

Chairman's Annual Report 2006/2007

Since the AGM in 2006, at which the new chair, Gavin Bolam was appointed; the User Group has held a number of social and other participatory events.

During the last year, the Group has been making progress in terms of hedge planting, bulb planting and organising a very successful fun day which was visited by over 1000 people.

1. MEETINGS

Since September 2006, the Group has had 8 meetings:

7 September 2006
26 October 2006
7 December 2006
1 February 2007
5 April 2007
10 May 2007
7 June 2007
6 September 2007

Meetings were being held at the 1st Forest Hill Scout Hall on St German's Road but since the Hall was taken over, meetings have been moved to the Ackroyd Community Centre to which affiliation is still being considered so that we can hold regular meetings there. Ideally, it is more centrally located than the other hall and it is hoped that as the message gets around that meetings are being held here, we will get more volunteers to join the group.

2. CONSTITUTION

The constitution is still being used and a bank account is now in full use. The Group has worked towards holding meetings approximately every 2 months and the committee meet on a more regular basis, as and when required depending on issues that are being raised.

As part of the constitution, people attending the meetings should, where possible make a voluntary donation of £1 to help cover some of the running costs, including the hall hire for the meetings.

As applications for funding progress, a funding sub committee was formed at the last meeting on 6 September and the members will be holding a meeting in the near future. The constitution will act as an important reference point. We have some copies of the constitution document here. It can also be found on the Group's website. www.blythehillfields.org.uk

3. COMMITTEE

The committee elected at the AGM in September 2006 was as follows:

Gavin Bolam - Chair
Kylie Barnes - Secretary
Andrew Barnes – Treasurer (elected in his absence)

Mark Wellband
Sydney Couldridge
Alan Bailey

Since being elected, the Committee has met on 4 occasions.

During the course of the year, one member of the Committee had to resign (Ray Ashley – due to ill health) we hope that he continues to return to good health.

4. EVENTS

The Group has held three very successful planting days this year. The first was a bulb planting day in October 2006. We had over 30 volunteers including children to help on the day. Sadly, as the bulbs began to blossom, Glendales made a mistake and mowed the bluebells down. A record of planting is now with the park maintenance team so this shouldn't happen again.

The hedge planting day on 20 January 2007 and the second on 17 February, all made possible by the support of Lara Al-Jabi from Glendales. The weather in January was awful – we were working in mud and it rained very hard. In February we had glorious sunshine and the job was completed in record time.

The hedging whips are doing very well and they are growing profusely.

With thanks to Gavin Bolam for successfully negotiating for resources from Glendale's, the Group is able to organise another bulb planting day on Saturday the 10th November at 10.30 along with putting up the sponsored bird boxes from the fun day. There will be 2 hedge planting events early in 08.

These events are really important in getting people from the local community involved and raise the level of awareness of the group. It is important to give them a sense of ownership and care towards Blythe Hill Fields. It is hoped that regular events like this will take place more often next year. There are photos of these events on the website.

5. BANK ACCOUNT

The Group's bank account is up and running with the Co-operative Bank. It is another important step forward in the group's structure that will help in future funding applications.

6. WEBSITE – www.blythehillfields.org.uk

The web site is continuing to grow, with regular additions of pictures taken by local people and it can be used for a number of ways, including booking stalls for the fun day etc. In practical terms it's a document store for Group agendas, minutes and reports but it is also a place of reference for new members to access information about the Group. It is a means of sharing ideas on the discussion boards and a gallery for pictures of Blythe Hill Fields and events and activities that the Group organises.

7. MEMBERSHIP

Attendance at Group meetings has fluctuated. There are many more people interested in the activities of the Group than attend meetings. It is difficult to manage their expectations and considerations without their participation in discussions.

It is imperative that any improvements/enhancements to Blythe Hill Fields are supported by a majority of park users and local residents. It is clear that since holding the Fun Day in June, people have expressed a strong interest in having another fun day however, for this to happen, it is vital that more volunteers come forward to help with organising such a complicated & varied event.

8. EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Group has tried to establish relationships with other park user Groups and community organisations. Sadly, these relationships have not continued, the reasons being unclear. It seems that groups are very busy with the items on their agenda to get involved with other groups.

There is so much that all our groups can learn from each other. One thing is clear; members of any park user group are there because they care about their park and want it to be the best that it can be. With continued commitment, energy and genuine partnership we can start helping that vision to become a reality.

Having completed 1 year as chair, I am stepping down at this AGM.

I would like to put forward Alan Bailey as the new chair of the user group.

I feel, that without having such a totally committed Secretary on board, Kylie Barnes, this group would not run as effectively as it has done over the past year. Without a capable Secretary, the group would not function at all and there would not be a user group for the fields.

It has been an interesting time over the last year. Organising the fun day was a steep learning curve, at times; it was like driving at night with no lights.

The committee and I have learned a great deal over the year. I have given my personal best to the Blythe Hill Fields User Group and give many thanks to all the loyal supporters.

It is hoped that the new committee can obtain funding for a further fun day, without it, such an event will not take place.

To sum up, the user group has evolved from a "lets sit down & have a chat" group to a "can do" group.

Gavin Bolam
Chair, Blythe Hill Fields User Group