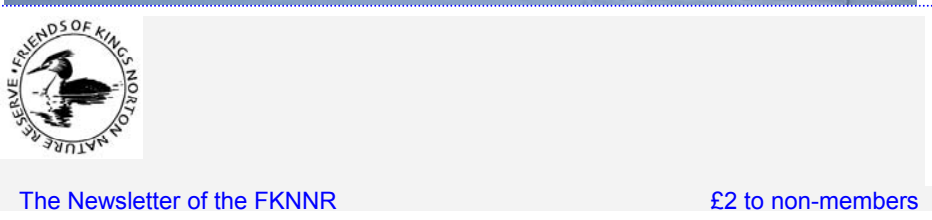
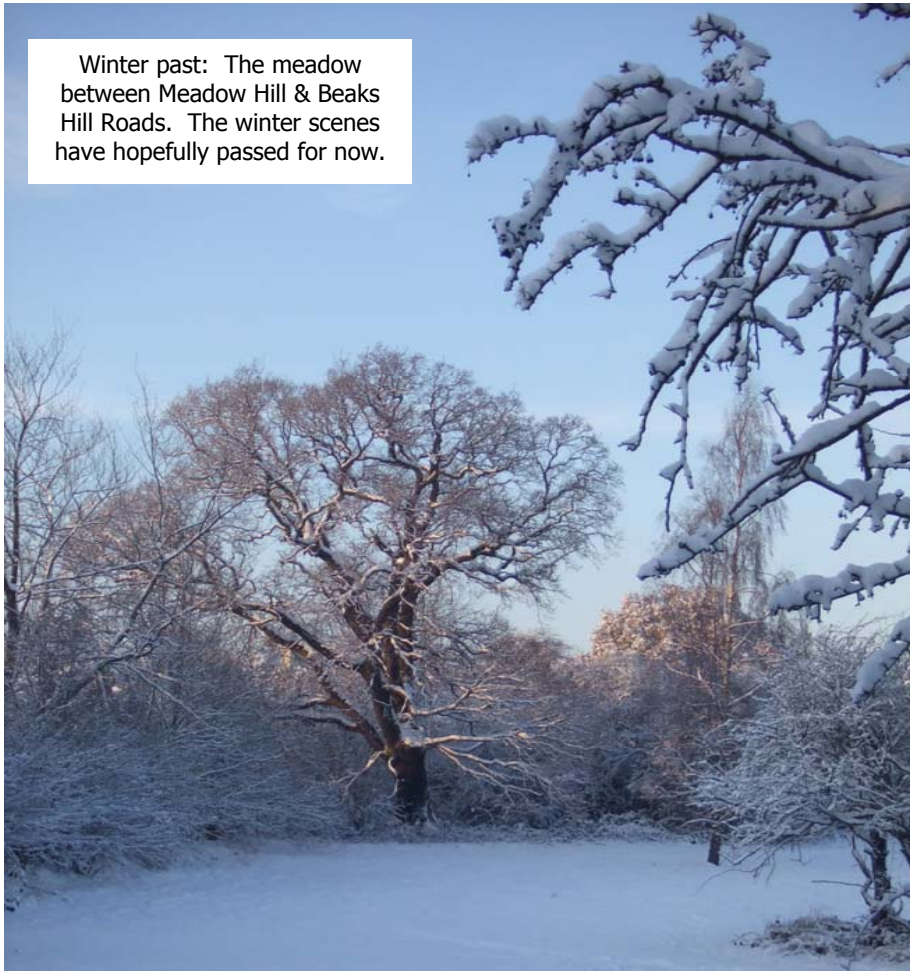


The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve Newsletter 25 – Spring 2011

Winter past: The meadow between Meadow Hill & Beaks Hill Roads. The winter scenes have hopefully passed for now.



Correspondence by email preferred: Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Chairman's Notes

What a winter it was! By now I can hardly remember all the snow-shovelling and windscreen scraping, but photos elsewhere in this Newsletter will remind us how fabulously beautiful the Nature Reserve looked in the snow. The cold weather will have been extremely tough on our flora and fauna, but most things seem to be sprouting now – not least as the brambles I was clearing this morning on the Work Out!

We have been asking the City Council for some time to try to clear the shopping trolleys, bicycles and traffic cones sticking out of the muddy bottom of Wychall reservoir. Thanks to the Kings Norton Ward Committee funds were made available from the Community Chest to undertake this work, and we are thrilled by the result and most grateful to Clive Wright and Dennis Bennett of the City Council and to the two good men from the contractors who went out to attack the rubbish in a flat-bottomed boat. The reservoir at last looks like an attraction within the Reserve that it should be.

What a pity, then, to see that our efforts at Popes Lane in October last year have been undone by a great deal of littering and fly-tipping over past weeks. To cap it all, someone crashed their car into the palisade fence causing a lot of damage to the fence – and presumably even more damage to the car!

The Tuesday Work Out crew have spent a good deal of time clearing the ground around our new scrapes at Wychall, including the planting of some young trees provided by the Environment Agency. We hope that the development of some native woodland in this area will greatly increase the diversity of bird and animal life to be found. A tree planting session planned for late January sadly had to be called off due to frozen ground but we were able to undertake planting sessions on both Saturday 12 and Tuesday 15 March. Many thanks to those willing volunteers that helped out on those days. The Street Champions were also there, joining us for a big clean up on the Tuesday. Now that the reservoir itself is looking so good, it is important for us to keep the litter and graffiti at bay.

Another improvement, which should soon be seen at Wychall, is the replacement of the interpretation panels by the reservoir, which have been totally ruined by continuous graffiti and graffiti removal. Again the funding comes from the Community Chest. Our own Brian Hewitt has produced a most attractive design which we hope will be acceptable to the City – and the panels will be covered with a 'sacrificial' layer of Perspex that can be replaced when badly defaced. We are hoping that funds might be available to allow us to devise similar notices for other areas of the Reserve.

Correspondence by email preferred: Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

At the AGM of the City-led FKNNR Management Committee in January I handed over the reins as Chairman to Graham Layton and I wish him every success in this role. Graham has been working hard to develop a regular partnership with Wychall Primary School, a partnership which I hope will be mutually beneficial, offering young and enthusiastic help with our work and, for the school, hands-on environmental experience as they seek an Eco Award.

I remain Chairman of the Friends Committee for the time being and have spent an increasing amount of time developing relationships with other environmental organisations in the area, particularly with Northfield Constituency Environmental Forum (where we are currently busy developing a leaflet of good walks across the green spaces of Northfield's four wards). FKNNR have also warmly welcomed the development of the Friends of Kings Norton Park and Playing Fields, in particular since they will be looking after the River Rea corridor immediately downstream from the LNR and will, we hope, be working to enhance the river corridor through their site for the benefit of wildlife along the lines of our own Management Plan. We are developing with them a Memorandum of Agreement whereby we offer them access to our experience, tools and skills wherever appropriate. FoKNP have also held a couple of planting days in March when they planted up four shrub beds to a design that has been planned through the BOSF for ease of maintenance. I very much hope that our Friends will want to join them in this endeavour to improve the look of our local Park.

I should like to express my thanks to Sue Allen, City Council Neighbourhood Manager for the 'Northfield Cluster' – which includes Wychall Farm estate – for her support over the past few months, including pointing us in the direction of the Successful Neighbourhoods Fund which supported the Open Day and Popes Lane Clean Up Weekend. Through her I have made useful contacts on the Wychall Farm Neighbourhood Forum that she set up. But funding for her post and others across the city runs out at the end of March. We shall miss her.

My thanks are also due to all who have worked for the Friends during the past few months, especially that valiant crew of Tuesday Workers Out, who have managed to make a tremendous difference across the Reserve, especially to the rear of the reservoir. I am, as ever, enormously grateful to the Birmingham and Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers who come to us every week to give a massive boost to the volunteer hours available.

And a future date for your diary: Dawn Chorus Walk on Saturday 30 April. Meet at Burmans Drive at 5.30 am; and the essential breakfast afterwards at Molly's Café on the Green.

Amanda Cadman Chairman

Correspondence by email preferred: Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Wildlife Watch (with a difference): Brief observations reported on or about the LNR over the past three months. Please send your observations to Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com

There have been numerous sightings of Muntjac Deer on the Local Nature Reserve this winter - from the dam at Merecroft Pool, in BW meadow and especially at Wychall Reservoir. Maximum sightings reported were eight on one day! Another notable event was the use of Wychall Reservoir as an overnight roost by members of the crow family – (*Corvids*) - and although we tend to overlook these common birds during the rest of the year (even complaining about them), the sight and noise of an evening gathering is quite spectacular. Maximum count was 110 Carrion Crows, 66 Magpies and 240 Jackdaws on one evening. However, one of the highlights at Merecroft Pool, which lasted for several weeks, was the presence of up to eight Goosander. There is obviously sufficient small fish to keep these 'Sawbills' well fed before they migrate back further North.

A walk on the Wild side

It was the 22 December late afternoon and the snow lay thick across Kings Norton. What wildlife would be about? A walk through the Nature Reserve was in order and being at The Green I walked via the Beaks Hill Road entrance to the Reserve to Merecroft Pool. Several Blackbirds were out and about attacking the only obvious food source – those exotic Berberis and Cotoneaster berries planted in local gardens. But at the entrance to the LNR there were two Redwings in the trees feeding on Alder, hence excellent views of these Winter visitors to the UK. These were soon joined by the ever present Wood Pigeons and Carrion Crows. There was no obvious life on or about the frozen pool until a Jay flew across into the old orchard area. Proceeding down the path further Blackbirds and Redwings were disturbed together with a small gathering of Blue Tits. The Magpies were present as usual in and about the horse grazing meadows. Goldfinches could be heard nearby. Past Sheila's meadow and one tree contained more Wood Pigeons, a Robin and a pair of Chaffinches whilst several Black Headed Gulls flew overhead. Following the path through a desolate looking BW meadow to Wychall Lane confirmed that wildlife sightings would be few and far between although a solitary Lesser Black Backed Gull flew across the adjacent gardens. Crossing Wychall Lane and following the cycle path to the left and onto the woodland walk provided several sights that transcended the intense cold.

Upon entering the woodland near to the stepping stones across the river (*sorry Sharks Tooth weir! Ed*) there was an excellent view of a Wren as it darted in and

Correspondence by email preferred: Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



Winter on Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve

Three photographs taken along the cycle route on the 19 December 2010 after Kings Norton had received its share of snow and ice.



Above: Frosty Hawthorne and the afternoon moon.

Left (1): An ice covered Wychall Reservoir. Wildlife well hidden.

Left (2): One of our trademark bench areas covered with snow.

Photos: Phil Evans

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

out of a woodpile created by the 'Friends' from the debris dragged out of the River Rea. A Wren from a yard away looks as good as some books portray it and it is good to know that we have created habitat and shelter that is essential in sub-zero conditions. Two Mallards foraged in the river and then that glimpse of a flash of blue that confirms you have disturbed a Kingfisher. But surprise, surprise the bird returned almost immediately and sat on a branch overhanging the river giving a superb view that lasted for many minutes. Time to move on and at the junction of the river and the old Mill leat two Moorhen and a Grey Wagtail searched for food in and on the shallow water whilst a pair of Great Tits called from within the woodland.

This woodland path is an excellent addition to the Reserve and a walk along it even with several inches of snow is always rewarding. However, back onto the cycle path to Burmans' Drive and a view up the old Mill leat to the archaeological site included an outstanding sighting of a Water Rail. The cold weather had obviously driven a very shy bird out into more open water. For a good 15 minutes I watched it search the streambed, head below water, in its search for invertebrates. A rare sight indeed.

Further up Burmans' Drive and a view opens up of the outflow from Wychall Reservoir, the 'riverine' section, which was cleared of Himalayan Balsam by the 'Friends' in the autumn. This has allowed continuously flowing water and shallow meanders. Two Teal and a further 5 Moorhen were foraging in this area today. A small group of 6 Long-tailed Tits flew about the trees above the Drive itself.

Onto the Reservoir site and a bleak landscape of snow and ice. A thin ribbon of flowing water crossed the silted up area. A total of 32 Carrion Crows were on site vying with 3 Black Headed Gulls for access to it. Further up and 5 Teal rested in the water and the obligatory Magpies flew across continuously. Snow started to fall again. A pair of Bullfinches called to each other as they passed through the adjacent scrub and the alarm calls of several Blackbirds hinted that predators were about. A dozen Wood Pigeons took to the air. Scanning the area with binoculars resulted in a Red Fox being observed near to the Reservoir edge, its stance and behaviour indicating that the long grass and snow was probably hiding voles for supper. However, the sight and sounds that drew attention were those of a flock of Jackdaws, which descended onto the site for the evening roost. Birds continued to fly in and an interim count of the *Corvids* on site was 70 Carrion Crows, 60 Magpies and 180 Jackdaws. More birds continued to arrive and then all took to the air in a crescendo of sound as a Buzzard appeared above and was then chased off the site. The snow eased off and small groups of Redwing and Starling flew over. Time to return home.

Many top quality wildlife sightings – 24 bird species and a Fox. Thank goodness for an Urban Nature Reserve.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

At the rear of Wychall Reservoir there is a very boggy environment with sparse patches of worthwhile habitat. Tuesday Work Out activities are creating a mosaic of 'dragonfly' pools with a series of interconnecting channels. An excellent woven hazel fence/barrier has been constructed to sub-divide one area and it all now looks quite good as shown in the photographs below. **CAUTION please** – this area is not yet open to the public and work continues to make the area safe – so please do not visit just yet!



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

The Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust (BIRT):

Peter Cage reports: The FKNNR encourages all members of the community to join in our Tuesday Workouts. For the past couple of years people from BIRT have joined us regularly.

One or two volunteers and a support person will join in the work. Usually they come every week for a few months then when their time with BIRT comes to an end they move on. This gives them a chance to experience something that is a little different from their normal activities and is also good exercise. We hope that it also gives them a chance to get used to coping with their disability in a small group of friendly people. It does not suit every one though; one or two people have decided that one-week is sufficient.

The FKNNR are grateful for all their effort, which has made a contribution to the working parties. We are particularly grateful to the support people who join in the work, that's really beyond the call of duty.

Ed: The 'Big Society' in action!

Facebook: Kings Norton LNR is feature on Facebook courtesy of Ged Hickman. Please check it out.

The Rea Valley Conservation Group Events – please support them.

Saturday 16 April	Spring Flower Bournville Walk (5 miles approx). Meet at Victoria Common car park at 11.00
Friday 13 May	"Wood you believe it". Talk by Penny Moore on Balaam's Wood.
Saturday 4 June	Walk: Weoley Castle/Bournbrook (5m). Meet at the car park Gibbins Road, Selly Oak at 11.00
Friday 10 June	To be arranged.
Saturday 2 July	Belbroughton walk. Meet at Kings Norton church at 11.00
Saturday 17 September	Annual walk (5m). Meet at Selly Manor House, Bournville Green 11.00
Friday 14 October	Annual General Meeting.
Saturday 5 November	Worley Woods walk (3m). Meet at Kings Norton Church at 11.00
Ring: Cyril Ashore on 477 4764 or Geoff Ray on 445 5126.	

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Our education activities move forward

Use of the Reserve by school groups is on the increase (see the Chairman's notes). This is very welcome especially as the City's own Ranger service is now so hard pressed and education resources are so stretched. We need to ensure that the younger generations learn to appreciate and preserve the natural environment. Some of the children were involved in planting small trees – the first time in their lives that they had planted anything! We have a superb example of an urban nature reserve. Let's show it off.



A lesson on the before and after.

Graham Layton (left) in the rain explains how one neglected area has been transformed into scrapes for the benefit of a variety of birds, amphibians and insect life.

Graham has also produced an updated 'power point' presentation tool to assist in our promotional activities.

Requests for talks?

Please contact Amanda or Graham.



To the left a school group possibly from the Green enjoys the tranquillity of Pinehurst Meadow. The group also visited the BW meadow.

Photo: B Hewitt

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

On the east side of Popes Lane a former pool emerges from the undergrowth. Willow is coppiced - water & reeds are revealed.



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Use of the cut Willow is well demonstrated by the construction of superb dead hedges around the area – Thanks to the B'ham & Solihull Group.



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

A Big Cleanup for Spring 2011

The problem of litter and other discarded rubbish in the area of Popes Lane continues to be a problem. Popes Lane marks the boundary between the wards of Northfield and Kings Norton, and separates the current Nature Reserve from the proposed LNR extension. The irksome problem of the litter has always been talked about but infrequently dealt with by the City.

The 'Friends' have always taken an active role in cleaning up the area and we firmly believe the whole site is now much cleaner than when we first began such exercises. Working Party activities especially the spring and autumn cleanups have been described in previous issues of this Newsletter and as usual our thanks go to Alan & Shirley Bakewell for their guidance in this work.



2011: March 12 & 19. Many volunteers with the help of the Street Champions attack the grot. Many thanks to Veolia for their assistance and for the provision of skips. Several tons were removed.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Finance – Yes, we want your cash!

A repeated appeal – but we do need more annual income in order to develop the Local Nature Reserve and help us better manage this superb local asset. This is becoming all the more important as the Local Authority concentrates its resources and manpower into those areas where it has statutory responsibilities. Parks and open spaces do not fare well in such times and the recent Ranger reductions have not helped us.

There have been many requests in previous Newsletters with the theme of extracting cash from the membership and it may seem strange that in times of recession and austerity that we should ask for more. However, we do need your support more than ever. The obvious request is for membership subscriptions to be paid by the due date of the 1st of June each year and for you to pay by standing order lest you forget! But how else can you help? Everyone could assist us in many varied ways.

- Gift aid your subscription if you are a taxpayer. Charity number 1122293. We then claim an additional amount from the Inland Revenue.
- Send us an additional donation (especially Gift Aid).
- Ensure that a sum is bequeathed to us in your will.
- Recruit a friend or a neighbour as a FKNNR member.
- Opt to pay automatically to us a proportion of your gains if you sell items in market places such as 'ebay'.
- Have a 'car boot' or 'garage' sale for our benefit.
- "Giving through the SA return" – If you wish to donate any small tax repayments due to you to a charity then please nominate the FKNNR and enter our unique code DAU70QG onto your tax return.
- Identify potential sources of grants to assist in meeting our objectives.
- Order your supplies of birdseed via us.
- Sponsor specific projects as an individual or better still find us a business or benefactor who would be willing to support our nature conservation activities.

Thank you, Phil Evans, Treasurer.

Subscriptions: *All to note: Subscriptions will be due on the 1st June 2011.*

Thank you to all those who have set up a standing order payment for their £7 subscription (or more), if you have not then please send a cheque to (+ donation? or ask for a standing order/Gift Aid form from) the Treasurer, 21 Woodglade Croft, Kings Norton, B38 8TD if you wish to continue your membership but please let us know if you do not. We do appreciate all financial support that helps protect and enhance Kings Norton LNR.

Correspondence by email preferred: kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Some more Rubbish from a Grumpy old man

In this Newsletter there are details of the continuing efforts to tidy up the Reserve. Rubbish and graffiti may be less evident in some areas but it remains in others. Why we wonder is it easy to carry a full four pack of beer to drink on a bench but it is so difficult to take the empties to the nearest litterbin? On the other hand why would someone want to steal one of the litterbins?

However, on a slightly brighter note, we have been fighting battles on several fronts in order to maintain a much higher standard of care and maintenance from the City and from other Authorities. The Committee members are working tirelessly in order to achieve perfection!! A formal complaint to the City was made on the method of clearing obstacles from the River Rea. Contractors were removing blockages and leaving the debris on the riverbank where over a period it was either thrown or it fell back into the flow. Daft? Hopefully all such detritus will be removed from site in the future. The City have also assisted in preventing a local resident from building bonfires on the Reserve to burn household rubbish.

Thanks go to David Hampson for maintaining the pressure on Severn Trent in respect of the 'grey water' entering Merecroft Pool in two locations. The problem of this pollution seems to reoccur regularly and is more noticeable in dry periods. If you know of houses where the washing machine or dishwasher discharges into the storm water system then please get them to sort it out.

On a worse note the Reserve was the recipient of several thousand gallons of raw sewerage in mid February (official incident 860569) due to a blocked main sewer. Whilst the Environment Agency did a good job to solve the problem and Severn Trent pumped out some of the residues we are left with quite a problem. The pollution effects the wet areas near Popes Lane and unfortunately the new scrapes dug for us by the Environment Agency.

(No Herons or Kingfishers there for a while! – Ed).

Now to dog walkers who are supposed to clear up after the pets have also discharged onto the Reserve. Well done to the majority who do clean up. But why does someone go to the trouble of filling that little black bag and then throw it as far as possible into the undergrowth. Can someone please design a boomerang shaped bag?

The boundary fences and hedges around the Reserve are, in theory, the responsibility of the City to maintain. The kick rails on Wychall lane have now passed their useful life and you may notice two methods of dealing with the problem! Watch this space for some more action. However, the car damage to the fence on Popes Lane (see Chairman's notes) now requires attention again on H & S grounds. It was through our own efforts that the former wooden fence was replaced by the metal palisade one following a similar incident with a car some four years ago.

What comes round goes round.

Correspondence by email preferred: kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

FKNNR Diary Dates 2011 - Please spare one or more hours of your time in order to assist us in progressing the LNR Management Plan.

Date	Location	Details
5 April	River Rea – South Bank	Prune trees/Clearance
12 April	Pinehurst Meadow	Blackthorn Hedge
19 April	BW & Sheila's Meadows	Tidy up/litter pick/scythe
26 April	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Path creation - Dead hedges
30 April	All LNR (05.30)	Dawn Chorus walk
3 May	Wychall – New scrapes	Reed + Wildflower planting
10 May	Wychall Res – cycle route	Path/hedges + wildflower area
17 May	Pea Fields extension	Prune trees/ bramble clearance
24 May	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Path creation - Dead hedges
31 May	Day out	Another LNR
7 June	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up/scythe bramble/prune hedge
14 June	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Path creation – Dead hedges
21 June	River Rea – North Bank	Balsam clearance/paths/pruning
28 June	Popes Lane Pool area	Balsam clearance/paths/pruning
5 July	BW & Sheila's Meadows	Tidy up/litter pick/scythe
12 July	Wychall Res – cycle route	Balsam clearance/paths/pruning
19 July	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Path creation - Dead hedges
26 July	Pea Fields extension	Prune trees/ bramble clearance

*Tuesday Work Outs (TWOs 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 & materials will be provided.

Please support our Dawn Chorus Walk on Saturday 30th April 2011 (start at 05.30 hours – Burmans' Drive).

FKNNR Monthly Guided Walks

Once a month every month at 10.30 to 12.00 a.m. Meet at the corner of Wychall Lane & Meadow Hill Road (The BW Meadow entrance). Note time & location change on the 30 April.

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.

April 30 at 05.30 hrs (Burmans' Drive)/May 28/June 25/July 30.

Correspondence by email preferred: Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

A long distance shot of the railway embankment from the Wychall Reservoir section of the cycle route. It is the 18 January 2011 and two Muntjac Deer appear from the stands of Japanese Knotweed into a sunny position.



**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	Alistair Howard	0121 451 3082
Education		
Newsletter Editor	Phil Evans*	0121 628 6769
Trustee	Alan Bakewell*	0121 603 1127
Committee Members		
	Suzanne Ashley, Anne Price, Brian Hewitt, Val Saunders	
	Peter Cage, David Hampson, Elizabeth Parker, Nicola Human.	
	Co-opted: Ged Hickman.	

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

Correspondence by email preferred: Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com www.fknnr.org.uk
Newsletter 25 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293