

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This has, again, been a very busy and interesting few months for the Environment Centre.

The Nature Reserve is looking wonderful but damp at the moment! Despite the rain, our excellent volunteers have been working hard to keep the site looking as good as ever. Monday afternoons continue to see about 20 people attending; weekend numbers are smaller but a lot of work is completed and local people are able to drop in to the reserve (May to September) on the 3rd Saturday of the month (2-4pm) and 1st Sunday of the month (10-12). Jobs include clearing paths, creating new dead hedges (particularly round the Monterey pine so the roots are protected), dealing with fallen trees (more details later), looking after the Centre garden and the grass verges beside Byng Road, managing the meadow, planting bird and butterfly friendly plants and generally making sure the Reserve is safe and looks good. My thanks go to them all for all the effort they put in to make this an important local resource which is much loved by many local residents.

Our volunteers also help before and after school visits, with our Open Events and during some educational visits. If you would like to get involved, please contact us via [info@fobec.org.uk](mailto:info@fobec.org.uk) to discuss whatever you would like to work on.

We have had 1980 children, plus 385 helpers, visiting the Environment Centre from local schools and uniformed groups this year and 2019/20 school year is already booking up fast. Our 'season' now runs from late February to mid-November, so we are kept busy for most of the year. Caroline, our Environmental Education Manager, is nearly back to full fitness after her major surgery last year and is looking forward to a busy 2020. She will still need the help of Sam McCabe who has been covering for Caroline and who has worked well with the schools and other groups and is highly thought of by them. Our thanks go to Sam for all his help and to Caroline for her continuing hard work and enthusiasm.

As well as the school and group attendance, we had a very successful Open Afternoon in September, with 200 people attending, we held two bat evenings in September and another 200 people came to our half-term activity day in October where activities focussed on nocturnal animals. Including visits on our summer weekend drop-in sessions (80) and the visits by our volunteers, we have had about 4000 individual visits to the site over the last year, which, again, shows the importance of the site to our local community. Planned events next year include three open afternoons, summer drop-in sessions, two half-term activity afternoons for children, Open House on the Medieval Festival weekend, bat evenings, a dawn chorus walk and at least one Make A Difference Day (MADD). Details will be put up on our website in the New Year.

Our MADD on 02 November 2019 was particularly eventful: we had planned to clear and plant out a couple of areas beside the South (QE Boys) path. However, as we were waiting for the rain to stop, half of a large willow tree came down across the North (allotment) path and we had to spend the day clearing the trunk to allow movement along the path. On inspection, the willow was found to be rotten and we discussed how best to remove the other half. Matters were taken out of our hands in early December, when the rest of the tree came down in high winds, neatly missing all paths, fences and ponds and saving us quite a lot of money in tree specialist work!

The Noah's Ark Children's Hospice (NACH) had its grand opening in September and day care is now being carried out on site. Residential care will start early in the New Year. FoBEC Officers have regular meetings with senior staff of Noah's Ark Children's Hospice to discuss a variety of issues, including the inevitable teething problems. However, we look forward to working with a new CEO and developing a positive working partnership with Noah's Ark which will benefit both charities.

We are currently continuing to work on a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid to enable FoBEC to make some paths on the Reserve safer for all visitors and users, creating an accessible route for wheelchair users, for those who are visually impaired and those with other mobility problems. We will also create a sensory trail with information boards and seating. This will mean we can work with a wider spectrum of schools and visitors as well as enabling children looked after by NACH and their families to access the Nature Reserve. We have now identified 3 outcomes from those stated as necessary by the Heritage Fund where we feel we could show the site would be improved for the local community as a result of the funding we are applying for.

**Finally, can I highlight our extremely popular Quiz Night, which is our major fundraising event of the year. It will take place on Saturday, 08 February 2020, 6.30-10pm in the Pennefather Hall at Christ Church on St Alban's Road, Barnet, EN5 4LA. There will be tables of 8 and the cost, £12.50 per person, includes a jacket potato supper. Bring your own drinks, glasses and nibbles. Please contact Linda Perry on [linda.perry25@gmail.com](mailto:linda.perry25@gmail.com) to book your table. If you cannot get a table together, please contact Linda and she will put you with a group of very friendly supporters.**

Thank you for your continuing support for the work of the Friends of Barnet Environment Centre. May I take this opportunity to wish you a very happy Christmas and I hope 2020 will be a peaceful and happy year for you. I look forward to seeing you at the Environment Centre over the coming year.

Bernard Johnson

Chair of Trustees