



## Chair's Newsletter

December 2020

Volunteers continue to work informally and in a Covid-safe manner at the nature reserve on most days of the week, keeping the site safe, tidy and looking wonderful. The main jobs have been on the Centre garden, the meadow, the ponds and Pollinator Corner, plus dead hedging, keeping paths clear, preparatory work ahead of path resurfacing, machine maintenance and mowing the grass. Household groups have carried out several major tasks including tree work, meadow and pond work; also the area around the Monterey Pine has been redesigned and includes the creation of two stumperies for stag beetles. Just before the second lockdown we had a very successful Make A Difference Day on 24 October 2020 when the willow tree in the Centre garden was pollarded, blackthorn was removed from an area on the west side of the meadow, the path edges in the wriggly tree trail were re-laid and a start was made on clearing out and relining Murky Pond. Thank you to everyone for all the hard work – we really did make a difference.

The Open Afternoon for volunteers, members and their families, held on Sunday 27 September 2020, ran very smoothly and was quite well attended. We asked groups to try out the new sensory trail leaflet and received very useful feedback; I think everyone enjoyed themselves even without the usual tea and cakes.

A lot of work has been done on sorting out educational materials and we have acquired three filing cabinets to help organise the resources. This is ongoing.

Caroline has recently updated the Management Plan which includes monthly task sheets and this is currently being trialled; Caroline has also carried out meadow and pond surveys. She has created a sensory trail and leaflet for our visitors and Noah's Ark (NACH) families and staff; there will be benches and 13 numbered posts around the site at Pause and Ponder and other points. 36 trees will be labelled to aid identification.

Work is continuing on the Increased Accessibility project, though due to the need for major drainage and attenuation pond work, the re-laying of the paths has been delayed until early next year.

The NACH Memorial Garden on the west side of the meadow is now in use and several butterflies have been 'planted' in memory of children, cared for by the Charity, who have died recently.

There have been no visits by school and youth groups this autumn as schools are still catching up with work missed during lockdown. We continue to be in contact with schools, however, as Caroline sends out a monthly newsletter to keep them updated and booking requests are coming in for next spring and summer terms.

Our environmental education manager Caroline will be leaving us in the near future as she is relocating with her family. We wish her well in her new life. We have been very grateful for her boundless enthusiasm and her comprehensive knowledge of all things natural, which has enabled her to advise and guide the work of the Trustees and Volunteers. Our school work has also developed wonderfully in her time here. We pass on our huge thanks to her for working so hard to make the Barnet Environment Centre an important feature in the life of our local community.

May I again thank everyone for their hard work, in all sorts of areas, and for your continuing support, without which we would not be able to look forward to welcoming back visitors from schools and the local community.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas- and let us hope that 2021 treats us all better than the last year.

Bernard Johnson, Chair, Friends of Barnet Environment Centre