



**Minutes of the
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**
of The Friends of Cannizaro Park
Monday 20th July 2026, 7pm at the Hotel du Vin

Present - Trustees: Catherine Nelson (Chair), Simon Ingall (Treasurer), Katrine Weig (Secretary), Paola Bassi, Samantha Ellis, Liza Llewellyn, Anne Peacock, Caroline Newsholme, Elizabeth Rink, **and further Members including:** Anne Cantrell, Victoria Carew-Hunt, Adam Clark, Mark Davis, Tony Dines, Rosie Gent, Robert Holmes, Sherril Ingall, Stephen Nelson, Brian Payne, Colin Price, Alison Reed, John Rink, Patty Robertson, Margaret Swain, Marguerite Vaughan-Payne, Richard Vaughan-Payne, Antoinette Urwick, Elisabeth Walker, Clare Weatherill and Sally Woodage. **Also in Attendance:** Sally Anscomb, Rosemary Boon, Margaret Dean, John Hendra, Asha Newsum and Alan Pedder.

The meeting was declared quorate.

The Chair, Catherine Nelson, welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked them for attending and for their continued support.

1. **Apologies for Absence were received from Trustee:** Jane Watkins **and further Members including:** Peter Avis, Dudley Buchanan, Shirley Chapman, Lesley James, Andrew Keener and Struan Robertson.
2. The **Minutes of the AGM held on 15th June 2025** proposed by Rosie Gent and seconded by Richard Vaughan-Payne were approved unanimously (with an amendment to attendance to be corrected).
3. **Trustees' Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2026:**
Catherine pointed out that the Friends will be reaching its 30th anniversary in 2027 and that the overall team's effort is stronger than ever. Gardening volunteer hours continue to match those of the paid idverde staff and she thanked Trustees Anne Peacock and Jane Watkins for coordinating volunteers and ensuring their numbers remain stable. £141,000 was invested in the park thanks mainly to the Environment Agency Natural Flood Management grant for the pond works. The third Art in the Park festival was well attended. The Friends' Instagram follower numbers grew by 5%. The park has won its 3rd consecutive Green Flag award and the decision on the 4th award is imminent.

The FoCP's Impact in 2025/26:

The biggest impact on the Park Landscape was the pond work which enabled the Friends to achieve their two charitable objectives (restoration of the park and engagement with

park visitors). The project absorbed a very large amount of the whole Trustee team's time and involved volunteer planting and Merton Council's Greenspaces team. It was completed on time and under budget enabling the Trustees to redeploy the leftover funds to create additional basins, for better water absorption on paths at the bottom of the lawn area and on the side of the Italian Gardens. Two new interpretative panels have been installed around the pond and community events were run with the South East Rivers Trust to engage visitors with the pond's wildlife.

The first phase of sustainable planting in the Sunken Garden was implemented along the wall border. Friends' partner Landform landscape architects developed the planting plan which was then implemented by gardening volunteers and for the most part funded by the community.

The repair of the Millennium Fountain was co-funded with Merton Council, and spurred on by a generous sponsor who responded to the Friends' Instagram appeal for support. Another co-funded initiative between the Friends and the Council was the restoration and cleaning of the listed Diana statue.

Catherine recognised that the volunteers' knowledge and goodwill on a weekly basis played a huge role in ensuring so much had been achieved.

Visitor Engagement is also a key priority. Catherine thanked Trustees Liza Llewellyn and Anne Peacock for doing a sterling job in keeping this going through walks, Art in the Park and the Art in the Aviary community partnerships. New Trustee Paola Bassi was praised for taking on the Communications role seamlessly.

Financial Summary 2025/26:

The Treasurer, Simon Ingall, referred to the financial statements in the presentation and talked through the key figures. Apart from the pond project which dominated income and expenses, donations enabled the Sunken Garden wall bed replanting and the Millennium Fountain repairs. The reserves will provide seed funding for the upcoming Cedar Space project.

Key FoCP 2026/27 Projects:

Landscape:

- The Toilet block, which has been mentioned in past visitor surveys as a priority, has been kept in functioning order by FoCP volunteers but needs renovating. The Friends is very grateful to two sponsors who will enable its funding later this year, pending the contractor being appointed.
- Explore Outdoors is a project introduced by the Council; and in which the Friends got involved as the trails fitted in with their aim to engage visitors with the park's trees and heritage. However, the technology has not been as flexible as expected and Digital Affairs Trustee, Sam Ellis, who has been instrumental in designing the content for the trail, has given her feedback to the company. Trustees are hopeful the system can be optimised over the next year.

- The Cedar Space project is going to be the Trustees' major focus. The project has the objective to create a landing space in the park and a launch pad to explore its diverse collection of trees. The Trustees would like to excite the community about the park's 300 different tree species, a fact that most visitors are not aware of. The plan is for a landscaped and interactive space with a pavilion positioned where the 160 year old cedar was felled a couple of years ago. The aviary will be removed as its wood structure is badly degraded, as confirmed by a conditions report commissioned earlier this year. The aviary was one of three aviaries built in the 1970s by council employees. The one in Cannizaro Park is the last remaining one thanks to the funding and effort provided by the FoCP; however, it was deemed unsafe for birds a few years ago and FoCP volunteers were unable to look after them anymore. The Trustees are looking to create a sculpture out of what can be salvaged from the building. Three significant design partners are advising the Trustees on the project and the Friends is grateful to have the opportunity to work with them. The aim is to submit the design for planning application in the autumn and begin fundraising activity in early 2027.
- The Sunken Garden sustainable planting scheme has the objective to restore the area back to George Dillistone's original 1920s design. The current carpet bedding offers dramatic seasonal colour but is ruining soil quality and biodiversity. Depending on the Trustees' organisational capacity, it is hoped that this will be implemented in 2027.

Engagement:

Engagement with the park's visitors will continue with the Friends' current communications and guided walks programme while also participating in the local Walk & Talk group's visits. The South East Rivers Trust is looking to increase its educational activities in the park with local schools and the Trustees look forward to more partnerships in this area over 2026/27.

Governance:

- Catherine explained that as introduced in the AGM Notice, the Trustees are asking FoCP members to vote on two Special Resolutions. In a first instance, the Trustees have deemed it fit to expand the charity's objectives to include the FoCP's activities to educate and engage park visitors. Catherine pointed out that the new Objects, referenced in Resolution 1 of the AGM Agenda, had been agreed in consultation with the Charity Commission and that the Trustees were now seeking approval from the members to implement the update. Furthermore, as the FoCP takes on projects of increasing complexity and financial value, the Trustees have agreed it is the appropriate time to move to a different charitable structure: a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, or CIO (referenced in Resolution 2 of the AGM Agenda). Catherine highlighted that as the FoCP enters its fourth decade in 2027, this professional governance structure will provide a stronger legal format to support the scale and scope of projects now being undertaken by the Friends. This will help with grant applications, fundraising and contracting with suppliers while reducing the Trustees' personal liability.

- There are 2 models of CIO (Foundation and Association) and following discussions within the Trustee team, it was agreed that the Foundation model best represents how the Friends' operates currently. As the FoCP membership does not confer any specific benefit, its members are in fact donors. Only 3% of Friends actually turn up to AGMs and it appears that a younger demographic of Friends is keener on a donation rather than a membership model. Under the Foundation CIO, a Friend will be someone who donates, volunteers, or is a current lifetime/honorary member. The only members would be the Trustees. As Trustees feel it vital to ensure two-way dialogue with the charity's supporters, they proposed to maintain an annual meeting with Friends; however, this occasion would be less formal and more interactive and social. In response to questions, Catherine indicated that the Trustee election procedures are set out in the CIO Constitution that was circulated with the AGM Notice. She also confirmed that the CIO format is well recognised and will be a more efficient structure under which to operate.

4. Special Resolution Votes

Special Resolution 1:

That the objects of the Friends of Cannizaro Park be amended to the following new objects, agreed in consultation with the Charity Commission, to better reflect the charity's purposes:

"A) To promote for the benefit of the public and future generations the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Cannizaro Park located in Wimbledon ("the Park"), by supporting the maintenance and renovation of this site of historical and ecological interest and beauty;

B) To advance the education of the public in the Park's status as a Grade II* listed garden, in particular but not exclusively, through engagement and appreciation of its diverse collection of native and exotic trees and historic woodland garden."

and the Trustees are authorised to take all necessary steps to implement this change.

Mark Davis proposed and Colin Price seconded that Special Resolution 1, as worded in the presentation and earlier in the AGM Notice, be put to the vote. The Chair declared Special Resolution 1 carried by more than a 75% majority.

Special Resolution 2:

That:

- The Friends of Cannizaro Park (registered charity number 1160982 or the "**Unincorporated Charity**") proceeds with its conversion to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation under the Charities Act 2011 to be known as The Friends of Cannizaro Park CIO (the "**CIO**"), adopting the CIO Constitution in the form attached to this resolution; and
- the Trustees be authorised to take all necessary steps to register the charity as a CIO and, conditional upon the CIO being registered as a charity by the Charity Commission, to transfer all assets, liabilities, rights, and obligations of the

Unincorporated Charity to the CIO on 31 March 2027 (or such other date as the Trustees may decide) (the “**Transfer**”); and

- following completion of the Transfer, in accordance with clause 6 of the Constitution of the Unincorporated Charity, the Unincorporated Charity be dissolved on such date as the Trustees may decide (the “**Dissolution**”); and
- the Trustees of the Unincorporated Charity be and are authorised to do all such things and to execute all such documents, agreements and deeds as are necessary to give effect to the Transfer and Dissolution provided that, in the case of assets held for restricted purposes, the Trustees shall ensure that similar restrictions are imposed when the assets are transferred to the CIO.

Adam Clark proposed and Colin Price seconded that Special Resolution 2, as worded in the presentation and earlier in the AGM Notice, be put to the vote. The Chair declared Special Resolution 2 carried by more than a 75% majority.

5. Election of Trustees & Appointment of Independent Examiner

All the Trustees had indicated that they were happy to stand again. Mark Davis proposed and Richard Vaughan-Payne seconded that Samantha Ellis, Simon Ingall, Liza Llewellyn, Catherine Nelson, Caroline Newsholme, Anne Peacock, Elizabeth Rink, Jane Watkins and Katrine Weig all be re-elected to serve as Trustees until the conclusion of the next AGM. John Rink proposed and Rosy Gent seconded the election of Paola Bassi as Trustee until the conclusion of the next AGM. Colin Price was thanked for his work as the Independent Examiner of the Financial Statements. He has indicated that he is willing to continue in this role. Rosy Gent proposed and John Rink seconded his re-appointment to serve until the conclusion of the next AGM. All these proposals were agreed unanimously.

6. Roll of Thanks

The Chair acknowledged the support of the FoCP’s Friends, donors, gardening and organisational volunteers, strategic partners (Hotel du Vin, Landform UK and Robert Holmes), Merton Council’s Greenspaces team, the Idverde gardeners, the Environment Agency Natural Flood Management partners, Art in the Aviary exhibitors and Art in the Park organisers.

7. AOB including Ideas & Comments from the Floor

It was suggested that all the dead trees at the bottom of Lady Jane’s wood be removed as they were a fire hazard and unsightly. Catherine responded that tree work is managed by the council and that the new arboriculturalist is very active and has a programme of clearing trees to start in August. She suggested approaching the Friends’ horticulture Trustee for more details.

An update regarding the informal entrance on Dunstall Rd was requested, as this poses a security risk with people entering the park at night to party noisily. A dog bin close to this entrance was suggested and the Tulip tree in the area should be taken into consideration when building the entrance. Catherine replied that the 2 Sycamores sale, once confirmed, would fund the new entrance on Dunstall Rd and that it is important to have

an entrance there in order to carry out work on that flank of the park. She acknowledged the issues and the need for an interim solution. She was hoping to get an update this week following a meeting with the council and would share this via Instagram.

Rosie Gent praised Catherine's commitment and leadership and thanked her and the rest of the Trustees for their valued work.

As there were no further comments, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8:05pm inviting all to join the Trustees for drinks.