

# Friends of Broomfield Park - Volunteer Rep Network Summary of meeting on 30/3/26



## *Overview*

Our regular Volunteer Representatives' Meeting on 30 March discussed current progress, hurdles we are seeking to overcome and discussed our new draft volunteer policy and insurance

- It has been an incredibly productive period for the Friends of Broomfield Park, with our volunteer groups making significant progress over a wide range of activities while continuing to build both strong community engagement and external partnerships.
- A comprehensive Volunteer Update was distributed and is available online.
- An integrated summary of the further discussions that took place at the meeting follows.

## *Recent Successes and New Initiatives*

- Biodiversity & Research: a new Hoverfly project pilots on May 1st, with a larger group project scheduled for mid-June; Habitats and Horticultural volunteers supporting families to plant sunflowers.
- Conservatory: visitors have enjoyed a gorgeous winter display of orchids and bromeliads, alongside a beautiful bulb display funded by last year's grant. Notably, the banana plant is showing signs of flowering.
- Conservation & Lakes: the team provides food support for vulnerable birds and have partnered with the Environment Agency, Thames Water, and Thames 21 on a new clean water project for the lower lake.
- Grants & Growth: new tools from a Gardens Trust grant are being used and our volunteer base continues to grow through the Orchard's offer of experience to Duke of Edinburgh scheme participants.
- Infrastructure: The stable yard has been cleared which should support efficient processing of green waste.

## *Current Challenges and Concerns*

- Environmental & Maintenance
  - increasingly high temperatures in the Conservatory in summer months pose risks to plants, volunteers and visitors. We need to balance the desire to retain tree cover for shade with Unlocking Broomfield's aims of restoring 'original' vistas from the house.
  - routine maintenance of lawns, paths, and hedges remains a priority that needs addressing.
  - a broken pipe has caused sewage issues in the Upper Lake

- Site Security & Damage: challenges in the Orchard include trespassing and damage to trees and elsewhere potential fire risks from hay bales.
- Wildlife & Habitats: sadly, the bee colonies were lost due to prolonged damp conditions; the plan is to rebuild using a local queen.
- Operational Hurdles:
  - more volunteers needed, particularly in heritage where there is limited capacity – although a recent Instagram ‘appeal’ has identified some additional resource
  - uneven collaboration between groups and difficulties with equipment storage and key access can also be problematic
  - new financing is needed to restore the Dipali Garden after an unsuccessful bid to the Gardens Trust.
- Public Communication:
  - volunteers often receive public inquiries regarding matters outside our direct control, such as the refurbishment of the playground or the filling of the boating pond; we remain reliant on timely information from the Council to keep the community updated.
  - concerns raised about a potential cull of pigeons as part of Unlocking Broomfield are based on a misunderstanding; no such plans exist.

### *New volunteer policy and insurance cover*

Review of the current insurance cover by the Conservatory group raised some important points to be clarified and prompted the drafting of a volunteer policy to ensure that volunteers/FoBP are protected in the event of a mishap.

- volunteers are insured when and only when they have been accepted by a group leader to participate in an organised activity and their names and contact details have been passed to the Volunteer Co-ordinator (Deborah at present) within a reasonable time.
- ideally all volunteers will become members of FoBP, but it is the registration which triggers cover, not the membership.
- all volunteers must be given, or directed to, a current certificate of insurance (available on the FoBP website).
- as a matter of good practice, but also because we will need to provide these to the Council in due course, brief risk assessments for each and every activity to be undertaken will need to be drawn up. A pro forma for this from the Habitats group has been circulated.

The policy will be circulated and comments are invited; it is vital that both volunteers and the Friends are not put in a situation where a claim could be

refused. This will support us with a safe and sustainable approach to all of our volunteering.

The next meeting will take place on 29 June.