a sense of community ownership.

C Grants and funding

Regardless of the proposed Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid – and a final decision would not be known till 2021 - we should (as the constitution suggests) be actively looking to explore new sources of funding, indeed, this would be regarded favourably by the HLF. Perhaps a committee member – ideally one with no specific responsibility – could take this on, though all committee members should look out for possible opportunities.

On funding, as distinct from grants, we should seek more clarity on accessing the Film Fund money generated by filming in the Park, and s.106 funding.

A small sub-committee (say three people) should draw up a list of priorities for the year of big projects we would like to use money for.

D Volunteer work

A huge amount of voluntary work is carried out in the Park but this is undocumented. The HLF can assign a monetary value to such work, if it is documented, and this could assist in their financial assessment and would underline the commitment of the community to its Park. We should, as a matter of urgency, seek to document volunteer input, whether that is the Wildlife Garden (WLG) or the Community Allotment or Health Walks, or even individual initiatives such as Mark Nesbitt picking up litter. We need to broaden the scope of this exercise to embrace other activities, such as the Scouts and Park Run, and this links in to the suggestion made in part B. More advice should be sought on what input is counted – for example, do we include all Scout volunteer time in the Park, or only activities where they actually go out to do something in the Park? Similarly, we should look for more advice on how to record volunteer input - HLF suggested input should be documented by spreadsheets and/or a diary or log. There may be scope for a student to collate the data.

We should continue to work with established groups of volunteers, such as Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers, but do we have the capacity (and suitable tasks) for one-off visits by a group, such the offer recently received from the Volunteer Centre. Manchester? We could perhaps think of some regular jobs that could be done, and what is required – for example, clearing leaves off the tennis courts but could the volunteers provide their own equipment, and how would the leaves be disposed of?

E Heritage landscape

The Park's Conservation area status is a reflection in part of its heritage landscape, both the Rylands era and then its role as a prominent, indeed the leading public park in the area. We should look to preserve and restore this landscape where possible. For the Rylands era, we should look at options such as opening up the views from the Hall (currently largely blocked by trees) out over the Grand Lawn (which in itself needs restoration), or restoring the ha-ha, or un-culverting part of Longford Brook. We should also look at enhancing key features of the public park era for example, the Rock Garden, where reinstatement of the water feature (powered by renewable energy or simply people power) should be pursued, and enhancement of the formal gardens with more planting.

F Heritage structures in the Park

The various houses and cottages in the Park are really beyond our remit but there are a number of heritage structures which we should look to protect and, in some cases, press the case for refurbishment. In approximate date order, these are the remains of the Hall (incorporated into the neglected Larry Sullivan Gardens), the kitchen garden wall, the Long Barn, the shippon buildings, the bowling green

buildings, the café building, the former pavilions and the former Firswood Library. The community centre, though an important asset, dates approximately to the 1960s so it may well not be classified as a heritage building. Unlike the previous bid, Trafford now plan to include the shippon buildings in the new HLF bid, and a key concern here is that appropriate uses (which do not accentuate traffic problems) are found for these buildings (including the courtyard) and Long Barn, while much more should be made of the remains of the Hall. Note that the HLF were inclined to consider Pets' Corner as a heritage feature, and work is needed here too (for example, extending the roof).

G Infrastructure

- Quality of paths, roads
- Entrances from Quadrant and Longford Road - how can these be improved? Should we improve visibility of the Park from Quadrant with signage?
- Parking / Cars management - too many cars enter from Cromwell Road side. We need to continue to review traffic management options.
- Need to provide effective clearance of gullies, for example by the Children's Playground, and the road near Longford Cottages, on the way to the Older Children's Playground.
- Replacement of damaged fencing – in particular, given the potential hazard of the pond to young children, the fencing separating the Wildlife Garden from the Rock Garden – and removal of hazardous fencing. Two examples of the latter are the fencing on the Park Run route, on the left, as runners head north past the Long Barn, and the half-concealed barbed wire in the hedge/fence on the Wildlife Garden boundary with the path past the stadium.
- Vandalism damage to ornamental walls in formal gardens and to coping stones on walls to rear of former toilet block
- Bins / Refuse / Waste. On bins, Paul Farrand reports that TBC are not happy with the proposed trio bins in the heritage area, and will be taking this up with Amey.
- TBC need to review bulge in Edge Lane boundary wall, which looks worse now than when it was reported two years ago.

H Health and Wellbeing

The HLF advise that this will continue to be a crucial area. We are well placed in this regard, with the user survey demonstrating such use of the Park, with Jean's Health Walks and the dementia walks, not to mention the Community Allotment, Wildlife Garden, bowling greens, tennis courts, Disc Golf, Park Run, Simply Cycling etc. New opportunities should also be considered, for example an outside gym – is it possible this could power the water feature? Mark Nesbitt, quite rightly in my view, has flagged up the potential for the Park to be a recognised cycling hub. No doubt Mark can expand on this (and has already mentioned that TfGM hold regular cycling practice events, and that Simply Cycling operate in the Park as well as the stadium) but Ernst mentioned the following, which all tie in to this concept:

- Walking / Cycling Infrastructure - you may have seen a fantastic new initiative by Chris Boardman - Beelines [here](#) and map [here](#). There is one proposed directly through the Park AND a proper connection proposed across Edge Lane (see 2nd bullet point) - this is an opportunity for us to steer and support the initiative.

- Entrance from Edge Lane / Turn Moss - the critical and only link between the Park, Turn Moss and the wider green belt. Potential of a major health and well being walking and cycling connection. Crossing Edge Lane still dangerous and challenging.
- Bike Pump Track

I Sport

The Park hosts a wide range of sporting activities, many mentioned in the previous section. We should continue to support such activities, such as football in the northern part of the Park, and encourage investment in existing sports, such as basketball, with investment in upgrading of the tennis courts being a high priority, or new sports, for example revisiting the idea of open air table tennis.

J Leisure

The Park is a natural focus of leisure activity in the area, both organised and less formal, and we should continue to promote awareness of it. While organising major events is perhaps beyond our resources, we should at least plan one open day a year, linking up with others (such as the various cycling groups and the café).

The playgrounds for both younger and older children are very well used areas, though equipment failures and drainage issues are a recurrent theme, so we need to press for continuing investment in both areas, both to replace equipment removed by the Council/One Trafford, and to buy new equipment eg ground level trampolines.

FOLP played a crucial role in the creation of the café. Those running the café have made it a major success story for, and indeed destination in, the Park. We should continue to support it and possible enhancements to its service. Crucially, the café means that there is a public toilet facility in the Park.

The open air theatre productions have been a great success, and we should seek to ensure these continue in the future.

K Education

The Park is a major educational resource in itself, with a rich history going back to the Rylands era and earlier still, and we should seek to promote awareness of this (see M). Other educational aspects which can be drawn on include horticulture, ecology and looking after animals. Education is likely to continue to be an important outcome for the HLF, so we need to build on existing links (which the Community Allotment and Wildlife Garden, to name just two, already have) with schools, colleges, Stretford Youth Theatre and so on, and support initiatives such as the Forest School (ie the Conker Crew).

L Biodiversity

HLF confirmed that this will continue to be an important consideration. As this is not a particularly strong point for the Park, we need to consider what steps can be taken to improve biodiversity. One option might be to set aside one of the areas subject to

persistent flooding and create a wetland habitat. The Wildlife Garden is a prime example of an area where we are encouraging diversity in the Park – for example, the planting of dwarf buddleia should help attract butterflies. The RHS Stretford In Bloom judge suggested the wood carving in the herb garden area, while beyond restoration, could be turned into an attractive insect house/ bug hotel.

More could be done to highlight the assets the Park does have. We could try to interest the RSPB to do a bird survey – and perhaps Lancashire Wildlife Trust might do a broader survey.

We could seek to publish a Tree Trail leaflet, highlighting the great variety of trees in the Park. It could include a tree (behind the Art Deco shelters) which John Agar tells Jackie is a hybrid tree which pre-dates the Rylands era; the Red Oak (now the subject of an information panel); the Lombardy poplars which John Rylands planted to mark the eastern boundary (and which adjoin the Ryebank Fields) and the young elm which the Stretford in Bloom RHS judge said was of particular interest. In addition, the Disc Golf members took a lot of trouble with their selection of trees.

M Interpretation

A greatly improved outcome would be possible if an investment was made in interpretation panels, signage and so on, to convey the rich heritage of the Park. Though these should be distributed appropriately around the Park, a group of panels might usefully be brought together in the former pavilion structures. We should also seek to publish leaflets, such as a Tree Trail and a Rylands Trail. Social media would be another outlet (see N).

N Social media

We need to have clear lines of responsibility for social media, as this will become increasingly important, certainly for younger people, in finding out and indeed learning about the Park. The revamped website is a great start but we need to clarify who represents FOLP on Facebook and Twitter. Looking into the future, one thing that might be considered is a smartphone app offering a history guide to the Park, and perhaps one for all the activities in the Park. This could be part of the HLF bid, and fits in with their wish for improved outcomes.

O General landscape points

All the following are under-resourced and the subject of minimalist provision, due to significant reductions in investment and staffing levels over the last year.

- trees: management and maintenance of existing, along with new planting
- mowing regime
- overgrown shrubs
- hedges
- planting in formal gardens and Larry Sullivan Gardens

Richard Bond

13/11/18