

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

*Newsletter 28 - Spring 2012*

Registered Charity No: 1122293

[www.fknnr.org.uk](http://www.fknnr.org.uk)



Enthusiastic Volunteers from Lloyds Banking Group.



Correspondence by email preferred: [enquiries@fknnr.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@fknnr.org.uk)

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Newsletter 28

55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton

Registered Charity No. 1122293

## The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

### *Chairman's Notes*

By Amanda Cadman, 15 March 2012

I started the new year with a sudden urge to get more exercise (and lose some weight!), and this has led to a good number of walks along the length and breadth of the LNR in all weathers. And varied weather we have been having recently, basking in spring warmth, followed quickly by sharp showers of hail and murky fog. I have admired the small group of goosander on Merecroft and been staggered to see two muntjac browsing beside Popes Lane in the middle of the afternoon. The ramsons are sprouting enthusiastically, foretelling strong garlic smells and white carpets of flowers in the woodland alongside the river. A recent excitement was the discovery by workmen of a pistol lying in the grass alongside the path from Wychall Lane to the cycle path, at the bottom of Meadow Hill Road. I found two policemen standing guard, and the firearms team came shortly after. I did take a photo on my mobile, but seem to have lost all trace of it! Anyway, it turned out to be a (broken) ball bearing-firing device, but I'm glad it was taken very seriously by the police.

The weekly WorkOuts have proceeded almost unabated throughout the winter, with only two, as I recall, being cancelled due to inclement weather. Many thanks are due to our faithful team of volunteers who turn out week by week to ensure that the Reserve is looking its best, and to the Birmingham and Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers who also visit us weekly and put in a huge amount of effort towards the development of the site. We have spent a good deal of time digging out ponds and wet areas ready for the new season. My personal high spot was, perhaps, spending a length of time up to my knees (in waders) in icy water helping to make some clear water in a reed bed.

We have received valuable help during the past weeks from, firstly, a group of our local police officers, who seemed to enjoy getting mucky to the north of the reservoir clearing a potential viewing area and building a huge dead hedge. Then we were visited by a keen and effective group of students from the National Hindu Students Forum (UK) which was meeting in Birmingham in mid-February and helped us with ditch digging and dead hedging

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on the Peafields. This proved so popular that another group, this time simply of University of Birmingham Hindu students, came to join our WorkOut on 6 March, when they found themselves digging out brambles to uncover the "Tree O'Clock" trees planted a couple of years ago. Their enthusiasm for working on the site is most encouraging, and we look forward to seeing them again soon.

Staff from Lloyds Banking Group across the country seem to congregate in Birmingham for regular meetings, into which they incorporate some team-building community work. Twice before the Reserve has been the beneficiary of their enthusiastic team work, and this spring we have welcomed a third group, coming together from across the country to help us prune shrubs and clear brambles by the Camp entrance before joining the 'Solihull Boys' in clearance work up by the Reservoir.

We have been lucky to be involved in the Northfield Community Orchards project organised by Northfield Ecocentre, and have recently taken delivery of 37 young fruit trees and 74 whips at a cost of only £1 each, to be planted at various locations across the Reserve (those for the Old Orchard are already planted). Even more luckily, we have received full funding support for this project from our neighbours GKN Aerospace Transparency Systems. We hope that a party from GKN will join us for a planting session shortly, and I understand that the firm, which takes its environmental impact and community involvement very seriously, are considering taking out Corporate Membership of the Friends and working regularly with us. This is an exciting development, and we look forward to the relationship being mutually beneficial.

The Friends had a stall at the Kings Norton Farmers' Market on 11 February. This attracted much interest and led to a number of new members as well as several renewals, while bird seed sold well. I gave an illustrated talk on the LNR to the Birmingham University Retired Members Association in January, and am helping to lead a walk (arranged by the Ikon Gallery) from the Northfield Ecocentre to the LNR and back on 17 March. We are also hosting two South Birmingham Ramblers' walks as part of their Kings Norton "Get Walking for the Olympic Games" Walking Festival on 26 and 27 May (see their advertisement elsewhere in

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the Newsletter). Finally, may I remind you of the existence of our Facebook Group "Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve", which can only get more useful as more people come to use it!

We held our big Spring Clean-Up on 10 March, and I am very grateful to all who turned up to help. As usual we concentrated on Popes Lane where, apart from five or six car tyres that had been there for ages, our haul was no fewer than 56 black sacks full of food wrappers, cans and bottles! Several larger items were brought out from the north side of the reservoir, including a plastic paddling pool and the statutory shopping trolley. I'd like to think that the litter bins that we are about to install will alleviate this problem at Popes Lane, but I fear this is never going to be the case until the local populace decides that littering is unacceptable behaviour. And of course we didn't have time to clear the whole area, so we are arranging a couple of ad hoc occasions, before the vegetation grows too high, for us to get help in completing the job.

In addition to some new litter bins paid for by Kings Norton Community Chest to replace those stolen or destroyed by arsonists, we are also awaiting two more interpretation panels, to be installed one in British Waterways Meadow and one on Wychall Meadows. Once again we have Brian Hewitt to thank for their eye-catching design, and the Community Chest for their funding.

Finally, after much discussion your Committee has decided not to hold an Open Day this year but rather to support the Friends of Kings Norton Park who propose to arrange an event on the Park in September. I wish them every possible success. The Fields Millennium Green Trust hosted an event there in 2011, it will come round to 'our turn' to host an event to celebrate Kings Norton's open spaces in 2013.

**This is your magazine. Please let Amanda know if you have an article for publication or photos of wildlife on the LNR. We will be glad to try and answer your questions about the LNR, its history and management, its wildlife or any other issue that may be of interest to the Friends. Please note that the copy deadline for the next issue will be Thursday 28 June 2012.**

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### *Wildlife Watch*

The winter has been milder, drier and sunnier than normal although we did have short periods with snow on the ground and freezing temperatures in February. During the latter period Merecroft was covered in ice again. However, as we write in early March the dwarf daffodils are looking pretty near Merecroft Pool and some of the deciduous trees in the reserve are beginning to break into leaf, or flower in the case of the prunus (or cherry). The snowdrops above Sheila's pond came out weeks ago and are still showing well. The frogs in our pond have arrived in great abundance (from I don't know where) and have been very vocal from 22 February. In the Reserve last year the tadpoles in Sheila's pond perished when the water dried up. This year there is a limited amount of spawn both in one of Sheila's ponds and in the field by Beaks Hill Road. However, the working party on the Reserve on the 28 February noticed a large volume of frogspawn in the clear water of the 'two ponds' reed bed area of Wychall.

The star sighting over the winter is probably a single Redpoll seen in two nearby gardens, on one occasion in the company of Siskins. This is the first time for several years that these migrating finches have been seen on the Reserve [Siskin: Nov 2001 – 4, Dec 2005 – 14, Dec 2007 – 22 & Feb 2009 – 8. Redpoll: Nov 2005 – 5, Jan 2007 – 9 & Feb 2009 – 6] and they are a very welcome sight when they feed on alder cones.

Also of note this year were the very large flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares that stayed with us for some weeks around the time that the snow was lying on the ground. Although these species are regular visitors we cannot remember seeing such large flocks (of about 100). They were a joy to see, especially the Fieldfares with their distinctive 'shack' call. However, on reflection we wondered if they were present in part because of difficult conditions in the countryside. Pheasants have also followed suit with birds being flushed out near Beaks Hill Road and at Wychall Reservoir this winter. A Green Woodpecker and a pair of Reed Buntings are also regular sightings off the cycle path at Wychall and Nuthatches have been calling from the tallest trees.

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The usual mixed foraging parties of tits were seen over the winter along with smaller parties of Bullfinches and Goldfinches. These two species appear to be increasing in number on the Reserve and small flocks were seen regularly by Wychall Reservoir. Greater Spotted Woodpeckers were drumming at several locations on or about the 11 January, which seemed rather early but it was a mild period. Similarly Starling were contesting nest holes in trees on the 'Pea fields' extension and Coot were seen fighting at Merecroft on the 1 February presumably in an attempt to mark out territory. A small flock of House Sparrows is now a welcome addition to the scrub along Popes Lane. Buzzards have been seen as usual with one observed sitting on a post in one of the fields above Merecroft on 11 January.

Great joy! ...The Goosanders arrived again this year on Merecroft Pool and the maximum seen was 18. At the time of writing in early March they are down to 3 drakes. 4 Widgeon stopped off there on their migration in the first week of November. These smallish ducks, intermediate in size between Teal and Mallard, are a predominantly estuarine species and not many are seen inland. Sightings on Wychall Reservoir included a maximum of 24 Teal in the middle of January together with 12 Moorhens.

Anybody who walks regularly around Merecroft Pool will have enjoyed the Grey Herons that have been very visible over the winter. However, you don't need to go into the Reserve to see them as they also sit on the roofs of nearby houses and in tall trees eyeing up the fish in garden ponds! In recent weeks the Canada Geese on the Pool seem to have increased in numbers and have become a lot more vocal. They are beginning to venture into the adjacent fields again to feed with 2 taking up residence at Wychall. Another feature at Wychall this winter has been the evening corvid roost with well over 100 Jackdaw, 120 Carrion Crows and 60 Magpies flying in on the coldest evenings. The site has also seen its usual complement of Black Headed and Lesser Black Backed Gulls this year together with 5 Herring Gulls. We wonder if the couple that regularly feed this growing throng with the daily remnants from the fish & chip shop have influenced the increase in the number of larger birds?

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As for mammals, two Muntjac Deer were sighted on 18 January by the Irish Bridge on Popes Lane and their tracks are numerous across the area by the new scrapes at Wychall. On the same day 7 Grey Squirrels were recorded chasing through the trees. There was also a possible sighting of Mink in the Rea near the Stepping Stones just after Christmas.

Finally a mystery. Does anyone know anything about the enormous fungus seen on the ground beneath one of the mature trees in the orchard in Merecroft? It was the size of a large kitchen toaster and might have been dislodged from branches or trunk of tree above. It was brown/light brown and had delicate markings.

PB, JB & PRE and others.



The Hindu Student Group hard at work.

## The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

### *FKNNR Monogrammed Workwear*

We will shortly be putting in a further order for workwear – fleeces, tee shirts and polo shirts – emblazoned with the FKNNR grebe logo. These are very smart and good quality, and a great way to show your support for the Reserve. If you would like to order anything, please ring Amanda on 0121 624 3865 to discuss sizing etc. Prices may have to change slightly, but at the last count we were charging £18 for fleeces, polo shirts £11 and tee shirts £9.

### *Membership Update*

Firstly a very warm welcome to new Friends who have joined since the last newsletter. The Kings Norton Farmers' Market obviously provided a good shop window for FKNNR and I hope you enjoy this and future newsletters.

In my last update I made a plea to those Friends who had yet to pay the annual subscription, and many of you have kindly forwarded cheques and cash. There are still some subs that are outstanding and so you may receive a knock on the door or a phone call to prompt. We would love to keep you on the membership and do remember it is great value at £7 per year, that's less than 2 pence a day!

However we are now rapidly approaching 1 June 2012, the first day of the new membership year where subscriptions are once again due. You may think I am being a little hasty, but if you would like to set up a standing order for the annual subscription to be paid on 1 June, then now is the time to complete the paperwork. Below is a form for setting up a standing order, please complete both halves, send them to me at the address on the form, and I will then get them to the bank before 1 June so that the subs can be paid without any further fuss or bother.

Over a third of our members use the standing order facility and find it hassle free, so I would strongly recommend it to you. Thank you for your ongoing support.

## The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

I would like to support **The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve** (Registered Charity no. 1122293)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose      \* my cheque (payable to 'FKNNR')      OR  
                     \* my completed Standing Order,      for (tick one:)

- Annual Membership: £7 per household  
 Concessionary:      £5      "  
(if one or more members is of pensionable age)

Plus a donation of: £ \_\_\_\_\_      TOTAL : £ \_\_\_\_\_

*giftaid it*

The FKNNR as a Registered Charity can reclaim tax paid on your behalf. Please sign up and help your money go further!

**I confirm** I would like tax to be reclaimed on my donation under the Gift Aid Scheme. I am a UK Tax payer and pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that can be reclaimed on my donation.

**Please tick:** YES       NO

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to:

The Membership Secretary, 16 Grassmoor Road,  
Kings Norton, Birmingham B38 8BP      Thank you!

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

**To the manager**

Name of bank: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay:

**Lloyds – TSB Bank plc, Birmingham BX1 1LT**

For Credit of:

**Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve**

**Reg. Charity. No. \*\*\*\*\* Sort code: \*\*\*\*\***

**Account number: \*\*\*\*\***

The sum of: (in words) \_\_\_\_\_ Pounds (£        )

On the \_\_\_\_\_ (day) of \_\_\_\_\_ (month) 20\_\_\_\_

and thereafter every year until further notice, and debit my account accordingly.

**Name of Account holder:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Account number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sort code:**    \_\_ - \_\_ - \_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:**

The Membership Secretary, 16 Grassmoor Road,  
Kings Norton, Birmingham B38 8BP

**We will send this portion to your bank. Thank you.**

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### *Annual General Meeting 2012*

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends will be held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012. The venue has yet to be decided but will be publicised well before the event, by means of an email to those of you who have supplied your email address, but otherwise by notices posted on the four notice boards on the Reserve. Elsewhere in this Newsletter; you will find the minutes of last year's meeting for information.

There are currently in the region of 200 households who are members of the FKNNR. That's a good support base, and the Friends' Committee are very grateful for the people such as yourself who, by joining the Friends, have indicated their wish to see the Reserve managed and maintained as an attractive and worthwhile community resource and are willing to provide a very modest amount of funding towards that end.

The Committee hopes that members are happy with the way in which the Reserve is developing. Although there is formal business that must be conducted at the meeting, the AGM provides you with an opportunity to express your views and any ideas that you may have relating to the Reserve and its management and future development, either as part of the business of the meeting or more informally in discussion with members of the Committee over refreshments. Although during the year we have the Tuesday WorkOuts, two or three weekend Clean-ups, and monthly Guided Walks, in practice we only meet a small proportion of the total membership. We all have a common interest in the Reserve; it would be good to share that interest in conversation. So why not come along to the AGM, if only to put faces to names and to extend your circle of acquaintances?

One of the items of business this year will be to elect three members to the Friends' Committee. Members of the Committee are elected for a three year term, with one third retiring annually. New members to the Committee are always welcome! There is also an urgent need for someone to proactively engage with and encourage schools to make use of the Reserve (an Education Liaison Officer), and for another person to deal with enquiries from individuals and organisations who are interested in helping

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on the Reserve (a Volunteer Co-ordinator). Each of these roles contributes towards fulfilling the aims and objectives of the Friends. If, for whatever reason, you are unable to participate in the practical work on site, perhaps you could offer support on this administrative side? If you would like to discuss this further, call me on 458 4712, or our Chairman, Amanda, on 624 3865. Alternatively, just come to the AGM. Come anyway!

Graham Layton, Secretary

### *Open Day to Open Eyes*

September 2010, I saw a notice from the Friends advertising their Open Day, and decided to attend. Picked up a leaflet about the Friends and their activities around the LNR, and thought this seems worthwhile, I'll give it a go!

That was almost 16 months ago, and how it has been worthwhile, and so rewarding!

I have the pleasure of working with a knowledgeable, dedicated group of Friends, who have a genuine desire to nurture and improve the Reserve. Through their guidance and know-how, I have learnt (and continue to do so) how to tackle tasks around the Reserve, and the benefits the work is to the Reserve. The work is varied, and can be tiring, but no one is pushed to do more than they are able.

The Reserve itself is really quite stunning in its beauty and diversity, when looked at through "open" eyes. It is all too easy to pass by and not really "look". Getting about and around the Reserve, and in it, has for me been an eye opener. I have seen it change with the seasons.

I feel it is indeed a privilege to work with the Friends, and to add my small contribution to the wellbeing of the Reserve.

Michael Lawrence

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### *Rea Valley Conservation Group*

**All Meetings at the Cotteridge Friends Meeting House, Watford Road (50 yds on left from Cotteridge roundabout) at 7.30 p.m. (unless otherwise stated).**

For all events further details - please phone Roland Kedge on 0121477 2629 or Geoff Ray on 0121 445 5126.

Friday 13th April Annual Dinner. The Oak (formerly Poachers Pocket/The Chalet), corner of Groveley Lane and Lickey Road, Rednal for 7:30 p. m.

Monday 30th April A visit to the gardens of Pump Cottage, Weatheroak. NGS National Gardens Scheme visit with £5 admission which includes Tea/coffee + large slice of homemade cake. Meet at Kings Norton Church on The Green at 10:00 a.m. Transport provided by contacting the numbers above

Friday 11th May Talk - To be arranged.

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May Visit to Martineau Organic Gardens, Priory Road, Edgbaston. These gardens are run by a charity which provide work experience for people with learning difficulties. Lovely extensive gardens. Meet at Kings Norton Church at 11:00 a.m. Transport can be provided by contacting the numbers above

Friday 8th June Cyril Ashmore - Films and slides of an experienced photographer.

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June Mid-summer Walk - Meet at Kings Norton Church at 11:00 a.m. Transport can be provided by contacting the numbers above.

**Please Note:-** 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of month - working party at Coleys Lane, Northfield, at River Bridge (50 yards from railway bridge) 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon - phone as above.

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### *SOUTH BIRMINGHAM RAMBLERS*

KINGS NORTON  
'GET WALKING FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES'  
WALKING FESTIVAL  
SATURDAY 26TH - SUNDAY 27TH MAY

Join us for one of 8 free, guided walks over this weekend, each starting from Kings Norton Green (outside St Nicolas Place). All walks led by an experienced leader.

#### SATURDAY 26TH MAY

##### **10:00am Kings Norton Nature Reserve - circular walk (3m)**

10:00am Kings Norton & Bournville Historic Walk – circular (4m)

2:00pm Kings Norton to West Hill Tunnel – circular walk (3.5m)

2:00pm Walk around Kings Norton – circular walk (3m)

#### SUNDAY 27TH MAY

10:00am Kings Norton to West Hill Tunnel – circular walk (3m)

10:00am Kings Norton & Bournville Historic Walk – circular (4.5m)

1:00pm Canal walk to Birmingham City Centre. linear walk (6m)

##### **2:00pm Kings Norton Nature Reserve – circular walk (3m)**

Bring stout footwear/boots, waterproofs, snacks and drinks

More details from:

Eleanor Tel No: 0121 458 1478 or

Keith Tel No: 0121 443 4840

[www.sbramblers.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.sbramblers.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

### *FKNNR Monthly Guided Walks*

These guided walks take place on the last Saturday of each month, starting at 10.30 am and ending around 12 noon. We meet by the British Waterways meadow entrance, at the corner of Wychall Lane and Meadow Hill Road. Waterproof footwear and tough outdoor clothes are essential, and binoculars, if you have them, are recommended. The walks tend to alternate between the south side of the Reserve and the Wychall/River Rea corridor.

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### *FKNNR Diary Dates*

Please spare one or more hours of your time to assist us in progressing the LNR Management Plan. Changes may be made at short notice, please check the web site [www.fknnr.org.uk](http://www.fknnr.org.uk)

Date	Location	Details
<b>31 Mar</b>	Burmans Drive	<b>Monthly Walk</b>
3 Apr	River Rea – South Bank	Clear rubbish/Tidy Hazel
10 Apr	River Rea – North Bank	Paths/chippings/remove laurel
17 Apr	Wychall Reservoir rear	Dead Hedge cut material.
24 Apr	Wychall Reservoir rear	Plant/Replant reeds
<b>28 Apr</b>	Burmans Drive	<b>Monthly Walk</b>
1 May	BW & Sheila's Meadow	Tidy up, Litter pick & scythe
<b>6 May</b>	<b>5:30 am</b> Burman's Drive	<b>Dawn Chorus Walk</b>
8 May	DAY OUT	Visit another Reserve
15 May	Pea Fields extension	Ditch, dig
22 May	Wychall Reservoir rear	Tidy up, Litter pick & scythe
<b>26 May</b>	Burmans Drive	<b>Monthly Walk</b>
31 May	DAY OUT	Visit another Reserve
5 Jun	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up, Litter pick & scythe
12 Jun	Pea Fields extension	Balsam clearance/Path maintain
19 Jun	River Rea – North Bank	Balsam clearance/Path maintain
<b>23 Jun</b>	Burmans Drive	<b>Monthly Walk</b>
26 Jun	BW & Sheila's Meadow	Tidy up, Balsam, Litter pick & scythe
3 Jul	Popes Lane Pool area	Balsam clearance/Path maintain
10 Jul	Wychall Res – cycle path	Balsam clearance/Path maintain
17 Jul	Pea Fields extension	Ditch – dig out & remove rubbish
24 Jul	Wychall Reservoir rear	Balsam clearance/Path maintain
<b>28 Jun</b>	Burmans Drive	<b>Monthly Walk</b>
31 Jul	BW Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
7 Aug	Old Orchard	Tidy up, Litter pick & scythe

*Tuesday WorkOuts (TWO Working Parties) – 10.30 to 13.30 hrs.  
All dates – weather permitting. Instruction provided.*

For working party days - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof footwear and old clothes. The appropriate equipment and materials will be provided.

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### *Tail Piece*



Goosander photographed on the reserve  
by Alistair Howard

### *Contacts*

#### **The FKNNR, 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton, B38 8TB Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors**

Chairman	*	Amanda Cadman	0121 624 3865
Vice Chairman	*	David Human	0121 458 1300
Secretary	*	Graham Layton	0121 458 4712
Treasurer and Membership Secretary		Alistair Howard	0121 451 3082
Education		Graham Layton	0121 458 4712
Trustees	*	Alan Bakewell	0121 603 1127
	*	Phil Evans	0121 628 6769

(\* Denotes Trustee of the Charity No 1122293)

#### Committee Members

Peter Cage, Anne Price, Brian Hewitt, Val Saunders, David Hampson,  
Elizabeth Parker, Nicola Human, Mike Lawrence, Lynn Horsnett.

Newsletter: Peter and Sarah Cage (0121 433 3486) and Amanda Cadman

Environment Agency Hotline	0800 807060
City Parks Department Call Centre	0121 464 8728
Northfield Rangers	0121 445 6036
West Midlands Police	0345 113 5000 ext. 7826 6363
Anti-social behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111

Correspondence by email preferred: [enquiries@fknnr.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@fknnr.org.uk)

[www.fknnr.org.uk](http://www.fknnr.org.uk)

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