

Friends of Brook Green Chair Report 2019-2020

Financial Resources

Overall our financial resources continued to strengthen over the year reflecting strong income from our main sources of revenue; the Tennis Courts; Brook Green Day Fair in September 2019 and Inter Street Quiz night in February 2020.

The Covid-19 Pandemic resulted in the closure of the courts in March 2020 but only affected our total rental income at the end of this financial period and our financial investments saw a temporary reduction in their asset values. A more cautionary approach will be required for the next financial year due to the cancellation of our two major fundraising events.

Tennis Venue Update

Brook Green continues to stand out as a Lawn Tennis Association registered venue and was again commended for having amongst the very highest levels of usage. This small tennis court location continues to be an integral part of community.

We worked with the LTA as COVID developed and followed all their guidelines, sadly this resulted in the courts being closed or with restricted usage during lockdown as per government guidelines.

Venue Improvements

We have replaced the nets on the full-sized courts. Our plan to refurbish the courts in Spring 2020 was delayed by COVID but preparatory work was undertaken to enable a full refurbishment as soon as allowed. CourtFit is the official licensee for coaching and are now responsible for keeping the courts cleaned regularly.

Coaching

Working with the LTA and our licensed coaches Courtfit, we have established a wide coaching offer across all abilities, whilst maintaining peak and off-peak access to playing members. Our membership is still free, which allows all members of the public to be able to book and use the court facilities. We are continually reviewing the coaching offer, which is updated each season.

We continue to see high take up of both the block booked courses and the "drop-in" sessions. We have worked hard to ensure there is the right mix of time on the courts for group coaching, one-to-one coaching and, of course, casual play by the public.

We are running outreach tennis programs now with 3 schools, including Addison Primary, which has been run through the generosity of CourtFit giving their time for free to organise.

We continue to receive very positive feedback on the courts in general and always welcome feedback on all aspects of the courts.

Safeguarding

We passed our safeguarding review in June 2019. CourtFit are only permitted use LTA-accredited coaches and to ensure they are DBS-checked on an annual basis. The courts themselves are low risk from a safeguarding perspective and there have not been any reported incidents. Nevertheless, we continue to ensure that all of those connected with the courts are aware that we will not tolerate any

form of abuse, whether physical, mental or sexual. We encourage our community to report any concerns to the Welfare Officer. Details are on our Friends of Brook Green website.

Brook Green Pavilion and Kiosk

We were excited to transition to a new operator for the kiosk. In January 2020, Bears Ice Cream signed as licence holder to operate the kiosk however their opening was delayed to June due to Covid. Bears is a local business who have successfully integrated well with the community. In addition to their core product offering of ice-cream they sell a selection of breakfast, lunch, snacks and coffee from Scotties, the local business we all know well.

We continue to explore opportunities to support the operation of the kiosk throughout the whole year and not just during the peak summer months. This will ensure we cover the overheads of keeping the well-used toilets open and kept clean, particularly for community members using the playground and tennis facilities.

Playground

Unfortunately, Covid-19 has caused LBHF to delay the plans for the refurbishment and improvement of the playground. With the reopening of the playground and easing of lockdown, it is anticipated that the project will be revisited and revised, specifically in relation to the time frame, later in 2020. We are currently lobbying to get an agreed date for the commencement of the works and the related finalisation of the design plans. We are also in touch with stakeholders, charitable bodies and other organisations, who will potentially be contributing to the funding of the project,

Our thanks to the consultation group, which includes six volunteers from the local community, who have made a significant contribution to Jon Sheaff's original plans for the playground. Jon Sheaff is the consultant we appointed to advise on the playground. The plans, which have been reviewed by the FBG Board, have been through several iterations. The most recent version (V8) incorporates feedback from the local Councilors most specifically in relation to ensuring the playground is accessible to children with disabilities.

It is hoped that we will be able to take the project forward in the coming months and ensure the ongoing safety of this well used playground by many residents from the H&F borough.

Brook Green Management

Western Lawn and Surrounds Trees

The contract to lighten the trees on the North side of the tennis courts and the South side of the kick about area was completed by Red Squirrel at the end of March, just before lock down. This contract was managed by Stefan Czeladzinski of LBHF and the work lightened the trees to improve both daylight to the ground around and importantly the air flow through the trees which is key to maintaining their health.

We are fortunate that from the surveys conducted by LBHF the plane trees on Brook Green are not yet suffering from massaria and we would hope that the works agreed with Stefan will ward off or at least delay any impact from this disease.

We were approached during the summer with a proposal for a tiny forest. This was not appropriate for Brook Green itself, but we are pleased to report that a site has been selected near White City in an area that will benefit greatly from the improved environment offered by these tiny forests.

We continue to look at other ways to support the trees on Brook Green and we have been approached with the thought that monies could be raised under a carbon offset policy to subsidize the cost of their continued maintenance. Further works will be planned next year as we work round the Green.

Horticulture

A number of gardening activities were undertaken during this last year. On the North side of the Western Lawn we planted over 120 saplings to extend our wildlife hedge. More spring bulbs were planted in autumn in several locations of the Green. On the south side of tennis courts, we created two new raised beds by the entrance gate where we planted a variety of herbaceous plants: including Agastache, Helenium, Verbena bonariensis, Anemone Honorine Jobert. All the work was carried out by local volunteers. Due to the Covid 19 Pandemic the planned work on the Western Side of the tennis court did not go ahead.

We have established a good partnership with the local community, and we receive regular support from St Paul's Girls School with horticultural volunteers. We hope to encourage more and more people with events and workshops and resume our plans for the other areas of Brook Green.

Brook Green Fair

The annual Brook Green Day Fair was held on Saturday 14th September, and once again we were blessed with glorious sunshine. It remains the centre piece of the FBG's year and not just as our largest single source of 'on the day' funds but also as a Community event bringing together local residents and a range of local businesses & traders.

Community

The Fair is not just a great day out but also a show of support from many residents, who help set out the event – putting up chairs and tables, selling tickets, minding stalls and countless other tasks. In 2019 nearly 100 volunteers gave up their time. Quite simply we could not run Brook Green Day without them!

This year we were able to distribute more free tickets for rides to local schools to give away to those who might not be able to afford the price of the rides on the day, thereby broadening this event to the whole community.

For the second year the normal Saturday market at Addison Primary relocated to Brook Green and has added to the vibrant atmosphere bringing with it a collection of food stalls and take-aways.

Business involvement

Brook Green Fair would also not be possible without the generous help from our local businesses. Sponsorship helps fund the 'up-front' costs of putting on the Fair – around £6k in 2019. The headline sponsors in 2019, which included some old stalwarts as well as a couple of new benefactors, were: Finlay Brewer, Marsh & Parsons, Savills, Bective, Onside Youthzones charity, Surge, Blue City Cars, Fever Tree, Brook Green Supply and Immediate Media.

Other firms that put their hands in their pockets and who sponsored us for smaller amounts because they admired what we do included Keystone Tutors, HCA Healthcare and others who prefer to remain anonymous. Finally, there were several other businesses (too numerous to list) that attended on the day and made contributions to our cause. To everyone who contributed a BIG THANK YOU!

Fundraiser

This is underpinned by our great sponsors and supplemented by the money taken on the day through the fairground rides, the food stalls and our own FBG tent that sells cakes made by people in the local area. All told, we managed to net about £14k.

Brook Green Inter-Street Quiz

The 2020 FBG quiz took place on Thursday 13th February at Bute House School, hosted as ever by the dynamic Susannah Frieze. Once again it was a full house with the winners Poplar Grove, regaining the trophy they last won in 2018.

The quiz remains one of FBG's valuable source of revenue and in 2020 it raised over £8,000. Through a winning combination of the ongoing generous sponsorship by Finlay Brewer, the many individuals who buy tickets (nearly 180 this year) and donations for our raffle.

The quiz is much more than simply a way of generating funds, it has also become a staple in the Brook Green calendar and a way of bringing our community together. There is often fierce competition between the various teams as they compete for the coveted trophy, it's also an extremely entertaining night out. To emphasize the true community nature of the event we are also indebted to Bute House who kindly permit us to use their sports hall. We are also grateful to the many local restaurants and businesses (approximately 30) who donated an assortment of free meals, vouchers etc as prizes for our raffle.

Community Outreach

We continue to support local charities where possible. This includes support in kind with time dedicated from members of the FBG Board and small donations to local causes at Masbro Centre and H&F Food Bank at the beginning of the Covid pandemic. As the Covid pandemic continues to impact all aspects of our daily lives and we experience challenging times we will be forced to adapt our fundraising efforts maintain the Green and support our communities.

Our Annual Friends Meeting is planned this year as a virtual event due to the Covid pandemic. It will take place on 29th November 2020 at 6pm.

As always, we would like to acknowledge with thanks the time and commitment made to the Friends by all members of Board and by the many volunteers who have helped us in facing the challenges we face.

Jackie Duff
Chair, FBG