



# Friends of Wimbledon Park

## Wimbledon Fortnight 2023

This year Wimbledon Fortnight (AELTC) had many problems including a huge lack of toilets. This was discussed at the FOWP Forum on July 18<sup>th</sup> at some length. After discussion the following questions with comments:

- 1) What areas did AELTC hire?
  - a. This appeared to be the Great Field, and some said the Old Bowling Green as well. This needs clarification.
- 2) Who is in charge?
  - a. It seems logical that AELTC oversee the areas they hired but they are also present at entrances. Clarification required.
- 3) What is AELTC's relationship with idverde?
  - a. A named person from AELTC and idverde should be available.
- 4) Who monitors the entrances?
  - a. When steward is present then AELTC but when absent does this fall to idverde and what is the handover procedure?
- 5) Procedure for setting up for the anticipated capacity?
  - a. The huge lack of toilets indicates a lack of competence in capacity planning, and this needs rectifying. Industry standard metrics (festival industry and portals industry) indicate around 10 toilets PLUS urinals per 1,000 people - more than 10 times what AELTC / Merton originally provided. (Estimates of 12000 people on day 1).
- 6) Procedure for dismantling and ground and other damage repairs?
  - a. This seems to have worked well with quick repairing of the ground. However, this area is fenced off until September to allow grass to grow.

### Car parking

Last year FOWP requested that car parking in the public park during Wimbledon Fortnight should cease. The request was made to LBM and to AELTC. We received no reply from either organisation. It is repeated that car parking should be removed from the public park as this is of no benefit to visitors, and it displaces their activities (e.g. Junior Park run). AELTC have 30ha on which they can park cars and they failed to use the golf club car park.

- 1) AELTC said the aim was to cease after 2026.
- 2) Please remove the car park from the public section of Wimbledon Park from 2024.

### Camping and queue

This was discussed, and the majority view was that this should also be relocated away from the public park. This item to be raised with both AELTC and LBM. The following issues were noted:

- 1) Queuers using the toilet by the playground with a lot of park users complaining about the long toilet queue - especially parents with little kids who are using the playground and splash pool.
- 2) Stewards using the toilets by the playground.
- 3) Women's using men's toilet - park support advised that is not acceptable, but the people didn't respect their advice.
- 4) Stewards were giving information to queuers to use the toilet by the playground.
- 5) People camping out of the lines, especially near the lake.
  - a. Stewards were told but they didn't get involved in this situation and it was reported to the security team.
- 6) Bikes and chairs blocked the footpath by the athletics track.
- 7) Poor toilet signs generally.
  - a. Signage to the toilets by the Wimbledon Park Road car park was poor and they were badly located.
- 8) A lot of people urinating in the bushes and under the trees. Also, evidence of people defecating



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which is even more of a public health risk and extremely unpleasant.

- 9) The flowerbed in front of the Revelstoke Road car park was destroyed by toilet queue users.
- 10) The cross area in front of Wimbledon Park Road gates was blocked many times and causing problems for the runners and walkers.
- 11) The Revelstoke Road barrier was sometimes left unattended.
- 12) Loose bin bags for the campers were still tied to wooden posts long after the queues had gone.
  - a. This is a danger to dogs.

## **A visitor comment reflected the situation:**

- a) *Today I was walking our dog in Wimbledon Park when I noticed a steady stream of people emerging from Horse Close Wood having used the woods as a toilet. I spotted 7 in the space of 3 or 4 minutes.*
- b) *When I challenged one man, he said there was a 45 minute wait for the portaloos. I understand there were 12,000 people in the park this morning with the gates closed to new queuers at 2.00pm.*
- c) *A Steward said I was not the first local resident to complain. When I remonstrated with another Steward, I was told it was nothing to do with AELTC as it's a police matter because of it being a public order offence.*
- d) *I have been in touch with the police and found out that it's AELTC and Merton BC's responsibility to ensure adequate toilet facilities for this event. Clearly today it was not adequate, so I have written to AELTC to request two things:*
  - a. *Industry standard metrics suggest 80 toilets plus additional urinals are needed for a crowd of 7,000 people. There were estimates of around 12,000 queueing in the park at one point yesterday (5/7/23).*

This is very worrying as the paths through woods and the glade are used by walkers and nursery school children, so thereby is a real public health risk, as well as being extremely unpleasant for other uses of the woods and park. Horse Close Wood is also a beautiful but fragile environment, being remaining old woodland and with important nature, including rare plants, bats, birds, and insects.

Lack of preparation by the organiser led to AELTC's guests behaving badly. Many are saying that the queue should also be relocated.

Finally, AELTC need to take responsibility for the site. Transgressions such as camping in the park on the Saturday (when it should have started on Sunday), camping by the lake, and using public spaces as toilets are totally unacceptable.

Can AELTC and LBM provide a good reason why camping should continue in the public park?

Dr N R Steiner  
Chair Friends of Wimbledon Park



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## Event spaces

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-culture/outdoor-venues-event-hire/wimbledon-park-event-hire>

Event space 1 Athletics stadium (7973m<sup>2</sup> or 0.8ha)

Event space 2 Courts 11-20 (5477m<sup>2</sup> or 0.55ha)

Event space 3 Old Bowling Green area (1713m<sup>2</sup> or 0.17ha)

Event space 4 Great Field (72085m<sup>2</sup> or 7.2ha)

Event space 5 Lakeside (2457m<sup>2</sup> or 0.25ha)



## In relation to this our approach should be:

- **Community consultation should be an accepted process.**
- **No damage to biodiversity (including soil biodiversity)**
- **Grass and other spoliation to be returned to good condition on completion of event.**
- **Vistas should not be obscured.**
- **Wimbledon Park café shouldn't be disadvantaged.**
- **We should agree the number of events each year. Currently 8 but more are suddenly appearing without consultation.**