

FPA NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2021



In memory of Ralph: Hamira Sultan - FPA Director & Public Health Consultant

I've been a convert to nature and all things green for the last couple of years now. The power it has to heal, manage stress and give me joy never ceases to amaze me. I couldn't quite believe the news delivered to me on the 15th of February that my friend and colleague, Ralph Smith, had unexpectedly passed away. I still feel quite numb whilst writing this. Ralph was a fit man, a lover of so many things – music, motorbikes, cycling, nature, and most of all, his family. I first met Ralph in 2009 at Sandwell Primary Care trust as the Head of Intelligence in my first ever Public Health job. He took me under his wing straight away, taking time to explain the intricacies and wonder of data, and how it formed the back bone of Public Health, the profession I have come to love.

We used to joke that he was my Public Health Uncle; he complained that he wasn't old enough to be my uncle, a joke that went on for another 12 years to come. Throughout my career, I have always thought of Ralph as the starting place for any of my programmes of work was with data. I even sought his advice when I was applying for a job as Consultant in Public Health lead for data and insight at Walsall. We often joked that one day, we'd both be working for Birmingham Public Health, in the city we grew up in, lived in and were raising our families in. Then it finally happened – I was offered a job at Birmingham City Council to lead our FPA programme.

On my induction day, in October 19, to get all my paper work sorted, I heard his voice from afar and ran over to give him a big hug. Finally, we'd be working together again. He got to meet Esa (who accompanied me that day) and hear all about how much I had got into growing vegetables in my allotment, and also that I had finally learnt to cycle. We were going to cycle to work one day once the weather was better. The last time I saw Ralph was in January 2021. We met for a distanced walk to go and see his allotment. His passion for growing took my breath away. He had an amazing plot (number 28), and took huge pride in it. I went to visit it recently with his wife, Emma – the potatoes, rhubarb and garlic he had planted were all growing.



We had planned to meet with Esa once restrictions lifted, and in the mean time, I promised I would get growing at home. That day with Esa never came. However, I have absolutely continued to grow plants at home, and we have a growing corner with peppers, an oak tree, herbs and pumpkins. Seeing my babies grow, along with my other baby, Esa, gives me joy each day. I've dedicated this corner to Ralph – your memory will continue to grow with these wonders of nature.

Rest in peace Ralph, you beautiful soul. I miss you a lot.

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



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.

On March 31st, the FPA team organised a Social Prescribing Workshop with local organisations working in green spaces, GPs, local social prescribers, Public Health and Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group. This was a great opportunity to bring together local and wider learning on how we start to do more with green social prescribing and some simple steps we can take to make it more like business as usual. We'll be sharing more work on this in the next few months, so watch this space

On March 17th, Northfield NNS invited the FPA team to tell them all about our work and how we can support this network in South Birmingham to do more with green spaces and growing. There was a lot of interest, especially for developing sensory walks in local green spaces. Our partnership with TAWS is going really well and would encourage you to contact Taz on Tahir.Parvaz@theaws.org if you're interested. He has now done over 50 walks in local parks, with more to do!

Weds 17th March

Live on facebook
In partnership with:
Friends of Swanshurst Park

50

10:00

Sensory Walk with Taz and Nazia
around Swanshurst Park

FREE

Find us on Facebook Search for "The Active Wellbeing Society" or @theaws

A NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR BIRMINGHAM'S GREEN SPACE

MID POINT REVIEW PASSED!

You may recall from last month's newsletter that we were approaching our Mid-point Review period with the National Trust - aimed at evaluating our progress up to now and critiquing our plans for the year ahead. I am thrilled to say that we passed the review and have the go-ahead to continue our work until March 2022! This was definitely a welcome boost to a bit of a gloomy year - so a big thank you to all those involved in the process and here's to another year of FPA goodness!

PLANNING ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan has been proposed to the deputy head of planning, outlining how Birmingham's planning team can embed the learning from the FPA programme.

A series of workshops held over the last 6 months has resulted in the drafting of an FPA Position Statement, outlining what the design of an optimum green space should entail in a "perfect world". To that end an action plan has been proposed to the Deputy Leader of planning in order to support the implementation of design pointers outlined in the position statement. A report is further being submitted to the leadership team of the Inclusive Growth Directorate in order to get sufficient buy in across the directorate to resource the work streams proposed.

The action plan involves tightening up design guidance surrounding green spaces so that there are fewer intangibles around issues such as equality and access for all so that stronger conversations can be had on issues that currently don't have a voice - due to lack of ownership, individual passions, or the perception of the issue being perceived as "small" within a wider design and thus "falling through the cracks".

Do we make sure that pathways cater to people with dementia? do we ensure landmarks at path junctions for those with poor sight? Do we ensure regular seating areas along pathways to cater for those with cardiovascular issues and that these areas are given adequate shade in light of the upward temperatures that Climate Change will bring?

These are some of the issues that the action plan will hope to address. This may be through tighter design guidance, tweaked local validation criteria for supporting documents that place greater emphasis on the issues captured in the FPA position statement, and encouraging officers, the community and private developers to work together towards common goals.

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

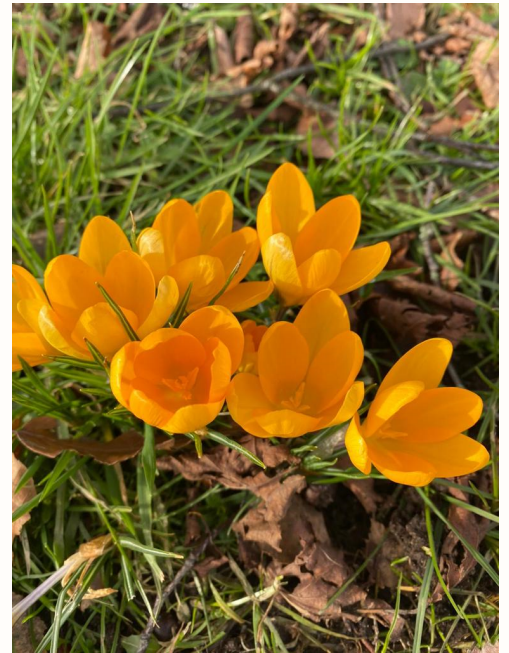
A core part of our FPA programme is ensuring that green spaces are at the forefront of decision making across all areas of the Council and the wider community. To do this requires a huge shift in the way we think about and value our green spaces, and we hope to facilitate this change through our FPA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

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

GREEN SPACE STRATEGY

One of the great skills of humankind is our ability to think ahead, and I don't mean what we are having for tea! I am talking about thinking about what will happen in a year, a decade and even a century from now. Although we can do this, it doesn't mean it is easy.

We are currently in the process of collating and creating ideas for our 25-year Green Space Strategy to help the citizens of Birmingham engage in green spaces - the work has involved digging up the wealth of evidence that supports the idea that green engagement is a cornerstone of good health. We are in the process of combining this with the ideas, concerns and expectations of the residents of Birmingham, and the challenge will be to communicate these ideas in a way that people can receive and integrate into their lives. A special thanks goes to Jeevan and Alex, on the team who have worked tirelessly in bringing all this information together. Further updates will follow as this work develops.



TALKS AND CONFERENCES

Future City Plan 2040

The FPA team are contributing towards our Future City Plan for 2040 – see what our FPA Director had to say about 15 minute neighbourhoods. (Skip to 31:45 if you don't want to watch the whole thing) [Click here](#)

All Party Parliamentary Group for Green Spaces

On the 1st March our Naturally Birmingham FPA Director was invited to speak about our project at the All Parliamentary Group for Green Spaces, this gave us a chance to talk about the fantastic importance of protecting and enhancing our green spaces at a national level. A recording of the meeting along with the slides from the speakers' (including our NB FPA Director) presentations is now available on the Parks & Green Spaces APPG webpage The full recording is [here](#). There is also a short highlights video, Q&A and Minutes [on the APPG website.](#)



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.

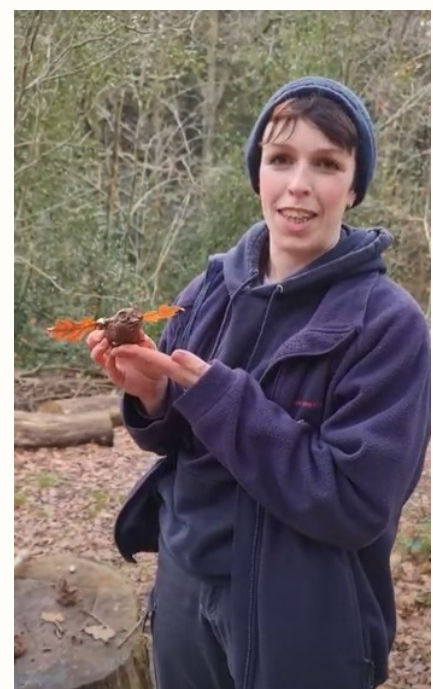
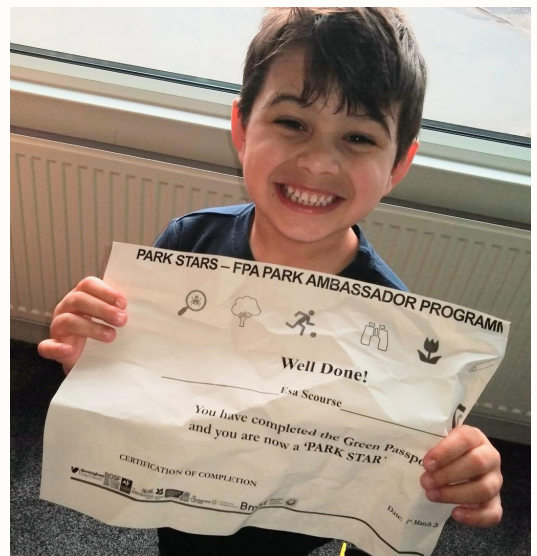
EARLY YEARS AND PARK STARS

During March the FPA Citizen Involvement team worked in partnership with the BCC Early Years and the amazing Childcare Team to deliver three online "Growing Together" webinars for Early Years practitioners. All three webinars were fully booked and attended by over 100 EY practitioners who wanted to find out more about using green spaces for children's development and play, including attendees from Scotland and Devon. Starting with the green spaces used daily by practitioners and children including gardens and school grounds and arriving finally in the wild open spaces of Birmingham.

We use the Naturally Birmingham Park Stars activities and the Early Years curriculum to suggest activities that range from quietly observing nature by listening to bird song and watching minibeasts found under a log, to adventuring along a trail, finding bears and dragons and making creatures out of mud, all achieved virtually. The sessions included a minute of mindfulness for the participants and developing the "Park Warriors" Programme, in line with the projects primary version "Park Stars". The Park Warriors programme is being designed to help involve even our youngest citizens and their families in their parks and green spaces. The Early Years Team were amazing to listen to, their knowledge and passion inspiring all attendees and prompting excellent feedback about what activities and ideas would be applied back in the settings. We were also lucky to have Holly, a member of the BCC Ranger Service, join us for a session and bring green spaces alive with her tales of children building dens and creating art at the Lickey Hills. The Early Years Team will now be delivering these webinars, and hopefully soon seminars, on a regular basis and together we will be developing digital resources to support practitioners, families and children to use, enjoy and get the most benefits from all the green spaces in Birmingham.

The Park Stars programme has already had 6 completed returns so far and we've been having some wonderful feedback: "Me, my brother and my mum went to Senneleys Park and observed nature for 15 minutes. We noticed squirrels and different birds. We took our dog for a long walk alongside nature trails and moved for nearly 2 hours. We took some lovely pictures and planted flower seeds at home."

You can get involved with the programme [here](#)



FPA PARKS LEARNING SESSIONS

We will be hosting several sessions over April that aim to share some of the experiences and learning we have accumulated during our project. Join us to find out what we have learnt so far and how you can help shape design, delivery and care of Birmingham's parks and green spaces via the Eventbrite link [here](#).

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FRAMEWORK

DAWBERRY FIELDS REPILE FUNDRAISER

Our Reptile Project fundraiser with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust is going strong - we have so far raised £1,075 so we are more than halfway to our target of £2,000 to create a habitat for slow worm and common lizard to thrive at this urban park.

We will continue fundraising for this project until 30th April so please do share with family, friends and colleagues.

To donate visit our [JustGiving page](#) or Text DAWBERRY to 70085 to give £10*.

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**

Image © 2020Vision

NATURALLY BIRMINGHAM: FUTURE PARKS ACCELERATOR

Birmingham City Council

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

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

CAREERS WEEK 1ST – 6TH MARCH

Early in March we hosted Careers week, where we had a whole host of exciting information and activities. A summary of the week is below:

- 6 young people are now in touch with us directly receiving updates about opportunities within the green sector with 1 just having accepted a Horticulture Apprenticeship "I have just been offered a horticulture apprenticeship... I have enjoyed the green sector related content (YouTube Channel) that you have sent over...and would still like to receive notifications about these events..."
- Our Jobs and Skills YouTube channel now has 38 videos, all highlighting different jobs within the sector, if you haven't checked it out, please head over and [take a look](#). If you'd like to submit content, please contact sophie.j.green@birmingham.gov.uk for more information...
- We created 3 Bitesize Videos with interactive activities and support packs, we are also offering follow up sessions with students to provide a Q and A and next steps discussion... 20 Schools have got in touch asking for the support packs.
- We received 23 new green content submissions, telling us all about a variety of green sector roles and the best thing about working in the green sector. Work is currently in place to create a green directory with these submissions – you may have seen them on our social media pages during careers week which saw 146 retweets and 227 likes on Twitter, as well as 62 likes on Instagram.
- A green quiz 'guess the role' was circulated which saw competitors have a go at guessing which role the quote related too...
- Three students from the University of Birmingham hosted a session talking all about what it's like to study, Urban Planning, Geography and Environmental Science – it was a fantastic session with 59 young people joining us.
- We also launched a co-working group for our Park Reps programme with 16 people attending. As a result of this, we are now working on some interactive events for 16-24 year olds with a green sector focus and tying it in with a Green Sector based Kickstart programme.

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.

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

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

You can also read our previous newsletters here:

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