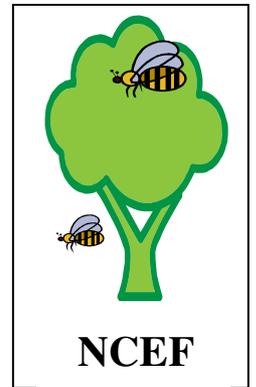


Northfield Constituency Environmental Forum

Minutes of meeting held Thursday 24th February 2011

Holloway Hall.



Present:

Sue Amey – BCC Northfield Constituency Parks' Manager
Amanda Cadman (Chair) – Friends of Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve
Steve Hinton – BCC Lickey Hills Ranger Hub.
Lynn Horsnett – Friends of Kings Norton Park.
Roland Kedge – Rea Valley Conservation Group
Penny Moore (Vice- chair) – Friends of Balaam's Wood LNR
Geoff Ray – Rea Valley Conservation Group
Luke Olly – Northfield Ecocentre
Maggie Sweet – The Fields Millennium Green
Emma Woolley – BCC Lickey Hills Ranger Hub

Apologies:

Graham Andrews (Secretary) – Merritts Brook Green Way
Norma Boyd – Rea Valley Residents.

Amendments:

The following amendment to the minutes of 1st December 2010 was noted:

(I) Sue Amy's name has an e; Sue Amey.

1... Welcome

Amanda welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a particularly warm welcome to Lynn Horsnett who was attending her first meeting on behalf of the Friends of Kings Norton Park.

2... Minutes

Amanda then reviewed the minutes of the last meeting and they were agreed to be a true record. Amanda also circulated a review of the year 2009-2010.

3... Matters Arising not Otherwise on the Agenda

1st December 2010 minutes item 3 (1) Graham has now written to Sue Amey regarding the Constituency Parks and Open Spaces Action Plan to pass on our ideas and comments.

4... Financial Report

Amanda informed the meeting that the NCEF now had a Co-op bank account with a balance of £750 (minus the cost of this meeting).

5... Gateway Routes Leaflet

Following the last meeting Penny had contacted Karen Jerwood (Be Active) and a meeting had taken place with Amanda, Maggie, Geoff, Penny and Graham. The meeting had been very productive and thanks to Karen there had been a subsequent meeting with Ed Cook a graphic designer.

The following progress has been made:

- ❖ The routes would primarily be walking routes.
- ❖ That we should look for extra funding and sponsorship. Steve suggested the PCT/ Be Active and Amanda said she had already contacted David Cox and was waiting for a reply.
- ❖ To have an A2 size leaflet with a large map on one side; Maggie suggested there be a very brief description of each walk ie length, time etc; on the leaflet complemented by a longer one on our website. Roland suggested that places of interest should be highlighted.

Sue Amey felt it would be wise to contact BCC about printing and design to make sure our funding did not necessitate using BCC services. Sue agreed to do this for the forum.

Maggie informed the meeting that BOSF (Birmingham Open Spaces Forum) were also talking to Karen Jerwood about future involvement with Be Active.

Amanda suggested any ideas regarding the leaflet be sent to Geoff Ray.

6... Database of Equipment and Skills

Amanda had put together a skills and equipment audit form; everyone was given a copy. Luke offered the help of the EcoCentre in compiling a database. Lynn suggested that there also be a directory of services and suppliers created for members to use.

7... Development of 'Friends of' Groups

Penny informed the meeting that the posters put around local parks had only produced one expression of interest and that was a complaint about toilet facilities!

However the creation of a new group for Forestdale Community Park was ongoing and Amanda said that there was an event planned for the summer that may lead to the formation of a friends group for West Heath Park. Cofton Park was going to hold a tree planting event, to which volunteers were welcome, and it was hoped this may encourage the formation of a friends group too.

8... Report from Parks Rangers

Amanda asked Steve if the restructuring of the parks dept was now complete. Steve believed that some posts were still vacant, but it was highly unlikely that they would be filled in the short term. Within the council some jobs had already gone, some were going through redundancy and some were still to go. This gave a grand total much higher than the 2,500 quoted by BCC, closer to 7,000.

The meeting was very greatly concerned that the parks dept and ranger service were already stretched and even after such a deeply felt restructuring were not immune to further cuts in the next 3 years.

It was felt, this reflected on how Birmingham City Council viewed our open spaces and how under valued are the staff that care for them. Those present believed BCC saw parks and open spaces as an easy target to cut, rather than as a vital part of the city's heritage, environmental worth and well being.

Penny believed that those who are workless needed these open spaces as they were positive places that provided opportunities for children to play and volunteering to build confidence.

Amanda was concerned that not only staff, but budgets had been severely cut. She felt the care of our open spaces needed funding and voluntary groups could not exist without it! The 'Big Society' could not be achieved without financial support. Sue Amey was asked what was to happen to Community Chest funding, she believed it was to remain in some form, but would be cut by 50%

Lynn said that the Friends of Cotteridge Park had lost funding for its summer play scheme and therefore something that encouraged environmental education and provided parents with somewhere safe and affordable to take their children may be lost.

Steve had heard that if enough saving could not be made there may be a sell off of some open spaces, though this was only a possibility the meeting was appalled by the prospect.

The CNEF were encouraged to support BOSF as they were one group that BCC were talking to about the future.

9... Grounds Maintenance and Monitoring

Amanda asked Sue about grounds maintenance in our constituency. Sue was hopeful that POPI would soon be up and running. This system using hand held devices will make it easier for parks/ranger service staff to report problems, and to see that work to be done has been done, while out on site. This system has been in the construction phase for a few years now and the meeting felt with cut backs by the time it was operational the number of staff to use it would be much reduced!

Roland made a query about litter picking. Sue explained litter picking is undertaken in an area 1m each side of paths; under bushes and less accessible areas were blitzed once a year. Roland was particularly concerned that litter trapped behind fences looked very unsightly.

10... Group Updates

(I) Rea Valley Conservation Group

Roland was pleased to report there was progress with regard to the site on Coley's Lane and licenses were being signed (group already had signed!). The tree survey had highlighted five trees to be felled.

The RVCG are holding a litter pick along the River Rea in the area of Mill Lane on Saturday 12th March starting at 10am. They are hoping to encourage volunteers to join the RVCG or even start a friends group for Daffodil Park.

(II) Victoria Common

Luke informed everyone that the friends group had its next meeting in mid March. A litter pick was planned and the group is at present setting up a bank account. One group member was compiling a history of the park. Amanda felt this could work in really well with a Civic Society project on the heritage of our parks.

A new ramblers group was to be based at the EcoCentre and 60 young volunteers would be taking part in a project called "The Challenge". Another interesting project was to make a map of all the edible plants in the park (local area).

(III) The Friends of Kings Norton Park

Lynn informed the meeting that the group had started in October 2010 and now had 30 members. The group had adopted four flower beds in the park with the help of Sue and Steve. Two sessions were planned to remodel the beds on 7th and 13th March.

The group were entering into an agreement with the FKNNR forming a partnership between their adjoining sites; this included the possible extension of the nature reserve as far as the canal.

As a new group they were looking to the future and what they would like to see happen in the next five years; this included the use of 106 monies on the play area.

(IV) The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

Amanda reported that Wychall Reservoir had benefited from some BCC funding to clean out the rubbish. The friends group were also holding a tree planting on Saturday 12th March.

(V) The Friends of Balaam's Wood LNR

Penny reported that the friends group had a workday coming up on the 28th February in partnership with Birmingham Parks and Nurseries the workday was taking place at Great Park. Steps would be repaired, benches installed and the nesting islands upgraded.

The woodland had also been benefiting from local BCC housing apprentices cutting holly and undertaking other tasks.

(VI) The Fields Millennium Green

Maggie informed the meeting that they had had two corporate volunteer days; Lloyds TSB Bank and Cadbury. Through the National Trust's GAP project for young people the Millennium Green orchard had been extended.

Thanks to a grant from the 3 estates "successful neighbourhood for young people" fund bulbs had been planted, a den building competition had taken place and there had also been a green woodworking session.

The Tracmaster had also been in action to cut the wildflower meadow.

There being no other business Amanda thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Next Meeting:

Monday 9th May 2pm, Oddingley Hall, Northfield