

Parks Management Association

Annual General Meeting

7.00pm Thursday 7th April 2023 (via Zoom)

Present: Paul Rabbitts, Eddie Currie, James Jones McFarland, Chris Worman, Jane Conway, Lawrence Gale, Simon Odell, Mike Bent, Stephen Daye, Steven Skinner, Bernard Sheridan, Gary Quilter, Helen Monger, Jason Taylor, Lucy Prisk, David Winslow, Ian Baggott, Ann Hayward, Simon Ingyon, Stefania Horne

Apologies:

Philippa Reece – Adur and Worthing
Yvonne Kelleher – Richmond and Wandsworth
Liz Stuffins – Walsall Council
Tony Leach – Parks for London
David Bowen – David Bowen Consultancy
Annie Surtees – Salford
David Lambert – The Parks Agency

1. Chair's update (Paul Rabbitts)

In late 2019 and into early 2020, a small number of us set up the original Parks Management Forum as an organisation to support those of us working in the parks management sector, that crossed all areas, from the public sector, private sector as well as those working in the third sector. After a significant survey to the sector, this was welcomed by over 600 colleagues and as a result we established the PMF.

It soon became clear that we needed to refine our role and our purpose which meant in 2021 a rebranding exercise, a name change, a logo, a bank account as well as a new and professional looking website. This we have achieved. We managed to raise over £11,000 from colleagues as founder members who were invited to donate what they could. This was remarkable and very welcome and showed the impetus in the sector.

Throughout the following period, we have tried to grow the membership and looked at what would be a reasonable amount to charge and what the offer would be. This was always going to be a significant challenge for us, with austerity, competing offers from other organisations in the sector as well as the bigger issue, the new PMA was being largely done through those of us volunteering time along with busy jobs, families and other distractions. We have however persisted and I will highlight some of our achievements below:-

- The website is fully functional and updated regularly and has a useful members portal on here. We try to keep it fresh and vibrant and if you search for us through Google, we come up straightaway;
- Our branding is current and well considered and has caught the eye of many;

- We are known within the sector - from the Landscape Institute to, Grounds Maintenance Association, Fields in Trust, Keep Britain Tidy, The Gardens Trust, BALI, APSE, Hort Week, and many others. The chair and Vice chairs have spoken at a number of online forums including Parks Herts, Midlands Parks Forum, Gardens Trust, Saltex.
- We have spoken directly to MPs as well as attended the APPG for Parks and Green Spaces, speaking with vigour and verve on our situation. We have lobbied all English MPs twice – to little avail but we have made our views known.
- We have collaborated with our colleagues in the wider sector through the Parks Collective – more on this later.
- We mounted a national campaign through a One Minute Brief Poster Campaign that had an incredible number of submissions which we now use in our publicity.
- We now advertise jobs on our website and are getting more of these.
- We now have 280 paid up members of the PMA which grows weekly, albeit slowly. A number of authorities have signed up for this including South Derbyshire, The Royal Parks, Wirral, Belfast, Blackpool, Fife, Bankside Open Spaces Trust, North Herts, Doncaster, Watford and Wychavon.
- A database of over 1,200 parkies
- We do have an Executive Board that meets when it can (but not often enough).
- We have a reasonably healthy bank account with £5,682 deposited.
- We have managed to point queries from members of the group to other areas of expertise, although we acknowledge this is very much a role APSE play.

BUT

I have concerns as to where we go next. I raised a while ago the idea of a NLHF grant to take the PMA to the next level. We need to decide this at future meetings of the Executive. As part of this, we need to sign off the ToR and Constitution. These are on the website but need formal adoption at the AGM.

The Parks Collective – this was a great idea but has floundered. I feel there is real mileage in resurrecting this and is something we also need to revisit.

We need to spread the workload and market ourselves, driving up the membership by speaking at Regional Forums, conferences, colleagues.

Corporate Sponsorship needs developing.

Decisions
The Chair's update was unanimously accepted.
The Terms of Reference and Constitution were approved

2. Report from the Treasurer (Paul Rabbitts)

The current balance is £5,682 as of 6th April 2022. Our account is with Unity Trust Bank. There have been some minor expenses for service charges, website hosting, Zoom and Mailchimp.

To agree fees for this financial year – it is recommended that there are no current changes and individual membership remains at £50 and corporate membership remains at £500.

Decision
The Treasurer's update was unanimously accepted.
Membership fees also agreed

3. Nominations for Executive and Advisory Boards

The current Executive Board is made up of:-

Chair – Paul Rabbitts

Vice chair – Philippa Reece

Vice chair – Ian Baggott

Vice chair – Stefania Horne

Vice chair – Chris Worman MBE

Vice chair – Eddie Curry

Vice chair – Mike Bent

The current Advisory Board is made up of:-

Sue France

Michael Rowland

David Lambert

Andy Lee

Jon Maidment

Darren Share MBE

Liz Stuffins

Annie Surtees

Stuart Turner

Kylie Ward

Laurence Gale

Chris Welsh

Yvonne Kelleher

Paul O'Brien

James Jones McFarland

Bernard Sheridan

Stephen Daye

Matt Kelly

Lucy Prisk

There have been no requests to step down from either Boards.

The business of the Association shall be conducted by an Executive Board of: the Chair; 4 Vice Chairs; the Honorary Treasurer; the Immediate Past Chair; and up to 10 elected Members.

Restrictions on appointment to the Board of certain membership categories are set out above.

The following nominations have been received:

Executive Board

Jane Conway – Luton Borough Council

Mike Harris – Tonbridge and Malling, Leisure Services Manager (Outdoors)

David Winslow, Community Parks Officer, Derby City Council

James Jones-McFarland, Parks & Cemeteries Manager, Arun District Council

Advisory Board

Simon O'Dell, Landscape Futures CIC

Steven Skinner, Operations Manager, St Austell Town Council

Decision
No objections were raised, all nominations approved

4. Any other business (actions in bold)

Lawrence Gale – suggested a PMA design for a bedding scheme to be used in Parks

James Jones McFarland – suggested an in-person meeting.

Action: Lawrence agreed to look at sponsorship for this

Eddie Curry – does anyone know what Green Flag Award are planning in terms of award ceremonies and could PMA meet up at them?

Chris Worman – GFA currently planning 3 – North, Midlands, South and 27/8/9 July venues etc tbc

Simon O'Dell – what has the money been spent on to date?

Paul Rabbitts – web site and the '1 minute brief's work

Jane Conway – any mileage in trying to set up a Zoom with MPs to try to deliver the message?

Chris Worman – we need to think about message and timing – also need to target MPs when they are putting their manifesto together

Eddie Curry – need to get to MPs before they start putting their manifesto together

Action: Paul - Item for future agenda – campaign to MPs

Ian Baggott – what happened to the All Party Parliamentary Group looking at parks?

Chris Worman – it has been postponed.

James Jones McFarland – how do we make local councillors aware of PMA?

Jane Conway – that is a good idea. A draft manifesto for parks would help. What about the Parks Charter?

Paul Rabbitts – we ought to revisit this idea

Action: Paul - Item for future agenda about draft manifesto

Helen Monger – a joined up approach with CPRE might be useful. Also what about asking for a new parks minister for next year.

Chris Worman – did we write to MPs as PMA

Paul Rabbitts – yes twice

Chris Worman – what about Chief Executives of Local Authorities – should we write to them? Would it be better if the ‘parks collective’ approached them?

Paul Rabbitts – would could also try targeting council leaders

Stefania Horne – if we do resurrect a manifesto then it needs to be short and focussed. Agreed to approach as Parks Collective. Also how do we work with civil servants working on parks (in DLUHC)?

Paul Rabbitts – should we invite Polly Lord (DLUHC) to the next executive meeting?

(Several members) – yes!

Action: Paul – invite Polly Lord to next executive meeting

James Jones McFarland – should we change the twitter handle?

Simon Ingyon – as per Eddie’s comments – worth trying to get parks champions in elected members

James Jones McFarland – thanks to Paul for all of his hard work the past 2 years

Chris Worman - £30m government funding for parks will be launched in June. Target likely to be those areas that are more deprived.