



## Friends of Barnet Environment Centre CIO (FoBEC)

### Annual Report October 2018

The aim of the Friends of Barnet Environment Centre is to advance the education of school age children and 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. We also aim to ensure the ecological and educational value of the Byng Road nature reserve in Barnet.

Our educational work with schools and with cub and brownie groups has gone well again this year, although our Environmental Education Manager, Caroline Gellor, needed a major operation in June. This meant that a few school visits had to be cancelled; fortunately some of our volunteers were able to step in and cover some sessions and Caroline's colleague Sam McCabe taught other school and youth group visits. In the end, only 250 children missed out on their Environmental experience (most were rescheduled for the autumn term) and we still welcomed about 1650 children with their accompanying adults. Feedback from the teachers has been excellent. We wish Caroline a full and speedy recovery.

We have organised a series of successful Community Open Days again this year, including an Open House weekend to coincide with the Battle of Barnet Festival held on the Rugby Field, when more than 250 people used maps for self-guided tours of the Reserve. Our half term event in October was a great success, with 110 people attending.

Our volunteers have worked extremely hard, as usual, to keep the Nature Reserve looking excellent and ready for school and other group visits and for our Community Open Days. There has been a variety of projects this year, partly in response to major challenges. Drainage ditches have been excavated across the site to alleviate the problems caused by the attenuation ponds, while bark chippings have been spread onto muddy paths to make them usable by visitors. Skater pond has been completely renewed and looks excellent; it should be ready to use over the next school year. Other ponds need to be repaired over the coming couple of years and planning is under way for this. We have begun to implement the management plan for the meadow and even at this early stage the work has greatly benefitted school and other groups. The renewed hedging along the east boundary provides a wonderful approach to the Environment Centre and the whole western boundary hedge has also been tidied up. There was a very good turnout at the Make A Difference Day in October, when we converted the old donkey shed into a bird hide for visitors to use. Volunteer numbers are excellent, and several new members have joined us this year. As a result we have been able to create a butterfly corner and a wild flower glade. A big vote of thanks is due to all our volunteers and trustees.

We secured a grant of £2709 from the 'Barnet Giving' Charity through the London Community Foundation, specifically to publicise our activities and to hold sessions to attract more volunteers and to develop their skills in ways which would support our work. As part of this grant project we have run training events for volunteers to increase their knowledge of the wildlife on the Nature Reserve; we have also updated our Centre leaflet and distributed this widely around the local area.

FoBEC will continue to maintain the nature reserve to provide ideal habitats for school visit activities and to enhance the visitor experience. Our programme of educational visits is constantly revised as we reach out to schools and the local community.

Bernard Johnson      Chair, Friends of Barnet Environment Centre