

Dear All,

Welcome to the first official Newsletter from Friends of Sanderstead Recreation Ground and Green Spaces. I know you may have heard from us before now about our original consultation and again about the Croydon Local Plan Review, but even before introducing ourselves properly, this was necessary and time restricted! We have certainly been kept busy in our first year fighting to save our Green Spaces. We wanted to write to properly introduce ourselves and let you know what we've been up to.

1) About us

As a friends group, we consist currently of 8 committee members and meet formally every quarter. The group is aimed at enriching and protecting four green spaces. These are Sanderstead Recreation Ground, The Gruffy, Cherry Tree Green and Hamsey Green Pond. Our constitution is centred around the Recreation Ground but allows scope for us to lend resources and thoughts to the other green spaces as needed. And oh boy was it needed, much sooner than we thought!! (see 2b below)

We work very closely with all Park Stakeholders and the Committee is representative of age, gender, sports, park tenants; considering the needs and wants of residents by consulting with representative parents, dog owners, Selsdon Little League, Sanderstead Residents Association, Sanderstead Cricket Club, Priscilla's Tea Room, Sanderstead Park Nursery, Take the Lead, Sanderstead Churches Together, Sanderstead Councillors and Croydon Council Parks Department. In addition, we are not afraid to throw it out to the general public for feedback on how to proceed and aid us in making decisions.

Our Facebook page is: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofsandersteadrec/>

2) What have we been up to the last 10 months?

a) **Our Consultation** – The Friends' consultation that took place in Late summer 2019 was to gain the views of local residents on how they would like to see the green spaces enriched and protected and has largely guided our short- and long-term goals. Many of you participated in this, so thank you.

b) **Croydon Local Plan Review** – You may or may not be aware about the council's proposal to build on Greenbelt that went out to consultation last winter. The proposals included: a large housing development on Mitchley Hill Greenbelt; a loss of a significant section of Sanderstead Recreation Ground to expand school places to meet the need of this development; seeking information about other local green spaces (including the Gruffy) for residents to evidence the green spaces on as demonstrably special.

After our original submission on 13th January on behalf of The Friends Group which included an impressive 229 participants in our own survey on the key questions pertaining to Sanderstead, we were asked to provide further evidence to support our answers. On Monday 4th May, after endless hours of research and writing the Friends group submitted 123 new pages of evidence to Croydon Council as to why our Green Spaces were demonstrably special.

Because they are filled with pictures and supporting evidence from local residents, due to GDPR we are unable to share the full submission with you at this time.

We now wait and hope that we have done enough for these proposals to be taken off the table and get back to fully enjoying the benefits of our green spaces.

c) **Monthly Litter Picks** – Monthly Litter Picks in Sanderstead Rec have taken Place on the first Saturday of every month since July June 2019 until the start of lockdown. Turnout from the very start has been breath-taking with approx. 15 volunteers on average including many enthusiastic children! Equipment is provided by Croydon Council and the litter picks help to keep the park tidy and safe as well as being an opportunity to meet new people, discuss plans for the park and enjoy the park. This is currently on hold due to the pandemic, but you are able as a family to conduct your own litter pick in the park. Please watch the Facebook Page for news of resuming group litter picks in the near future

d) **All Weather Cricket** – In November 2019, two non-turf pitches were installed at the Rec, one on the north side and one on the south side. The project was led by Sanderstead Cricket Club and Funded by ECB. We hope you have been able to enjoy them already.

e) **Tree planting so far** - We have worked closely with the Trees & Woodlands Department at Croydon Council and are pleased to have been able get 35 cherry trees planted in the local area in November 2019, mainly on Cherry Tree Green and Limsfield Road, with three also planted by the playground on Sanderstead Rec. To celebrate the 20 trees being planted on Cherry Tree Green, we held a community litter pick to tidy up the green, with an impressive turnout of 30 local residents and community leaders.

3) Plans in Progress

We have been using the original Friends group consultation to help plan the projects you asked us to and have made a lot of headway, despite focus having to be redirected to the Local Plan Review so early on in our journey.

a) **Trees** - Sanderstead Recreation Ground is to be the proud recipient of 50 Sakura Cherry Trees from the Japanese Embassy. The project represents a celebration of the partnership between Japan and the UK and also marks the Olympics to be held in Japan with 6,500 trees being gifted to the UK in total. We are delighted to be working with the Tree Department on integrating this with our Petanque project (see next section). For a newly formed group we have been overwhelmed by the local support we have received for this project and how demonstrably special this will be for our historic village in the very near future.

b) **Petanque Court** – This is an exciting project for Sanderstead Recreation Ground that we are working with Croydon Council on. We have community support from our Summer 2019 public survey. The proposal for two petanque courts unlocks the potential of the disused bowling green next to Sanderstead Nursery to create a family friendly activity bringing the rear of the park to life. The proposed two petanque courts are not only family friendly but also promote active lifestyles and combat isolation. We hope to have updates on this in the next few months. We are keen to put together a working party of volunteers to move the project forward.

c) **Lighting** – To improve security and support families using the nursery during darker evenings, Sanderstead Park Nursery persisted in getting installed and part self-funded outdoor security lighting from the nursery towards the car park. Thank you SPN, Im sure this will make a huge difference, especially in the winter months

d) **Community Garden** - Our Summer 2019 survey of local residents and park users showed strong support for a community garden and of 103 respondents, 55% wish to actively take part in maintaining and improving the park. As soon as is possible we will be working with Croydon Council to agree on details such as location of the community garden. One keen member of the community has kindly submitted a proposal for the community garden, and one of our committee members is a gardener so we have a basis to move forward once we have the green light from the council. One exciting aspect is that the Brilliant Butterflies Project are happy to support us by recommending plants in the butterfly borders that will complement the community garden and support pollinators. We had hoped by this point to already have a working group in place to involve the community in creating and maintaining the garden but as with other projects this has also been on hold but we hope to have news in the near future.

e) **Brilliant Butterflies Project** – Discussions are underway with the London Wildlife Trust regarding this amazing People's Lottery and National History Museum funded project to help bring rare species of butterflies to Sanderstead. There will be opportunities for residents to take part helping to plant and create the butterfly friendly borders at Sanderstead Recreation Ground and our three green spaces. The site visits have been postponed due to current government guidelines, but we will hold the site visits as soon as we are able. Whilst the project is on hold, we asked the project team what local residents could plant at home to support butterfly populations. They have recommended planting Bird's Foot Trefoil seeds in particular as this supports common blue and dingy skipper butterflies. They would love to see more common blue in greenspaces and dingy skipper is a conservation priority due to national decline in abundance. This is very exciting :-)

e) **Hamsey Green Pond** – There are discussions between TCV, Sanderstead Councillors and The Reptile Shed Ltd to revamp Hamsey Green pond to a glorious location filled with plant life and wildlife for all to enjoy, including educational trips. The first step in the plan is to ensure the safety of the banks and the bridge and then to dig out the edging, thin out some of the overgrown reeds, reduce the parrot weed and plant some native plants in the hedgerow, put in native oxygenation weed and a decking area for education and pond dipping. Please watch the Facebook Page for news of when volunteers can get involved.

4) How can you help?

People were asked when completing our original consultation, how best we can fund the work of the friends group. 54% agreed that both volunteering to work on projects would make projects affordable and you would be willing to help. Similarly, 68% cited they would be willing to contribute to the work of the friends group with a membership fee of £3-£5.

a) **Membership** - In our first year we propose, if you are able, a membership fee of £5 per year to aid our work. This in the first instance should cover insurance and any licences needed. As membership grows, we will look to reduce the membership fee accordingly. I will write to you again very soon with details of how you can support us through membership fees.

b) **Volunteering** – With so many of you willing to give your time and expertise as needed, we would be very grateful if you would take part in our skills audit. This will help us understand your availability, your expertise and your willingness to engage with different projects. Whether research is your gift and you are able to help fight the

council and protect our green spaces, or you're handy with a saw and a two by four to put together a raised flower bed, or you want to give our time more regular and tend to the flowers. No gift of your time and skill is too small. I will write to you again with a short questionnaire to help guide us.

5) The impact of Covid-19

The recent pandemic has made a huge difference to how green spaces are being used at the moment and we have seen an increase in activity in the park even though the playground is closed. But the biggest change to the park has been to the tenant stakeholders.

a) **Sanderstead Park Nursery** has been closed since March and reopened in a small way in June

b) **Selsdon Little Leagues** were forced to end their season early after a fragmented season due to weather and water logs. This fabulous provision hosts 5 leagues 201 Footballers aged 6years to 13years old and 110 Netballers 9years to 13years old and they truly hope to recruit new members and start the 20/21 season

c) **Sanderstead Cricket Club** have not been able to start their 2020 season as planned in April and may play some friendly games in August. The club are supporting one of its members fundraising for Young Minds Trust who support mental health concerns - <https://www.gofundme.com/f/jallen039s-challenge>

d) **Priscilla's Tea Room** have been unable to trade as normal the last few months and have had to close both the Play Café in Croydon completely, lost their sports catering income at both Sanderstead's Cricket Clubs SCC and TMW, and the cancellations of many of their party catering bookings. In addition, being a Café in a green space, Priscilla's are not eligible for the small business grants offered by the government. Innovative as ever, Priscilla's has tuned into an alfresco general store. They already Sold fresh Bread and Eggs and have now expanded into many of your other larder and fresh food needs. And you can still get their gorgeous tea or bean coffee to take away. Check out the Facebook page Priscilla's General Store <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1162967737376031>. As lockdown eases, the menu increases and you can get take away food and drink from Priscilla's.

e) **Take the Lead Dog Club** also had to cease due to Covid-19 but will resume in some form outdoors in the Rec as soon as it is deemed safe, offering dog socialisation and puppy socialisation sessions to the local community to foster responsible dog ownership.

6) And Finally

Thank you all for supporting what we are trying to achieve.

If you have received this as an email and no longer want to be on our mailing list then we sincerely apologise, please reply to this email requesting to be removed.

I will be writing again in the next month regarding membership and skills audit