

BOSF

February 2009

Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

Open Spaces Champions at No.10



Arthur Davis, Penny Moore & Richard Burden MP

BOSF members attended a reception for Community

Champions at No 10 Downing Street in January.

Penny Moore and Arthur Davis from Balaams Wood and Emma Woolf from Cotteridge Park were invited as guests of MPs Steve McCabe from Hall Green and Richard Burden from Northfield.

The event was an opportunity to meet members of the Cabinet and explain how important a city's open spaces are and

the role community groups play in making the best of those open spaces.

Communities Secretary, Hazel Blears, Education Secretary Ed Balls and the Chancellor, Alastair Darling were amongst those that Emma and Penny spoke to about what BOSF and all the member groups do.

This event follows on from the

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Cutting the Grass in Birmingham

New contractors announced for 2009 - 2019

After a rigorous couple of years the new companies who will be looking after Birmingham's parks and open spaces have been announced.

There are new teams and some familiar ones. New-comers **Quadron** are taking over Ladywood, Yardley, Hall

Green and Selly Oak. Another company new to Birmingham are **Vale** and they will be working in Erdington and Hodge Hill.

Glendale, who have been in the City for several years, are moving to cover Perry Barr and Sutton Coldfield. **Birmingham Parks and Nurseries** are taking responsibility

for Edgbaston, Northfield and the strategic parks; Kings Heath, Cannon Hill and Lickey Hills.

BOSF are arranging a "getting to know you" event so that you can meet your new staff and let them know how you want your spaces looked after.

Money & Resources Page

O2 It's Your Community

It's Your Community is a new awards programme O2 has launched to help people come together to make a real difference to the communities in which we live. Compared to many grants you apply for this is very straightforward - with just an on-line form. BOSF groups have already been successful so have a go.

Awards of up to £1,000 are available to local groups and individuals, for anything that you can show will benefit your community.

If you could change one thing about where you live, what would it be? Turning derelict land into a playground. Planting trees where none grew before. Creating a wildlife pond where there was once a puddle. Turning an abandoned building into an arts centre for young people...

Whatever your idea you can apply today, simply visit the O2 It's Your Community website www.itsyourcommunity.co.uk

The Chestnut Fund is an independent charity making grants available to encourage and enable conservation groups to carry out conservation activities.

The grants are administered by BTCV. Groups must be part of the BTCV Community Network to qualify. For further details or to request an application form please contact BTCV's Community Network Department on 01302 388834 or at local-groups@btcv.org.uk

The Charity Technology Exchange is a programme created for registered charities that offers donated or discounted hardware and software from big name brands including Microsoft, Symantec and Cisco. Once registered with the scheme you can also get advice about the right products for your organisation.

If you try the service out let us know if it's any good



Media Coverage

Once you received your grant make sure you tell the local media so that you get the maximum benefit for your group. Both The Birmingham Post and Birmingham Mail have dedicated open space reporters: Patrice.John@Birminghammail.net or 0121 234 5433 and Jo.Ind@Birminghampost.net 0121-234-5635.

Grassroots Grants

Grassroots Grants is a key element of the Government's strategy for building stronger and more active communities. Grassroots Grants aims to invest in a thriving community sector by:

"Increasing the small grant funding available to community groups and making it more sustainable".

This is a fund for community groups who have been active in their community for at least 12 months and have income of less than £20,000 a year. The aims of the fund are to:

- Encourage community responsibility
- Develop community capacity
- Provide funding for groups unable to access other funding
- Support original work not being done within the area

You can apply for a minimum of £250 and a maximum of £5,000 either as a one-off or over the 3 year life of the programme. These are some examples of what they will fund:

- Purchasing equipment,
- Putting on a local event or workshop
- Staff costs to enable the employment of individuals, contribution to rent costs
- The cost of attending a conference or event, training for volunteers
- Activities that meet an identified need in the local community

For further information regarding Grassroots Grants contact

Birmingham Community Foundation, Nechells Baths, Nechells Park Road, Birmingham, B7 5PD.

Tel: 0121 322 5560

email:

team@bhamfoundation.co.uk

Forest Education Initiative

FEI Birmingham is an organisation that is committed to supporting and improving standards of Outdoor Learning and Forest Schools in the City.

All primary schools are now required to deliver elements of the curriculum outdoors and as such, lots of schools will be looking to their local parks as open spaces as venues.

If you are interested in using your open space for outdoor learning contact FEI Birmingham who offer subsidised training sessions in outdoor skills and events where you can experience a range Forest Schools and woodland learning activities.



FEI Birmingham is run mainly on a voluntary basis, they are an arm of The Forest Education Initiative UK. To join the organisation, receive emails regarding up coming events and FEI cluster group meetings and qualify for subsidised training, please visit our website at www.brumforestschools.com and follow joining instructions or ring 07766 17 15 17

Goings On

Get Walking Keep Walking

The Ramblers Association is keen to prove that walking isn't just something to do in the countryside. They have a programme of walks around Birmingham. They need your suggestions for other places to walk - so if your park or open space is suitable why not get in touch with them.

The project co-ordinator writes a regular urban walks column in the Birmingham Mail - go to urban walks at www.birminghammail.net for details of previous walks. You can contact the Ramblers in Birmingham on 464 6050 or go to www.ramblers.org.uk & click on the Get Walking Keep Walking logo.



OPAL - Open Air Laboratories

The green spaces in Birmingham are home to a wide variety of plants and animals that many residents are only vaguely, or completely unaware of.

OPAL want to try and get everyone interested in the natural world that surrounds where people live, work, or go to school. This will not only ensure a brighter future for wildlife but should help people feel good about their local space and increase their feeling of ownership and use of it.

Open Air Laboratories is a five-year long Big Lottery funded national project that aims to raise the level of public understanding and awareness of the natural environment across England through a range of interactive science projects. Activities in the West Midlands region are being organised by researchers at The University of Birmingham, full details of which can be found at: www.opalwestmidlands.org/

Research projects include studying where solitary bees nest and live, how birds move across the city, and which species of moth live in local gardens. Interactive science projects include studies of worms and soils, how lichens can indicate how polluted the air is, and what creatures live in ponds.

We need green spaces in which to run these research and interactive science projects. So if your organisation would like to get involved, or would like to talk about how we can tailor events for your needs then please send an e-mail to team@opalwestmidlands.org or telephone Adam on 0121 4146167.



Lottery Money for Parks & Open Spaces

BIG Lottery is holding a consultation on how lottery funding should be spent between now and 2015. We need as many BOSF members as possible to respond and make clear the demand for further funding for parks and green spaces.

The importance of open spaces to people's everyday lives was highlighted in the findings of Green-Space's 2007 Park Life report, with 83% of respon-

dents viewing their parks and green spaces as being the focal point for their communities. This clearly illustrates the importance of parks and green spaces to communities and is further backed up by research by MORI, on behalf of CABE Space, that showed that 91% of residents believe that public parks and open spaces improve the quality of their lives.

Over the past three years the Lottery has awarded over £150m to parks and green space. This has enabled considerable funding to continue for parks but to date only around 1-2% of UK parks have benefited, but there is still high demand as funding programmes are significantly oversubscribed. It is therefore important that the lottery continues to fund public park projects in order to make a difference to the daily lives of communities.

The consultation offers the opportunity for those that have successfully bid for lottery funding to convey the importance of this funding, what has been achieved, and how by working in partnership the community is at the heart of each project. We would also urge those considering applying for funding in the future to be explicit in the need for further funding opportunities, and to put forward the potential for effective partnership working.

Make your voice heard by going to
www.big-thinking.org.uk by February 27 2009.



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recent submissions BOSF has made to Birmingham City Council Scrutiny Committees about the future funding of our parks and open spaces.

Recognising that we will never get all the money or staff our open spaces need from local council funds BOSF submitted a report that demonstrated how Friends groups add tangibly to the resources available to an open space - in both labour and cash.

The report contained 3 case studies:

- Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve contribute 3,300 hours of labour a year - the equivalent of nearly 2 additional workers.
- Friends of Cotteridge Park have raised £100,000 in grants for equipment and activities over the last 5 years.
- CSV Environment have helped parks in Nechells and Ladywood raise more than £500,000 in the last 3 years.

Both local and central government need to recognise the resources volunteers contribute and should be supporting that effort in practical ways.

New Worker for Birmingham Open Spaces Forum

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has recognised the value of the work undertaken by BOSF and have helped us pay for a part-time worker for the next 2 years. The new **Community Open Spaces Development Officer** will be here to support the work your groups already do as well as help get new groups and services started.

This is a great boost for BOSF, as for the last 4 years all the work has been taken on by volunteers who already contribute lots of time to their own open space. The person recruited for the new post will be someone who is able to work from home and do flexible hours with experience of community groups involved in community development and the environment. If you are interested in applying for the post or would like an application pack contact Emma on 451 2336 or info@bosf.org.uk The deadline for applications is Friday 20th March 09.

