



Woodheys Park Annual Report 2018

It's been a very busy year for us four Committee members so there is quite a lot to report back on. I suggest that, if needed, we have questions/ suggestions and feedback after each topic rather than a general question session at the end.

There has been a lot of activity so this is a brief review a few things.

Green Flag

We again retained our 'Green Flag' status, despite the atrocious weather leading up to the inspection. The inspectors were particularly impressed by the layout of the park and woods with so many 'different environments' for everyone to enjoy; golf / football / kid's play area / orchard / picnic area / woods / paths for dog walking – all very friendly. Not manicured – but well used and tidy. (The activities of the Friends Group and Volunteers scored significantly).

Web Site

Thanks to Sue we have a web site which is regularly updated. You can read about park activities, check the calendar for forthcoming events and make contact via the email address, which increasing numbers of people and organisations are using. The site also contains documents such as the Greater Manchester Ecology Report, so there is a lot of information available.

Pitch & Putt

During early 2017, we had to be very insistent to ensure the P & P greens were cut to prevent them from falling into disuse which risked losing the facility – the last one in Trafford. Although it opened at Easter for a day, it was only in June that it was staffed properly and started to be popular. Cllr Stephen Anstee also gave a lot of support in getting it re-opened.

This year we got new sand for the bunkers, and AMEY had a new ride on machine for cutting and maintaining the greens (and bowling greens elsewhere), and it's been maintained since opening at Easter.

We had a spate of anti-social behaviour from a gang of young teenagers at the start of June, but Trafford's Enforcement Officer and the Police were quick to respond when we reported it; Russell and George were very pro-active in dealing with this. Once the ring leaders were caught and parents informed it resolved itself. Amey quickly replaced the broken flag poles.

Tesco Grant

Part of the £10k grant was for the felling of **non-native** (esp. Norwegian Maple) trees in a section of the woods which was done in February this year, (with free logs for those with wood burners). We were fortunate in that Trafford Council had already planned some work at the back of Kenmore Road at the same time so we got more work for the money. (The Council have had to carry some work over because of the very bad weather at the time). This was followed by planting some native saplings (Oak, Hazel etc.) with an AMEY Volunteer Day.

Also, some of the grant money was allocated for running workshops by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (Bird Song, Invertebrates, 2 Bat Walks and a Fungi ID) Most of these were oversubscribed but several planned had to be carried over to later this year because of adverse weather.

The Woods

A long term effect of the realignment of Sinderland Brook has been flooding in a section of the woods – making the lower path treacherous in parts. As a result of the £10k Tesco Grant,

Trafford match funded it to improve drainage by putting sections of 'Top Trek' along the path and draining excess water into the brook (without totally draining the woods – which are classed as 'wet woods' and are quite rare). Already, this is a vast improvement. We need to add more bird and bat boxes.

Volunteers

We have continued an ongoing relationship with Stockdales (Charity for adults with learning disabilities based on Harboro Road). They have undertaken a wide range of tasks and encouraged a few more locals to volunteer to help out. Work has included developing the butterfly garden, bulb planting, moving woodchip (path adjacent Woodhouse Lane and back of Link), removing self-seeders from hedges, litter picks, tidying the flower bed by the flag pole etc.

Some volunteers prefer to work quietly in the background repairing fences as and when etc. Others – especially dog walkers litter pick as they go around the park which helps keep it tidy.

We have also 'hosted' students doing their National Citizens Award, for the last 2 weeks of the scheme they have to fund raise for a project and undertake some conservation work. Last year we hosted 3 'waves' of students (approx. 15 per wave) in the pavilion – 2 waves working in Woodheys and 1 in De Quincy. Last year, work focussed on clearing the first ancient ditch, the butterfly garden, balsam bashing, promoting the P &P. This year, another 3 waves, the first, working on the second ancient ditch (parallel to F/Path 23), putting woodchip from the Tesco tree work onto the top path in the woods, some balsam bashing. They also raised £162.50 from a 'car wash' towards the defibrillator project. The 2nd are working in De Quincy, and the 3rd wave will continue the ancient ditch, woodchip on paths in the woods, and an agreed fund-raising event.

We should perhaps acknowledge David Rome, AMEY's Green Space Officer for South Trafford, who guides and advises volunteers on what / how to do various activities safely in parks.

Last year we estimated at least 700 hours of volunteer time was spent working in the park and pavilion.

Defibrillator

Stacey Plews and family decided to raise money for a defibrillator for the park and approached us for support; they cost around £2k including heated box etc. (AMEY will install it free of charge). Stacey organised some cake and coffee mornings to raise money and the 'just giving' web site. Mark Reid, who was an active member of the Friends before leaving to work in the USA for a few years, picked up on the project and applied for a grant from an organisation he was aware of and dramatically boosted funds by £1000! It's been very satisfying working with park neighbours on such a worthwhile project.

Fun Day

We had a free Family Fun Day on the 22nd July last year which was well attended. Some regular volunteers made lovely cakes which they donated but as always, despite a lot of offers of help and advice / suggestions we could have done with more practical help on the day, especially clearing up.

Behind the scenes

In order to get things done in the park the Committee have to keep contact with a lot of people in Trafford and AMEY, attend meetings such as 'Friends of Friends of Parks' at Stretford Town Hall, on site meetings with AMEY / Trafford personnel. We also talk with the various maintenance teams that work in the park and exchange info. Cllr Stephen Anstee is very supportive in getting issues resolved quickly if 'normal' channels fail. It must be said that, whilst Woodheys Park is relatively small, we have a very high profile and are known to be vocal at high levels within AMEY, One Trafford and Trafford Council.

This behind the scenes work includes things such as:

Park security – getting the gates locked/opened.

Liaising with Trafford's Enforcement Officer/Police over issues.

Getting repairs to the pavilion done e.g. blocked toilets, defective padlocks.

Talking with Trafford Council's Tree Unit about the care of existing trees and the replacement of diseased/damaged ones that are felled.

Working with Trafford Conservation Volunteers on a bid to Sport England which, if successful, would fund a large -scale health project in six Trafford parks with us being the lead park.

The Pavilion

Sue, with minor help, redecorated inside the pavilion herself, following which the lighting was also repaired and improved. Now, with the kitchen, it is very presentable for groups to use, such as the NCS students, the Broadheath Partnership and the Allotment Society. It is now used by Walking for Health, a group of about 30 who meet on a Wednesday morning at 10.30 am to walk about 2 miles in the area before returning for tea or coffee. This is a CCG sponsored activity encouraged by doctors as it provides both activity and social interaction. There are several groups based in various surgeries but this pavilion provides an ideal base as there are lots of walks that can be done from here.

There is potential for the pavilion to be used more, however, that would require volunteers able to commit enough time to managing any event or activity and being responsible for opening and closing, security and cleaning. For some activities there are issues relating to insurance, supervision and appropriate authorisation.

Litter Bins

The existing bins are being replaced as part of Trafford's plan to get rid of open bins & have trio bins which allow for re-cycling on the go. Trios will replace some of our bins and letter box type will replace a few others. Although we are not making the decisions we have been consulted and our suggestions will be considered.

What's next?

All being well, we will continue working with Stockdales after the Summer and will maintain contact with various groups and individuals to continue to push for more improvements in the park.

We intend to:

1. Complete the butterfly garden.
2. Restock the woods with native plants – the final phase of the Tesco project.
3. Create hawthorn/holly hedges along some of the chestnut palings, close gaps in perimeter hedges.
4. Planting spring bulbs/ plants – native daffodils and early pollinators.
5. Start creating a planted area in the car park between the main gates and the pavilion. Although there are some interesting shrubs and trees the ivy and general lack of maintenance has killed most of it off.
6. Find a way to get some all-weather paths in the park. We wrote a bid to THT to get a grant for a path between the car park and the play area, however it wasn't successful as they are reluctant to fund infrastructure projects as indeed are the majority of grant providers. Cllr Steve Anstee and Dave Rome are looking to get it included in the capital programme. We are currently in talks with One Trafford about how a path can be installed.

We are still in need of volunteers to help in the park and on the Committee. If there's something you feel strongly about and would like to take a lead in making it happen, let us know as we have lots of information and contacts which we can share.