



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Pocket Parks Plus

End of Grant Report

Bridge House Pond, Feltham - connecting and inspiring through safer, more welcoming, play and community engagement

#PocketPark, #Safety, #Connectedness, #Creativity #Teenagers #Hope



**Friends of
Bridge House Pond
Feltham**

The Headlines

Pocket Park funding has helped transform park and bring people together

- New equipment and fencing improved area and reduced antisocial behaviour
- More people using the park, visiting for a wide range of reasons
- People feel more connected to others and want to participate in activities
- Majority of people feel much safer, although challenges remain at night
- Funding accelerated wider creative collaboration and activities

"I think the changes have considered all ages of people who want to use the space. Safer for youngest visitors who can't run into the road now. Attractive planting for people to sit and enjoy. Table tennis which would provide teenagers something to engage with (as well as other groups)"

Local resident

"My granddaughter loves the playground and having a gate there is much better for safety"

Local resident

"New fence gives piece of mind with kids safety"

Local resident

"We hang out here because we feel safe here. Although some of my friends sometimes drop litter, we now tell them to pick it up and try to look after the area"

*Young Person**

"We have found that there is a lot less damage to the playground in the past 6 months since the fence was put around it. We were worried that new equipment might attract antisocial behaviour, but the opposite has been the case"

*London Borough of Hounslow Greenspace360 team**

"I can't begin to say what a pleasure it is to see all the lovely photos of what you have done. Being an old Feltham girl, who now lives in the 'wilds of Wiltshire', I remember walking around with my Nan to pay her rent, or something similar, at the council offices Last visited Feltham in 2011 and was dismayed at the state of the place. Your work gives me hope that it can be returned to what it was when I was young. Thank you and keep up the good work."

*Former resident ***

[Note: All quotes are from survey, unless marked by * - which indicates these are gathered from informal conversations in the park, and ** which is from a comment on Facebook]

The background to our new pocket park or refurbished park.

Bridge House Pond is a green space at the heart of Feltham town centre, a community on the edge of London in the Borough of Hounslow. Feltham is the largest town in the west of the borough, a 'district-centre' for nearby Hanworth and Bedfont, and just south of Heathrow airport. It is connected to a number of green and blue networks as it lies within London's greenbelt, with the man-made Longford River passing through the town centre on its way to Hampton Court. The area is largely flat and is part of a larger area of what was once Hounslow Heath, an area of Taplow Gravel, which is characterised by springs and large numbers of historic ponds and lakes – often dug out for gravel. Bridge House Pond itself was dug out in the 1840s when the railway came to Feltham to create the embankment for the road to be diverted over the new railway line.

The site itself is opposite Feltham railway station and borders the main approach roads to Feltham High Street from the South and East, in an area that marks the Victorian expansion of the town. Formerly the home of Feltham Urban District Council until the 1960s (and surrounded by delightful gardens), the offices at Bridge House had been owned and used by Hounslow Council until about a decade ago, until the building was sold.

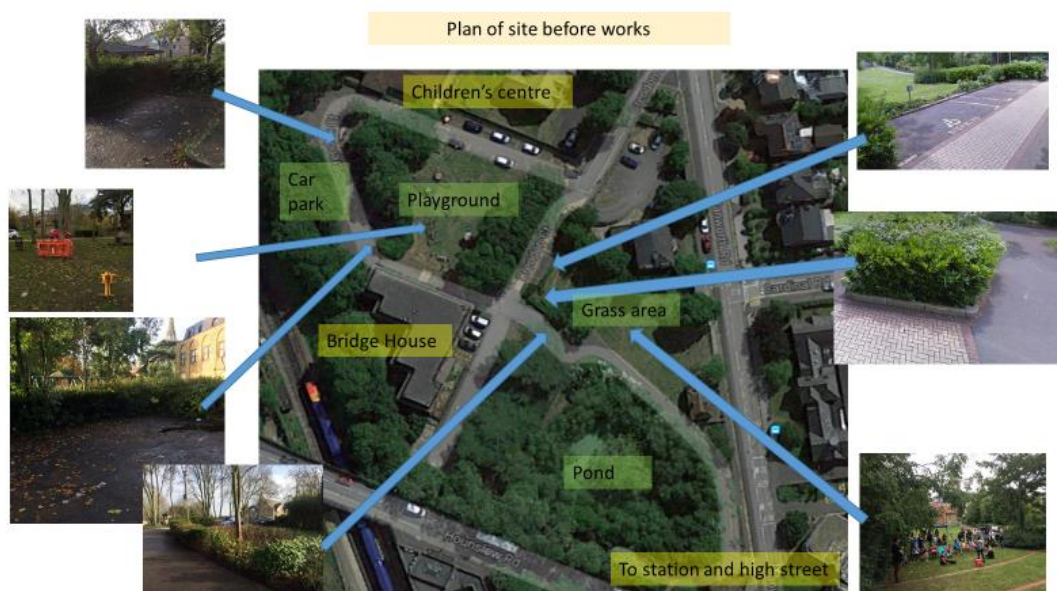


Since then, and with different parks maintenance contracts, the remaining park area had become overgrown, unloved and dangerous, attracting drinkers and drug dealers – and it was not uncommon to find needles in the area.



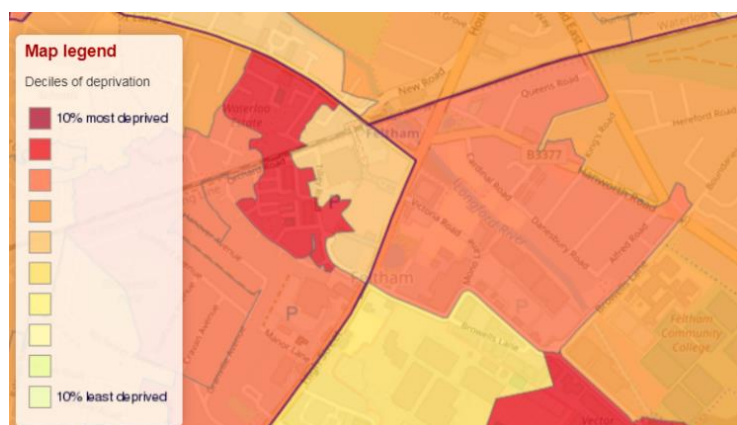
After holding an initial clear up in the winter of 2014 that removed large amounts of waste (including 40 bags of rubbish and trolleys from the pond) in 2015 a Friends of group was formally constituted to work to improve the area. Around this time a new playground was added in unused land next to Bridge

House, opposite Alf King’s Children’s Centre, in part to provide local play provision for those living in the many new town centre flats. While popular with local families, nearly everyone commented that the playground needed a fence around it, as it was surrounded on three sides by access roads to and from the nearby car park. In addition, the playground attracted antisocial behaviour from young people, in part because it was tucked away and also because they felt disengaged and forgotten with no provision for them. The park has three main ‘zones’ – the pond (which is being improved through a separate project), the grass area, with a sloping ‘amphitheatre’, and the playground – surrounded by access to the car park.



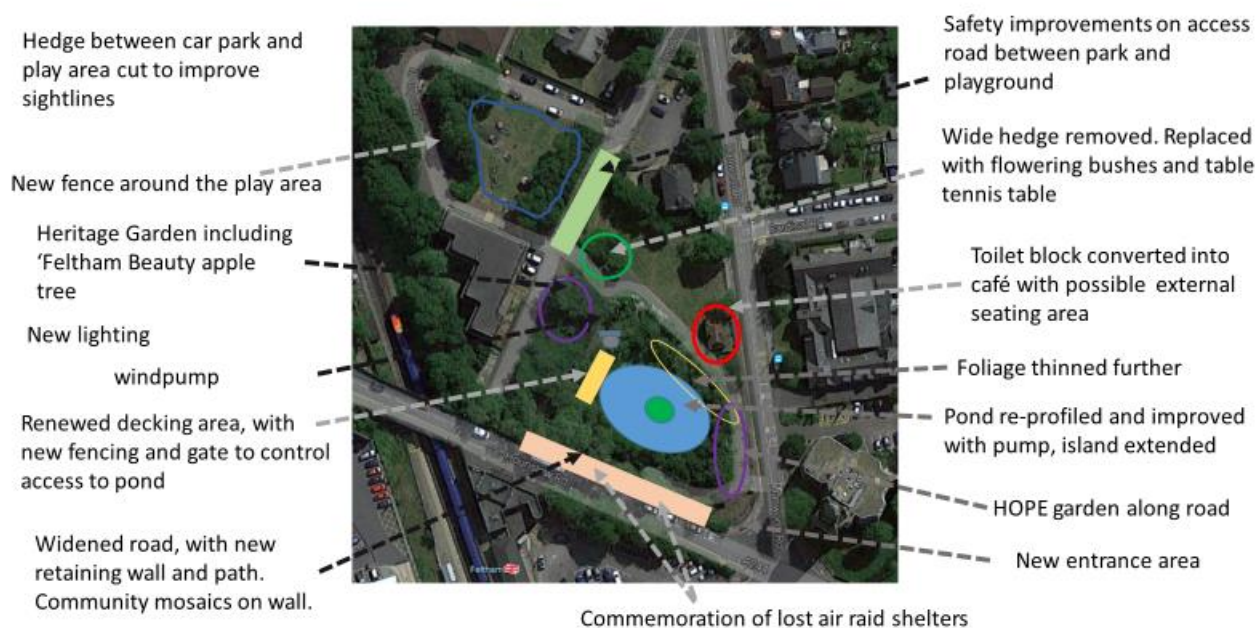
Feltham town centre has large numbers of families living in flats, including a number of temporary accommodation ‘hostels’ and residential conversions of office blocks. The area has recently been designated as a housing zone, and significant numbers of additional flats are being built in the area around the station. While Feltham has a large number of parks and green spaces, unfortunately, most suffer from issues of anti-social behaviour, including drinking and drug-dealing, and often do not feel safe or secure.

The areas around the centre of Feltham score highly on the index of multiple deprivation, with living environment deprivation and deprivation affecting children scoring particularly high. The high levels of poverty nearby mean that many people cannot afford to travel to higher quality sites, and safe and easily accessible green spaces are very important. Being so near to Heathrow, Feltham has also attracted immigrant communities from a range of backgrounds, including many temporary or short-term residents in the area.



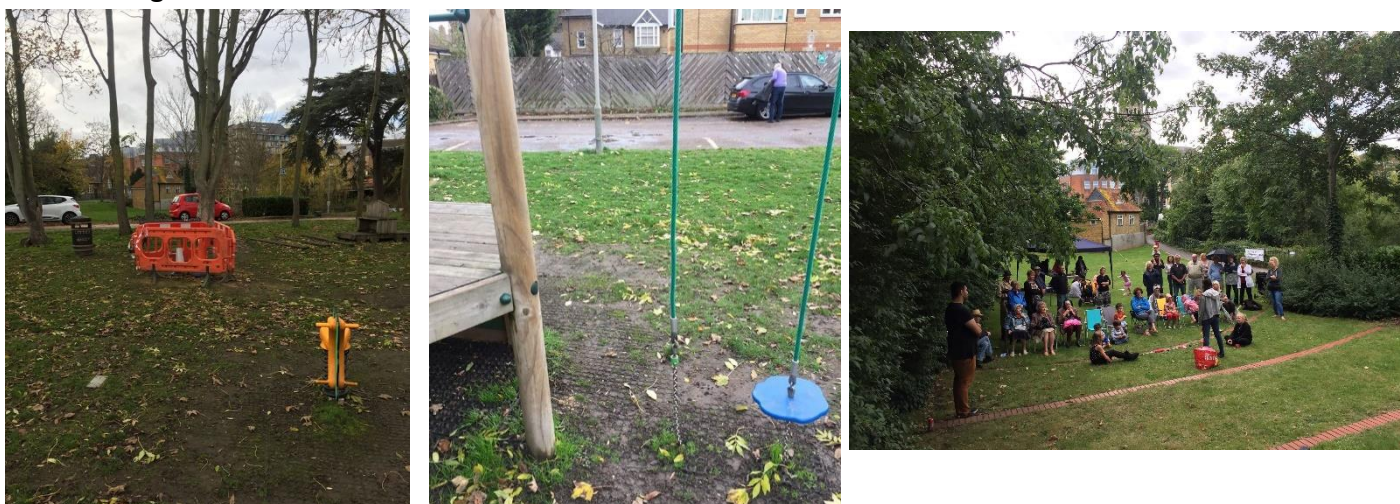
Over the past five years the Friends of Bridge House Pond have held a series of meetings, surveys, clear ups, and community get-togethers, and planting activities, and raised funding from a variety of different sources to improve the park. Community involvement and participation is important to us to create a sense of ‘ownership’ for the park, and changing the cycle of anti-social behaviour into pro-social actions. For example, we were the first urban park in London to have a #2minutelitterpick station – a litter picker available for the community to use to pick up litter. This has helped contribute to a significant cultural change – we have found groups of young people who might previously have dropped litter, picking it up after other groups, and taking more responsibility for keeping the area clear. This is not without challenges, and we have still had an ongoing issue with a small minority of people ripping down community notices or breaking the litter picker. In discussion with different groups, the Friends put together a ‘Masterplan’ for the park – which has been refined by further feedback from different groups.

Bridge House Pond Masterplan



The main outcomes we are trying to achieve through our new pocket park or refurbished park

This project is all about increasing ‘connectedness’. The aim was to break down physical barriers between different areas within the site, bringing them together as a cohesive single park, while also adding new low-level fencing to ensure the children’s playground is enclosed, meaning that children can play in safety and parents can properly relax and connect with each other. It set out to replace large areas of thick hedging, which were habitats for rats and block views (creating secluded areas for anti-social behaviour), with new amenity facilities for play, as well as attractive planting to open up views and give visual interest.



We aimed to measure this by gathering community feedback (both formal and informal), as well as observing and documenting the changes. We also sought opportunities to add value to this funding by creating and taking advantage of opportunities to engage the community in novel and innovative ways.

Outcomes from our new or refurbished park	✓
Improve the physical appearance of the existing park/develop a park on this site	✓
Increase the use of the park (more people visiting the park/green space) than before the project	✓
Increase the use of the park (green space) by more people from different backgrounds than before the project	✓
Increasing local people’s satisfaction with the park/green space / local area than before project	✓
Increase the number of people who volunteer to work to support the park/green space than before the project	✓
Increase in the use of the park to bring people from different backgrounds together (social mixing) than before the project	✓
Improve bio-diversity and environmental impacts than before the project	✓
Improvements in wellbeing	✓
Other please specify: Perceptions of safety	✓

The main partners in our Pocket Parks Plus project

The project was led by the Friends of Bridge House Pond who put together the original proposals, based on community feedback from a series of meetings and events over the past five years. The commissioning of physical infrastructure changes was led by Hounslow Council, in conjunction with the Council's in-house (but separate) parks organisation Greenspace360, as well as other contractors, and in co-ordination with the Friends group.

A range of other partners have been involved through the year in a variety of ways. Last year, the Friends of Bridge House Pond successfully applied for funding from the Mayor of London to hold a community festival in the park, as a way of bringing new people into the park, engaging young people, and changing perceptions about how the space could be used. 'PondFest' was held in July, and drew on the themes and issues set out in the Pocket Park bid to celebrate London becoming the world's first National Park City. As well as the GLA, this involved local community groups (in particular Christ Church Feltham who provided food and entertainment, the World Zoroastrian Organisation who are based at Bridge House, the Polish Social and Integration Club who provided the stage and refreshments, Reach Academy – who co-ordinated the live music including bands of young people to perform on the stage, and a range of local environmental groups (Lets Go Outside and Learn CIC/ Friends of the River Crane, Feltham in Bloom, Friends of Hanworth Park House, Hanworth Park Runners, Hounslow Heath Green Gym).

There have been other unexpected opportunities, including the chance to launch 'Feltham in Bloom', which brought together people from across the community to plant flowers and celebrate the area's horticultural heritage. While this was led by another local resident Rob Antill, the Friends of Bridge House Pond helped create materials, and hosted the awards ceremony, and participated in a series of events across the town including the Hanworth Park House car show, Feltham Fete (organised by Creative People and Places), and Feltham History Day (organised by Feltham Arts, together with other partners such as Tale be Told Theatre).



At the start of the project, local organisations set out their reasons for support:

"This is as a great opportunity to enhance the park which would benefit hugely from a community led project and a programme of investment." Lets Go Outside and Learn CIC

"Improvements to Bridge House Pond... will allow for us and other local performing groups to collaboratively produce events outdoors in the park and increase the local offer and engagement within green spaces." Feltham Arts

"We are in urgent need of more green community spaces in Feltham. Many of our pupils live in flats and apartments and have very little contact with outside generally and living things in particular. Feltham is a community with many vulnerable people and one which has lost substantial community facilities in recent years, especially those for young people. The intention of the Friends to create a space that can be used by young people is laudable and has the potential to make a real contribution." Reach Academy Feltham

The main costs /resources associated with the project

Set out the costs and resources spent during 2019, rounding the costs to the nearest £100.

Resource	Number of people	Cost £
Staff who ran managed the project	1	N/A
Staff who delivered the project	2	N/A
Contractors who delivered the project	2	N/A
Consultants who helped during the planning/design stage		N/A
Volunteers who delivered the project (you may not need to include costs, if people were not offered any incentives)	25	
Capital costs for fixtures/fittings in the park		£15,300
Other costs, please specify		
Evaluation		200
Totals		£15,500

Breakdown of capital costs

Item	Amount
Fence and gates for playground	£5,000 (Note: Hounslow Council contributing additional £12,700)
New swing	£1,500
New planting across site, including new trees	£2,725
Levelling ground and surface preparation for paths and under table tennis table	£4,500
Table tennis table	£1,575
Total	£15,300

What has been the impact so far?

Overall, the Pocket Park funding has helped transform the park, making the play area safe, and supporting repairs to equipment and new provision which have greatly improved the area. The wider changes to the park have improved sightlines and improved perceptions of safety, as well as providing a new table tennis table, which has already been well-used, and drawn new people to the park.



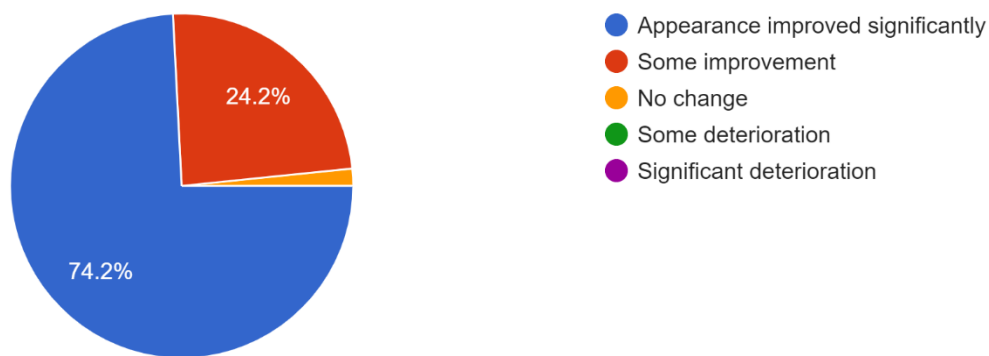
The funding has helped empower our vision for community engagement and creative arts. Although the aspiration was originally to create a ‘stage’ area, wider consultation and feedback from a minority of residents suggested concerns that a permanent area could encourage more informal gatherings which could create a risk of noise nuisance if people felt empowered to play music loudly. While this was thought unlikely, it did cause us to re-think the approach. We decided that we would have additional flexibility by using a temporary stage for events. Last year we held ‘PondFest’ for the first time, using funding from the Mayor of London, as part of the city-wide National Park City Festival. This allowed us to host an event considerably larger than we had originally planned, and meant that we set up the stage in the car park of Bridge House instead of the original location, in order to increase capacity.

This in turn has created new momentum around using the park for community activities, and the creative legacy of the project by including more visual arts around the park alongside finding opportunities for live music at other gatherings (sadly plans for 2020 have now been put on hold – but included plans for a smaller community festival and community ‘art in the park’).

One unexpected (but perhaps serendipitous) change has been that the road through the site that leads to Bridge House Pond was re-named Freddie Mercury Close in March 2020 – in recognition of his family’s Zoroastrian heritage and connections with Feltham. This iconic road name, which was publicised around the world, came about in part due to conversations between the Council and World Zoroastrian Organisation that built on the connections established by the funding. It reinforces associations between the park and creative arts, and is something we may look to continue to build on in future.



Feedback from park users has been very positive. Three-quarters of respondents said that the appearance of the park had ‘improved significantly’ in the past year. As there have been delays completing some aspects of the overall masterplan, we very pleased with this, and hope to address some of the outstanding areas raised in feedback to the consultation going forward.



Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus outbreak, it has not been possible to undertake the full range of stakeholder interaction to gather feedback from all park users. However, we received over 60 responses to an online survey of local residents, which was widely shared through social media. The majority (61%) of respondents were aged 35-49, a quarter were 50 or over, and 10% were aged 25-34.

However, there are also other ways of judging progress. The Friends of Bridge House Pond entered London in Bloom in 2018 and 2019, and secured a silver award, and were recognised by the Council alongside Chiswick House as one of the few winners in the whole of Hounslow Borough. Bridge House Pond has also again been entered for a Green Flag in 2020. Feedback from the unsuccessful 2019 Green Flag entry (which was before most of the works had been completed, and was also affected by the closure of the main entrance due to road works) has been addressed, which concerned the welcome to the park, and Council staff assess that it should now be successful if the entrance works are completed in time – although the Coronavirus situation has complicated this. There are still further improvements planned, such as signage and new replacement bins - but these will be implemented once the main works are complete.



The physical changes to the park/green space

The Pocket Park funding helped pay for a new fence around the play area (£5,000 towards a total cost of over £15,000). Originally this was planned to cover three sides of the playground, and retain the hedge at the back, which was the concept submitted in the application. However, in order to improve personal security in the car park (out of sight) behind the playground, the Council felt that it would be better to remove that hedge and extend the fence around all corners. The hedge had not been adequately maintained for many years, and was very wide, and if trimmed back fully it would have gaps. By removing the hedge, it has improved sightlines and access to the car park – which is now also increasingly used by families as a new education facility opened in September 2019 using a floor of the old block at Bridge House. Additional replacement trees and new planting are planned to create screening between the car park and the playground – although were not in place at the time of the evaluation and survey, and will take some time to mature.

The Pocket Park funding paid for new toddler swings to provide dedicated provision for infants (requested as a large number of families with very young children use the adjacent children's centre), which has also helped free up space on the other swings for older groups, meaning children spend less time waiting when they could be playing.



The Council paid for maintenance of damaged areas of the playground (including a damaged swing, roundabout, rocker and rope step). Recent feedback from the Council has shown that their regular playground inspectors have noticed a significant drop in antisocial behaviour and damage to playground equipment, as a result of recent changes, coinciding with the new fence. The addition of a physical barrier to demarcate the space has allowed increased enforcement and establishment of new social norms, whereby it is clear that the playground is for young children and not for teenagers drinking or meeting up. Other factors, such as improved sightlines, engagement with this group around the music festival, and the new table tennis table have also helped.

The Pocket Park funding paid for the creation of a new table tennis table in the area next to the grass. This was an area that had previously had a high hedge that had restricted sightlines, and created a barrier between different parts of the park. New planting is planned for the area around the table tennis table – although was delayed by bad weather and the Coronavirus, and so had not been completed by the time of the feedback survey.

In the original proposal, there were aspirations to create a new stage area on the site of two disused car parking spaces, and improve the safety of the road. The idea of a permanent stage area was put on hold to allow a more flexible use of the space . The Friends group continues to liaise with the local authority on future plans for this area and continue to press for road safety improvements, although these have been delayed by some quite complex ownership/land registry issues.



Use of the park

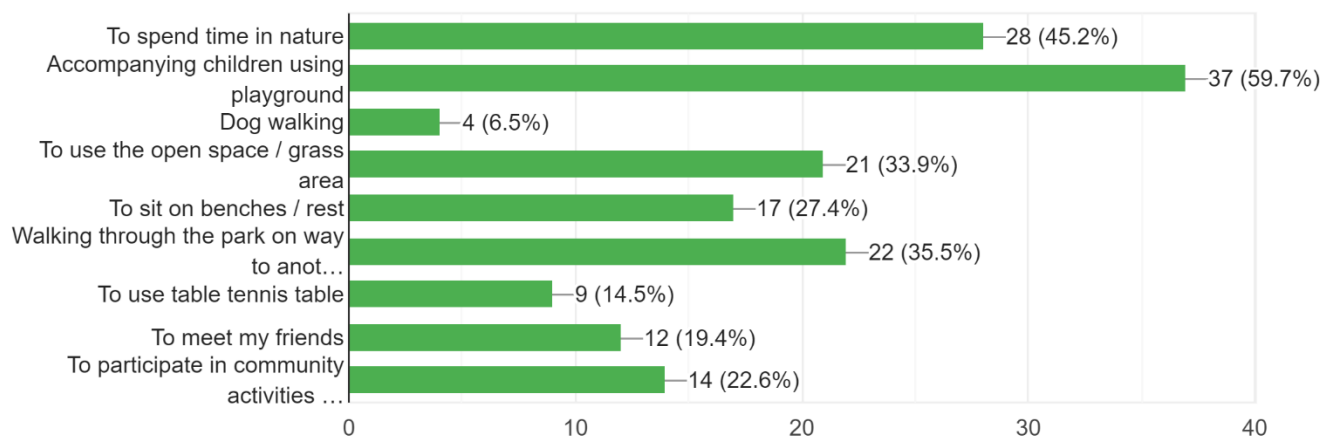
Since the Pocket Park improvements to the playground, there are visibly more people using the park. This includes people staying for longer in the playground because they are able to relax and not worry about their children. The improved sightlines mean that more people are aware of the playground, as they can now see it more easily from the road, which may be another reason for increase use.

“Before the improvements, my son run [sic] off once and one of the health visitor’s car nearly hit him.”
Local resident

People told us that they use the park for a wide variety of reasons. The highest proportion were accompanying children using the playground, which highlights this area’s importance for usage of the park overall. Spending time in nature, using the open space, and resting, as well as meeting other people and playing were also reasons. As the park is near the station and high street, there are also a number of people who choose to walk through the park as part of their route.

2. What are your reasons for using the park (please tick all that apply)

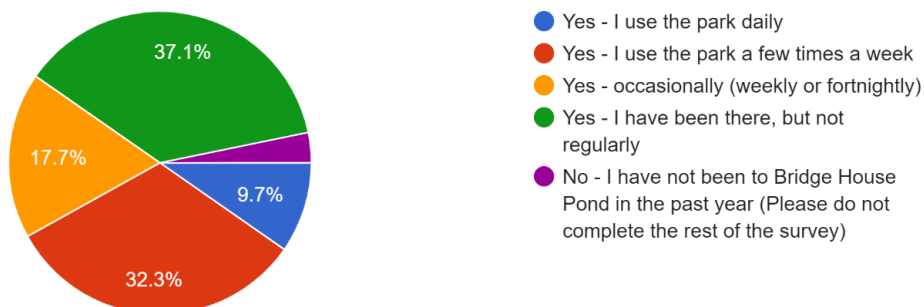
62 responses



While some people (10%) who responded to the questionnaire visit the park daily, the majority (around half) use the park a few times a week or occasionally (weekly/fortnightly). Over a third of respondents visit the park, but not regularly.

1. Have you ever visited Bridge House Pond? (the area from the pond to the car park, including the grass area and the playground)

62 responses



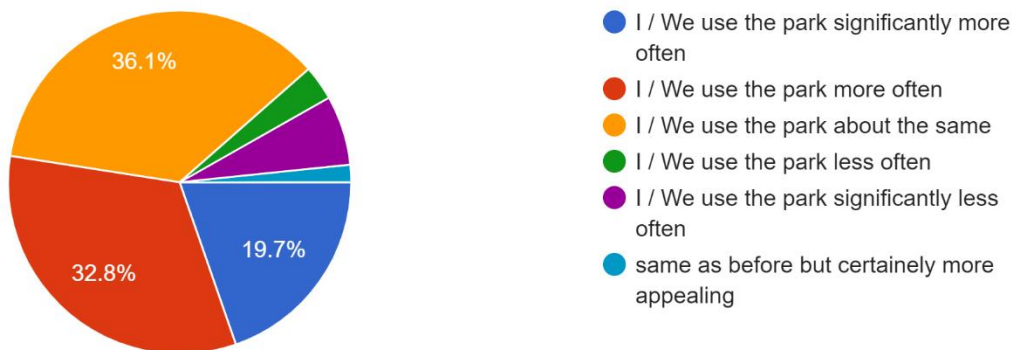
The summer ‘Pondfest’ Festival attracted hundreds of people to the park (we estimate around 300), including a wide range of families and community groups. The Friends group have also held regular clear ups and planting activities, which have a regular group of participants, but also attract new people who see posters or who are passing and who choose to join in.

The provision of the table tennis table has also encouraged new people to use the park. Even though it has only been in place a few weeks, it has been widely used, including a range of ages and backgrounds – both children / young people / families and groups of adults from a variety of different backgrounds.

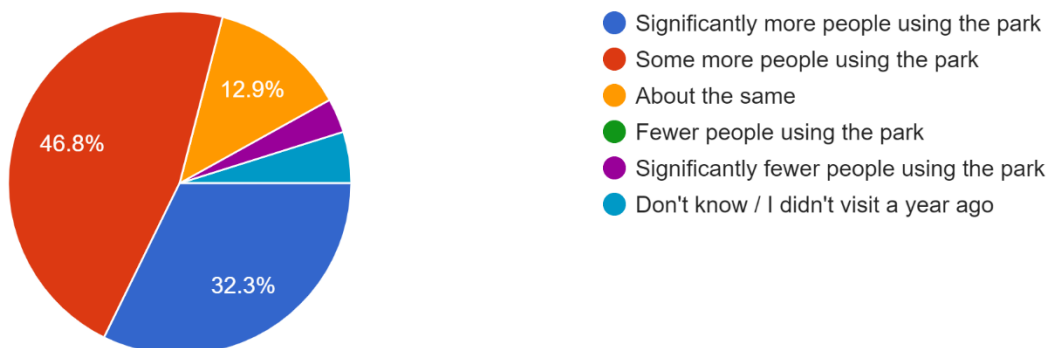
“Its actually really great to be honest. I’ve used it and really enjoyed it”
 Young person in park*

In response to our survey, more than half of people said that they are using the park more often because of the changes. Over three-quarters said that they noticed more people using the park.

5.a) Compared to a year ago, has the frequency that you use the park changed?
 61 responses



5. b) Compared to a year ago, have you noticed any difference in the numbers of other people using the park?
 62 responses



Bringing people from different backgrounds together

The park improvements provide a space for people from a range of different backgrounds to come together. This includes different ages, backgrounds and walks of life.

Last year the Friends held a number of activities that brought people together. These included regular planting and clear up activities, an Easter Egg hunt, and the summer PondFest festival. The Easter Egg hunt brought together around 50 people, including a large number of children who heard about it the school opposite the park which put information about it in their end-of-term information pack.



Friends of Bridge House Pond Feltham

Easter Trail / Egg Hunt:
Easter Monday 22nd April, 2.30pm
Easter Fun for all the family – Easter egg hunt for children 5 and under.
Easter trail for older children
Prize of small chocolate eggs (while stocks last – enough for first 100 children)

AGM: Tuesday 30th April 7.45pm-9pm
Voting for Committee. An update on progress and plans and chance to discuss ideas
Christ Church, Hanworth Road- Main Hall

All welcome! We are a community group, which has formed to look after and improve our local park and play area – celebrating local heritage and the environment

More information: www.facebook.com/groups/BridgeHousePond/
E-mail: BridgeHousePond@gmail.com

Logos: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government; Heathrow Community Fund; London Borough of Hounslow; 3550 Bags of Help; OUR SPACE

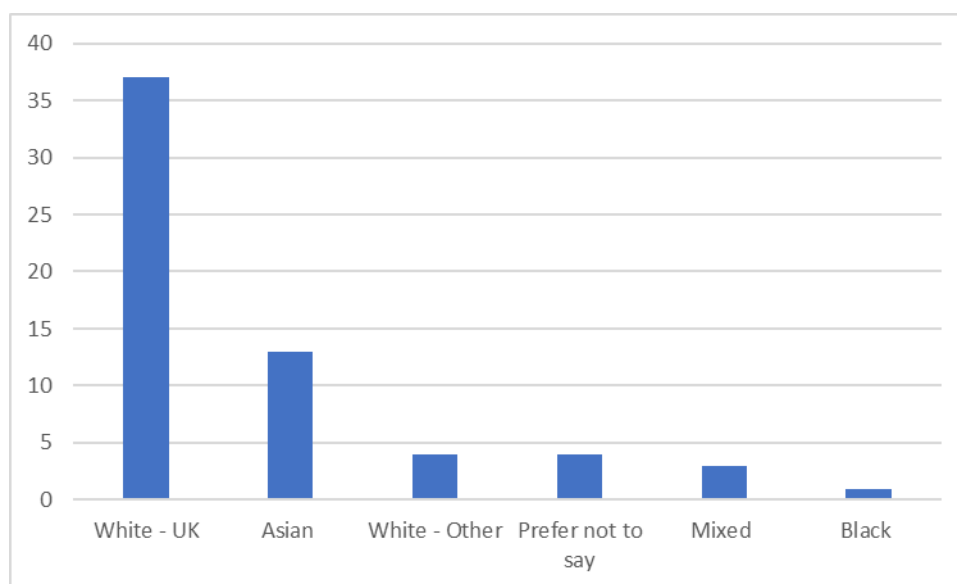
Clear Ups have engaged a wide range of different groups, including the local Islamic group HIRA, who helped clear a flower bed and assist with planting.



The PondFest festival particularly sought to engage teenagers, and included local groups from schools, including Reach Academy. Other groups participating in PondFest included the Polish Social Integration Group, World Zoroastrian Organisation, Christ Church, and a range of other community groups. There were activities for all ages, with refreshments and seats available. The Friends engaged with Age UK to ensure that we reached all ages, and it was pleasing to see a large number of older people there.



In response to the question in the survey about ethnicity, it was clear that there are people from a variety of backgrounds who visit the park. This proportion is broadly similar to the overall demography of the area – although as discussed it may not include some harder to reach groups – for example those whose first language isn't English - who might find an online survey harder to complete.

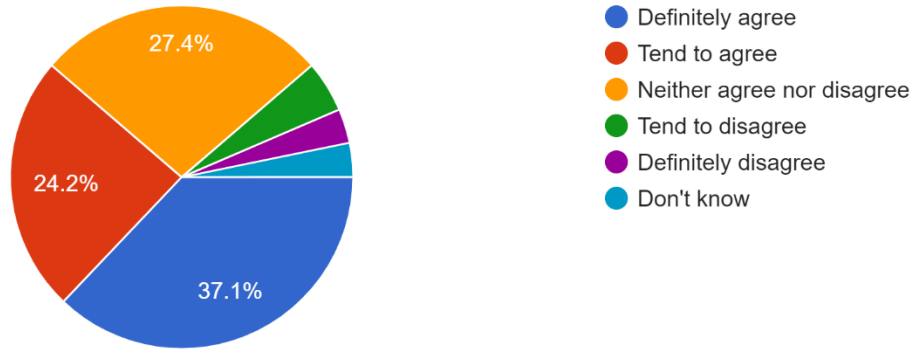


The majority of people who responded to the survey said that Bridge House Pond is somewhere that they meet and interact with people from different backgrounds. A small number disagreed, while around a quarter were neutral. This in part reflects people's experiences of using the park – for example those just walking through may have a different experience from those taking part in a community activity or using

the playground. However, overall this is a high proportion that interact with people from different backgrounds.

8. To what extent do you agree with this statement: Bridge House Pond (including playground) is somewhere I meet / interact with people from different backgrounds

62 responses



Satisfaction with the park/green space

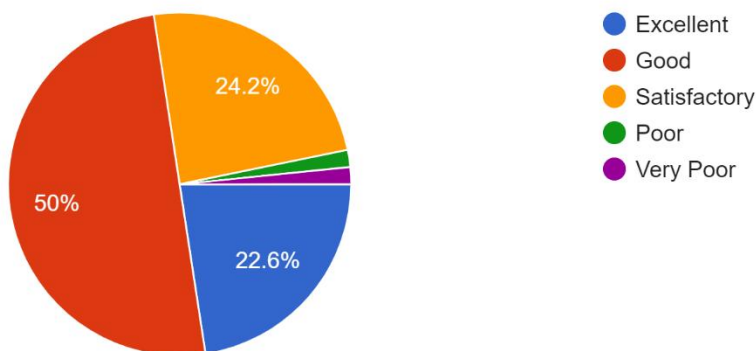
Overall, the majority of people rated the park 'Good' or 'Excellent', with three quarters noticing 'considerable' improvement to the park. Considering the state that the park was in less than 5 years ago, this is amazing progress.

"A lovely bit of space at the end of my road, with pretty things growing in it, and birds on the pond and lovely to look at. Cheers me up!"

"The community respect and develop it"

11. a) Overall, compared with other parks, how would you rate Bridge House Pond?

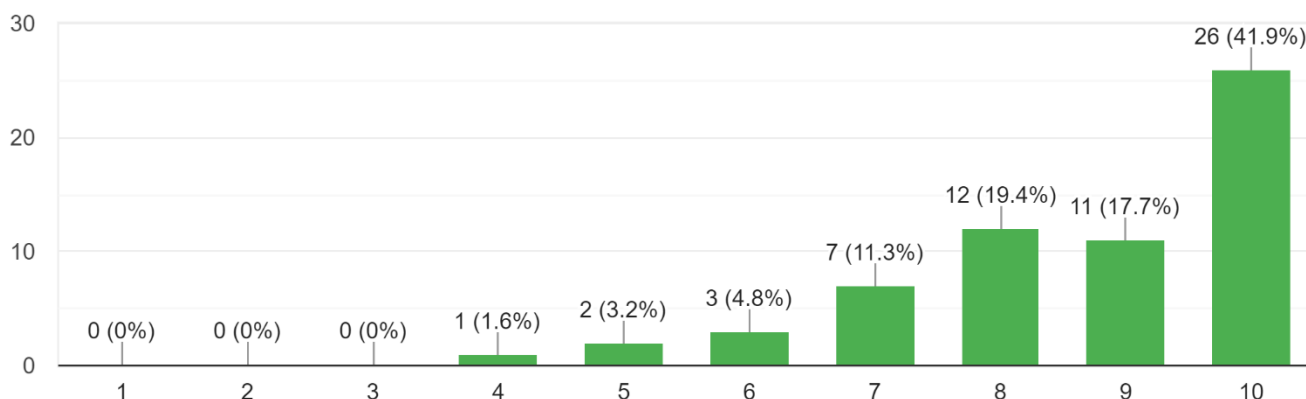
62 responses



On average, people rated the improvements 8.6 out of 10 (where 10 was 'very satisfied' by improvements, and 1 was 'very unsatisfied'). 90% scored it a 7 or higher. There were a very few comments that were critical of changes, but these were a small minority and are discussed in more detail in the discussion at the end about lessons learned.

9. Overall, how satisfied are you about the changes to Bridge House Pond (playground, grass area, table tennis table) over the past year

62 responses



In terms of the comments, there were a number of themes that were repeated about what people like about the park – these were around the openness, peacefulness and connection with nature. There were also a large number of comments that highlighted the play facilities, including the playground and table tennis table. Finally, there were also comments that highlighted the local and community dimension of the park, including that it was well looked after and cared for.

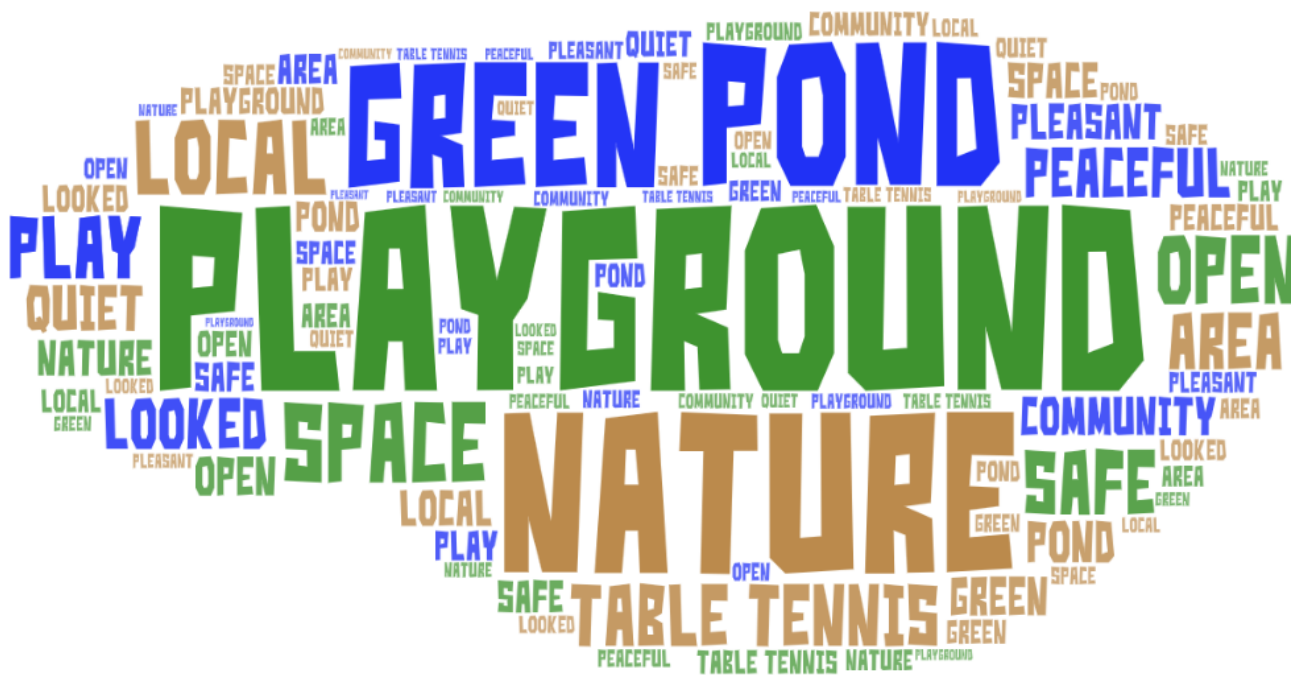
Other comments:

“It [is] beautifully maintained, local so high chance we [will] bump into our friends there. Close proximity to my home.”

“That there are now lots of things to look at, more pockets of interest and my children love the new table tennis table.”

“It’s well looked after”

Word cloud of themes from comments:



Voluntary support for the park

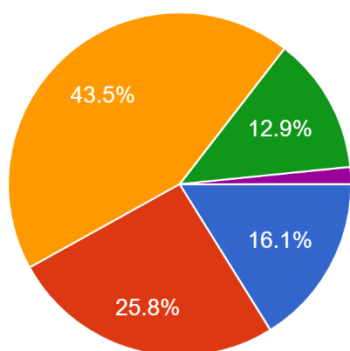
Over the past year the Friends group have continued to hold regular clear ups and planting events. During 2019 these were monthly, and focused on improving the 'HOPE garden' and 'heritage garden'. On average up to a dozen people attended, including a wide range of ages and backgrounds – from small children to older people.

In addition, PondFest and Feltham in Bloom were run entirely by volunteers (although funded with support from the GLA and Hounslow Council), and brought together a wide range of voluntary groups. We ran a conservation day led by TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) which helped clear out the pond and tend to the heritage garden in July, which involved around a dozen volunteers. Over the course of the year we estimate that 25 – 50 people have helped in significant ways.

Over 40% of people responding to the survey said that they had participated in organised activities at Bridge House Pond. Of the remainder, the majority said that they would be interested in attending events in future. Only a small proportion said that they wouldn't be interested.

7. Have you ever participated in any organised activities at Bridge House Pond (clear ups, planting activities, events)

62 responses



- Yes, I have participated in several activities
- Yes, I have participated in one or two
- I have not participated in activities, but would be interested in future
- I have not participated in activities, and this would not interest me
- Because of age





Bio-diversity and environmental changes

Environment is one of the core values of the Friends of Bridge House Pond, alongside Community, Creativity and Heritage. One of the challenges with the site is transforming it from being wild, overgrown and unwelcoming to one that is well looked after, with appropriate trees and plants in the right places and which is easy to maintain. Inevitably there are challenges and trade-offs in any project, and this is one area where there are short-term trade offs for long-term sustainability.

The Friends group, in consultation with local residents, always look to minimise any environmental losses as a result of our work. There are times however when we need to heed to the wishes of the landowner and during this project more trees and bushes were removed by local authority contractors than originally envisaged in the proposals. Although the view of the Friends Group (and some local residents in the survey) is that some of this was not necessary we continue to work proactively with them to see what lessons we can learn from this and lobby for additional pro-environmental improvements in the future as a result. It should also be noted that the funding for these additional changes did not come from within the Pocket Park funding.

In the long-term the changes to the park have the potential to add significant environmental value. Large numbers of new trees have been planted, or are planned to be – including 10 new trees – which will be more suitable for parks than the specimens that were removed, including many which were self-seeded. Four new bird boxes are also planned for the site

Whereas before there were large evergreen hedge areas (described as ‘supermarket car park planting’) which had limited visual interest, a new ‘urban planting scheme’ is planned. The Friends group have planted new rose bushes and plants to add interest to the border and welcome as people approach the park. The park itself has been a haven for wildlife – the location between the railway line and nearby Longford River with the pond in the centre mean that there are a wide range of birds, butterflies, ducks, and insects (including dragonfly) that can be found around the park, as well as a range of wild plants and fungi. While it is sad that the changes to the park have resulted in the loss of more trees than the Friends initially hoped, we will continue to work to ensure that these are adequately replaced and are confident that these changes are investing in the long-term health of the park for future generations to enjoy.

In their feedback, a large number of people mentioned the green space, openness, peace and quiet, and wildlife as reasons for coming to visit the park:

“To see ducks, birds or enjoying to feed food to birds”

“To sit and look at nature.”

“Watching the wildlife”

However, some highlighted the way that the Council had implemented the works:

“I love the improvements to the playground - the fencing to make it safer and the table tennis table - but I hate that this has come at such a cost to nature. The extensive tree felling and the hedge removal were very saddening and it meant we avoided the area for a while because the resulting lack of wildlife was too obvious and too heartbreaking.”

“The park looks great. I’m disappointed that a few trees were cut down and appreciate that some more have been planted but it’d be great to see more trees and greenery.”

“Perimeter fence is great, disappointed that the hedges and trees were removed.”

Further planting and improvements are planned, which unfortunately could not be completed by the time of the survey because of delays caused by bad weather and the Coronavirus. This will continue to be a priority for the Friends group and we expect that in a couple of years there will be far more diverse planting than previously, with more flowering plants and havens for wildlife. The survey feedback also highlighted the desire for wildflower areas, and once the large-scale works are complete, we will look to implement these.



Needs that have been addressed; Including physical and mental health, wellbeing, Integration and social mixing etc..

This project was about connectedness and hope. Our work has made a significant difference to the area – and catalysed wider community activities in a relatively deprived area and empowered people to get involved and feel proud about their local community. When the Friends group was starting, and holding its first clear ups, one local resident e-mailed to say ‘Thank you for doing this. Nothing good ever happens in Feltham’. This project, and the wider masterplan for the site is aimed at demonstrating that positive change is possible, and that people can realise their dreams and aspirations.

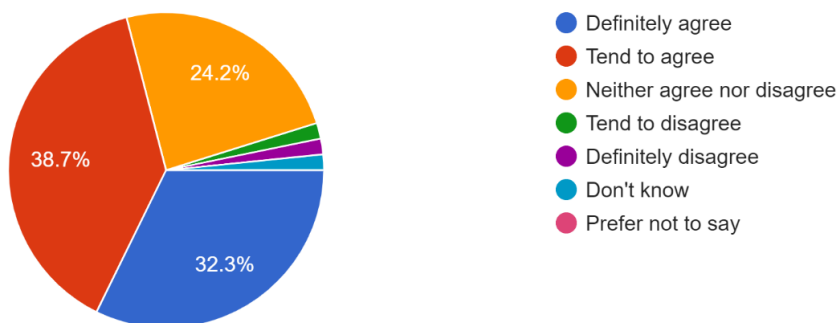
In order to realise long-term change, this means transforming anti-social behaviour into pro-social behaviour, or at least adding so much weight to positive change that the scales tip inevitably towards progress and the creation and experience of a new and better culture.

“Park has seen to be loved and nurtured now, also wonderful seeing notes in the park such as pick up litter when passing by to keep park tidy all the time, nice mosaic and many flowers.”

To do this requires people with different backgrounds and skills to come together, and to share and learn from each other and be able to find ways of meeting their needs through exchanging experiences in community, learning skills, sharing new things and feeling part of something bigger. Nearly three-quarters of people responding to the survey said that they feel more connected to people from their local neighbourhood because of changes to the park, with only a very small minority disagreeing.

12. To what extent do you agree with this statement: I feel more connected to people from my local neighbourhood because of changes to the park

62 responses



Many of the ideas for the project came out of discussions with people using the park. This included listening to parents using the playground, but also significantly groups of young people who use the park.



Today at Bridge House Pond chatted to some fantastic teenagers who would love somewhere to play live music in the area. So we started dreaming about an open mic afternoon in the park some weekends and perhaps even #PondFest - you heard it hear first...
[@CPPnetwork](#) [@Feltham_Arts](#)

6:47 pm · 19 Apr 2018 · Twitter for iPhone



CPP Hounslow @CPPHounslow · 22 Jul 2019

We had a great time at the @BridgeHousePond #PondFest event yesterday! A celebration of creativity and the wildness of nature as part of the @MayorofLondon #NationalParkCity Festival. Our CAW bought some plants for her garden from Feltham in Bloom too 🌻🌻🌻



Talking to teenagers, they told us that there is nothing to do in the area – particularly as many youth clubs have closed and there is no place outside their own homes to meet together (especially as many live in crowded flats). Many hang out in the park with friends – but have nothing to engage them. Speaking to them they were excited by the idea of a table tennis table (‘We would come here all the time if there was one’). They also didn’t feel that they had a forum for their creative talents – often not being old enough for pubs, but with no other live music venues available. The idea of PondFest was literally dreamt up in conversation with young people in April 2018, and we were able to realise this in July 2019. Similarly, the idea of a table tennis table was developed in conversation with young people, and the fact that this has been realised helps them feel empowered and listened to. It is perhaps no coincidence that damage to the park has generally reduced over the past year.

One of the other real social drivers of the project was ensuring that people have access to a high quality green space that they can enjoy and relax in locally. Incidentally during the Coronavirus lockdown this was highlighted more than ever, and it was good to see families enjoying the open space.

“It helps the families who don’t have a garden”

We know from conversations with people at the park that there are a large number of people who don’t have access to their own garden, or who only have a small amount of space. With large numbers of flats in the town centre accessible parks are vital for people’s wellbeing. Although a large proportion of those who responded to the survey have their own garden, around a dozen do not. We also know that these communities living in temporary accommodation or whose first language is not English may find it harder to complete a survey.

About you: Type of housing. Do you live in a



Being able to make improvements to the park, and to transform how people see the space by putting on a free Festival (in addition free food was provided to those living in the temporary hostel opposite) makes these people feel connected, brings them together and builds social capital and wellbeing.

“I can't begin to say what a pleasure it is to see all the lovely photos of what you have done. Being an old Feltham girl, who now lives in the 'wilds of Wiltshire', I remember walking around with my Nan to pay her rent, or something similar, at the council offices Last visited Feltham in 2011 and was dismayed at the state of the place. Your work gives me hope that it can be returned to what it was when I was young. Thank you and keep up the good work.” Former resident

Other impacts

One other key aspect of the changes was to improve safety. This had three dimensions:

- Safety of children using the playground, to prevent them from running into the road
- Safety of children approaching the playground by slowing vehicles on the access road to the car park, and improving sightlines
- Improving perceptions of personal security by reducing antisocial behaviour by openness up views across the site to ensure that people could be seen and passively monitored by people walking through or past the site and if necessary reported.

The overall feedback has been extremely positive – particularly around the playground and fence, but also by reducing antisocial behaviour.

“The new addition of the fence has made a tremendous effect with keeping children safe. The removal of the large bushes has opened the play area up and stopped teenagers loitering in the small carpark smoking and drinking illegally.”

As discussed earlier, there have been challenges identifying the ownership of the road with the local authority which has delayed the installation of more permanent and effective measures. In the meantime, traffic cones have been used by the Friends as temporary traffic calming measures to ensure that vehicles pass over the speed bumps and do not drive around them on the adjacent brick pavement section. We continue to engage proactively with the Council to try and ensure a more permanent solution.

“Close the area to motor vehicles”

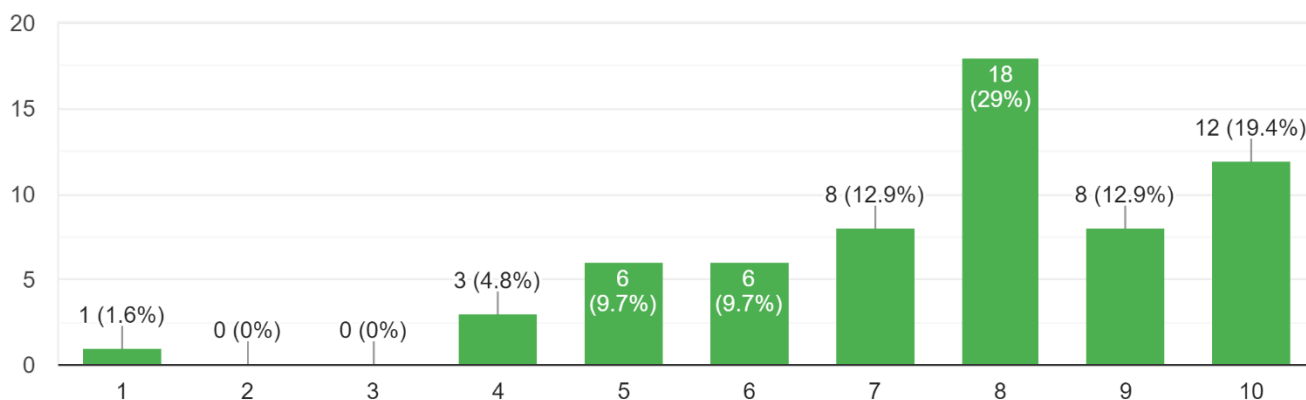
“Enclose the area by fencing to avoid cars”

“More grass, less road”

In terms of personal security and safety, overall most people said that they feel safer as a result of the changes. On average people gave the changes a score of 7.6 out of 10 where 10 was feeling much safer, and 1 was much less safe.

6. a) Compared to a year ago, how do you perceive the safety of the area (e.g. your own personal security when using the park, and that of others)

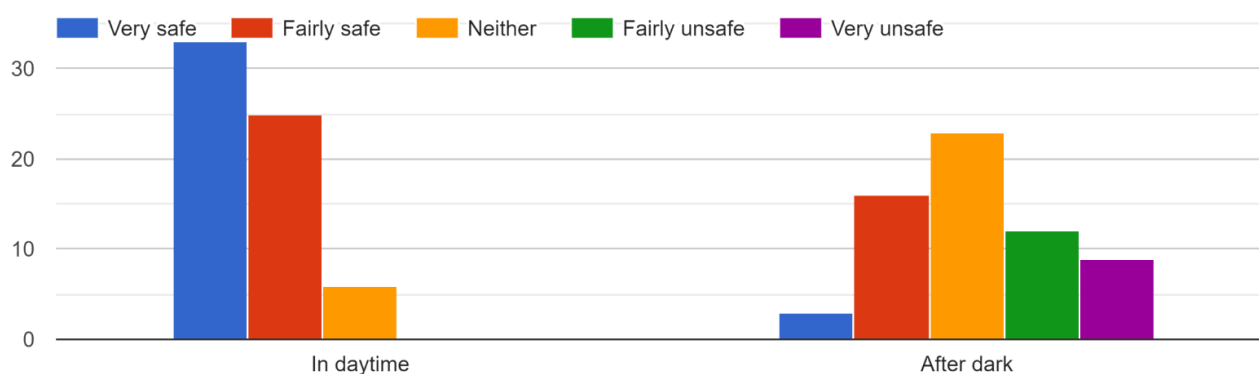
62 responses



The score that was chosen most often was 8, and scores were distributed around this level. Four people scored it less than five – indicating that they feel less safe as a result of the changes, but these were in the minority.

Further feedback revealed that although nearly everyone feels safe using the park in the daytime, they have concerns after dark. Nine said that they feel very unsafe, with twelve saying ‘fairly unsafe’. This is perhaps unsurprising – a London wide survey said that just 37% feel safe in their parks after dark¹ - overall just under a third (31%) said this about Bridge House Pond.

6. b) Overall, how safe do you feel when now when visiting or walking through Bridge House Pond?



The Council has additionally invested to upgrade the lighting in the car park and access route to Bridge House to LED lighting, replacing orange sodium-type fixtures with bright white light.

What is also clear is that although anti-social behaviour has reduced over the past year, some of the changes have led to perceptions of safety to alter in ways that weren't anticipated. Whereas in the past antisocial behaviour was concentrated in the car park and playground out of sight, many of the groups of young people were now gathering in the main park area near the pond, making them more visible, and nearer to where people have to walk past. The brighter lighting also means that they are easier to see.

“The changes look great, but sadly I feel this has attracted youths to hang out more. I have nothing against youths, but when they are hanging around smoking weed and sitting in the playground or on the walls it can feel intimidating and makes me feel uncomfortable walking past, day or night.”

“The problem is youths smoking drugs, and alcoholics on the bench, there is always so much rubbish there. The youths throw away the litter picker and were also vandalising the kids playground - i hope this has reduced with the perimeter fence. CCTV should be installed to tackle anti-social behaviour including, smoking drugs, excessive alcohol abuse, especially in such close proximity to the children in the playground.”

The Friends group have been liaising with the local police to increase patrols and identify ongoing issues, particularly over the winter months, and will continue to highlight this as a concern. Talking to the young people, one of the reasons that they chose to spend time in the park was because they felt safe there – and often congregate by the bench under the large cedar tree because it keeps off the rain– but for other park users their presence in large groups and activities made them more anxious.

¹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/uk/london/weekly-poll/8922945/Do-you-feel-safe-in-Londons-parks-and-open-spaces.html>

What made these changes possible?

The transformations in the park in the past five years have been significant, and to some extent, the park is unrecognisable from what it was before. There is still a long way to go to ensure that all issues are addressed, and that areas continue to be maintained and cared for. However, the following principles are key:

1. Spending time in the park

The more time you spend in the park, the more you understand it. Seeing how it is used at different times of day, understanding how the sun travels around the park and the shadows it casts during different times of year and seasons, understanding the sightlines and why groups gather in particular places is all vital information to gather. Often the Council employ external ‘experts’ to design changes, but these rarely have the depth of understanding that comes from spending extended time in the area.

There are easy ways of doing this – changing walking routes to include a daily (or twice daily if you are commuting) walk through the park allows you to monitor issues and identify any emerging issues. Holding regular clear ups and planting days, and ongoing activities such as watering or weeding can mean that there is a visible presence within the park. By being in the park for extended periods, it becomes possible to see trends, such as suspicious individuals, or possible drug dealing. It also powerfully communicates to park users that people care, and that they are putting effort in, and gives them additional reasons to respect the park.

2. Engaging with people and listening

This project is about connection, and without this nothing would be possible. Fundamentally, social media has undoubtedly played a key role in facilitating the establishment of the Friends group – the initial clear up in 2014 was motivated by long-running complaints on a local Feltham Facebook page, where everyone was agreed that ‘something needed to be done’. Combining this ‘virtual’ connection with established real-world connections – through members of the Feltham History Group- who understood the heritage and significance of the park and were motivated to help restore it and could see the vision.

Over the past five years, the Friends group have held a regular series of meetings – on average at least one AGM and an additional discussion meeting, as well as quarterly committee meetings. In addition, we engage with people through Facebook and Twitter, which have had hundreds of posts and discussions. We have undertaken online surveys. We also talk to people within the park -and is another reason that we hold regular community get-togethers and events. Importantly, informally asking park users their opinions and spending time in the park allows us to reach those who use the park and who might not be on social media.

The community litter picker is a good way to involve people in pro-social behaviours, and demonstrate to park users that their actions make a difference. Undertaking litter picks around groups who may have dropped litter also pricks their conscience and talking to them and reminding them to pick up litter can also help. Over time these conversations have extended into deeper conversations about why certain groups choose to spend time in the park, what they enjoy, and what they would like to see changed. These ‘appreciative inquiry’ techniques demonstrate that you care about their experience, and if over time you are able to show that you have listened by acting on their suggestions it can be very empowering. It also helps understand different groups perspectives – recognising that young people feel safe hanging out in the park and have few other options changes perceptions of them being the problem, to them having a problem of space where they belong.

The community masterplan for the site guides interventions, which has been widely shared. Any significant changes are discussed as widely as possible, and feedback sought through the committee and social media and informal conversations in the park. Normally this results in a clear coalescence of views, but may also highlight sensitivities and the need to ensure that all groups understand the changes that are taking place and why – sometimes people may be upset by a short-term change if they do not realise the issues behind them or the long-term vision. However, this is challenging if dates of works are not known in advance.

3. Funding enabled transformation and focused action

A lot can be done with very little. Clear ups, weeding and clearing takes very little resources and can make a significant impact. Over time the Friends group have received a range of funding, which means that we now have tools, litter pickers and other resources to enable our ongoing activities, and also insurance. We have also had funding which has paid for plants and seeds, and this is extremely cost-effective.

Over the past five years, we have secured funding from Hounslow Council, GLA/Mayor, OurSpace Fund, Heathrow Airport, Tesco as well as voluntary contributions from other groups, including reduced rates at local garden centres, free Easter Eggs from supermarkets, and a free #2minutelitterpick board.

In order to secure wider changes – particularly those that require infrastructure or capital expenditure, some budget is required. The process of getting a new fence for the playground took several years, including a petition, agreement of Council funding and then pushing implementation. Funding itself is not sufficient to lead to significant change, but it is very difficult to achieve without it. The table tennis table for example is the kind of project that the Council would not normally implement – it is on a challenging site, and is not currently part of a wider programme of work. External funding, and the deadline to spend the money within a certain timeframe helped focus attention and prioritise the changes within the Council.

4. Collaboration with other groups - sharing passions and energy

We are fortunate to have been able to work with a wide range of different groups, including creative arts, local voluntary groups, schools, residents' associations, businesses, environmental groups and many others. Most of this has been done on a voluntary basis, although occasionally external funding has paid for formal activities, or tied into wider projects. People have been willing to help as they recognise that this is a project that benefits everyone in the community, and supports their aims and connects them with different people.

PondFest would not have been possible without commitment from local residents, schools, the nearby Church and World Zoroastrian Organisation, and local groups turning up to participate and share. Over time these connections build new skills and experiences, change perceptions of what is possible, and develop a new culture. We have seen this over the past five years – when we started we were one of the first active Friends groups in the area, but now there are several, and we are working to support and develop them to achieve wider transformation, and benefit from mutual learning and experiences.

5. Vision, determination and fun

Securing change is hard work and requires perseverance. There are lots of times when it has felt deeply frustrating, and when progress has been slow or where it has felt like we are taking one step forward and two steps back. For example, when antisocial behaviour damages equipment or when people deliberately rip down posters in the park, or through things into the pond – including information boards, community litter pickers, or trolleys.

Having established structures and routines, and regular events helps. Little by little small changes can make a cumulative impact – simple things like clearing litter and cutting back overgrown areas to improve sightlines and planting bulbs have large payoffs in demonstrating to people positive change.

A clear vision, with core values helps focus what you are about and helps guide decisions. Determination is also required to make time for meetings, check details and keep going when you are feeling exhausted. Once you have invested significant time and energy in a project, it is almost natural to want to see it through to completion, but it is also important to have fun and to see the benefits and payoffs from improvements to avoid burnout.

Community clear ups, planting activities and other activities are mostly very rewarding – being out in the fresh air, meeting new people, in a beautiful setting and making a visible difference is very important. The ability to see the difference that changes have made is very motivating, and feel that you have been part of it – for example seeing daffodils that you planted return year after year is very satisfying. Learning new skills from others and connecting with different age groups and backgrounds is enjoyable and new connections create new possibilities and open up fun opportunities and experiences. Conversely, when participation stops being fun motivation drops and progress becomes challenging. Like a snowball, positive energy and momentum can grow and generate its own path.

What has been learnt so far

Change is never straight forward. Overall, the changes are having a cumulative positive impact on the park. Some of the challenges will fade over time, and with ongoing care and focus can be overcome.

From antisocial behaviour to prosocial behaviour: Simple changes with a big payback

Many of the issues with antisocial behaviour in parks are symptoms of wider issues. It is well known that improving sightlines, increasing park use and addressing issues such as litter and graffiti can lead to positive change.² In addition, demarking the playground with a fence caused a physical barrier, and combined with enforcement and engagement has so far led to a significant reduction in losses through damage. As described above, increasing community use of the space, providing new facilities to attract new groups to the park, and giving people positive things to do and engage with has helped reduce mindless damage caused by people who felt like no-one cared.

“We have found that there is a lot less damage to the playground in the past 6 months since the fence was put around it. We were worried that new equipment might attract antisocial behaviour, but the opposite has been the case” Greenspace 360 / Hounslow Council*

You can't please everyone, but you must mitigate impacts and manage expectations

It is clear that there are often trade-offs when considering changes. For example, some people value the peace, and solitude of the area, while others want spaces to play with their children, and young people also enjoy having music playing when they are meeting together. In a small space these present potential conflicts.

One of the things that masterplan that the Friends have put together aims to do is connect spaces, but also create different zones and add value to different areas. These can potentially have multiple uses, and have different characters depending on the time of day or those using it.

² E.g. <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/f768428a39aa4035ae55b2aaff372617/park-safety.pdf>
<https://www.pps.org/article/what-role-can-design-play-in-creating-safer-parks>

It was clear from conversations with stakeholders that although there was provision for very young children, there was little designed with young people in mind. Adding a table tennis table in a space that was previously inaccessible provides a new feature and helps re-imagine this space as one where they feel welcome. However, now that they sit on one of the benches within the park itself many people have commented that they feel intimidated by them. One possible option would be to provide a separate covered area near the grass area so that they had their own dedicated space away from park users, or seating in this area. However, to ensure passive surveillance, it would be important that this is open and within clear sightlines of the road. The risk would be by increasing provision that it could attract even more people into the space and create new challenges. This can be mitigated by working with other stakeholders to ensure provision in other areas is also increased, and that designs plan and prevent future issues.

*“We hang out here because we feel safe here. Although some of my friends sometimes drop litter, we now tell them to pick it up and try to look after the area” Young Person**

One other issue that was anticipated was that there would be disruption when plants and foliage was removed, and so the aim was to ensure that this would be re-planted as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, this did not happen, and instead a lack of communication meant that some stakeholders were upset, causing further problems and delays. These are addressed below

Council capacity and communication across multiple stakeholders

Agreeing and actioning changes takes time, particularly when there are multiple stakeholders involved. Because Greenspace360 replaced Carillion at short notice when the company was liquidated in 2018, it took time for the Council to establish new ways of working – such as the relationship between this new organisation and Council staff – these were still bedding down in early 2019. In addition, a new Council-employed Parks Projects Manager started, who was responsible for managing multiple projects, including a backlog of delayed projects and ones which were higher political priorities. The Council worked hard to overcome these challenges and more recently have supported this project as a priority with additional resources and regular communication and implementation.

All this is to say is that the process was not as straightforward as anticipated, but this is the reality of any project. There have been challenges in areas where the parks team made changes to the proposals developed by the Friends group. In summary, establishing ways of working and maintaining trust are not always easy, but important. On reflection, this process of learning to work together has helped make this project a success. The Council have recognised the great value this project had for the community and the need to support the Friends group, which they see as a critical and fantastic asset for the community, the open space and its development, and likewise the Friends group appreciate the ongoing support of the Council.

Agree details in writing, update regularly and look for opportunities to involve

One challenge was arranging and agreeing decisions, which would typically involve multiple stakeholders meeting on site and talking through the options. On a number of occasions changes were subsequently implemented which were not in line with the discussions that had taken place. For example, trees were planted in different locations, and more trees were removed than agreed. On some occasions, the Friends group only found out that changes were taking place by seeing the contractors on site, with no notice or ability to supervise. We believe that there are multiple benefits from involving community groups in the planning and planting of the site – including increased ‘ownership’ and ongoing informal care and maintenance of areas, as well as saving costs on contractors. Where simple tasks can be carried out cost-effectively by the community, and there is a desire to do so, we feel this should be prioritised.

Getting the details right adds value

Councils and their contractors manage a wide variety of sites and inevitably can't know the area as well as Friends groups or residents who spend a lot of time in the park. A good concept poorly implemented can result in failure. For example, one comment was that there are many other table tennis tables that have been put in other local parks which are not well used. However, it is clear that location matters, and understanding demand. The fact that the table tennis table is visible from the road means that it attracts people to come and use it, and it is also near enough to houses that people can independently walk there with equipment. Already we have seen large numbers of people using the table tennis table, including drawing new users into the park.

"We love going to the park, love it's a community project and seeing the veggies and plants growing. Now the trees have been thinned out it feels safer. Good to have table tennis for old children."

However, there were challenges in delivering the table tennis table, which has been located on sloping ground, which needed to be levelled and the gradients adjusted. Although a solution was agreed, the staff digging out and levelling the base added in more materials than were needed, and so the base level was precariously high, and the slopes approaching it would have been potentially dangerous. The Friends group questioned this and asked for the work to be halted and adjusted. At the time, this seemed like a lot of additional work and delays. However, the end result was worth it. The alternative where some users might have had to adjust how they used it would have resulted in fewer users and loss of value. There was some short-term cost, but the long-term benefits are well worth getting the details right.

Next steps

Clearly this is an ongoing project, and there are still further stages of changes across other areas of the park to be managed and implemented. It is important to continue to build trust and ensure mutual benefits between those tasked with completing tasks and the community going forward. We hope by codifying these lessons and experiences it will help us going forward, and we can find constructive ways to maximise the benefits going forward.

Some of the areas highlighted by the survey as areas to address going forward include: a café and toilets, a noticeboard, more bins, dealing with dog poo on the grass areas, more bins, drinks cans/bottles, exercise equipment / more play equipment. Many of these are planned going forward. The fact that dog poo was mentioned so many times means that we will now consider what additional steps can be made on this.

Note on evaluation

The survey was designed by the Friends of Bridge House Pond, in collaboration with the South West London Environment Network (SWLEN). The survey was circulated primarily on social media – Facebook, Twitter, Next Door and Whats App in a variety of local groups, and asking people to pass them on to other relevant stakeholders. Because of the Coronavirus pandemic, it wasn't possible to put posters in the park, and people were no longer able to use the playground and table tennis table. This therefore relied a lot on recall, and we may not have reached all groups – although we tried hard to do this.

The evaluation report was written by the Friends of Bridge House Pond, and checked by SWLEN against the findings of the survey, in order to verify the findings. This approach offered better value than SWLEN attempting to complete the whole report – any savings from this approach is invested in the park.

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