

Insight from our FPA team

Name: Daniel Lloyd

Role: FPA Project Officer



Welcome to our November newsletter! Putting these monthly updates together really puts it into perspective how fast time has been going recently; I only started with Naturally Birmingham three months ago, but it really feels like I've been part of this amazing team for years!

My role means I get to dip into all five of our project frameworks and I'm always so inspired by just the scale and breadth of all the work taking place as part of this programme. Nature is such an important, but often undervalued part of our lives, and I feel so lucky to be part of a team that works to embrace and showcase the value (or even necessity) of good quality green spaces.

We're entering the transition between Autumn and Winter and I'm definitely starting to feel the cold creeping in! Though even as the air starts to bite and the trees go bare, there's still an unmatched beauty to nature – while we may mourn the loss of the warm Autumn colours, we can rest assured knowing they'll come back brighter and stronger next year.

I really hope you enjoy reading about what we have been up to this month and hopefully still find the motivation to embrace the cold air for a winter walk! Now.. where did I put my scarf..?

As always, if you have any suggestions for our newsletter or items to include, please contact me at Daniel.Lloyd@birmingham.gov.uk

Leadership Programme

Our green leadership programme is set to begin in the New Year, that aims to embed the skills needed to champion green spaces in our staff, partners and wider community to ensure that parks and nature are high on the Council's agenda in the future - long after the FPA ends. These will take the form of a series of online workshops that focus on building individual leadership skills and empowering participants to embrace and push for change. If you would like to get involved with this programme, or perhaps just learn more, pop an email to:

Daniel.Lloyd@birmingham.gov.uk



A New Governance Model for Birmingham's Green Space

Central to Naturally Birmingham's ambition is to put nature at the forefront of decision making, and this requires a fundamental shift in the ways we operate and to challenge the 'status quo'. As part of our housing pilot, we are currently consulting with tenants to establish the level of interest at two sheltered housing schemes in south Birmingham. Feedback so far has been very positive with tenants keen to have a shared outdoor space, especially as this year they have been unable to meet up as a group due to Covid-19 restrictions. The aim of these community gardens is for residents to be able to meet up outside and possibly grow fruit and vegetables while chatting to friends and neighbours. Once we have feedback on the consultation the next stage will be to co-design the space with residents to ensure that we are delivering on their expectations, and then hopefully get the gardens built ready for the Spring. We've linked in with some partner organisations who will be able to support the tenants at both sites, so that they can become a constituted gardening group and apply for funding to make them more sustainable in the long term.

We are also in the process of finalising our Green User Guide (GUG) that will form part of the package for new homeowners in the city. The guide outlines the 'green' maintenance responsibilities of the property, as well as general guidelines and tips on how to look after your green spaces and get the most out of them. We are hoping to publish a draft version of this guide on our website soon, so stay tuned!

On the 27th of November we hosted our second Designing Public Open Space Workshop (*pic below*), with around 30 participants from a range of organisations and backgrounds. Topics included an overview of Birmingham's 'Great Green Infrastructure', an overview of environmental justice and what is stopping us from achieving this, as well as some discussion groups on design principles for green spaces in a range of sites. The session was well received and we are really looking forward to hosting the third and final workshop in January 2021.



Healthy City Framework

Green spaces and nature are at the core of Birmingham's ambition to be a healthy city. We've been working on connecting with NHS link workers and GP practices in order to ensure that the activities that we are offering are accessible to those in the community who would benefit from them the most, making sure everyone gets a chance to experience nature.

We have also been working on creating a 'How-To...' guide, putting together the experiences of all those working within the FPA project in a simple, easy-to-read format that aims to present ideas of how to incorporate green spaces into different activities. The guide presents the activities that the FPA project has been working on, and includes challenges that we have faced, as well as top tips for running these activities. We hope that this guide will help ensure our activities and learning are sustainable in the long term, and aids other organisations who are on a similar journey to us jumpstart their own programmes. We will be posting this 'How-to' guide on our website in the coming weeks.

Below: King's Heath House



Finance Framework

A vital part of the national Future Parks Accelerator Programme is to address the outstanding question from the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Future of Public Parks; how can we secure a sustainable financial future for public parks? In Birmingham this month saw the first Sustainable Finance Steering Group chaired by Councillor Tristan Chatfield, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources. This group is made up of city council, third sector, NHS and external partners- all pooling ideas and collaborating to answer both the short-term and long-term funding questions. For the city's green space. A year long programme was outlined that will result in the city adopting a new Sustainable Finance Framework from March 2022.

The FPA is also piloting new sustainable methods of funding our green spaces, including investing £10,000 into our new foundation model to test how that can be used to raise funds and support local parks. We are also taking part in a fundraising effort for a conservation scheme in Dawberry Fields Park with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust.

Earlier this month, the Office for National Statistics released their Natural Capital Account for the UK, some of the more interesting take-aways include:

- In 2018, the asset value of the aspects of UK natural capital we can currently value was estimated to be £921 billion.
- Living near publicly accessible green and blue spaces added £3,146 to the average property price.
- Over 5 billion nature-related visits within the UK were made in 2018, amounting to 10 billion hours.
- There were nearly three times the number of hot days in UK city regions in 2018 compared with 2017; urban green and blue space helps to mitigate the associated costs.

Citizen Involvement Framework

Making sure people's voices are heard is a key part of our programme, and we love to hear your stories and experiences wherever possible! We have hosted two successful Early Years webinars, with great feedback from those providing childcare for under 5s, we had 62 people attending, and it was a chance to hear about simple things settings can do to promote nature, swapping tips and connect with our Ranger Service. We had some great feedback - '...it was amazing and gave me some great idea's to think about'. Ranger Holly gave some ideas on how to get children and staff comfortable with being outside. Watch her great video showing you how to make mud animals - <https://naturallybirmingham.org/out-and-about-with-birminghams-park-rangers/>. The team are now supporting the BCC Early Years Service to do this regularly.

Our Park Stars programme has now been launched, to help encourage young people to connect with the outdoors and nature. Read more about it here <https://naturallybirmingham.org/birminghams-park-stars/> - we'd encourage everyone to take part and see what they learn!

Environmental Justice Framework

Environmental justice is a true cornerstone of Naturally Birmingham, something we are trying to get all our partners and colleagues to think long and hard about, across all areas of city life. We are midway through a series of workshops with planning, housing and development colleagues and partners- examining how this can be better defined, measured, assessed and incorporated into everyday activities and processes going forward. These will continue and be tested on certain ongoing development schemes or proposals across Birmingham to make them robust. We are working towards adopting an Environmental Justice Audit that could then be read across all future projects; to help ensure they deliver best for those in greatest need.”

The Naturally Birmingham Project is also looking to support business and organisations fulfil their green commitments through activities within Birmingham’s Parks and green spaces. We want to encourage businesses to get involved with Naturally Birmingham through park activities, staff engagement days and social value activities.

We want to ensure that businesses are involved with looking after their local green spaces. We will support businesses to look at the opportunities that will give back in the long term including sponsorship, the support of training courses for those with an interest in the green sector and more...

Employee health and wellbeing is very important and we want to encourage businesses to support employees that wish to use the green spaces around Birmingham to support their health and wellbeing.

Social Value activities can be supported through

- **LOCAL EMPLOYMENT** – creating employment and training opportunities
- **PARTNERS IN COMMUNITIES** – supporting community organisations
- **GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE** – commit to protecting the environment

Parks need people and people need parks: we would therefore love to have a conversation with you around your social value and green commitments, so please get in touch with us at socialvalueparks@birmingham.gov.uk





Some pictures from the Dolphin Centre Gardening Club Renovation Work

Still not had enough of FPA? Why not check out our blogs here?

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/blog/>

You can also read our previous newsletters, which provide more detail of our 5 frameworks:

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/read-our-newsletters/>



@NaturallyBirmi1



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