

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

Newsletter 8 – Spring 2006 & your AGM Papers



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Chairman's Notes

The period since the last newsletter has been a very eventful for our local nature reserve (LNR) and its supporters. Spring has arrived, of course, bringing with it plenty of delights to assail the senses, and we have also had significant highs (and lows) on the management front. I'll leave it to our Secretary's articles to cover the wildlife and concentrate on events, although I can't resist this picture of our own native bluebells in profusion by Merecroft Pool.

Old Place-Names Sought

Having mentioned Merecroft Pool, does anyone know the old names for any other areas of the LNR? Please let a member of the committee know if you do.

Antipodean Assistance

Amongst 'highs' is a large cash contribution – from Australia! Three of our supporters, Simon Cooper and our Service Team colleagues Paul Spinks and Dave Connolly, entered an environmental competition on our behalf with *Brambles pty*, the Australian parent company of *Cleanaway*, which provides our Service Team. The result is £6,500 towards developing the LNR. Well done and thanks.



Astounding Vandalism

Having had our final major cleanup before the nesting season, we have been confronted with another challenge from those with little respect for the environment. There is a constant battle against those who damage trees & hedges, litter dumpers and even nest-wrecking bathers, so we must look to communication and our educational endeavours to ease the problem over the years. Recently one of our members came upon youths tearing down a recently restored old iron fence, 'explaining' that they needed get their motorbike down to Merecroft pool where their father was fishing! In the short term, the police have said they will help with additional patrols.

Loss to the Forest of Dean and Selly Oak

Congratulations are due again, this time to Chris Mansell, the Rea Valley Ranger, who is leaving us to work with the Forestry Commission. He will be missed hugely – though he insists that he will be back occasionally to continue his support for our working parties. On the local front Kings Norton has 'moved' from Selly Oak to Northfield District following changes in the administrative processes within Birmingham – your committee shall now work to see how this will impact upon the LNR.

Make Tuesdays Special

Working parties have been very successful once again, thanks to all our supporters. Why not join our Tuesday morning 'green gym' working parties? Details on the back page.

- Amanda Cadman

The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

Wildlife Watch: observations reported on or about KNNR over the past three months.

Interesting bird sightings

Spring finally arrived in Kings Norton at the end of March with the usual breeding activity from birds and amphibians. The first *Chiff Chaff* was recorded on the 28 March, which was the same date as last year, and other arriving migrants such as *Willow Warbler*, *Blackcap* and *Swallow* quickly followed this. Instances, either by sound or sight, of *Green Woodpeckers* have continued in conjunction with those of *Gt. Spotted Woodpeckers* but an interesting sighting of the small *Lesser Spotted Woodpecker* was reported in February in Beaks Hill Road. The observations of over-wintering



A visiting *Blackcap*.

Blackcap in the area have increased together with a growing number of *Bullfinches*. The occasional sighting of *Reed Buntings* gives us hope that recreation of wetland habitat at Wychall Reservoir will give us a resident population. Observations at one of our working party days in late February at Pinehurst Meadow included 9 *Fieldfares* that appeared to be en-route in a northeasterly direction. Reports of *Pheasants* ended in early spring: we can only assume that they have moved on or perhaps provided a meal for a fox!



Target species - *Reed Bunting*.
An occasional visitor to Wychall Reservoir and nearby gardens.
This photo taken at Upton Warren near Bromsgrove, where the wetlands support a thriving population.

Wildfowl observations have been consistent with the usual observations of *Mallard* and *Canada Geese* together with *Coot* and *Moorhen*. *Kingfishers* and *Grey Wagtails* continue to be seen at both sites. The occasional sightings of *Buzzard*, *Kestrel* and *Sparrow Hawk* continue and several reports of an increased number of *Ravens* have been received. The 'Friends' walk through the reserve as part of 'International Dawn Chorus Day' identified 25 different bird species.



Grey Herons are regularly seen over-flying the LNR and local garden ponds were visited for fish and frogs throughout the period. Photo taken on the 30 March.



The water line on this *Canada Goose* and the Wychall reservoir surface hint that there is plenty still to be done.

Other Sightings

There have not been very many reports of mammals (excl *Grey Squirrels*) so far this year – has anyone seen *Muntjac Deer*, *Foxes* or *Water Voles* lately? Spring sunshine did, however, bring out the butterflies and a recent walk along the cycle path adjacent to the area we cleared in February 2005 revealed *Orange Tip*, *Peacock* and *Small Tortoiseshell* species.

- Phil

The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

Annual General Meeting

To be held on Wednesday, 28 June 2006 at 19.30 hrs at the clubhouse of Grange Hill Tennis Club,
Kings Norton. (Junction of Grange Hill Road & Rednal Road)

AGENDA

1. Welcome & Apologies.
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the AGM held on the 6 June 2005.
3. Reports:
 - Chairman's statement.
 - Treasurer: Accounts for the period ending on the 31 March 2006**.
 - Membership Secretary: Membership Status.
 - Education Liaison: Progress with local schools.
4. Membership Fees 2006/07:

The committee do not propose any changes to the existing levels for individual membership fees for the year 2006/07.

[Note: Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on either of the 31 May or the 30 November for members who join on or before these half yearly dates.]

5. Committee membership:

Election of committee Members for one year – In accordance with the constitution one third of the committee retire shall retire annually by seniority of election. Retiring members of the Executive Committee shall be eligible for re-election (max. 4).

The following retiring members have been nominated for re-election:

Alan Bakewell; David Hampson; Meredith Andrea; Brian Hewitt.

(Nominations shall close 24 hours before the opening of the AGM).

There will not be an election for the Honorary officers [i.e. Chair; Vice chair; Secretary; Treasurer; Membership Secretary] – they continue for the second year of a two-year term.

6. Appointment of an auditor to the accounts of the FKNNR.
7. Any other business.

[** Copies of the reports marked with an asterisk will be available at the meeting. If any member wishes to receive a copy in advance or cannot attend the meeting then they should contact the Secretary on 0121 6286769].

Amanda Cadman
Chairman

5 June 2006.

The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

Annual General Meeting held on Monday, 6 June 2005 at 19.00 hrs at the clubhouse of Grange Hill Tennis Club, Kings Norton.

Minutes of the Meeting

Present:

A Bakewell, K Fradley, D Barraclough, P Evans, G Evans, S Humby, D Hampson, J R Smith, J Anson, E Roberts, D Kelly, G Ray, S Hughes, C Ashmore, E Parker, J McCoy, C Mansell, G Lacey, M Andrea, M Watson, B Hewitt, D Sharpe, S Cage, P Cage, D Human, N Human.

1. Welcome & apologies.

The Chairman, Alan Bakewell, welcomed those present to the AGM.

Apologies: S Bakewell, H Fradley, A Cadman, J Bodycote, S J Cooper, S Fox, J Bromley.

2. Minutes of the EGM held on the 17 May 2004.

The minutes of the EGM were approved unanimously.

3. The constitution of the 'Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve'.

The Secretary outlined the discussions that had taken place on the draft constitution. A sub-group of the executive committee had produced the submitted document, which had been agreed by the committee at their meeting on the 17 September 2004. Then having been duly proposed and seconded it was resolved that:

The constitution of the 'Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve' be approved and adopted.

4. Chairman's statement.

The Chairman commented upon the progress that had been made since the EGM and the transition of the group from being the 'Friends of Wychall Reservoir' to its current format. In order to achieve many of the items contained within the draft 'Management Plan' for the site the group would now need to move forward and deal proactively with the City Council and other relevant bodies. He considered that the formal notification of the Wychall Reservoir and Merecroft Pool sites as an LNR was a significant achievement. He now wished to stand down as Chairman although he was prepared to continue as a member of the committee if so elected.

5. Treasurer's Report

David Human presented the accounts for the period to the 31 March 2005. The accounts had been audited and agreed by John Bodycote who was also willing to perform this task next year. The Secretary explained the position on the restricted funds which arose from the conditions attached to some the grants received for conservation and training activities – thus the cash balance carried forward of some £5,500. A recent NRF bid for resources had also been successful.

- i) **The Accounts for the period to the 31 March 2005 were approved unanimously.**
- ii) **A resolution to appoint John Bodycote as auditor of the funds of FKNNR for the forthcoming year was approved unanimously.**

The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

6. Membership Secretary's Report

Phil Evans presented the Membership Secretary's report in her absence. He reported that the membership numbers at the end of May stood at 82 households. They had risen from 9 as at May 2004 i.e. a substantial increase. Steps continued to be taken to increase membership and the committee were also investigating the possibility of corporate membership. **The report was noted.**

7. Education Liaison Officers' report.

Nicola Human outlined the activities that had been undertaken as part of a programme to involve local schools in the development of the LNR. Specific work had been undertaken at Wychall Primary School. Bird boxes had been constructed and installed. Guide walks had been undertaken in conjunction with the River Rea Ranger, Chris Mansell. Further co-operation with local schools was envisaged. **The report was noted.**

8. Election of Honorary officers:

The following persons had expressed an interest in fulfilling the roles of the honorary officers of the FKNNR for a period of two years in accordance with the constitution.

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>
Chair	Amanda Cadman
Vice Chair	David Barraclough
Treasurer	David Human
Secretary	Phil Evans
Membership Secretary	Jil Bromley

All were duly proposed, seconded and unanimously elected by the meeting.

9. Election of Committee Members.

The following persons had expressed an interest in serving on the Committee in accordance with the provisions within the constitution. Individual Committee members would continue to perform certain roles.

Committee

Meredith Andrea (Education liaison)	
Alan Bakewell (Publicity)	
Nicola Human (Education liaison)	
Brian Hewitt	John R Smith
David Hampson	Sue Humby
Jon Anson	Jenny Bodycote
Peter Cage	

All were duly proposed, seconded and unanimously elected by the meeting.

10. Annual Subscriptions 2005/06.

The membership subscription to the FKNNR was currently set at £5 per household per year except where one or more of the householders are of pensionable age when the annual subscription shall be £3. A proposal agreed by the committee on the 21 February 2005 for submission to the membership was the retention of these existing levels for membership for the year 2005/06 but to introduce future renewal dates of the 31 May and 30 November for those new members who join on or before these half yearly dates.

The proposal was duly proposed, seconded and approved unanimously.

The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

11. Status of the LNR

An officer of Birmingham City Council had been invited to the AGM to explain the latest position in the formal processes of LNR designation but, unfortunately, they were not able to attend and had therefore tendered their apologies. The Chairman and Secretary, assisted by Chris Mansell, outlined the current position, as they understood it.

Whilst the formal process appeared to take a long time it had to be recognised that the Local Nature Reserve encompassing Wychall and Merecroft had now officially been granted LNR status. A letter of support was received from English Nature during January and formal approval was given to the scheme by the City Council Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture on 26 January. Following this approval the City Solicitor has been asked to prepare the necessary legal notices which will allow the different areas of land to be formally and legally placed under a single management.

The above process may take several months to complete, but in the meantime the City is taking steps to set up the Management Committee for the LNR, which, according to its own draft constitution, would bring together representatives of voluntary organisations, statutory authorities, other relevant bodies and individuals. Up to two people nominated annually by the 'Friends' will serve on this Management Committee. Negotiations are still taking place with British Waterways over the management of land owned by them (the meadow at the corner of Wychall Lane and Meadow Hill Road). **The position was noted.**

12. Any other business.

The following topics were raised in questions from the membership and they were briefly responded to. The Chairman undertook to take them for further consideration by the committee at forthcoming meetings.

- i) Interest was expressed in possible future outings and a picnic with the River Rea Association was proposed.
- ii) Communications/reminders on events by email was requested.
- iii) The possibility of placing some FKNNR cash resources in an interest bearing account was suggested.
- iv) The mowing regime for the Wychall Lane grassed areas needed to be revisited and the mowing of one specific informal path implemented.
- v) Additional litterbins and an improved emptying regime were required.
- vi) A scheme should be implemented which would reduce the amount of silt and rubbish being washed into Wychall reservoir – silt traps being seen as a solution to the problem.
- vii) Interest was expressed on the acquisition of a boat and in a boat-handling course.
- viii) A youth member on the FKNNR Committee required consideration, as did the possible formation of a junior club.

13. Votes of thanks

David Hampson proposed a vote of thanks to Alan for the major contribution he had made to the development of the Nature Reserve principles and for the hard work he had undertaken since 2001. **The proposal was approved unanimously.**

The Chairman thanked the previous committee for their support in progressing the FKNNR since its inception in October 2001 to the present time. He hoped that progress would be continued in the coming years. He thanked the Tennis Club for their hospitality.
The meeting closed at 20.35 hrs.

The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

Working Party Activities

It has been hard work at times but the six months working party activity from October through to March has resulted in noticeable and rewarding changes to parts of the Local Nature Reserve. We have been active in most areas - from Popes Lane, along the cycle route and up through the Pinehurst and Merecroft Meadows.

Working for the present and the future

We have been working to the Management Plan for the site, thus reversing many years of less than minimal maintenance. We have undertaken thicket clearance and, where appropriate, the creation of dead hedges. We have also planted trees and hedges in appropriate areas and are trying various techniques to re-introduce a number of native wild flowers. Running alongside these constructive activities there has also been the inevitable litter-picking and graffiti removal!

Pinehurst Meadow

Regular activities on alternate Tuesdays have been supported by the Birmingham & Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers and thanks go to Dave Hackett and his experienced volunteers for a dead hedge par excellence at Pinehurst Meadow and for removal of bramble and ground ivy. Their efforts – aided by a number of our stalwart weekday workers – have turned a bramble-ridden mess into an attractive (if rather ant-hill-studded – good for woodpeckers) meadow. The gate surrounds of conifer log piles have been larded with moss to make them attractive nest sites for field mice.

The footpath alongside looks much better, too, largely thanks to the work of David Hampson in restoring the old iron fence (the old iron gate into the 'wet meadow' below Merecroft was a wonderful find in the middle of a bramble thicket). The horse field has been fenced to allow the horses only seasonal access to the wet meadow, and much work has been done by our own volunteers on planting new hedging along the footpath and constructing dead hedges along the slope below the dam. It's lovely to get this area looking so good again. It's been fun to be involved in this often very muddy work, and I am sure all involved feel proud of the difference we have made in a relatively short time. Thank you all. More hard work is required at Pinehurst, of course, since we have uncovered a nasty mixture of *Rosebay Willowherb* and *Japanese Knotweed*.

Wychall Reservoir

Damage and other anti-social activities continue to be a major problem and we need to thank Alan Bakewell, who's continuing mission to remove rubbish from Wychall Reservoir and the Rea needs to be experienced first hand in order to be fully appreciated. Alan even sent a number of noble souls out on a boat to clear the worst from Wychall reservoir itself.



Wychall Reservoir early this spring.

Litter Picking

We have held several of these sessions along the Rea, culminating in the Great Spring Clean on 9th April. Alan Bakewell, Service Team and the Community Wardens, arranged this, billed as 'positively the last time we will call on your muscle power on the Nature Reserve until after the birds have finished nesting'. It was well attended and a huge amount of rubbish was cleared from along and in the river. Again, many thanks to all involved for making it happen.

- Amanda & Phil

The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

Notices

Diary Dates

Please come and support us at these events:

Tuesday, 6 th June, 10.00-15.00.	Green Environment Day, Victoria Square.
Wednesday, 28 th June, 19.30.	Annual General Meeting at Grange Hill Tennis Club.
Saturday, 8 th July, 09.00-14.00	Kings Norton Festival on The Green.
Tuesday, 19 th September, 10.00-15.30	Volunteers Training day @ LNR with the Birmingham Foundation
Saturday, 14 th October, 09.00-13.00	Stall at Kings Norton Farmers Market on The Green.

Tools wanted: If you have any unwanted garden tools then please let one of the Committee know.

Help us stay in touch with you: Have you emailed us yet? Please send us a 'hello' message, so that we can maintain our address lists.

Join our 'green gym' working parties:

Every Tuesday, as much time as you can spare between 10.30 and 1.30. Please let us know in advance on KingsNortonlnr@aol.com or by ringing a committee member – see below. Next dates: 13 & 27 June, 11 & 25 July.

FKNNR – Police Contacts:

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ON THE NATURE RESERVE.

As many of you are aware, we were promised a dedicated police officer that we could contact if we observed any malicious damage or vandalism on the reserve. Inspector Jane Parry has now allocated PC James Bennett who will be our main point of contact in conjunction with the CPSOs and Community Wardens to report incidents of an anti-social nature. It is in everyone's interest to utilise the above agencies as the more incidents are reported, the stronger the case we have in requesting a greater police presence on what is at present called Beat 26.

Useful contact numbers: -

Inspector Jane Parry.....0845 113 5000 ext. 7826 6441
PC James Bennett.....0845 113 5000 ext . 7826 6363
CPSO's.....07769 882113

I understand from one of our members that there has been increased police presence on the reserve recently and that appropriate action has been taken to remind the public that this is a nature reserve and that certain activities are not allowed.

Alan Bakewell

The FKNNR Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors

Chairman	Amanda Cadman	0121 624 3865
Vice Chairman	David Barraclough	0121 458 2244
Treasurer	David Human	0121 458 1300
Secretary	Phil Evans	0121 628 6769
Membership Secretary	Jil Bromley	0121 244 7483
Newsletter Editor	Paul Adams	0121 451 3003
Education	Meredith Andrea & Nicola Human	0121 451 3243 0121 458 1300
Committee Members	Jon Anson, Suzanne Ashley, Alan Bakewell, Peter Cage, David Hampson, Brian Hewitt & John Smith.	
River Rea Ranger		0121 447 7106
<i>Environmental Agency Hotline</i>		<i>0800 807060</i>
<i>Community Police</i>		<i>07769 882113</i>
<i>Anti-social behaviour Hotline</i>		<i>0121 303 1111</i>