

This report covers FoWG's activity in the last 12-months of the Heritage Lottery Grant. The report also looks forward to 1816 the bi-centenary of Brixton Windmill when we no longer have the financial security of the HLF grant for the windmill's successful education project.

Windmill Gardens

Much time has been devoted to the Council's decision to establish the 'cooperative parks' management programme. After discussing this at our general meetings we decided, as a small park (0.77 hectares) containing a unique heritage building, to make an expression of interest in becoming a 'partnership park' – one of three management options on offer. To our disappointment the partnership model has not been progressed by the Council who have spent most of their energies encouraging a few 'pioneer parks'. To date only one of these has been established at Streatham Rookery. Recently their Friends group voiced worries about their financial future. The council has announced cuts of £2m in the annual parks maintenance budget – half the total annual spend. At our last General Meeting FoWG opposed these cuts and the executive issued a leaflet to park users explaining why.

Despite this gloomy background there have been some good improvements to Windmill Gardens. A third wooden bench seat was installed in memory of Colin Stewart Brooks a musician who played at FoWG's summer festivals from 2003-2011. It enhances the park and is very well used.

Footfall in the park continues to increase. In early June Windmill Gardens was judged for a Green Pennant Award. We should hear the result later this month. Our Park sub-group organise regular gardening workshops and we had another fabulous display of spring bulbs this year. In April they planted spring wheat next to the windmill and a native species hedge along the railings by the ping-pong table.

They later planted various soft fruit bushes in other border areas of the park. Disappointingly the contractor cut down some of these new bushes just as they were fruiting. The bushes had been purchased with a small grant from Lambeth Incredible Edible to encourage food growing. The contractor has apologised and will replace the bushes. We are meeting with them next week to ensure it does not happen again.

Last year we started 'Bat Walks' in the park led by Dr Iain Boulton. They were very successful and the next one is booked for the 16th of July. In November we started free Saturday morning Tai-Chi sessions beside the windmill. These are popular and take place in all weathers. The Tai Chi is funded by a small Lambeth Legacy Fund grant.

This year Brixton City Farm organised a consultation about their proposal to site some small farm animals in Windmill Gardens. This consultation, which engaged park users and residents on the Blenheim Gardens estate plus other local stakeholders, has recently concluded and we await the outcome and plans for the next steps in this proposal.

Improving Windmill Gardens for all users is a key objective of the Friends and we see the construction of an Education Building at the Windmill as a necessary addition to the park. A dedicated windmill building will provide the means to raise revenue to expand our community projects and enable further improvements to the park. In particular we need improvements to the children's play area and more sports

facilities for young people. There is a demand from some users for outdoor gym equipment.

The Windmill

FoWG volunteers opened Brixton's historic windmill for free tours from March-October 2014 and re-opened in early April this year. We introduced monthly Windmill Walks around Brixton Hill in April this year. These are led by Liz du Parcq.

Visitors: During the 2014 season 847 people visited the windmill on free weekend open afternoons. A further 19 came on mid-week group visits, paying £6 a head, making a total of 866 visitors. Because Holmewood Nursery have expanded their Stay and Play activities during this year we had fewer opportunities for mid-week group visits and overall visitor numbers are slightly down on 2013. Since re-opening in 2015 the Friends have welcomed 452 more visitors including 32 midweek paying visitors. We know there is a big demand for midweek visits and if we had a dedicated education/visitor centre building then that demand could be met. National Mills weekend in May 2015 was a success and once again Paul Sellwood, our millwright, plus volunteers got the sails moving to the delight of visitors.

Building: There is still a problem with the Windmill's spring sail mechanism that has to be resolved. But in general the windmill withstood the winter rains and cold quite well. Minor repairs carried out during the year and more constant airing of the building means it is now drying out. We now have a ladder to the cap and there are some further improving works due this September using up the last of HLF grant. These include: installing cupboards and box seats on the ground floor which will provide much needed storage space and adding mesh grills to windows to allow air to circulate through the mill in the summer months.

Flour Milling 12 volunteer millers were trained by Jon Cook last November and we have begun to produce stone-ground flour regularly. This May Bank holiday we milled in public for the first time and the event was a great success. As fast as our millers could grind and package the flour, it was taken away by our visitors keen to donate money for the first Brixton Flour to be regularly produced since 1934.

The Future: A great deal of the time of the Exec and the Sustainability/Fundraising sub-group has been taken up with planning for the future in these final months of the HLF grant. We need to raise a great deal of money to continue the very successful Windmill Education project. So we were pleased by the decision of the Council to plan a four-year programme of capital investment in Lambeth's parks, open spaces and heritage sites. After a public consultation – thanks to all members and local partners who responded – we were even more heartened when the January Cabinet agreed that £350k would be spend in the first year of the investment programme on an education building in Windmill Gardens. However, we have been disappointed that nothing has moved on this since then. Our members have done a lot of work identify suitable building types and to prepare a business case for the building that shows how having a building can bring in much needed revenue to pay for the Education Project, fund our community events and in the long-term fund the maintenance of both Windmill Gardens and the Windmill itself (after 2020 when the council's maintenance responsibility under HLF agreement ends).

Windmill Education Programme

On Mondays and Fridays throughout the academic year our DEO, Stephen Lawlor, provides education workshops to a stream of school groups visiting the Windmill. He continues to work closely with the Windmill Cluster of local primary schools. FoWG are concerned to ensure the future of this very successful programme particularly as funding ends in September.

The Friends

We distribute our monthly e-newsletter to nearly 640 supporters. Following our AGM last June the Friends held General Meetings in October and March.

We continue to recruit new members but too slowly and some of our long-term members have not renewed. For the last 18 months we have not had a membership secretary so we are very grateful to Donna Lister for taking on this role.

During the past 12 months FoWG responded to two Lambeth Council consultations. The first proposed £18m capital investment in parks (mentioned above), that requires Friends groups to raise half of that sum. The second was about the future of cultural services up to 2020 including parks, sports, libraries, heritage and the Lambeth Archive. Thanks go to our many Friends who responded individually.

We attend quarterly meetings of Lambeth Parks and Green Spaces Forum where we closely follow progress of the Council's cooperative parks programme. We also attend meetings the Local History Forum as well as meetings of the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum and Brixton Hill Partnership

Executive Committee An important part of the Annual Report is to thank all the members of FoWG who have worked so hard to regularly open the windmill and to organise all the events we have put on in Windmill Gardens. I want to thank all the FoWG officers, and our Executive Committee who are standing down at this AGM. Each year we elect an Executive Committee to be the team carrying forward decisions of FoWG members between our general meetings and to negotiate with Lambeth council via our partnership agreement. The 2014 team all worked extremely hard. During the year Sandra Watts, who reluctantly agreed to be our secretary at the last AGM, gave up that role and Sujata Biswas agreed to take over as our FoWG secretary.

Now, having served three years on the Executive Sandra has decided to stand down. I want to thank her for her wise counsel on the Executive Committee. During the year Laura Zauli also stood down because of family commitments. Her role as volunteers organiser was taken over by Ann Lee. Thanks to Laura for her many years on FoWG's committee.

The four sub-groups of the Friends: Comms, Events, Parks and Sustainability/Fundraising, continue to meet supporting the hard work of our Executive Committee and general members. Thanks to all sub-group members.

The Sustainability / Fundraising group in particular has a big task ahead guiding FoWG in the necessary task of raising money now the HLF grant is at an end. We need to secure the future of our community programme as well as the Education Project, the park, and more long-term the windmill itself. If you have experience of fund raising do consider joining this group

If you would like to join any of our sub groups let us know by emailing info@brixtonwindmill.org.uk

Community Events: FoWG's Events and Park groups work closely with Stephen our Development and Education Officer (DEO) to organise a lively programme of events in Windmill Gardens. In July 2014 we held a Big Gig music event and in August Art in the Park. A successful Harvest festival was held on Open House weekend in September. Two events in October: the Big Draw and Halloween at the Windmill were great hits with children. In December the windmill was transformed into a magical grotto. Children could take a sleigh ride to meet Santa in his grotto.

The 2015 season started with a very successful Easter egg hunt and two weekends ago 12 local teams competed in our 5-A-Side Football tournament for children and youth. Due to funding issues we have had to postpone our Summer Festival and Parade but hope to organise this in September.

Volunteers and Guides are extremely important to Brixton Windmill and we always need more trained guides as well as stewards and bakers. I want to thank Ann for ensuring we have enough guides and helpers at each open day and also Angela Rouse for so imaginatively encouraging our bakers. We thank Blenheim Gardens Resident Management Organisation for their ongoing support and Veolia, Lambeth's parks contractor, for supplying us with a volunteer First Aider at all our open days throughout 2014. We also thank them for their very generous support for the annual Festival & Parade. We also benefitted from one-day each of volunteer help from Lambeth Council and PWC.

If you would like to train as a guide or steward email info@brixtonwindmill.org.uk to book a place on our next training evening on Wednesday July 8th.

Outreach and Publicity The Friends' communication group (Comms) have continued to provide brilliant publicity for FoWG and Brixton Windmill. For much of the year we were without a dedicated PR officer but this has recently been resolved and we would like to welcome Nuala Ginty.

We have set up stalls at the Lambeth Country Show, Lambeth Archive Day, Brockwell Winter Fair, and in Brixton Market where we promote Brixton Windmill. Two of our volunteers attended Archive Training organised by the Mills Archive in Reading.

The Comms group regularly update the Windmill Website at www.brixtonwindmill.org with Friends' news via our blog.

Merchandising One way to promote and raise funds is by selling our growing range of FoWG merchandise. Thanks to Chris Patton this year we have added a newly designed special 2016 Brixton Windmill T-shirt to our range plus some colourful windmill mugs. Our merchandise is on sale at Diverse Gifts, Brixton, Pempamsie, Brixton Hill, and The Old Post Office Bakery, as well as at all Windmill events. The Park group also provide seasonal plants, jam and fresh produce for our stalls. All these sales boost our funding for the free community events we run in Windmill Gardens.

Finally We say "Goodbye and good luck" in their new posts to two officers. First, Toussainte Reba, our project officer for the five-year HLF restoration project at the Windmill. Many thanks for your support through some quite difficult times and for your role in making the Windmill restoration such a successful Lambeth project. Secondly, Lara Mifsud-Bonici our Brixton area parks officer who we know loves the windmill but is moving on to look after Clapham Common. Thanks to both of you for being such great supporters of Brixton Windmill and Windmill Gardens.