

FPA NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2021

Insights from our FPA team - Tess Fitzgerald - Student Placement (Geography with a year abroad)

Over the past few months we have had the pleasure of hosting several student placements within our FPA team. We thought it would be great to hear about their experiences so far, and to hear about what they have learned during their time with us. This month we will be hearing from Tess, a Geography student from the University of Birmingham:



Why did I choose to join FPA?

I was drawn to this opportunity because of the vast opportunities that the programme encompasses, and I wanted to be able to explore where my strengths and interests lie.

As a final year student, I was more than ready to begin to apply my knowledge practically, as well as work on my independent work ability and how to manage professional responsibilities.

With a keen interest in the planning and sustainability sector, this opportunity was exciting as I would be able to have an insight into the public sector and understand how local policy is created and applied. I have always wanted to get involved with the work of Birmingham City Council, especially given the growth that the city is constantly experiencing, which has created new challenges that I wanted to help tackle, such as environmental justice and community engagement.

What have I learnt/enjoyed

What has been most enjoyable to me is having the opportunity to meet passionate and like-minded people, many of whom who have inspired and encouraged me to continue pursuing my interest in the environment and planning sector. In particular, I enjoyed networking with local green champions and hearing about their experiences and connections with green space. I have learnt about the huge importance of green space, both to people as a form of community unification and identity, and physically for the local environment in a growing city.

I have also enjoyed the opportunity to have flexibility to explore my interests, and I have improved my GIS analysis skills through regular meetings with the GIS team looking at public access to green space. I have found it really interesting to compare how Birmingham's green space and urban form compares with urban spaces in other countries, such as Berlin. I have realised that without the work that BCC do and their commitment to improving the local area, the city might be a very different place!





Has it given me different ideas about the future?

Working through this placement has given me plenty of insight into the different career paths available to me, and it was really reassuring to see that people have got into this sector of work through many different routes. I thought that I was set on being a planner, however this placement has showed me about the value and opportunities of other roles, such as local policy analyst, sustainability advisor, environmental consultant and social outreach coordinator. Many of these work interdependently and therefore there seems to be a lot of flexibility within government work. I am still interested in elements of urban planning, but I appreciate that I now have a better understanding of the different kinds of avenues within the sector, and I would now like to have a go at different roles to see what I most enjoy and am best suited to.

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.

SOCIAL PRESCRIPTION

As part of our Healthy City Framework, we are working with 5 Friends of Park groups around the City to test out if volunteering can act as a form of social prescription. We are also working with our Wellbeing Centres around the City to help them move some of their exercise sessions outdoors into local parks.

20 MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Our work on developing a 20 minute neighbourhood is also going well - we'll be testing how to design a 20 minute neighbourhood in the Bordesley area with a range of colleagues both in and outside of the Council.'

WHISK - A CALL FOR RECIPES

As a part of our mission to create a healthier food city Birmingham City Council's Public Health Division has partnered with [Whisk](#) the recipe and nutrition platform over the next 12 months. We are looking for partners and businesses who want to grow their visibility in the community and who have healthy recipes they want to share and promote to citizens.

The initiative will give an unlimited number of Birmingham residents free access to the Whisk platform. Whisk will enable residents to find, save, and share their favourite recipes and see the nutritional information breakdowns and a simple 'health score'. The platform also includes Meal Planning, and Shopping List features making discovering, planning, and cooking recipes easier for residents. More information will accompany the Newsletter email

A NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR BIRMINGHAM'S GREEN SPACE

COMMUNAL GARDENS

Since our update on communal gardens in the October 2020 newsletter, we thought you would be keen to know how we are progressing. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 restrictions have slowed us down slightly, however on the 7th of April 2021 members of the FPA programme and BMHT teams held a co-design meeting with tenants at the Cornerway Sheltered Housing scheme. We were also excited to have Elliott Cairney (from a BMHT contracting company), so he could see and hear for himself exactly what tenants wanted in their communal garden and importantly, just how passionate they were about the space and the possibilities this would create in the future.

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.

All of the tenants were very enthusiastic, even though the grey clouds were threatening snow – yes it was the coldest week in April! We have translated their very realistic expectations, thoughts and ideas onto a conceptual drawing which we have begun circulating to tenants. We are waiting to hear from the contractor on their commitment to support us through the build stage of the process, in the hope that we can have a grand opening in June!

Once this pilot is completed we'll be looking at returning to the Millfield Sheltered Housing Scheme to establish how this group can also be supported.



@NaturallyBirmi1



<https://naturallybirmingham.org/>

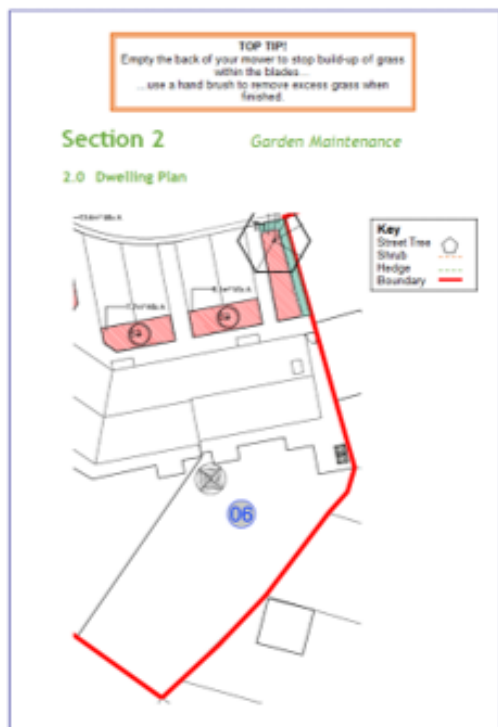
GREEN USER GUIDES

Birmingham City Council tenants moving into BMHT new build homes are given a Home User Guide (HUG) which contains lots of useful information about their new home and local area.

Being part of the FPA has allowed us to expand the HUG to include useful information about our tenants' new gardens and local green spaces – the Green User Guide (GUG) is the result of a collaborative effort between Gill, Rupi, Louise and Zoe. The aim of this 'GUG' is to: *'create a new way to raise awareness of greenspaces, how to look after greenspaces (building on people's confidence & knowledge in gardening) and promote green-related recreational opportunities in their local area. This can be achieved through the mechanism of using a guide embedded within a Property Handbook, clearly presented to encourage and motivate local residents to actively use greenspaces or participate in connected events'*.



The HUG and the GUG have generated interest from other Housing providers and tenants in older BCC homes, and we have now turned this concept into a reality!



The first 6 'live' GUG's, contain

- gardening hints and tips,
- a plan of their property with the planting plan,
- a plan of the local area showing amenities, parks, allotments and etc. and a list of local shops, post office, cinema, theatre, medical centres etc.
- contacts and links for local groups such as gardening groups,

These guides were distributed to residents 3 weeks ago, and we'll be contacting them in May to obtain feedback – we want to know what to keep, what to change, what to add to, and what they've found most useful. GUGs will be given to all new BMHT tenants from now on.

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.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

During April we held 3 more online Community Conversations to update on the successes of the first part of the Naturally Birmingham Future Parks Project and pose some questions to volunteers and organisations about creating people powered parks to help deliver ideas that have been trialled through the project so far. We had 48 people participate in the conversations sharing insight into all the great work happening, making connections with other participants and asking some really helpful questions.

These were our questions to everyone:

Park Ambassadors - especially children, young people and mentors for children in care.

- Would you be interested mentor training and or training to work with young people?

Healthy Parks

- Would you want to help deliver a "Natural Health Service" through social prescriptions?

Park Skills – Opportunities for work experience, volunteer taster days, skill sharing sessions –

- Would you be willing to help run any of these ?

Parks and Homes – Supporting community gardens, growing in parks, supporting housing groups, looking after and development of green spaces –

- Is anyone interested in being matched with a communal garden space? Or willing to help develop one?

And finally

- Are you raising funding for green spaces, can you share your stories with us?
- We need to know who our volunteers are, would you like to trial the Track it Forward app that helps volunteers record their work?



If you want to know more about anything covered in our Community Conversations please contact us at: Futureparks@bosf.org.uk

LUNCH AND LEARN - A CITY OF NATURE - POWERED BY PEOPLE - 25/05/21

Our FPA Community Facilitator, Debbie, is hosting a 'lunch and learn' session all about the importance of our volunteering community, and how vital it is to move to a more inclusive volunteering model in Birmingham for us to achieve our ambition of being a 'City of Nature'. If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, you can find out more information and sign up to the event [here](#):

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FRAMEWORK

DAWBERRY FIELDS REPTILE FUNDRAISER - GOAL REACHED!

We are excited to announce that we have reached our fundraising target for the Dawberry Fields Reptile project! The fundraising effort ran from 25th January to 30th April and in collaboration with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust we raised £2,360, thanks to a supplementary donation of £1000 from IM Properties.

The money raised will go towards improving the habitat of the species present in the area, including installation of reptile banks and rocky habitat to encourage slow worm and common lizard to bask and hibernate, as well as the enhancement of grassland to benefit pollinators. There will also be a permanent interpretation board installed on the site to provide more information to the public.

A fantastic aspect to this project has been the way it has really resonated with the community. As a result of our fundraisers, we've had a couple of enquiries about volunteering, and even an expression of interest of providing materials from John Sisk and Sons, as well as a tonne of fantastic feedback, summarised in the word cloud below:

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.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK

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.

ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE

Covid-19 has been our lead news item for over a year now, and this has been true around the world. One of the things that has featured as one of those news stories globally has been people's unequal access to urban green space or parks. The FPA team have been working with the City's GIS specialists to bring together a new compound map that shows this for the whole city; coupled with the current and future impacts of climate change on the city and those communities. We will share this map in next month's newsletter; so watch this space.

We have also had a focus area for some of this study work, at Ward End in East Birmingham.

We have worked collaboratively with the staff and students at Birmingham City University, Birmingham School of Architecture and Design, from January-April-21. Two student groups have surveyed the neighbourhood and the park and produced two excellent reports, one from the viewpoint of the design professions and practitioners and what could be improved; and a second one from the viewpoint of the local community; and what they would like to see. These two reports are being built into the FPA workstream and action plan.

Job Opportunity - Graduate Consultant - CFP (Full-time)

Our evaluation partners CFP are looking to hire a Graduate Consultant to support their wider team for a 6-month period, with the possibility of a permanent contract after this period. The role will include assisting in design, research, analysis, reporting, and report production in a wide range of green space projects. Applicants should be proficient in Microsoft Office suite applications, alongside some familiarity in database applications, GIS, and graphics software, though training and support will be offered.

For an informal conversation please contact our Managing Director Ian Baggott on **07720895849** or by email at **ian@cfpuk.co.uk**. Application is by a covering letter, setting out how your current skills and experience suit the role, and a cv by **Friday 14th May 2021** to **ian@cfpuk.co.uk**. Please state your preference for full or part time work, your current salary and also any current notice period. **Interviews will be held virtually on Thursday 20th May 2021 for short listed candidates.**

Salary: £19,500 to £21,500

Hours: 37.5 hours per week, willing to accept applications for those wishing to work part time.

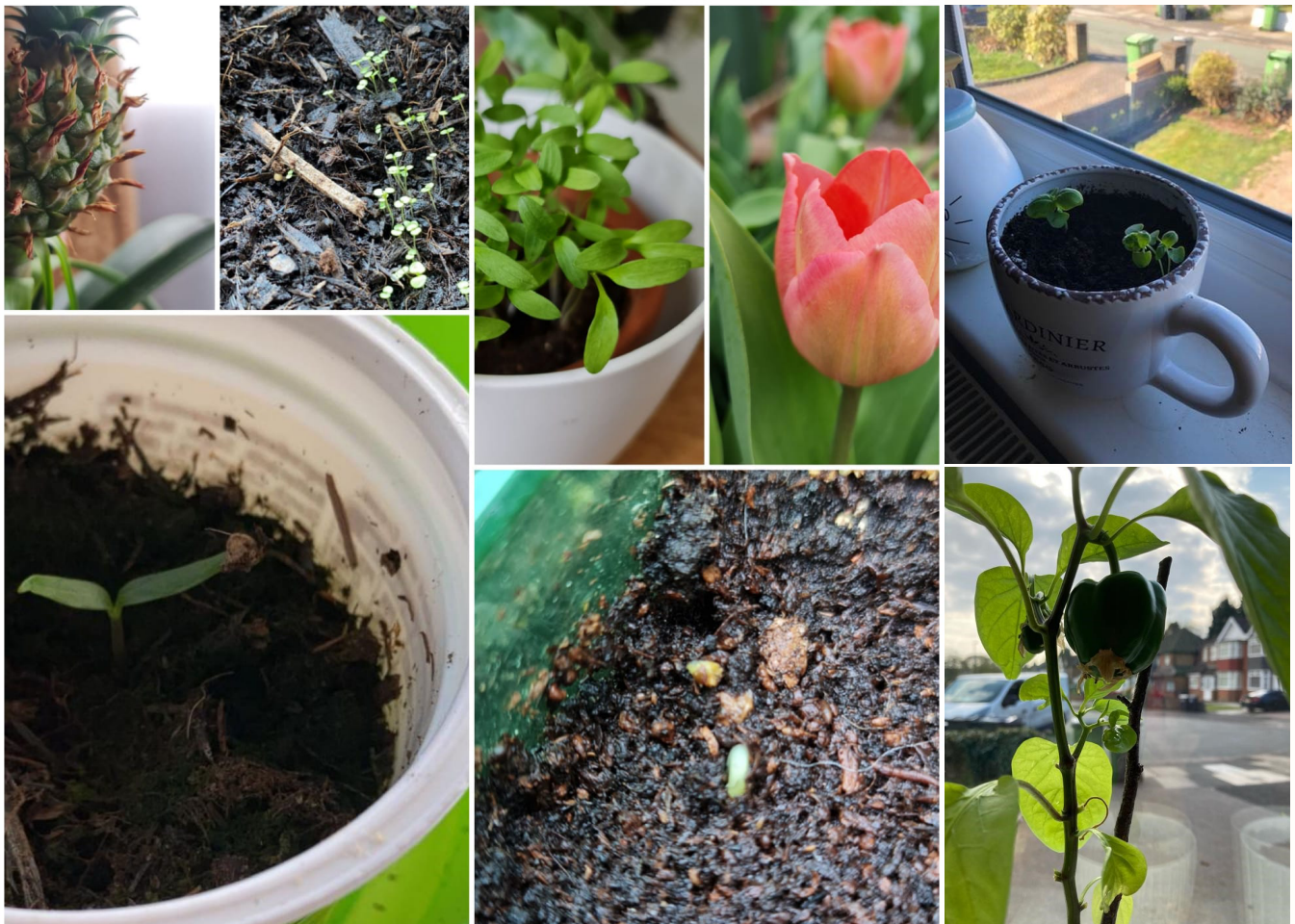
Contract: 6 months initially.

Full information will be attached to the newsletter email.

GREEN CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME - GROWING TOGETHER

Our Green Champions programme is rapidly approaching its halfway point as we come to the end of the second round of workshops. So far, the groups have explored the concepts of extending, growing and nurturing networks by crossing boundaries in workshop one; moving onto the ways to mobilise support and develop narrative around key green space issues in workshop two. Workshops three and four will take place in the summer and will cover topics such as understanding resistance to change and revaluing green spaces through the use of voices and experiences.

As part of the Green Champions Scheme, our participants have also been growing their own seeds, many planted towards the beginning of the programme – check out some of the progress photos below:



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/>