

BOSF

March 2008

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

Spring Meeting

The daffodils are up and Spring is definitely here, but before things get too busy in your open spaces put aside Saturday 26th April to come to the BOSF Spring Meeting. The main issues for discussion this year are:

- Who's going to look after our open spaces for the next 10 years – your chance to quiz the people making the decisions?
- Is your site under threat from developers – who can help you protect your open spaces?
- Money – where do BOSF members get money from to improve their open spaces and how can you get your hands on some?

All the sessions during the day are about giving the people who care about Birmingham's Open Spaces the skills and knowledge to make the most of those open spaces.

The day will also include our Annual General Meeting and we are always keen to welcome new volunteers to the committee. If you want to know more about getting involved in BOSF contact Emma on 0121 451 2336.

The meeting is being held at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall from 10.30-3pm, attendance is free and lunch and refreshments will be provided. If you



would like to come along the booking form is available at www.bosf.org.uk or ring **0121 451 2336**.

From BOSF to NOSF via Greenspace

BOSF is a network of the user groups who look after Birmingham's parks and open spaces. We are 4 years old and have 96 member groups. That makes us the biggest authority-wide network of friends groups in England. Greenspace is a national charity that works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals. Greenspace has identified 10 other networks from Bristol to

Sunderland and on March 8th they met for the first time in Birmingham. The meeting agreed to create NOSF – the National Open Spaces Forum – to ensure that the needs of parks and open spaces are recognised by national politicians and most importantly that adequate funding is made available. NOSF other remit will be to support existing networks like BOSF and help other areas create their own networks.

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Re-Procurement

Birmingham City Council is going through the complex process of choosing new contractors to deliver £200m of grounds maintenance for the next 10 years.

This directly impacts on members of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum as these are the people who will be looking after our parks and open spaces; cutting grass, providing on-site staff, planting, cleaning and clearing and being the face most people see when using Birmingham's parks and open spaces.

Since BOSF was set up 4 years ago it has been one of our main aims to ensure that open space user groups are part of the re-procurement process that BOSF members have a say on:

- What jobs need to be done in our open spaces
- Which sites need to have on-site staff
- The willingness of contractors to work positively with friends groups
- The skill levels required of horticultural staff
- Continuity of staffing

We are very pleased to report that Birmingham City Council is actively implementing its commitment to BOSF to involve us in the process. BOSF committee members are part of the groups devising the specifications for the contracts as well as taking in part in short-listing and selection of the contractors.

The final decision is a financial one and is therefore taken by politicians – the councillors you vote for. Your BOSF representatives can do their best to ensure that what we want is included in the proposals but the pressure to find the money to pay for a better service has to come from all of us and all the members of your groups.

The process is long and slow and a decision won't be made until the end of 2008 with the new contractors starting in March 2009. You have your chance to have your say and ask questions of the Parks Department officers involved in the re-procurement process at the BOSF Spring Meeting on Saturday 26th April at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall. If you have a specific question about the contracts you want answered let us know in advance.



Sites Under Threat

Birmingham's open spaces are coming under more and more pressure as the demand for housing and shopping increases. 5 groups have contacted BOSF since January 2008 with concerns about the threats to their local open spaces and there are probably many more.

Ravenhurst Playing Fields, West Hill Rec, Holloway Head Playing Fields, Nocks Brickworks and Moorpool Estate are the ones we know about.

The Spring Meeting will offer the first opportunity for these groups, and any others that you know of, to get together to share experiences and expertise.

Should your site become a "village green"? What does PPG17 mean and what is the UDP? How do you challenge plans to build on your allotments?

If you don't know the answers the chances are another BOSF member whose site is under threat may be able to help you. Perhaps your group has successfully fought off a threat and you've got valuable lessons to pass on.

After the Spring meeting we hope to set up a section on the BOSF website with the collected knowledge on how to defend your open spaces from development. If you've got information that should be included please get in touch with BOSF.

New BOSF logo and soon to be new website

After 4 years of making it up as we go along, BOSF has decided that its image should reflect the high standard of work we do. With a grant from Awards for All we have been able to make use of the skills of a local designer who has worked with us to improve our image. Following similar involvement with the Nocks Brickworks

Residents Action Group, Mark Pawley (mark.pawley@mac.com) has created our new logo, stationery, this wonderful new newsletter and is also helping us put together a display about the work of BOSF, and more importantly the work of BOSF member groups, so that we can showcase what you do to make your open spaces so good.

Mark has spent over 15 years specialising in graphic design, print and photography and offers a full service for organisations like ourselves. Our new identity will help the BOSF build on the reputation of being seriously committed to our open spaces.

