

## **Project Update: August 2016**

This project continues on the work of the Rufford Small Grant with three main objectives:

- To advocate for City Park to continue to exist for the benefit, enjoyment and learning of urban residents and visitors;
- To further develop people's active pursuit and experience of nature; and
- To further grow the number of friends that support the cause to save City Park.

### **Protection of land**

Most of the effort of the project thus far has been taken up by actions and activities for the protection of City Park's land—they have taken precedent as issues piled up and as we have worked to mitigate the threats.

One party challenged in court, in the latter half of 2015, the decision by the National Lands Commission (revoking titles to parcels of land given to private entities) with success (<http://kenyalaw.org/caselaw/cases/view/114880/>). They won on the argument that they did not get 'proper' notification from the National Land Commission (NLC) and therefore did not get a chance to defend themselves. (City Park was among the first reviews of the newly formed National Lands Commission.)

We've rallied the NLC on the options they have at this point one of which being to repeat the process (involving inviting the concerned party to a fresh hearing). This decision was agreed and planned, but is yet to take place.

One of the pending land matters, not included in the list of parcels revoked, is the area of the park that includes the maze. The hedge maze, for which we have great concern, is physically an extensive labyrinth of kai-apple trees designed out of an old quarry in the 1940s. It has been in use for more than 70 years by many thousands of park visitors, and - when it was better maintained - has one of their most memorable experiences of the park. The public continues to access the maze as part of City Park. We have appealed time and again to have the maze and adjoining green areas officially reverted back to the park.

As a result the National Land Commission requested the Land Administration to make enquiry as to the maze strip ownership. This was done and the parties claiming ownership responded to the NLC queries. To their response we have pointed out the lack of clarity, requested more details on the subdivisions, and pointed to the fact that the public continues to utilise the maze as part of the City Park experience. This matter is pending further action by the NLC.

With these in play the commission also received an appeal from two other parties (their alleged parcels having been revoked in the NLCs earlier ruling). Their request was for the commission to reconsider their decision on the bases that the commissioners may not have known of the 'public' nature of the projects they intend for the said parcels. That is, though the proposed projects are not in keeping with the park use, they should nevertheless be allowed, as they will be to the benefit of the public.

The Friends of City Park were subsequently invited to appear for a hearing on the same, the date of which was revised twice. But finally we were able to make our case in defense of the park on 8th July 2016.

We reminded the commissioners that said parcels overlap the primary title L.R. No. 209/6559 (City Park). We also reminded the commissioners that the purpose of City Park is that of providing a recreation green space for the millions of people that live in Nairobi. It receives visitors from far flung high density neighbourhoods of the city—an indication of the current lack of green spaces in the city. Also, we indicated our support for a proposal for providing greater protection for the park. (The commission has not communicated a decision regarding the 'public' projects appeal.)

This last point (of providing greater protection for the park) is especially welcome as encroachments as seen in the lease of a section of the park for road access to an adjacent building is truly worrying. This has resulted in a permanent wall being built and the area rendered inaccessible to others, especially commuters who used that entrance point. We have written severally to the Nairobi County in this regard including an open letter to the Governor <http://bit.ly/1l8HBzu>. We continue to follow up on this matter.

### **Growing people's experience of nature**

Developments with the pollinator garden had been stalled by use of the same area by the parks administration to house their growing potted ceremonial plant collection. After some negotiation weighing the options, we agreed that with the provision of materials (chainlink, shed netting, poles) the park would look for an alternative space and their own staff would erect a shed. We bought the required materials and park staff put up a new shed to house their ceremonial plant collection. Most of these have now been removed from the pollinator garden. This has freed up the Boscowan collection area for work on the pollinator garden.

With volunteer help and the support of staff of the National Museums we have been identifying the garden plants. Plants samples were collected for identification, which were also pressed so as to be of use at a later time.

The flowers include *Acalypha racemosa*, *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Plectranthus edulis*, *Dyschoriste thunbergii* flora, *Carrisa spinarum*, *Achyranthes aspera*, *Tinnea aethiopica* and those showing in the attached collage: (clockwise) *Pentas schimperiana*, *Cuphea micropetala*, *Thunbergia holstii*, *Hypoestes aristata*, *Pentas laceolata*, *Salvia* sp.

### **Growing the number of Friend supporters**

We work on the website ([friendsofcitypark.org](http://friendsofcitypark.org)) to ensure it stays attractive and functional and we maintain it so that it works efficiently. It has been a very effective tool for awareness and communication whenever needed, with friends, other stakeholders and the press. But we'll be putting more effort to its promotion so as to increase visitors to the site.

Our mailing list is now at over 250 persons, and some of these have been won over from our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/CityParkFriends](http://www.facebook.com/CityParkFriends)), whose 'Likes' to date are 3,092.

We have started on an email-newsletter campaign (see <http://bit.ly/2aYvPlx>) with each issue

also posted to Facebook. We have seen some great engagement: one post getting 3,771 organic engagements, 325 Post likes and 34 shares; another received 1,057 organic engagements, 22 comments, 776 Post likes and 14 shares. Despite this success though turning fans into supporters is a mission that has proved difficult and we will have to continue to test and evolve our tactics in trying to achieve this goal.