



## **Friends of Barnet Environment Centre (FoBEC)**

### **Annual Report September 2017**

Our aim is to advance the education of the public in natural history and nature conservation, welcoming a wide diversity of visitors and enabling them to gain a positive attitude, lasting interest in and an appreciation of the natural environment and also ensuring the ecological and educational value of the Byng Road nature reserve in Barnet.

This year, the first full year in our new Environment Centre, has been another good, busy and very eventful year. We were awarded an Area Grant by Barnet Council and that enabled us to have the work on the Centre garden completed – the rest of the central area was turfed, fencing was erected, new gates put in place and an outdoor activity area constructed. Our excellent group of volunteers continues to work hard on the flower beds round the edge of the garden and the whole area is looking wonderful.

We are in the process of developing our Open Afternoons; an event in May celebrated the new garden, and two more events in June and July enabled more than 600 people, including the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Brian Salinger, to walk round the Reserve, take part in fun activities and to take tea and cake on the veranda. The new sail has been in full use to advertise our whereabouts to the local community and we hope to open the Reserve to visitors on a more regular basis over the coming year.

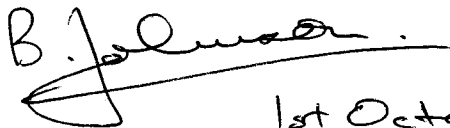
Our Education programme has gone from strength to strength, thanks, as ever, to the great enthusiasm of our Environmental Education Manager, Caroline Gellor. 1845 children and young people aged 4 to 18, plus 500 associated adults, attended over the year, representing a 14% increase on the previous year. This total includes not only pupils from 54 local Primary schools, but also 30 Work Experience students from 4 establishments who helped with school groups, 19 National Citizen Service students, aged 16, building two new Bug Hotels (London Skyline and Noah's Ark), 8 groups of Cubs and Brownies, a Twilight event for 11 Teachers and an INSET session for the whole staff, 30 teachers, of one school. On top of this, we have run several corporate work days with groups from local companies working on path and bramble clearance. Feedback has again been consistently excellent.

FoBEC and Noah's Ark Children's Hospice (NACH) have continued to work well together. The Hospice Planning Application was approved by Barnet Council, though the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage issues have still to be finalised and we are

also working hard to protect the Monterey Pine. Construction work should start on the Hospice in September 2017. There has been good communication between the two charities in the run up to work starting and particularly since the appointment of a NACH Senior Community Engagement Manager. We held a Cream Tea Event for NACH staff and Trustees in early July, which was a great success, with Caroline encouraging everyone to identify grasshoppers, crickets and butterflies in the meadow. We are planning to hold more joint events for NACH staff and FoBEC members over the coming months.

Much of this work would not be possible without the huge effort put in by the FoBEC volunteers and trustees. The nature reserve is looking better than ever due to their work and new educational possibilities are developing all the time. We have had to clear up after a series of storms and there are various projects which will keep us occupied over the autumn and winter. These projects include finalising the new Woodland Ride, clearing out and renewing the ponds and cutting a new path from the Environment Centre to the meadow. We have also recently put a new rotational plan for the meadow into operation and work on this will continue well into the future. New machinery recently acquired, including a tractor unit with power scythe attachment, will continue to enable a wider variety of work to be carried out. We have also been awarded a small Barnet Giving grant for work on volunteer recruitment to encourage more local people to give some of their time to ensure that the Nature Reserve continues to be a popular and useful centre for the local community. A big vote of thanks is due to all our Volunteers and Trustees who put in so much time to keep the Reserve looking so excellent and ensuring that everything runs smoothly.

We look forward to another challenging and successful year in 2017/18, with building work on the new Children's Hospice moving ahead and due to open in the spring of 2019, but also a year during which we will further develop both our educational offerings and our work with the local community.



1st October 2017

Bernard Johnson

Chair of the Trustees