

Friends of Chislehurst Recreation Ground

Registered Charity Number 1163405

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

## Structure, Governance and Management

The Friends of Chislehurst and Walden Recreation Grounds, also known as FOCRG, was established in 2010 and became a charity on 3 September 2015. It is governed by its Constitution, most recently amended 30 July 2015.

**The Trustees of the Charity are the committee:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Chair** | Barbara Arora **Social media & marketing**  Pia Burbidge |
| **Secretary** | Alison Stammers **Gardening Club** Mai Bunce |
| **Treasurer** | Julie Covill. **Environment & Biodiversity** Gary Tyler |
| **Events** | Rachelle Harte **Member without portfolio** Clive Richardson |

**Consultant engineer & factotum** Ian Douglas

## Objectives and Activities

The charity’s principal objective is to assist in maintaining and improving Chislehurst & Walden Recreation Grounds and associate community facilities for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area with the object of improving their conditions of life. Funds are raised through grants, events and by encouraging donations from local people and businesses. We rely on this funding and volunteers to provide free community events and park improvements.

## Membership

Membership of FOCRG currently stands at 604 households, 895 members. People regularly thank us for making the Recreation Grounds a safe and pleasant environment, but the number of hands on volunteers remains low. We have a committee of 9 plus a further 12-14 regular volunteers who can be called upon for projects and events.



FOCRG volunteers, including the Gardening Club, contributed an amazing total of 2,855.5 hours to protect, promote and improve our Recreation Grounds. This is logged hours – many more go unrecorded e.g. dog walkers and others who litter pick.

## Achievements and Performance

Once again, a small but committed group of volunteers contributed an impressive amount of time to maintaining and improving the Recreation Grounds and woods. The Gardening Club, under the committed guidance of Mai Bunce, has continued to grow, both in volunteer numbers and in the expanding range of borders and planters they maintain. Thanks to the ongoing grant from London City Bridge Trust, they now have a greenhouse and other tools and equipment. Located in the Invicta Scout compound it is used to start seedlings and cuttings and overwinter tender plants. Along with composting our green waste and choosing hardy, perennial plants, FOCRG is steadily moving towards sustainable gardening. Nothing is wasted and we upcycle where possible. We are delighted by the way local residents are starting to contribute plants and materials to help us. The volunteers have become a real team. A WhatsApp group aids communication about what the week’s work will involve and enables exchange of ideas, and humour!

Fortunately, our grant funders appreciate the importance of looking after our volunteers, so refreshments after work and an annual appreciation lunch can be budgeted for.

Sadly, holding regular monthly work sessions for a Biodiversity and Environmental Group did not increase volunteer numbers as hoped. Existing volunteers managed to plant a new native hedgerow and a disease resistant elm tree in Chislehurst Rec, but we decided bigger projects like stream bed clearance in Walden Woods and improving the natural play area would need input from idVerde. Community Manager, Andrew Harby, has been a great help, and we hope that once people can see improvements taking shape, they might be encouraged to volunteer.

It was gratifying to have our efforts recognised by retaining our Green Flag for the 5th year. We also achieved Outstanding in the London in Bloom It’s Your Neighbourhood category, as well a Silver in their Environmental Challenge. The Gardening Club won first prize in the Community Gardening Class of Bromley in Bloom, sponsored by Cooling’s Nursery.

Playground works, funded mainly by LBB’s Platinum Jubilee Grant (£16,550) along with £2,000 each from The Chislehurst Society and FOCRG, are nearing completion. The newly surfaced path and areas around play equipment should make better access for pushchairs and wheelchairs. A little ticket office completes our toddler’s train station.

Events this year included our 3rd annual Gingerbread House making in collaboration with the Invicta Scout Group. This messy, but fun, event was held in December in the Scout HQ.

There were so many other events to mark the Coronation on May 7th that FOCRG did not hold one of their own.

19th May saw us host the first Chislehurst Car Show in collaboration with the Visit Chislehurst Group. It proved very popular.

11th June was Mia’s Pawfect Dog Day – a fun treasure trail in Chislehurst Rec and Whytes Wood for children and their dogs to raise money for Annabelle’s Challenge, a charity in support of Vascular EDS research. This was also great fun and raised £1,500 for the charity.

19th August was the big event – Chislehurst Rocks in Walden Rec. This has now become so popular and the various licensing, crowd control and anti- terrorism regulations so complex, that we need the services of ClearSynergy, a CLC event management team, who can work with idVerde and LBB to ensure the event is compliant, runs smoothly and everyone has a good time – which they did. Bands play for free and both the Main stage and the Community Stage give a platform for local up and coming musicians.

FOCRG are keen to keep events in the Rec accessible to all with free entry where possible. To do this, given our limited number of volunteers, we need to work closely with other community groups and look for funding through grants and sponsorship. To reciprocate, our volunteers helped out at the very successful Chislehurst Creates art event, the Rotary Fireworks and the Chislehurst Remembrance Day Parade.

Apart from our publicised events and work parties, FOCRG volunteers routinely answer queries from the public, pick up litter, provide dog poo bags and clean the drinking fountain. We offer volunteering opportunities for Duke of Edinburgh award students and a dedicated group of Cubs from the Chislehurst 5th. We liaise with Scouts, FC Elmstead, the Tennis Club, Bootcamps and other park users. We are an active part of the Bromley Friends Forum.

Numerous hours are given to background tasks like publicity, event planning, learning new skills as needed, applying for grants and dealing with LBB and idVerde, for example planning park improvements, reporting maintenance issues, and sometimes seeking urgent action.

In March, FOCRG was instrumental in raising awareness of sewage pollution in the main drainage ditch and ensuring action was taken by LBB, Thames Water and The Environment Agency.

We continue to monitor plans for an SEN School in part of Walden Woods. To date the DFE have only done a feasibility survey and a planning application has not yet been submitted.

## For the future

As always, we need to grow our volunteer base and work on succession planning. Projects will focus mainly on environmental and biodiversity issues. We will be looking for grant funding to help direct water run off from the lower end of Walden Recreation Ground into our cleared stream bed and restore some of the wet woodland. Water management for drainage and wildlife is a priority. We will continue our policies of sustainable gardening and appropriate tree planting and do our best to ensure Walden Woods remains accessible and protected from building encroachment.

We hope Chislehurst Rocks remains a feature of the Recreation Ground year, although sponsorship is critical. We are open to suggestions from local residents for smaller, fun activities which will engage families.

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Financial Review

During the year ended 2 September 2023, FOCRG received income of £25,340 (2022: 7,027). Total resources expended were £29,291(2022: 25,033). Net Incoming/(outgoing) Resources were -3,951 (2022: -18,006).



The financial statements are set out on pages 1-14 and the independent examiners report on page 15. The independent examiner is Mattison & Co.



The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees’ report above,

Barbara Arora

Chair FOCRG 27th November 2023

**Appendix 1. Volunteer Hours**

## Work parties: 1698.5 hours

* Regular weekly Gardening Club plus extra individual work
* Environmental & Biodiversity group
* Chislehurst 5th Cubs Saturday work mornings
* Remembrance Poppies for wreath and gate.

**Events: 453 hours**

Gingerbread Houses • Chislehurst Car Show.

Mia’s Pawfect Dog Day. Chislehurst Rocks. London in Bloom and Bromley in Bloom Awards

## Other activities: 693 hours

Committee meetings, site meetings with idVerde, LBB, interaction with other organisations including Friends Forum, Chislehurst Society, Invicta Scout Group, Chislehurst 5th Cubs,

Emails, telephone calls, administrative tasks including grant applications, book keeping, Charity commission documentation, policy writing, social media and website maintenance, research and design for campaigns,, posters etc.

Regular, ongoing activities: Maintenance of drinking fountain, Litter picking, provision of dog poo bags

**Total volunteer hours 2855.5 hours**

**Appendix 2. Funding**

**Grants: City Bridge Trust for Gardening Club and Park improvements £3842**

**Donations £1570.75**

**Community Fundraising £465**

**In kind (materials e.g. compost, plants, gravel and timber) approx £1300**