



**Friends of Barnet Environment Centre CIO  
Charity no. 1165515**

**Annual Report: September 2019-August 2020**

This has probably been the most challenging year for FoBEC for a long time!

The Environment Centre has been closed since March when the country went into Covid 19 'lockdown', while the rain over the winter had already posed quite a few problems. However, a lot of work has continued in the background.

Before lockdown, we had a busy autumn and winter: 665 children visited (26 schools) between September and March, including a Year 12 group carrying out part of their A Level work. Unfortunately all subsequent activities had to be cancelled; 43 further school visits had already been booked for the rest of the year (1220 children), which would have brought the total to 1885 children, plus the usual 160 that normally attend from youth groups and this would have brought the total numbers to 2045 children, plus teachers and helpers. I think these figures highlight what a valuable resource we are in the local community. Our Environmental Education Manager, Caroline Gellor, has been sending out regular newsletters to schools to keep them up to date on what is happening on the Nature Reserve and has included indications of where work on the Natural Environment can be found on line.

FoBEC carried out a lot of work to prepare for our bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to resurface some of the paths on the Reserve. We were informed by NLHF in April that there would be a long delay (January 2021 at the very earliest) in processing any new bids, due to the Coronavirus situation. However, due to the wonderful generosity of the Hadley Trust, who visited the Reserve in February, we do now have the money to proceed with a joint FoBEC/NACH project to complete the path resurfacing, enabling us to extend Environmental Education to a wider range of visitors and allowing easier access to the Noah's Ark families and staff. We have three quotes for the work and have been meeting with NACH to work out how to proceed.

We held a very successful Open Afternoon at the end of September 2019 with 200 people attending and this was followed by two Bat evenings which were fully booked, while the Half Term activity for children at the end of October was also attended by over 200 people. The Make a Difference Day at the end of November was an eventful one – a willow tree fell down as we were waiting for the rain to stop and the day was spent moving the trunk off the path. A few weeks later, the rest of the tree came down, thus saving us the expense of tree work to make it safe. Our annual quiz was very successful and we welcomed a new 'Quiz Master', Sue Warrington, who has already been booked for next year.

FoBEC has recently become involved in both the Barnet Green Spaces Network, hosting the January meeting at the Centre, and the newly formed project (January 2020) Chipping Barnet Community Plan which partly aims to highlight sites of interest close to the town centre.

The Noah's Ark Children's Hospice had its grand opening at the end of September 2019 and full time care has now started there. Sophie Andrews started as the new CEO in January 2020, while Alison Goodman, with whom we have worked closely over the last 18 months, has been promoted to Deputy CEO. We welcome both of them and look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

As ever, our volunteers have been working very hard, in difficult circumstances, to maintain the Nature Reserve to its usual high standard. The rain over the winter meant that all existing drainage ditches had to be cleared or re-dug and new ones had to be created. The Reserve was very wet, but schoolchildren and volunteers were able to move about the site reasonably well. Although we took the decision in March to suspend our regular working parties, many volunteers decided that they would like to continue with their work on the site during lockdown. Family and household groups have been working when it has been convenient for them to do so, which means that there has been work going on almost every day. In addition, many people have continued to attend on Monday afternoons, making sure that social distancing is maintained and that health and safety is a prime concern – there is a hand sanitization table and the building is not used. A lot of work has been done – the meadow continues

to be managed, the ponds are looked after, the Monterey triangle has been cleared, the fence at the substation corner has been repaired (it was knocked down by intruders during lockdown), the Centre garden has been looked after, Butterfly Corner has been worked on, butterfly and moth surveys continue, there has been some clearance around the attenuation ponds, the verge outside the Centre has been kept tidy, the camera has been constantly monitored, machines have been serviced and generally looked after, paths on the Reserve have been kept passable and our Facebook page is kept updated and includes photos and videos. My thanks go to all of the volunteers for supporting the Environment Centre so well during these difficult times.

We had an arranged visit from Tim Hill from the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in June; he toured the Reserve with FoBEC personnel, including Caroline, to advise us on work needed. This was done to enhance our Annual Work Plan that Caroline has developed during lockdown. Caroline is currently working with volunteers on a rigorous monitoring of the wildlife species on the Reserve to provide us with an updated baseline to determine future work on the site.

Caroline is also working on a series of 'trails' round the Reserve so that visitors can self-guide to points of interest and learn more about what is there. This fits in with our paths project which will also include a sensory trail.

We hope that we will be able to slowly open up the Nature Reserve over the winter, but we still need to adhere to the Government rulings on the easing of lockdown. We will announce any changes to the current situation on our website, so please do keep an eye on that.

Finally, thank you all for your continued support and I look forward to welcoming you back to the Environment Centre and Nature Reserve as soon as it is safe to do so.

Bernard Johnson      Chair, Friends of Barnet Environment Centre