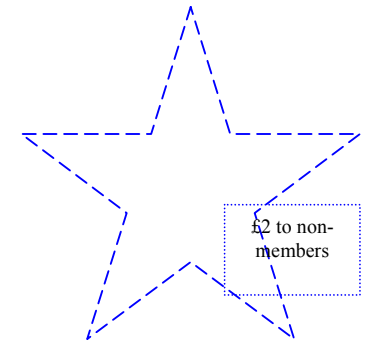






The Friends of King's
Norton Nature Reserve
Newsletter 21 - Winter
2009/10



The Friends of King's
Norton Nature Reserve



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

	
	Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve
	Management Plan 2009 - 2013
<p>Matthew Osland-Barker Birmingham Parks Ranger Service Lickey Hills Country Park The Visitor Centre Warren Lane Rednal Birmingham B45 8ER</p>	

Above: The cover of the new Management Plan for the Local Nature Reserve. The full plan can be read on our website – www.fknnr.org.uk.

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Newsletter 21

Registered Charity No. 1122293

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The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Chairman's Notes

The most exciting development in the past three months, to my mind, was the arrival at last, on 18 November, of the Tracmaster power scythe, bought for us by the City Council with Community Chest funds. This will enable the 'Friends' to cut those areas of bramble and grassland on the LNR that are not on Council property and which, therefore, do not have a regular mowing regime. However, its use on City land will require a City Officer to watch over us. Four regulars from the 'Tuesday Work Out' group have had to have a morning of certificated training to operate the machine and are now suitably qualified. We have already had a preliminary bash at the rough grass and brambles in the British Waterways meadow at the foot of Meadow Hill Road, and it looks vastly better. The machine will be used, too, on the Fields Millennium Green, (opposite the new Kings Norton cemetery), in exchange for labour on the LNR by their volunteers. The hoops that we had to go through with the City have been complicated and very long-winded. *[Ed comment: The propensity for generating bureaucracy surprised even former Local Government officials!]*. However, we believe this is the first time that the Council has allowed a volunteer group to own and operate powered machinery purchased through its own funds and I consider that history has now been made. We look forward to seeing a significant improvement in biodiversity – and a reduction in pervasive brambles – across the British Waterways grassland. Thank you very much, King's Norton Ward Councillors and the local Community Chest!

We are now working to our new Management Plan, and a key issue is to develop the survey work that will allow us to measure accurately the success or otherwise of our management techniques. While we made a start on this work last summer, it is imperative that we make further progress in 2010. Your help in on-site surveying of meadow and woodland plants, vertebrates and invertebrates in our watercourses and on our land, and/or in inputting that information to a database, will be invaluable. Do please let a Committee member know if you are able to help in any way.

For the past couple of months we have led guided walks across the LNR on the last Saturday of the month, 10.30 am to 12 noon. These walks offer a splendid opportunity to learn about the wildlife on site and about our plans for the future development of different areas of the LNR, as well as to socialise with like-minded people. The number of members and guests turning up for these walks has been very low but I would urge you to join in sometimes: kingfishers, herons, woodpeckers and jays were the highlights in October, as well as autumn colour. Warm and waterproof clothing and shoes are essential and binoculars are definitely an advantage. Future walks will be slanted towards bird identification for those who wish to learn (see page 13).

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We have spent some time recently clearing up in Pinehurst Meadow after the Council kindly demolished the old concrete horse shelter that was deemed by them to be very unsafe. We need to finalise our burying of the remains, and are meantime developing a bird feeding station near the hide we built last year. A circular path around the meadow gives walkers an opportunity to see the varied features of Pinehurst Meadow and we hope that an appropriate mowing regime will allow the wildflowers to increase their hold. Anthills encourage woodpeckers to feed here, and we will be careful to leave some untouched

In September Northfield Constituency Environmental Forum held an open meeting at the Lickey Hills Visitor Centre. Alongside this meeting the Forum's member groups – of which FKNNR is one of course – put up their display stands for a week at the Visitor Centre, bringing our work to a wide audience. Much interest was shown, and a good many of our leaflets were taken away. The Forum has met recently with developers St Modwen at Longbridge, where much work is being done to bring the River Rea out of culvert, to clean it up and to do all possible to slow down floodwater when the river is in spate. All these actions should be of considerable help to us downstream, and the combined interest of various groups along the river, including the developers, St Modwen, promises a real opportunity to enhance the visual, biodiversity and flood alleviation aspects of 'joined up thinking' along the river.

When we were on a family holiday in the US back in October, I had the most extraordinary, heart-stopping wildlife experience. At the mouth of the Potomac River, where it enters Chesapeake Bay, we witnessed a passing migration of Monarch butterflies, hundreds upon hundreds, huge and scarlet. Many landed for a rest from the high winds on some bushes, so that the whole bush was scarlet. Some of the branches were weighted down with resting butterflies, wings folded and looking just like dead leaves – quite magical, and totally unexpected! Oh well, we don't get such exotica here I suppose, but the omnipresent robins in the garden are a delightful sign of the turning seasons. [Ed comment: *The UK witnessed an influx of Painted Lady butterflies this year – but non were recorded in Kings Norton? If you know better then please let us know*].

I wish you a very happy Christmas. Don't forget to join us for a New Year walk and/or clearance work on 1 January 2010 to blow away the cobwebs before our regular New Year's drinks!

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Amanda Cadman Chairman

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve – Vision Statement



The Friends seek to develop Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve, in partnership with Birmingham City Council, as a tranquil haven that supports a broad range of wildlife and is welcoming, clean and safe for people to visit.

We aim through best practice to:

- Provide a safe, welcoming and inspiring environment for all to enjoy, irrespective of age, ability, gender, belief or ethnicity.
- Provide an open space that is maintained to a high standard, enhancing, promoting and conserving the biodiversity, landscape and heritage of Kings Norton LNR through sensitive, sustainable and appropriate management.
- Enhance visitors' awareness and appreciation of the natural environment through education, life long learning and volunteering opportunities.
- Promote a sense of ownership within the local community and among visitors.
- Seek, in collaboration with partner organisations, to enhance and enrich the wildlife corridor along the River Rea.
- Seek formal LNR designation for the green space lying along and beside the River Rea between Popes Lane and Wychall Road.

The Friends, in partnership with Birmingham City Council, will achieve this by:

- Providing a safe and stimulating environment.
- Using sound environmental principles in our management of the Reserve's biodiversity, landscape and heritage.
- Working in partnership with members of the Friends group, the local community, other environmental groups and stakeholders, keeping them informed of activity on site and consulting them on plans for future development.
- Producing regular newsletters for Friends, increasing promotional material and ensuring it is widely available.
- Increasing the use of the site by local schools and other groups.
- Holding regular events such as Open Days and Bat Walks on site.
- Providing a welcoming and supportive environment for volunteers.
- Showing a commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Seeking appropriate funding to enable the feasibility of future development of the site to be fully investigated.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Above: The Friend's Vision Statement included in the new Management Plan for the Local Nature Reserve. The full plan can be read on our website – www.fknr.org.uk.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Wildlife Watch: observations reported on or about the LNR over the past three months. Please send to Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com

It is the beginning of December 2009 already. Time flies these days. The wet weather seems to have continued over the past three months and this has dampened much wildlife activity across the Local Nature Reserve. However, the list, below, of birds observed about the River Rea & Wychall sections of the LNR over a 2 hour period on a Sunday morning does indicate the wide variety you can see or hear without too much effort.

The new woodland footpath along the north side of the River Rea contains a variety of habitats and new residents appear to be Nuthatch, Song Thrush and occasionally a flock of Long Tailed Tits. A Woodcock was flushed out of one area by the river at the end of November. Grey Wagtails, Moorhen and Kingfishers are also regularly seen along this section of the river. Many sightings of Heron and Buzzard were also received from the Wychall Reservoir area. Reports of Green Woodpeckers in local gardens have not been copied with sightings on the LNR. A phantom bird ringer has been identified in Kings Norton and he claims to have ringed some 20 Bullfinches out of a local population now in excess of 50!

There have been fewer reports of mammals this year and they include Foxes and Grey Squirrels. The 'Friends' working party activities uncovered Short-tailed Voles in the BW meadow and a Bank Vole by the cycle path at Wychall Reservoir.

Sunday, 13th December 2009: 10.00 to 12.00 hrs.

22	Mallard	6	Goldfinch
13	Teal	1	Chaffinch
3	Lesser Black-backed Gull	4	Duncock
11	Black Headed Gull	6	Robin
3	Moorhen	4	Wren
1	Heron	14	Long Tailed Tit
1	Water Rail	8	Great Tit
1	Grey Wagtail	6	Blue Tit
10	Blackbird	2	Jay
1	Song Thrush	12	Magpie
1	Nuthatch	14	Carrion Crow
1	Gt Spotted Woodpecker	2	Jackdaw

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

2 House Sparrow 16 Wood Pigeon

Tree O'clock record attempt

Some time during 2008 we registered Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve on the BBC website as a 'Breathing Place' where people could get out into the fresh air and do their thing for nature. I'd always found it strange that if I looked for events in our area, Kings Norton LNR failed to turn up. I found out why in the past couple of months when I checked on the alphabetical list and located our LNR out in the North Sea somewhere east of Norwich!! Sorry folks but I must have got my Easting mixed up with my Northing when submitting the grid reference! Anyway, we are now registered in south Birmingham, which is heartening. Now as a Breathing Place we have been involved with the BBC's "Tree O'clock" attempt to break the World Record for the most trees planted in one hour in multiple locations (currently 653,143 and held by the Philippines).

The basic facts are that **fifty-one volunteers planted 553 native trees in 53 minutes** on two locations within the LNR. We planted on two sites, one on the north bank of the Rea alongside Wychall Lane, and the other adjoining the oak woodland on the 'Pea fields' extension. The planting covered a total area of 852 m². The Birmingham and Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers had undertaken preliminary ground clearance work.

Behind these facts a number of important thanks are due. Firstly, I am enormously grateful to the local Street Champions, for providing 240 young trees and for ground preparation in advance of the day provided by Dean and his group of Birmingham City Council horticultural apprentices. A further 400 young trees were provided through the Civic Society's 'Trees for Life' project (90 of these trees still await planting at other locations across the Reserve) and June McCoy provided some oak seedlings from her garden.

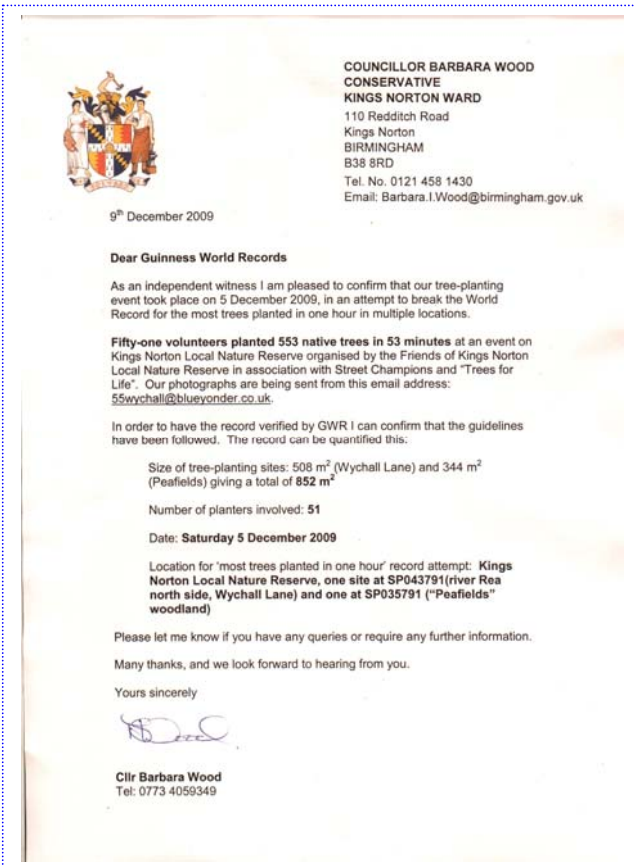
Shirley and Alan Bakewell organised a splendid prize draw, with many prizes donated by local businesses. Lloyds Bank was particularly generous on this occasion and I am enormously grateful to them for their support. I pay special thanks to Councillor Barbara Wood and Police Sergeant Andy Notley for acting as independent scrutinizers, Alan & Shirley for organisation in advance of and on the day itself, Phil Evans (risen from his sick bed), Dean Paul, Graham Layton, Peter Cage and Jean Perring for organisation on the day, and to Dean, Shirley, Graham and Peter for photographs of the event.

The rain came down in great torrents on the Friday night, making us very concerned to ensure that we had clear health and safety instructions to all to

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

keep away from the riverbanks. Saturday dawned clear and bright, ideal conditions for setting up the BBC bunting and preparing to meet our volunteers. Friends, Street Champions and other local volunteers were joined

by a cheerful group of civil servants from the Government Office for the West Midlands and students from Aston University, together with a number of Dean's apprentices. Our age range was from 5 to (I would guess) 75, and the hour seemed to be much less frantic and much more enjoyable than I had expected. The Rea-side group had finished planting all available trees by about half past, while the "Pea fields" group were given a second instalment to keep them going until just before the witching hour of 12 noon. Then it was back to Burman's Drive for the prize draw, kindly drawn for us by Councillor Wood. The train trip back to Aston must have been a very merry one for the students with a large bottle of whiskey on board!



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The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Tree O'clock - The tree planting event cont 3



The group who planted in the woodland in the Wychall Road area (known on the plan as the "pea fields". where we are planning for the extension of the LNR to occur.

Two more photos below of the willing volunteers and 6 on the next page.

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The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



Tree O'clock - The tree planting event cont 4



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



Thank you one and all. We achieved a great deal to contribute to the BBC record attempt, but more importantly we have added considerably to the number of young native trees on site, and we had great fun too! I look forward to welcoming back the Aston and GO-WM groups to see 'their' trees and, I hope, to join us in further work on the Reserve.

Amanda Cadman

Working Party Progress

The working party activity throughout the LNR, mainly the Tuesday Work Outs [TWO], has achieved significant progress in the past 6 months. Such maintenance and development work is now being tailored to the new Management Plan for the site, see page 2. As well as the tree planting event (detailed elsewhere) and two Saturday cleanups/litter picks which attracted additional volunteers the routine TWO activities [shown as 'volunteer days'] can be analysed as follows for 2009:

Area	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Total Days
Meadows:					
BW	11	14		14	39
Pinehurst	8	19	8	12	47
Sheila's		6		12	18
Beaks Hill				6	6
Wychall			6		6
Hay Rake				14	14
Woodland:					

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River Bank North				21	21
River Bank South		9			9
Pea Fields				5	5
Wychall back lands				10	10
Merecroft				7	7
Footpaths, fences, hedges & adjacent areas:					
Boundaries & kick rails			1	13	14
Burman's Drive	10		7		17
Rea Cycle route & path	10	11		39	60
River Bank North new path	14	10	13		37
Beaks Hill path		10	8		18
Other:					
Merecroft Pool (south end)	32	18			50
Wychall Reedbeds	7	12			19
Balsam bashing			37		37
	92	109	80	153	434



The footpath through the BW meadow.

Moving those chippings on the 9th September [Thanks again Elizabeth!]



Another pleasant day in September sorting out the Dogwood along the cycle path.

New



5

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

The Rea Valley Conservation Group

Future meetings of the Rea Valley Conservation Group held at the Friend's Meeting House, Cotteridge at 19.30 hrs.

Date	Speaker	Topic
12.02.2010	John Tilt	Woodland Butterflies
12.03.2010	Phil Evans	Around the world in 80 weeks – Photos of the natural & human landscape taken on recent travels.
09.04.2010	Annual Dinner	At the Oak Tree @ 19.30 hrs. Formerly the Poachers Pocket.
17.04.2010	Walk	A Spring flower walk. Meet at Kings Norton church 11.00 a.m.
14.05.2010	Ted Rudge	"Brum Roamin" Romany gypsies in the Midlands
15.05.2010	Walk	Salwarpe/Droitwich Canal walk. Meet at Kings Norton church 11.00 a.m.
11.06.2010	Cyril Ashmore	Lakes and Mountains
23.06.2010	Outing	Bodenham Arboretum. Meet at Kings Norton church 11.00 a.m.
17.07.2010	Walk	Belbroughton to Sling Common. Meet at Kings Norton church 11.00 a.m.

King's Norton History Society

Future meetings of the Society held at the Saracen's Head, The Green, Kings Norton, at 19.30 hrs. Please note the 24th May.

Date	Speaker	Topic
25.01.2010	Mike Hodder	Birmingham Archaeology Latest Discoveries.
22.02.2010	Joe Holyoak	Martin & Chamberlain Birmingham Architects.
29.03.2010	Don Hazzard	Good Men of Birmingham.
26.04.2010	Keith Clenton	Walk through the City Centre back in Time.
24.05.2010	George Demidowicz	Mills on the River Rea.

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The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Tools always wanted: If you have any unwanted garden or workshop tools, spanners, screwdrivers, files etc then please let one of the Committee know (or phone 0121 6286769). We will collect.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

FKNNR Diary Dates

Date	Location	Details
1 January	Merecroft/Old orchard area	Tidy up & new year drinks
5 January	BW Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
12 January	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance/path/hedges
19 January	Old Orchard area	Bird + Bat boxes/log piles/Dead hedges
26 January	Wychall (Popes Lane end)	Clearance/Prune/log piles
2 February	Pinehurst Meadow	Remedial work/Hide construction
9 February	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance/path/hedges/Bird boxes
16 February	Beaks Hill Road	Prune trees/Ponds/Paths/Dead hedges
23 February	Wychall Reedbeds	Tree & Reedbed Maintenance
2 March	Beaks Hill Road	Prune trees/Ponds/Paths/Dead hedges
9 March	River Rea – North Bank	Clearance/path/planting
16 March	BW Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
23 March	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance/path/hedges
30 March	Burman's Drive	Prune trees/Paths/Dead hedges
3 April	All LNR (Meet Burman's Drive)	Saturday Litter Pick/Tidy up
6 April	Pinehurst Meadow	Wildflower areas
13 April	River Rea – South Bank	Prune trees/Clearance/Tidy Hazel
20 April	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance/path/hedges
27 April	BW Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work

For working party days - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof footwear and old clothes. The appropriate equipment & materials will be provided. Please spare one or more hours of your time to assist us in progressing the LNR Management Plan.

*Tuesday Work Outs – 10.30 to 13.30 hrs.
All dates – weather permitting. Instruction provided.*

**Please support our Saturday Tidy up on 3rd April 2010
(start at 10.30 hours).**

FKNNR Monthly Guided Walks and learn bird identification

The last Saturday every month at 10.00 to 11.30 a.m. Meet at the corner of Wychall Lane & Meadow Hill Road (The BW Meadow entrance).

For all walks - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof footwear and oldish clothes (It can be wet and muddy!). We will alternate the walks between the South side of the LNR and the River Rea/Wychall corridor.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Finance - Phil Evans

It should not need a note from the Charity's Treasurer to tell you that the recession has bitten deeply into the finances of all types of organisation. The FKNNR is no different. We have to slow down our conservation activities because our own restricted funds and income have not been at the level we have enjoyed in our first 3 years. What do we do?

- We have already reduced some activity and instigated economies where practical.
- We are urging all members to renew their membership and gift aid their annual subscriptions (see below).
- We are seeking further grant aid.

Times are hard. One significant casualty has been the open day in the Wychall Meadows but what next?

I therefore urge you to renew your membership if you have not done so already and the 'Friends' are ready to receive further donations of any amount in order to sustain expenditure on trees, plants and materials, etc.

One further thought - and I make no apology for raising it - have you considered leaving us a legacy in your will (Cash, shares or property). If not, why not? The Charity exists for the reasons shown on page 5 and if you wish to see the green open spaces and the character of King's Norton maintained then the Charity needs support in this world and from the next. Such legacies are very simple to arrange for whatever sum an individual deems appropriate. Please consider:

The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve [FKNNR].
Registered Charity Number - 1122293
Bank Account: The Green, Kings Norton. Sort Code: 30.96.12
Account No: 00057330

Subscriptions

All to note: There are numerous 2009 subscriptions to the FKNNR now overdue. Thanks to the 80 who have renewed already.

Please send a cheque to (+ donation or ask for a standing order form from the Treasurer, 21 Woodglade Croft, Kings Norton, if you wish to continue your membership. Please gift aid your subscriptions if you pay tax - this will provide additional resources for the 'Friends'. We do appreciate all the financial support that helps protect and enhance Kings Norton LNR.

There are also several outstanding membership renewals from June 2008!

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The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



The FKNNR, 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton, B38 8TB Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors (* Denotes Trustee of the Charity No 1122293)

Chairman	Amanda Cadman*	0121 624 3865
Secretary	Graham Layton*	0121 458 4712
Vice Chairman	David Human*	0121 458 1300
Treasurer	Phil Evans*	0121 628 6769
Membership Secretary	Jil Bromley	0121 244 7483
Education	Matthew Osland-Barker	0121 447 7106
Newsletter Editors	Phil Evans*	0121 628 6769
Trustee & Sage	Alan Bakewell*	0121 603 1127

Committee Members

Jon Anson, Suzanne Ashley, Anne Price, Brian Hewitt,
Peter Cage, David Hampson, Jenny Bodycote, Nicola Human.

Environmental Agency Hotline	0800 807060
City Parks Department Call Centre	0121 464 8728
Northfield Constituency Ranger	0121 447 7106
West Midlands Police	0845 113 5000 ext. 7826 6363
Community Police	07769 882113
Anti-social behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111

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