

FPA NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2021



A word from our FPA Team: Dr Jeevan Swamy - GP Registrar

Hi! My name is Dr Jeevan Swamy and I am the GP registrar working with FPA team for the next six months. I wanted to share a brief reflection that I have had by working with the FPA team over the last two weeks.

Firstly, have you heard of a term called cognitive dissonance? It is a concept that we are taught early in medical school. It is the idea that the beliefs we hold can often be contradictory. More specifically our actions can often be in juxtaposition to our beliefs. Let's take engagement with green spaces as

an example. I know that engagement with green spaces positively effects my physical and mental health and therefore my overall wellbeing. However, I would unashamedly raise my hand and say that despite knowing this I have not been able to implement this into my life. This is something that I am looking to change.

If we delve a little deeper why have I not done this? This is because the cultural paradigm that myself and my colleagues use is about symptoms rather than root causes.

My experience of working with the FPA team has, pardon the pun, been a breath of fresh air. I am currently fortuitous enough to work with a wide variety of people who enhance and enrich my worldview, and yet still connect to the underlying idea of engagement in green spaces. The key difference I have noted is a cultural change. For example, we recently explored our memories of green spaces together and talked about how this made us feel. The honesty between us created synergy and a shared culture from which, I believe, we can work with intent and integrity..

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



A NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR BIRMINGHAM'S GREEN SPACE

Over February, the team have been busy preparing for our 'Mid-Point Review' – where we summarise all the progress we have made to date, alongside our plan for the future and present this information to our key stakeholders. We thought this was a good opportunity to let everyone know a bit more about the way our programme is structured, and some of the progress we have made on our journey so far.

We are currently transitioning from the first phase of the FPA project - the '**co-design phase**', where we have been working with the National Trust, our partners, and the community to develop a new strategy and business plan for managing our parks and green spaces. Finding out who uses our parks and greens spaces and why has been a big part of

the co-design phase, though the task has been made much harder by the restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic - not to mention that the use of parks has changed quite radically over the last 12 months! We carried out community consultation, partner engagement and partnership development with our main partners: Birmingham Open Spaces Forum, The Birmingham Children's Trust, Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust, Witton Lodge Community Association and Birmingham City Council, and most recently have carried out options appraisal and business planning for our next phase. Throughout the project we have been supported by The National Trust and received other external advice and due diligence from organisations that are helping to shape and steer the project.

Within all four pilot areas of the project we have been looking at opportunities for volunteer development, consultation, and community partnerships for social outcomes, working with the people we already have relationships with such as Friends Groups, volunteers, and other community groups. But at the same time, we are also aiming to increase the numbers and diversity of people involved with green spaces and build better relationships with this new cohort of people. We have been providing regular and ongoing opportunities for engagement and consultation for all age groups - from children learning how to "Grow together" to older housing tenants enjoying Witton Lodges "Parks at Home" programme. Our aim is to achieve equity across all these areas and promote environmental justice across Birmingham by putting parks at the heart of everything we do and showing just how crucial such green infrastructure is for civic pride and liveability. We started out this first phase of the project aiming to '*make the invisible visible*' and one of the greatest lessons we have learnt is that **people need parks and parks need people**. Together we look forward to moving to the transition stage of the project, where we plan to 'cement' the proposals we have set in motion. We hope you will be alongside us for this next part of our journey.

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

A core part of our FPA programme is ensuring that green spaces are at the forefront of decision making across all areas of the Council and the wider community. To do this requires a huge shift in the way we think about and value our green spaces, and we hope to facilitate this change through our FPA programme by connecting others to the green agenda.

Visit our [website](#) for more information on our frameworks.



CITY PLAN

As you may be aware, Birmingham City Council launched Our Future City Plan (OFCP): Central Birmingham 'Shaping our City Together' document as the first step towards transforming the central area of Birmingham. The document kickstarts the conversation about how we want our city to function, to agree a vision and work together in delivering our future city over the next 20 years.

To further explore the key issues and ideas in the engagement document, a series of virtual events titled Our Future City Conversations will take place during the consultation period (26/01/21 – 26/03/21). These discussions will be led by our public, private and third sector partners featuring a range of speakers, including Birmingham-based professionals and experts, to look at how our city can address the major challenges and opportunities that we face. We want all of our communities to input on this engagement so we can create a shared vision for the future. Please have your say on the proposals and ideas contained in the engagement document by taking part in the [BeHeard survey](#).

The remaining events focus on the key themes of the OFCP 2040 namely;

- A city of nature
- Celebrating our unique identity
- 15 minute neighbourhoods
- Creating an equitable City

The programme of events will be taking place over February and March with details of forthcoming events updated regularly and announced [here](#).



CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT FRAMEWORK

WHAT IS CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT?

The world's greenest cities make it very easy for their citizens to make a difference through contributing their ideas, their endeavour, and their time. Birmingham needs such a support system for its citizens and under FPA we intend to create such a platform - where everybody's voice can be heard.

EARTH STORIES

The things our parks and green spaces offer us have never been more important than they are now. The Covid-19 pandemic has meant we can't do all the things we would normally do - visit our friends and family in their homes, go to the gym, go to school and play and learn with whoever we want to, go watch a film, see our colleagues in the office and so much more. The one thing that we have consistently been able to do since March 2020 has been to visit our parks and green spaces. They have become our classrooms and offices, our gyms, our meet up place for friends and family, entertainment spaces (when

appropriate) - they have helped to keep our mind and bodies healthy.

In return for nature always being there for us and never closing, we need to look after our parks and green space not just for us now, but for future generations. Birmingham City Council Parks Service, green groups and volunteers have a huge job to make sure these spaces are well looked after and not only survive but also thrive and are welcoming to anyone who wants to use them. We want our green spaces to offer an opportunity for community cohesion, one of many ways all people of different social backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths, and generations can interact with and relate to each other in a positive way. We want to find ways to help that happen.

There must be a million stories out there - we want to gather hundreds of them from our residents, from a wide range of backgrounds - different ethnicities, nationalities, faith groups, young and old, LGBT, those with disabilities. Give us your memories, the good bits and the bad bits, your hopes, fears and dreams. Only then will we be able build a future for our parks that reflects what our City wants. We want to hear the good and the bad - don't hold back! The stories we collect will help shape the 25-year plan we create for the City's green spaces.

If you would like to find out more about the initiative, you can find more information on our website [here](#), or you can send us your story through our SurveyMonkey link [here](#).

We have also put together a process whereby local groups can bid for £500 funding to collect earth stories from particular members of our population. If you know any community organisations who work with these particular groups, please do get them to get in touch with us as soon as possible.

Expressions of interest will need to be made by the 12th of March, and stories would be needed by May 4th. Contact futureparks@bosf.org.uk for more information.



CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT FRAMEWORK

PARK STARS

The first of our Park Stars certificates have been sent out! Our Park Stars Programme (link) is part of a wider initiative that aims to get people from a range of age groups interested in our parks and green spaces through a series of activities, including nature trails, quizzes, and planting seeds. [Visit our website](#) for the full details.



  @NaturallyBirmi1

 <https://naturallybirmingham.org/>

WHY NOT SEND US A MESSAGE?

We'd love to hear from you! We're very active on social media so please get in touch!



DAWBERRY FIELDS

One of our pilot sites, Dawberry fields, has recently had some notice boards installed (pictures on the left). We've also had some lovely feedback from Luke as a result of our Dawberry Fields Reptile Habitat Fundraising Project:

"I saw your advertisement on Warstock Road this morning. I don't think I'd be exaggerating to say it's one of the most exciting things I've seen for a good while! I suppose you could argue it's not hard to pique people's interest during such times, but there's not a lot I enjoy more than UK reptiles."...

... "If there was any way in which I'd be able to help with the project, I'd be over the moon. I've read the 'For the Love Reptiles' article by Megan, so it sounds like things are already in more-than capable hands, but I thought it worth gauging whether there is any additional scope for assistance, even if just as a volunteer mucking in with some ground work!"



The team were thrilled to receive such a passionate response to our Reptiles Campaign, and it really showcases the passion our residents have for our green spaces!

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FRAMEWORK

PARK COUNTERS

To truly make our green spaces sustainable, we need to understand how they are used. To help us understand this further, we have been collaborating with the University of Nottingham to introduce 'park counters' in three of our local parks to help us measure usage. The counters will be in place between March-June 2021, in the following locations:

- Kings Heath Park – Rangers office, ground floor, Kings Heath Park House
- Ward End Park – ground floor, Ward End House
- Cotteridge Park – ground floor, Friends building.

The counters will use Wi-Fi technology to log the number of devices that ping the sensor, the information these counters collect will be completely anonymous, and cannot access any identifiable information or data on phones or devices, it will only record whether a device is present. You can opt out of this by turning off Wi-Fi on your phone while in the park. The sensors will really help us understand how and when our parks are used, and the impact of any initiatives we introduce.

DAWBERRY FIELDS REPILE FUNDRAISER

Our Reptile Project fundraiser with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust is going strong and we're currently halfway to our fundraising goal! Please consider making a donation to the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust by clicking [here](#) to learn more and donate, or Text DAWBERRY to 70085 to donate £10. Texts cost £10 plus one standard rate message and you'll be opting in to hear more about our work and fundraising via telephone and SMS.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE FINANCE?

Any change or improvement we make to parks and green spaces has to be financially viable. Our new finance framework will re-calculate all the benefits green space brings to the whole City. We will look at ways to bring extra money in where possible. By focusing on money and budgets, we will grow a greener future with confidence.



Support the Dawberry Fields
REPTILE PROJECT

NATURALLY BIRMINGHAM: FUTURE PARKS ACCELERATOR

Birmingham City Council

In partnership with the Birmingham City Council's Naturally Birmingham Future Parks Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

It's Careers Week 1st - 6th March!!

Did you know there are hundreds of different jobs within the green sector? From horticulture and forestry to research technicians and environmental scientists?

We've spoken to a few people working in the green sector about why they love their job!!

See if you can guess what the roles are by completing our Guess the role Quiz [here!](#)

We really love working in the green sector and if one of these roles excites you and you want to know more, then please do get in touch!

Good Luck!! #skillsshowcase #greenskills #greenjobs

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

We believe that access to green spaces is a fundamental right.

People living in more deprived areas have poorer health, access to work/education, and often cannot access good quality green spaces.

This theme connects Climate Change, ecological decline, and the Covid-19 pandemic workstreams to ensure the enormous benefits of being in nature are available to those who need them most.

HEALTHY CITY FRAMEWORK

WHAT IS A HEALTHY CITY?

Birmingham aspires to be a healthy city as well as a green city. Part of this means recognising the overwhelming health benefits of the natural environment to people's lives. Our Naturally Birmingham Programme will aim to re-connect these agendas once again in Birmingham so that we clearly link health and wellbeing to green space nature, helping our residents to live healthier lives.

We are continuing to work with GPs and Wellbeing Centres to look how we can deliver activities in parks. The importance of nature to our overall health is something that is increasingly being realised, and it is a core value of our FPA programme that people have a plethora of opportunities to interact with our green spaces, no matter your age, ability, or background.

You may also be interested in signing up for the 3rd International Social Prescribing Network Conference 'Social prescribing & community - beyond the pandemic' 4th-5th March, Online, GMT
<https://www.socialprescribingnetwork.com/conference>

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/>

FREE ONLINE EVENTS AND COURSES

[Nature Connectedness - for a new relationship with nature](#) - free online course from the University of Derby

[Landscape Institute Events and Seminars](#)