

SEEDS OF CHANGE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

No. 13 Autumn / Winter 2023

Welcome to the newsletter for the project which highlights the work of the Friendly Parks for All project in parks in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Friendly Parks for All: project aims

The Friendly Parks for All project aims to get more people visiting parks in Richmond and to understand the barriers to spending time in parks. Other aims include:

- Improving opportunities to engage with parks for residents to enjoy by improving access for people that face barriers to spending time in parks.
- Promoting the benefits of engaging with the natural environment for health and wellbeing especially for groups who have identified inequalities and face barriers to accessing these spaces.
- Providing tailored interventions that address these identified inequalities to address barriers to access and inequalities.

There is more information on the parks pages of the council website parks pages :

www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/explore_richmonds_parks_and_open_spaces

All Ability Cycling in Kneller Gardens

The project has been trialling free All Ability Cycling Sessions again this autumn following the success of the trial in the spring. The project worked in partnership with RISE disability sports and inclusive activities (part of the council Sports Development team) and Bikeworks CIC to deliver 8 sessions. The project was designed so that everyone interested in cycling could take part. Over 8 sessions there were 60 participants and 14 carers. Most had a disability, and many had 2nd disabilities (learning disability 33% autism 20% mental health condition 13% physical impairment and sensory impairment 7%).

45% attended more than 4 sessions. Reasons given for returning were lack of confidence and the need for more tuition from experts. Two people, who had never cycled, were able to ride a bicycle at the end of their first sessions due to the careful instruction and encouragement by the Bikeworks team. Participants told us that the activity allowed them to enjoy spending time in parks (100%) and that they enjoyed the cycling experience (100%). 90% enjoyed the opportunity to get exercise, 81% told us that they enjoyed meeting new people, 57% told us that they enjoyed learning something new and 14% told us that they enjoyed re-learning to cycle. The trial indicated that there are benefits to carers in activities that they can do with their cared-for relatives. The project team are seeking funding to make the activity more regular over the next year and include families as well as adults in the initiative.



Improving access to parks for blind and visually impaired park users

Recent research by Natural England, [Enhancing Access to Green & Blue Spaces for People with Visual Impairment](#) outlined challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments when trying to access and enjoy green and blue spaces. These included the following factors:

Information and Planning: Lack of accessible information about green/blue spaces, unpredictable weather, and crowds pose challenges to planning visits. Where people rely on others, this can introduce barriers like cost or finding companions.

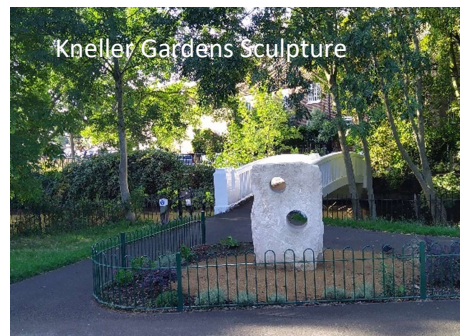
Transportation and Infrastructure: Absence of accessible public transportation, convenient parking, step-free or wheelchair-accessible routes, and facilities like benches, toilets, cafes, and picnic areas were identified as significant barriers.

Navigation and Physical Access: Challenges include difficulty locating entrances/exits, using gates/turnstiles, understanding signage, navigating uneven terrain, and overcoming obstacles.

Technology Challenges: Accessing maps and navigation tools using mobile apps is challenging due to poor signal/internet connections.

Safety Concerns: Fear of getting lost, falling, or encountering negative attitudes from others were prominent concerns for those visiting green and blue spaces.

These findings reflect consultation in 2020 into the use of parks in the borough by people who are blind or visually impaired. Since that date The Friendly Parks for All project has been working in Kneller Gardens to make the park accessible to people who are blind and visually impaired. In 2023 a sculpture and sensory garden were installed and planted by the Richmond Green Gym. Over the winter of 2023/4 a tactile tree trail will be installed. This will include 12 rubbing plates depicting leaf shapes and braille information. The trail will be linked to a written guide. This work has been developed with RNIB and in consultation with blind/visually impaired park users.



Jubilee Meadow, Heathfield



Jubilee Meadow, Heathfield – one year on

Richmond Borough Mind Volunteering Services Manager and some of her team took part in a tree planting day to plant an oak tree. Local community groups, schools & businesses also helped. Over the summer there have been regular activities with more planned for the spring. Contact info@lgoal.org.uk for information.

Cambridge Gardens – Developing a Friendly Park with Mencap Richmond.

Mencap Richmond have continued their support in developing a new Friendly Parks for All at Cambridge Gardens, East Twickenham. We are developing and access guide to the site with the help of the Working Together Group. A consultation of proposals for an outdoor gym, sensory garden and artwork for the entrances/exits has recently closed and work is planned for 2024.



Park designs by Year 10
Grey Court School, Ham

Working with young people

We know that some young people face barriers to spending time in parks and open spaces. ([Young, Green, and Well: A research study on young Londoners' green space use and mental wellbeing \ Parks for London \ October 2022](#))

In the summer 2023 the Parks Team consulted with young people with the aim of gaining a better understanding as to how young people use green spaces in the borough and what improvements we could make them accessible to young people.

Research tells us that there are several barriers including:

- Personal safety and feeling secure anxiety in teenagers who report parks and playgrounds as the least safe urban environment. See parksforlondon.org.uk/resource/women-and-girls-safety/
- Fear of bullying issues of exclusion arising from the domination of urban green space by other groups of people.
- Lack of appropriate activities. Evidence that girls in particular think that facilities in parks don't meet their needs. [Parkwatch Report \ Make Space for Girls \ September 2023](#)
- Access to public transport leading to some groups staying close to home.
- Fear of dogs particularly among African-Caribbean and Asian park users.

The results of the Parks consultation are being analysed and will be available shortly.

Young people's vision for parks Grey Court School, Ham

In summer term 2023, we worked with a group of 14 Year 10 students attending Grey Court School to understand what their vision for parks would look like. They told us that they used Ham Lands, Ham Common, Ham Woods and Richmond Park for leisure activities. Many of their designs included ponds or rivers and natural elements such as woodlands and wildflower meadows. One group included a space where people were not permitted so that wildlife could live undisturbed. All designs included a café and facilities such as toilets. A path network and benches were considered important. One group included tunnels under the road for animals so that they did not have to cross the road. The students thought that parks should be for people as well as wildlife and included areas for sport, exercise, and play. One design included a tech hub in addition to the café. The group of girls were keen to have telephones that could be used for SOS messaging in case of emergency. Young people voted on their top must haves, these were: toilets, trees/greenery, playground, river or pond (with viewing point), grass areas for wildlife and sports facilities.

Other projects in parks

There is a complete list of recent and current park projects available on the Richmond Council website. https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/3clfdsum/parks_update.pdf

Friendly Parks for All Programme of Activities Winter 2023/4			
Date	Time	Meeting place	Type of Walk
December 2023			
Thursday 7 th December	1-30am- 3.00pm	Twickenham Junction Rough to Kneller Gardens & back Fountains The Exchange, London Road, Twickenham TW1 1BE	Accessible Walk
Thursday 14 th December	10.30am- 11.30pm	Kneller Gardens Meadway, Twickenham, TW2 6PH near pavilion	Dementia Inclusive Litter pick
No Walk			Wellbeing Walk
January 2024			
No Walk			Accessible Walk
Thursday 11 th January	10.30am- 11.30pm	Kneller Gardens Meadway, Twickenham, TW2 6PH Near pavilion	Dementia Inclusive Litter pick
Friday 9 th January	10.30am -2.30pm	Bushy Park Circular Walk Meet Hampton Hill Gate, High Street behind supermarket.	Wellbeing Walk
February 2024			
Thursday 1 st February	1-30am- 3.00pm	Twickenham Junction Rough to Kneller Gardens and return Fountains at The Exchange, London Road, Twickenham TW1 1BE	Accessible Walk
Thursday 8 th February	10.30am- 11.30pm	Kneller Gardens Meadway, Twickenham, TW2 6PH Near pavilion	Dementia Inclusive Litter pick
16 th February	10.30m- 12.30pm	Twickenham Riverside and Marble Hill Park. Church Street Twickenham beside Champions Wharf Play area.	Wellbeing Walk
March 2024			
Thursday 7 th March	1-30am- 3.00pm	Twickenham Junction Rough to Kneller Gardens and return Fountains at The Exchange, London Road, Twickenham TW1 1BE	Accessible Walk
Thursday 14 th March	10.30am- 11.30pm	Kneller Gardens Meadway, Twickenham, TW2 6PH Near pavilion	Dementia Inclusive Litter pick
15 th March	10.30m- 12.30pm	Hampton Court Home Park and Barge Walk to Kingston Bridge. Meet at Hampton Court Road, Lion Gate.	Wellbeing Walk
Full programmes available: www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks and open spaces/explore richmonds parks and open spaces/friendly parks for all			
To take part register in advance by contacting parks@richmond.gov.uk or phone Frances 020 8401 6837.			

For more information about the Seeds of Change Project see Richmond Council web site:

[www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks and open spaces/explore richmonds parks and open spaces](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/explore_richmonds_parks_and_open_spaces)

The Seeds of Change project is managed through the London Borough of Richmond Parks Department. It aims to encourage more use of parks and open spaces by local people.

To contact us please email parks@richmond.gov.uk