

**FRIENDS OF BARNET ENVIRONMENT CENTRE: CHAIR'S NEWSLETTER,**  
**DECEMBER 2021**

This autumn has been a very busy time at the Environment Centre. School and brownie/cub/beaver visits have extended later into the year (final visit on 25 November) and we had a Make A Difference Day on 9 October and an Open Afternoon on 10 October. As ever, our excellent group of volunteers has been working very hard to keep the nature reserve safe and looking good for all of these groups, as well as being on extra duties to set up the Centre for teaching and clearing up after each session has finished.

Although not as busy as in recent years, due to Covid, our educational work has gone well. We have had over 1000 school age children visiting the site this year to work on National Curriculum related themes. We are extremely grateful to Robyn Stern who stepped in to cover the teaching when Caroline Gellor left earlier in the year.

The new paths have proved to be a great success, making movement around the site much easier, particularly for those with more limited mobility. They are much easier to keep clear and the new leaf blower is a great time saver. Visitors have also been very appreciative of the new benches at the 'pause and ponder' points and of the numbered posts which guide people around the reserve. We have done a further trial of the new leaflet for the Sensory Trail and will complete this project over the winter. The trail will include raised beds at Pollinator Corner and these have now been ordered. The Tree Trail should also be finalised and ready for use by the time the 2022 season of Open Afternoons starts in April. Thirty-six trees will be labelled and an accompanying leaflet will give information about each one. We are also currently working on a garden plant identification trail.

We have just taken delivery of a very large water butt which will collect the rainwater from the roof of the Environment Centre. This water will be used to top up the teaching ponds on the reserve. The newly tarmacked service yard is a great benefit to the site, making it much easier to move the machinery out of storage and we will soon have a workshop so that our tools and machinery can be serviced on site and under cover.

Our volunteers have, again, carried out a range of jobs over the autumn months. The new chestnut fence has been erected along the southern boundary of the meadow – this fence has been built without the use of screws, nails and concrete and is a great asset to the site. The meadow itself has been well managed, is looking lovely and will be featured in the Sensory Trail. The teaching ponds are looking clear again following a lot of work on them in recent months and they should be full of interesting wildlife once schools begin to visit again, from February 2022 onwards. Many of the trees on the reserve have needed attention – some have blown down during the autumn storms while others have been pollarded to make them safe and to enable them to grow better. We are just about to have another tree survey carried out and there will undoubtedly be some work to be done following that. Much of this work will need to be done professionally but there will be jobs that can be carried out by our volunteers. So huge thanks, as ever, to our volunteers for keeping the nature reserve and the centre garden looking so wonderful.

Our series of Open Afternoons culminated firstly with the Battle of Barnet weekend on the Byng Road rugby field (150 people visited the reserve on their way home from the festival in September) and then in October, when 69 local residents visited the site and trialled the Sensory Trail leaflet for us. We hope we will soon be able to offer activities for children and have teas and cakes available again at our Open Afternoons in 2022.

New movement sensor lighting is currently being put in down the east path so the Noah's Ark staff will be able to walk safely down to the playing field car park and we expect work on the filling in of the attenuation ponds, which have never functioned properly, to start sometime in the early part of

2022. Also early next year, work should start on a new path down to the Centre to provide safe passage for our school groups and other visitors.

Next year, then, should be another busy and very exciting time with a lot to look forward to. May I thank you all for your continuing help and support which means, of course, that we are able to carry on fostering an understanding of and a love for the environment both among current generations and future generations.

Could I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a calmer and more peaceful New Year. If you have not been able to visit the Reserve recently, we look forward to welcoming you at some stage in 2022.

Bernard Johnson, Chair of Trustees, Friends of Barnet Environment Centre