



Finsbury Park Management Plan 2007 – 2011 Executive Summary (*reviewed January 2008*)

Introduction

Originally designed by Alexander McKenzie and opened in 1869, following the passing of the Finsbury Park Act in 1857; Finsbury Park has since undergone many changes. From the 1970s, the lack of capital investment resulted in a run down site, much of which attracted anti-social and criminal behaviour. A Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Grant, along with match funding from two other sources, resulted in £4.9million capital investment between 2001 and 2006. Further successful bids for a further £1million additional funding have provided many smaller project improvements, largely for park based community projects. The newly restored park is now a major attraction for local and wider-based communities, for many types of both formal and casual recreation.

Finsbury Park currently has an active bowling green, nine new tennis courts, basketball courts, a skateboard park, formal sports pitches for a variety of games, a dedicated sports track and gym, a lake, a café, three play areas, a large water play feature and several garden areas; all set in an open park landscape. There are also several buildings sited across the park, which are used by community groups, sports clubs and Park staff.

Park Management

Finsbury Park is managed by the Parks Service, a division of Recreation Services in the Directorate of Adult, Culture and Community Services in the London Borough of Haringey. The site has been managed by the London Borough of Haringey since the Council's formation in 1965.

A Parks Service Neighbourhood Manager, responsible for all sites in the central area of the borough, oversees the maintenance and management of Finsbury Park; and is assisted by a Neighbourhood Officer; and a dedicated Finsbury Park Coordinator who oversees the continued infrastructure improvements, small projects, buildings' management, all sport and the Athletics Track management, events, and community development in the park.

Finsbury Park also has a dedicated grounds maintenance team of four full time staff, two apprentices and one hygiene operative. Events, marketing and other administrative tasks are carried out by the Parks Service in-house administrative team in liaison with the Park Management staff.

Our Vision for Finsbury Park

Finsbury Park will continue to fulfil McKenzie's original design aims which were to provide 'lungs' for the metropolis. The essential character of the Park will be conserved and enhanced, surviving components of the original design will be restored and any future changes or adaptations will be sympathetic to the design objectives.

The Park will provide a thriving amenity and play a vital role in sustaining the quality of life for local people, by providing a high quality, robust, attractive landscape fabric, and focus for the community activities and events including sports, recreation and the arts. These functions are in addition to its essential role in providing an open space for the many local people who do not have access to a garden and a first contact with nature for those, particularly children, without means to visit the wider countryside.

To achieve this vision we aim to follow the eight Green Flag Award criteria in creating a welcoming, well used park, which is clean and well maintained.

A Welcoming Place

Finsbury Park has seven pedestrian entrances and one vehicle / pedestrian entrance. Three of the entrances have imposing Victorian style brick piers and wrought iron gates. Each entrance is provided with a welcoming sign.

There are six finger-posts within the park helping to direct people to key facilities. There are four heritage trail panels at key locations which promote the park's history and heritage. Information panels at the lake, Flower Garden and American Garden inform the public of the origin of the landscape and design. These are complemented by five community notice boards located throughout the park. These display information about the park, closing times, activities, events, and by-laws.

We aim to ensure that the park is accessible to all members of society and undertake audits and user surveys on a regular basis to monitor this provision. During the extensive restoration works, accessibility for all was taken into account in the design. Inclusion of dropped kerbs to paths and the carriageway; pathways throughout the park are wide and use a surfacing along which a wheelchair or pram may be easily pushed. All of the entrances to the park are wheelchair accessible from the surrounding roads.

Cleanliness, Health and Safety

The Parks Service takes a comprehensive and objective approach to Health and Safety on its sites. Staff are given relevant training and are provided with appropriate safety clothing and equipment for the task they are undertaking. Any accidents or incidents that occur on site to either staff or members of the public are reported to the management team and are followed up.

Finsbury Park has a dedicated staff member who litter picks and empties the bins. He is supplemented by an agency staff on his days off. Following busy

weekends, the grounds maintenance team will step in to help litter pick the park. The staff member responsible for emptying all dog bins at least once a week throughout the borough is also based at Finsbury Park; and is able to help out on busy days. Graffiti is removed within 24 hours by the on-site staff member.

Toilets for the public are provided within the café building and are opened during café opening hours.

Safe and Secure

Landscaping of Finsbury Park during the restoration works was undertaken with the original MacKenzie designs in mind, but also acknowledging various effective solutions in designing out crime. This has been a successful project with the result of a higher number of people visiting the park and feeling safe in doing so. Landscaping of the park is an ongoing project and safety aspects will always be considered.

The Parks Constabulary is based in Finsbury Park and spends a significant proportion of patrol hours in the park. Officers are responsible for locking and unlocking the park on a daily basis. The park is locked in a staggered fashion to accommodate evening sports' training at the Track & Gym.

Security in the park is boosted by the regular presence of staff in the café, users of other buildings in the park, the Friends group, and sport group users; as well as the grounds maintenance team.

Maintenance of Buildings, Equipment and Landscape

The Parks Service first approached the HLF in 1996 to source funds for restoring the lake. After further development of the bid, and the inclusion of further works, the HLF approved a total of £3.4million in early 2003. The London Borough of Haringey provided match funding of £1.1million; and the Finsbury Park Partnership provided £0.4million; making a total of £4.9million spent between 2002 and 2006. Further funding has been received from a number of other funding bodies. This money enabled the following works to be completed:

- restoration to the lake including dredging, installation of aerators, tree works, bank stabilisation, replanting of bank vegetation and reed beds, restoration of the surrounding fencing and installation of new access gates to the newly installed disabled fishing points.
- refurbishment of the promenade alongside the boat hut
- complete re-design and new installation of a play area adjacent to the boat hut / café
- rebuild of the café
- extensive re-landscaping of the American Garden
- refurbishment of the play area in the American Garden
- restoration of the MacKenzie Flower Garden with 30 cut formal beds
- complete rebuild, extension and redesign of the tennis courts
- refurbishment of all pathways in the park

- upgrade of the main carriageway and key access points to highway grade build in order to withstand event traffic.
- planting of an avenue of poplar trees alongside the southern carriageway on the eastern side of the park
- refurbishment of the main gates at Manor House, Finsbury and Hornsey
- removal of the train-spotting platform at Oxford Road Gate
- landscaping at all gates
- extensive replacement of bins and benches to reflect the historical aspect of the park
- extensive landscaping throughout the park
- re-design of Parkland Walk where it meets Finsbury Park to improve the feeling of inclusion and seamlessness between the two sites

Monies from the Finsbury Park Partnership, which includes a further £700,000 on top of the match funding have enabled the following works:

- creation of a safe play space in the Jamboree drop in centre
- refurbishment of the Jamboree building
- refurbishment of Friends of Finsbury Park community Art Hut
- the former toilet block was converted into a Community Centre
- creation of a meeting room and low impact exercise room at the Athletics Track building from dilapidated space and further upgrades
- construction of a very popular skate park
- restoration of Manor House Lodge for use by the community
- cycle path (jointly funded by FPP and TfL)
- demolition of derelict toilet block at Finsbury Gate and installation of a new automated unit and re-landscaping of the area
- installation of a lighting feature at newly restored Manor House Gate entrance.

Additional funding beyond the HLF project has come from:

- Transport for London for the development of the bike park and improvements to cycling facilities within the park; creation of a cycle path from Oxford Road to the Cycle Park; £40,000 for engineering works to rebuild the path at Endymion Road entrance.
- the Environment Agency (£20,000) for development of the fish stocks and fishing opportunities in the lake
- Gleesons (£14,000 to the Alpha Dog Club site) for mitigation costs in using the area around Manor House during renovation of the Piccadilly Line
- UnLtd Grants Millennium Fund (£3,000) for the development of a Wildlife Recovery Centre which will be developed alongside the improvement project at the Metropolitan Housing Trust Nursery (£250,000 from the GLA)
- Active London has funded a project to provide cycling opportunities for disabled people (Cycle-able)
- London Marathon Trust (£50,000) for the restoration of the perimeter to the Track & Gym

Finsbury Park still has a number of works to be carried out and these are listed in the Action Plan of the main management plan. Some of the key works highlighted in the management plan include:

- replacement of the red adventure play fort
- replacement of the Jamboree Play tree walk
- further landscaping in the American Garden following removal of Japanese Knotweed
- refurbishment of the basketball courts
- improved drainage in the pitches adjacent to the New River
- improvements to the green waste recycling facility
- extensive renovation works to the Track & Gym
- further work around improving event provision in the park
- replacement of boundary fencing
- continuing rolling program to enhance each entrance to increase welcoming feel
- continuing rolling program of renewing shrub beds around the park
- continuing rolling program of tree planting to replace vandalised / old / diseased trees
- continuing replacement and installation of benches, bins and picnic tables as they wear out or are vandalised

Environment and Sustainability

The Parks Service aims to reduce its impact on the environment and as such:

- uses bedding plants grown in peat-free soil as supplied by Faith Nursery
- requests plants to be grown in peat-free soil when supplied by other contractors
- not use chemicals unless all cultural (manual) methods have failed
- aims to reduce transport emissions through better scheduling of work
- aims to reduce transport emissions through recycling green waste on site instead of taking it to North London Waste
- procures materials and furniture made from sustainable or recycled sources
- uses drought resistant plants to cope with climate change and reduce water use
- aims to ensure machinery procured has low emission levels
- continues to assess ways of reducing our impact on the environment

Conservation of Nature and Heritage

Finsbury Park is a Site of Local Importance in the Haringey Unitary Development Plan and is classified as a Site of Borough Importance, Grade 2. The New River, which runs through the park, is a site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. Principle habitats are woodland, hedgerow, neutral grassland, a lake and park / amenity grassland.

Key conservation points are:

The lake – which has undergone extensive restoration in recent years and requires continuous management. Fishing opportunities in the lake will be provided to people from across the community.

Wildfowl – continual management of the wildfowl on the lake is necessary.
Trees – the park has a range of mature and newly planted trees. A careful program of tree maintenance and planting will need to be developed in order to ensure the health and provision is maintained.
Bird and bat boxes – further provision could be made
The sunken garden ‘The Richard Hope Play Space’ – could be enhanced with planting to encourage butterflies.
Meadow creation - remote areas of grassland could be naturalised
Drought tolerant garden – there is capacity to create such a garden.
Education – improving scope for local school children to use the site for conservation, orienteering, geography, and nature purposes
Historical gate piers and buildings – ensuring a continuous refurbishment / maintenance program

Marketing

The Parks Service carries out extensive borough wide marketing of its parks and open spaces. Finsbury Park is advertised in the following ways:

- a specific leaflet on Finsbury Park with a map and details on its facilities
- through the quarterly Recreation Services stakeholder newsletter
- through articles in the Haringey People monthly magazine
- events are listed on the ‘what’s on’ page of the Haringey website
- Better Haringey Trail Guide
- A Park for Finsbury published by the Friends of Finsbury Park

Finsbury Park is also advertised beyond the borough boundaries through:

- the Haringey website under parks and leisure, which includes a 360° virtual tour
- the ‘YourLondon.gov.uk’ website
- on the ‘VisitLondon.com’ website with a special article in 2007
- The Good Parks Guide
- London’s Parks and Gardens Guide
- the London Cycle Network (Guide 5)
- Walk the Capital Ring – Walk 12

The Parks Service will continue to assess ways in which to further advertise Finsbury Park to the local and wider community.

Community Involvement

Finsbury Park has a strong Friends group that have been positively involved in the master plan development of the park over the last two decades. They are also very involved in activities within the park and provide a number of events. They have created a Heritage Trail and produced ‘A Park for Finsbury’, a book detailing the history of the park. The Friends also created and maintain a Community Garden adjacent to Manor House in which they have offices.

There are also a number of other stakeholders, of which a majority are concerned with the sporting facilities in the park. They have also been positively involved in the park.

The Parks Service also carries out an annual park user survey through which they can gauge the improvements desired by the local community and the continuing improvement of service delivery.

Tell us what you think or get involved

Users of Finsbury Park can tell us what they thought of their visit to the park by:

- going online and completing the 'yourvisit' survey found on the Parks Service pages
- calling the Parks Service Customer Care line on 020 8489 5662
- by emailing the Parks Service at parks@haringey.gov.uk
- or by writing to us at Parks Service, 1st Floor, Contract House, Ashley Road, Tottenham, N17 9AY

Users of Finsbury Park can also get involved in the maintenance, management and future vision for the park by joining the Friends group. They can be contacted through calling them on 020 8809 0039 or by visiting www.thefriendsoffinsburypark.org.uk

Summary

Finsbury Park continues to provide an invaluable resource for the local community and those working in the area. The vision is to keep the Green Flag Award and thus maintain the high standard within the park.

The full management plan can be viewed on the Councils website at www.haringey.gov.uk/greenflag