

# Northfield Constituency Environmental Forum



Annual Public Meeting, Lickey Hills Visitor Centre, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013, 12 noon.

Present: Amanda Cadman (Chair), Graham Andrews (Secretary), Penny Moore (Vice-Chair), Jill Harvey (Lickey Hills Society), Peter Harvey (Lickey Hills Society), Steve Hinton (Hub Manager, Lickey Hills Country Park), Adam Noon (Ranger, Lickey Hills Country Park), Rachel & Megan Poole (Friends of Cofton Park), Sue Amey (District Parks Manager), Chris Blythe (TCV), Maggie Sweet (The Fields Millennium Green & BOSF Chair), Clive Sweet (The Fields Millennium Green),

Apologies: Sarah Royal (BOSF), Cllr Eddie Freeman, Denise Meredith (Friends of Cofton Park), Lynn Horsnett (Friends of Kings Norton Park), Georgia Stokes (Northfield EcoCentre).

## Welcome:

Amanda welcomed everyone especially Rachel and Chris who were both attending their first NCEF meeting.

## Annual Reports:

Amanda then gave the annual chair's report (attached) and an update on group finances; which are much the same as last year (around £600) as there had been little spend and no income.

## Election of Officers:

Amanda felt it was time to stand down as chair, but she wished to continue her involvement with the Forum.

The following were elected unanimously, by a show of hands, to serve for the coming year:

Chair: Graham Andrews

Secretary: Penny Moore

Vice- Chair (and Treasurer): Amanda Cadman

Graham then took charge of the meeting.

Graham's first task was to thank Amanda for all her hard work in setting up the NCEF and making it an extremely successful forum that continues to grow. A formal vote of thanks took place proposed by Graham and seconded by Maggie.

## Minutes:

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.

## Matters Arising:

- (i) Wheelie Bins

Amanda informed the meeting that she had not yet heard back from Penny Smith at BCC regarding this issue. Maggie was concerned charging for green waste collections would lead to more fly-tipping. The

end of free bulk pick-ups was a similar concern. Chris said community groups could access free rubbish bags in Ladywood and offered to see if this applied in other wards.

## (ii) Insurance

Maggie informed the meeting that the issue of insurance for community groups had been raised at the Service Review Consultation. If community groups are being encouraged, by BCC, to take on extra work they could not be expected to do this without insurance cover. BOSF were also speaking to Zurich to see if we could get blanket insurance cover for all friends groups. It was also suggested more groups look into joining Waterside Care as they offered free insurance for certain activities.

## Local Explorer Walks

The meeting discussed the future of the guided walks; which everyone was hoping would be attracting more members of the public. It was decided to continue with a bi-monthly walk. The next date set is Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 11am, meeting at Lickey Hills Visitor Centre for a walk to Cofton Park.

## Be Active Parks

Karen Creavin was unable to make the meeting and a new date will be agreed for her to come along. Maggie gave a short update, saying that Active Parks had been so successful it was changing from 5 parks (as a pilot) to activities in an extra 50 parks! Funding would continue for the health budget and new projects like cycle hubs and the Northfield EcoCentre cycling scheme would be involved.

## Development of Friends Groups

Adam said trying to start a group at Cockhill Quarry was proving difficult. Sue Amey commented that the fledgling group at West Heath Park had slipped away and perhaps needed some more encouragement? There had been no movement with a new group at Longbridge; Penny had contacted St Modwen, but had yet to receive a reply.

## Ranger Service Update:

Steve then gave his ranger service update; which focused on the proposed budget cuts to Parks. There is a proposed cut of 50% to the number of park keepers, up to 25% cut in the ranger service and 60 play areas will be removed from parks. NCEF members were encouraged to fill in the online 'Birmingham Be Heard' survey.

Amanda was concerned about the safety issues of asking friends groups to do more in our parks and as a consequence of this being liable. Maggie said Emma Woolf (BOSF) had raised this very issue at the service review consultation. Amanda also felt that friends groups should be offered more training if they were being encouraged to take on more diverse tasks.

Sue reminded everyone that these cuts were a rolling programme and we would need to keep putting pressure on the decision makers.

Jill was concerned that volunteering is not something that is comparable to employing staff, numbers can be hit and miss, people volunteer less as they get older and it is important to have a professional staff in place.

Graham said there were very serious concerns and NCEF needed to spread the word and get as many surveys filled in by 10<sup>th</sup> January as possible.

#### Future Plans:

The NCEF will be continuing to support the Ranger Service and parks through this difficult time.

Graham was also going to speak to Georgia at the EcoCentre about the possible regeneration of Northfield and improving/ using the small spaces that are at present unloved.

#### Group Updates:

Lickey Hills Society: The society held a litter pick and are thanks to the support of the parish council replacing an old bridge.

Balaam's Wood LNR: The friends group held a memorial tree planting for Cyril Ashmore. The four large fruit trees in the community orchard have been funded by the Rea Valley Conservation Group.

The Fields Millennium Green: Maggie reported that they had planted 100 whips on Longdale Road. The woodland was being thinned, yellow rattle planted and path repairs taking place with gap year students. The group had also put in a funding application to make further improvements.

Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve: Amanda reported that work continues over the winter on the LNR, they had walked the site with Steve and Adam and were awaiting a new management plan.

Friends of Cofton Park: Rachel reported that their park survey had received 576 responses! Those who responded were generally happy, but improvements such as lighting, loos and a café had been suggested. The group were also looking at future events after the very successful play area opening. Sue Amey said she had made progress trying to interest football teams in using the park, there had also been progress with regards to changing facilities.

Friends of Ley Hill Park: Graham reported that trees in the park were being replaced and 100 whips to be planted. The group have held a litter pick and a very successful BOSF coffee morning.

#### Any Other Business:

#### Health for Life:

We were joined at the meeting by Chris Blythe of TCV (The Community Volunteers) who was working on a project called 'Health for Life' which set up community gardens, allotments and spaces for growing fruit and vegetables. The project is to run 5 years and has been going for 18 months. The health benefits included a green gym and healthy eating. They were now looking for possible sites in our area; Manor Farm Park and a possible site in Kings Norton are being assessed at present. Maggie was concerned about vandalism, but Chris said in the areas they have already been using this hasn't been a major problem.

Chris was thanked for coming along and invited to keep joining us for meetings.

Dates for 2014:

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2pm

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 6pm

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2pm

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 12 noon.

Graham thanked everyone for attending and wished them a Merry Christmas, meeting was closed.

NEXT MEETING:

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2pm, Oddingley Hall