

FRIENDS OF EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS  
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2026 AT 11.15AM

The meeting commenced at 11.20am

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Gill Peters, Steve Place, Sue Place, Gerry Edwards, Tony Swan, Liz Gambier, Paul Lake, Christine Lake, Keith Barnard

PRESENT

Sue Smales, Sue Burne, Christine Gregory, Philip Toms, Susan Toms, Margaret Ray, Audrey Newell, Catherine Dann, Kay Rowlands, Linda Furnell, Cliff Pattenden, Owen McDermott, Mark Lemon, Rosemary Bucksey, Charmian Baker, Richard Doughty, Malcolm Penny, Chris Groom, Joan Butfield, Irene Groom, Denise Read, Jo Oliver, Sue Francis, Christine Connelly

TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM

Approved - RD; seconded CG

MATTERS ARISING

None

TREASURERS' REPORT - MP FOR KB

As the AGM is being held in May this year rather than October/ November I will go through all the events that we have held during the financial year so that you can see how much income is generated from them.

Book, Craft and Plant sale held on 10th May 2025. Total sales £1,084-55.

Scaled down Summer Picnic 7th June 2025. Main event cancelled due to poor weather forecast. Income after expenditure £1,271-19. Expenditure was minimal £140-00 due to the event being cancelled, but monies from Craft, Book Sales, Plants, Raffle, Cakes and Estate Agents boards saved the day. Comparing it with the previous year's takings were down £1,700-00 on the day.

Book and Craft sales 12th July made £168-60.

Book and Publication sales 9th August raised £166-00.

Heritage Day and Classic car show 14th September 2025 raised £2,223-00. £1,401-00 after expenditure which included a £400-00 donation from the car entry fee split between Hillingdon Brain Tumour and ADHD charities, other expenditure was for the Band and First Aid cover.

Book and Publication sale 25th October 2025 made £202-00.

Tree Dressing 29th November 2025 Income after expenditure £240-70.

Book, Craft and Plant sale 11th April 2026 raised £603-80. Our financial year ends on the 30th April.

Also, for information, the major expense this financial year have been:-

(a) £2119-00 for paths in the Old Orchard and in the vicinity of the Dovecote.

(b) Purchase of Plants and Jubilee Orchard Trees £1,100-00

(c) Wood for Potting table £463-00.

(d) London in Bloom Entry £335-00.

For budgeting purposes I allow:-

(a) £300-00 for Teas/Coffee and Biscuits.

(b) £250-00 for Tool Insurance.

(c) £100-00 Maintaining the Web site.

(d) £300-00 Replacement of Tools.

Income and Expenditure Account Attached below.

#### QUERIES

RD queried the cost of £200. for insurance for tools. MP explained that this was because the tools, although secure, were left in an unattended building. ML stated that their premium for tools for his organisation was high for this same reason.

MP - We had been using Nat. West Bank in Eastcote but the branch has now closed. However, KB can pay the proceeds from the events at the Post Office. Otherwise, it would mean a visit to a branch, the nearest ones being Harrow or Uxbridge.

KB has now signed up for bank transfers to be made to our account and MP and CG will sign up in due course.

#### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT- CG

It is hoped that this AGM will be shorter than previous AGM's. At the AGM last November, we agreed to move the AGM to the month after the end of the financial year, that is to this May. At the AGM last November we reported on many of the main happenings of 2025, and we do not intend to repeat those reports today so on some of the agenda items there will be a reduced report or no report.

However, I give no apology for repeating some things I said last November. I could never have managed over the last year without your fantastic Committee and the many members of the Friends who have worked so hard throughout the year to make The Gardens such a resounding success. Some of you will not realize how much work goes on behind the scenes to keep Eastcote House Gardens at such a high standard. To all your excellent Committee and wonderful volunteers, we cannot thank you all enough for the exceptional work you have all carried out during the last year, and for some of you, for many years.

The only report of an event is the Tree Dressing which we will hear in a minute. I just want to give a huge thank you to Christine and Paul Lake for a brilliantly planned and organized event.

Now for some more general matters possibly not covered in other reports

Thanks to Paul Lake, again, for his organization of the 2027 calendars and to FEHG members who submitted some excellent photos. Don't forget we will need photos for the 2028 edition which will soon be on the drawing board. Please be out and about the gardens with your cameras.

As mentioned in previous years, the serving of treats at break times is an important task and these are much appreciated by us all, a good cuppa, biscuits and gossip are enjoyed by everybody. To our 'Tea ladies' Margaret and Audrey, I am sorry if we do not say thank you often enough but we do greatly appreciate you both.

Just a note before I finish to record our spreading fame, after making the cover of Country Life, we have started to appear in a number of London and National publications and websites and more recently the walled garden has been appearing as a background to the BBC weather. Fame!

In finishing I must once again thank everyone for their support throughout the year; keeping our wonderful gardens at a standard of which we can all be proud.

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT - CD

As our A.G.M. is earlier this year there are obviously less months to look back on.

But that makes no difference to my observations of a successful Group of Volunteers.

It is about your commitment and achievements at Eastcote House Gardens every week of the year regardless of the weather conditions.

Whilst looking after the gardens you are also involved in several much larger events here.

They require a lot of your time and effort, and they are very successful and provide events for so many people to come along to and enjoy.

Each year you are successful in receiving many Awards for your gardening and I congratulate you all on those achievements.

Thank you for allowing me to be your President.

Chris as Chairman of the Friends of Eastcote House Gardens and to all of the Committee and Volunteers thank you for all of your hard work.

## TREE DRESSING 2025 - CG FOR PL

This year's event was a great success. We welcomed choirs from four local schools – Warrender Primary, Coteford Infants, Lady Bankes Primary and Newnham Infants – which ensured an excellent turnout of parents and families. We also hosted a small group of children from Breakspear School's gardening club.

Our guest of honour was the Worshipful the Mayor of Hillingdon, Cllr Philip Corthorne. Accompanied by the President of the Friends of Eastcote House Gardens, Catherine Dann, he led the dressing of the tree.

In the Stables, guests enjoyed tea, coffee and cakes. Other activities – including a raffle, a craft sale and a Teddy Bear Hunt – ensured there was plenty for everyone to do. In addition, we welcomed Hannah le Good, Education Officer for the London Borough of Hillingdon, who ran a bauble-making stall for the children.

We owe many thanks to everyone who helped before, during and after the event to make it such a success: our tea stall helpers, our talented team of crafters, raffle sellers, Teddy Bear Hunt organisers and outdoor stewards – plus Audrey, who took care of the baubles and table decorations.

Each year we present the Hinman Shield – named for George and Margaret Hinman, who saved Eastcote House Gardens and Long Meadow from development in the 1930s – to celebrate young people's involvement in community work. This year, the shield was awarded to Coteford Infant School.

Once more, our historic yew tree was adorned with hundreds of Christmas decorations, adding a festive air to the Gardens.

Organisation for this year's Tree-Dressing (Saturday 28th November) will begin in September.

## SUMMER FETE AND PICNIC 2026 ORGANISATION REPORT- CG

With the help of so many the planning for the Summer Fete and Picnic on 6th June is coming together.

Very little, in the format, has changed from last year except we have found room for a couple more stalls (we wish we had room for more as some latecomers have been turned away) and we have also added a spot for dance troop in the entertainment.

When I say nothing very little has changed let's hope we have much more luck with the weather this year.

If there is anyone who has not volunteered yet who could help on the Friday evening or on the Saturday please contact Christine Lake. All help gratefully received.

LF asked if we were paying for first aid. CG informed the meeting that we were donating £75. to St.John's Ambulance.

## HERITAGE DAY AND CLASSIC CAR 2026 - ORGANISATION REPORT - ST.

Simply Gray booked for 3 sessions.

First aid to be provided by St. Johns Ambulance Brigade.(to confirm nearer the date)

Community shield recipient to be decided

Community shield to be presented by David Simmonds MP as Mayors not available.

British Legion and Sally and Dave Peters have been invited.

We have agreed that Centre for ADHD and Autism Support and Michael Sobell Hospice will be the two local charities to receive the proceeds from the classic car registration fee. Both these groups will have a stall on the day as well.

Harrow Car Club have offered to help Keith with stewarding cars and collecting the fee on the day.

The registration fee will be £10.? this year.

This year car owners will have to register to enter beforehand on the Friends' website. They will be given a registration number, which need to bring with them which should make it easier to manage on the day. Cars will not be allowed on site if they have not registered.

JB asked for nominations for the Community Shield.

## GARDENING/PLANT SALES/LONDON IN BLOOM UPDATE - JO

The gardening update is going short and sweet, as it covers the winter months and early cold Spring.

In terms of gardening, we have started to replace the box in the topiary bed, unfortunately the caterpillar is back with a vengeance. Replacement has been put on hold due to the very dry weather; we may have to wait until the Autumn to complete.

With the help of Jerry we have pruned the trees in the new orchard and replaced 3 trees.

Our plant sales to date have been successful, we now look very professional due to the brilliant new tables made by Mark and Tony. Our thanks go to them both.

Thank you for your contributions to the plant sales our next sale is at the Picnic, any plants will be gratefully received.

London in Bloom judging will be here before we know it, as last year we will introduce an extra gardening day starting next week. By doing this hopefully we will maintain our high standards and achieve gold.

Although not strictly gardening, we need as many donations of cake for the Picnic, as last year we ran out and had to make an emergency dash!

Lastly as ever we could not keep the garden looking beautiful without the help of all our volunteers, so a big thank you goes to you all.

#### WEBSITE - CG FOR PL

Using the absence of complaints as my benchmark, I believe the website is functioning well. I endeavour to keep the content up to date (chiefly posters for forthcoming events and post-event photos, reports, etc.). Our website manager and IT guru is Dave Kidner (gxcomputers.co.uk), who continues to offer prompt support in removing obsolete messages and uploading new content.

As the committee is aware, Dave offers his time and effort at no cost. His charges for this year were just £70.00, which consisted of £30.00 to renew our domain name and £40.00 towards Dave's annual hosting fees (no increase for the third year running). As a token of the Committee's gratitude to Dave, we have given him a gift of wine (to the value of £30.00).

#### Monthly numbers

November 2025 – March 2026

Web traffic is healthy, but naturally fluctuates throughout the year – this review only covers the coldest months, when clicks on the website are at their lowest:

- Total clicks – 2419
- December recorded the fewest clicks – 315
- March recorded the most - 717

#### Pages

- The vast majority of clicks are for the Homepage (75%)
- The Diary Dates tab consistently scores second highest (11%)
- Next comes the Contacting Us tab in the Information section (7%)
- These 3 pages score the highest totals every month – this means that none of the other content on the site achieves more than the occasional click

#### Devices used

- The vast majority of visitors access the website on their phones – 74%
- Next come desktop PCs – 22%
- Finally tablets – just 4%

#### Overseas interest

Over the period, the website has had visits from the following countries:

USA – 7

India – 2

Switzerland – 2

Argentina – 2

Italy – 2


France – 2

Spain – 2

UAE – 2

#### Our social media presence

Thanks to a great deal of work by our friends Simon and Jo Norbury, we now have pages on both Facebook and Instagram – if you are active on either of these, just search Eastcote House Gardens Volunteers. These pages are another excellent way of keeping the public informed about forthcoming events. As of 14th May, we have 95 followers on Instagram and 532 friends on Facebook!

N.B.: If you go onto either of these pages and “like” the entries , they will magically be promoted more widely to others.

## BOOK AND CRAFT GROUP - SS

We held six craft and seven book sales, starting in April and ending in October.

### Book sales report

As usual, we started the year by refreshing the books. The relatively few which were past their best were recycled, others which had remained unsold after a year were gradually moved on to charity shops. This created space for the several large donations of books which arrived during March, in good condition and covering a wide range of subjects. Science books do well. I think our sales are so popular because we have such a wide range. For example, five books on clock repairs and restoration were snapped up within the first hour by a local person with a keen interest. We have many familiar faces at each sale as well as people who have just discovered us.

Our books sales are held each month from April to October.

In April we took £112.80 and in May £159.20 so £272 so far this year.

My thanks to everyone who supports us by donating or buying books, to Sue Francis who helps with the sorting, and to Margaret Ray and Dave Plummer for the sales.

### Craft Group report

The craft stall raised £72.75 at the Tree Dressing event at the end of November. Our first sale this year in April raised £60.65 and we took £69 in May.

Having lost two prolific crafters last year, we have fewer items to offer for sale and so instead of holding sales every month this year we are holding them on the same dates as the plant sales, so April, May, June and September and there will also be a stall at the Tree Dressing event.

Our current membership is 15. Craft sessions are always more well attended during the colder months so this year we will not be meeting during July and August.

I am in the process of updating the craft web page, which I admit is seriously out of date, and advertising for new members.

My thanks, as always, goes to the talented crafters who have created so many beautiful items, to those who help with the sales, and to everyone who supports the Gardens with their purchases.

ML informed the meeting that when an elderly lady in NWH died, she left a lot of Jewish War Books which we passed on to the Jewish Community Library at Stanmore Synagogue. SS said she never minds books being passed on to other community groups.

## REAL ALE CLUB - CG FOR TB

My apology's once again for not being able to attend the AGM due to another engagement but I am pleased to present this report on our activities over the last 6 months since the November 2025 AGM.

Now in its 9th year the Real Ale Club remains a popular and enjoyable opportunity for FEHG's Volunteers, supporters and their families to meet socially and enjoy an evening of conversation and humour.

The format for our evening meeting remains unchanged; we gather at a previously agreed venue on the 1st Thursday of every month. The events are very informal, there is no commitment to attend every meeting and you don't even have to drink real ale. You can arrive and leave early or late depending on your personal circumstances and you are not expected to contribute to 'whips' or buy a 'round'. However, the evening does provide you with the opportunity to participate in pleasant and diverse conversation and usually have a few good laughs!

Since November 2025 we have enjoyed the hospitality of the following venues: Coach & Horses, Ickenham (twice), The Woodman (both Joel Street and Breakspear Road), The Case is Altered and The Queens Head, Pinner. For our January meeting we were invited to enjoy the hospitality of Chris Horsburgh home, which was once again a lovely evening – thank you Chris and Elizabeth.

For our next meeting, on 4th June 2026, we are going to be a bit more adventurous and travel slightly further afield for the first time. Our plan is to visit The Old Shepherd PH, Chorleywood, which comes highly recommended by one of our members. It's only a short trip on the Metropolitan Line to Chorley Wood and then an 8 min walk. Its description on Instagram reads "an 18th-century gem with real character. From open fires and a lovely garden to seasonal menus and great wines, we've got cosy covered". Sounds lovely, so I for one am looking forward to it.

If any volunteers or supporters of Eastcote House Gardens and/or their partners would like to join us at future meetings then please get in touch and ask to be included in the email distribution list

#### BOOK READING CLUB - CG FOR TB

Please accept my apologies for not attending due to another commitment, although Rosemary is planning to attend. In any event, please accept this written report for the Book Group.

It's hard to believe, but from my records the FEHG Book Group has been running for 14yrs and we continue to meet in one of our homes on the 1st Tuesday of each month to discuss the book provided to read during the previous month.

The staff at Eastcote Library continue to provide us with an excellent service, and usually manage to ensure we have our next book available when needed.

Since November 2025 we have reviewed 6 books covering a varied mix of genres, including historical fiction and personal memoirs. Each one usually receiving a varied response and wide range of opinions from "excellent" to "why did I bother!"

Each meeting usually starting and finishing with a general discussion on local or national news, recommendations for TV and film viewings, as well as enjoying the excellent refreshments provided by each member at their respective home.

#### FIRST AID/DEFIBRILLATOR - CG FOR CL

First Aid - All three first aid boxes in the gardeners' Cabin were checked on 15.5.2026.

I think we would all agree that the attendance of qualified external first aiders at public FEHG events is very reassuring.

Defibrillator - the last quarterly defibrillator check was on 05.03.2026 and all was well.

#### DOVECOTE OPENING - ST

The dovecote has been opened twice in 2026. In April 67 people visited and in May there were 44 visitors. These numbers justified opening the dovecote when we had the plant sales. The children liked the potence and seeing how it worked.

ST queried whether, when the craft group isn't in the Stables, should the publications be moved to the dovecote. CG stated that the stables was already booked for July and August.

ST said that when she opened the dovecote in May, there was a pile of what looked like sawdust on the floor from the beams above. CG agreed this was probably woodworm although due to the height it was impossible to see properly.

CG has written to the Council, siting this problem together with a list of outstanding repairs but has had no response. CG will contact again next week.

ST thanked all the volunteers for their help during the year.

#### EHS FLOWER SHOWS

The first Eastcote Horticultural show was held on Saturday 14th March 2026. On a bright spring day the FEHG show team entered 77 exhibits covering many daffodil classes along with tulips, primulas, heathers, flowering shrubs and all round flower arrangements. This was the highest number of entries ever submitted.

This resulted in :

1st x 13

2nd x 16

3rd x 18

Highly commended x 1 (Total 48 awards)

We were also awarded two cups :The J S Ranger cup for the highest points in daffodils. The W E Evans Memorial cup for the Best Exhibit in Class 30 which is 3 vases, 3 blooms each, 3 cultivars (one cultivar in each vase)plus a Gold Medal Diploma for the Highest points in other horticultural section.

The show was attended by the Mayor of Hillingdon, Cllr Philip Corthorne who was amazed at the large variety of different daffodils.

I would like to thank the team of Jane Neave, Linda Furnell and Rosemary Bucksey for picking on Friday and exhibiting on the Saturday.

The summer show is on Saturday 13th June.

#### OUTDOOR CLASSROOM - CG

FEHG have a healthy bank balance and over the years have been looking for a good community project to spend some of the money on.

One of the ideas was to improve the outdoor classroom where educational visits are held. After the success of Forest Schools it was thought worth considering improving the outdoor classroom area which currently has a few old log stumps acting as seats. It is very well used by school groups and we have 90 pupils coming in June. Several contractors were spoken to and the Wildwood Company's design was thought to be suitable for our requirements at a cost of just over £9,000.

The proposal has been submitted to the Council. We have made a request for monies from the Ward Budget, which we received in 2008, 2010 and 2012. However, the ward budget does not exist anymore. We do have the money; we accumulate monies each year from our events and we could use it for a community event such as this.

CG asked if there were any objections - of which there were none.

#### ANY OTHER REPORTS

There were no new reports for Publications, Long Meadow Insect/Butterfly, Hinman Shield/Community Shield.

#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 2026/27

The following officers agreed to stand for re-election; there were no new applications for committee members

##### Officers

President	Catherine Dann
Chairman	Chris Groom
Deputy Chairman	Malcolm Penny
Treasurer	Keith Barnard
Secretary	Joan Butfield

##### Committee Members

Jo Oliver	Head Gardener
Sue Place	
Tony Swan	
Sue Smales	
Paul Lake	
Christine Lake	
Susan Toms	
Denise Read	

##### Other Roles

Hon. Auditor	Steve Dunn
Advisor	Gerry Edwards
Council Liaison Officers	Joshua Wallington, Green Spaces, Fiona Sweet, Museums and Historic Buildings

By Invitation Cllr. Nick Denys

##### AOB

JB asked if notices could be put around asking dog owners to pick up after their dogs. ML suggested having a map showing where bins were. JB to action

The meeting ended at 12.25pm.

**FRIENDS OF EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP.**

**Income and Expenditure Account for year ending 30th April 2026.**

	<b>2026.</b>	<b>2025.</b>
		£
<b>INCOME.</b>		
Supporters and Donations.	550.	641.
Publications and Calendars.	850.	1,821.
2025 Summer Picnic	1271	2015
Plant,Craft & BookSales.	2,223.	1,124.
Heritage Day.	1,401.	943.
Tree Dressing/Other.	340.	612.
<b>Total.</b>	<b>6,635.</b>	<b>7,156.</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE.</b>		
Plants/Trees	1,100.	1,222
Tools and Equipment	675.	836
Publications.	600.	412
London in Bloom Entry.	335.	325
Ground Works.	2,582.	805.
Other.	745.	3,072.
<b>Total.</b>	<b>6,037.</b>	<b>6,242</b>
 <b>Surplus income over expenditure</b>	 <b>598</b>	 <b>984.</b>

**Balance Sheet as at 30th April 2026.**

Cash at Bank.	
Current Account.	<b>15,535</b>
Savings Account.	<b>5,235</b>

K. Barnard,  
Treasurer.