

FPA NEWSLETTER - JUNE 2021

Insights from our FPA team - Sarah-Jane Hampton - Student Placement (Geography BSc)

Over the past six 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. Next up is Sarah, a Geography student from the University of Birmingham:

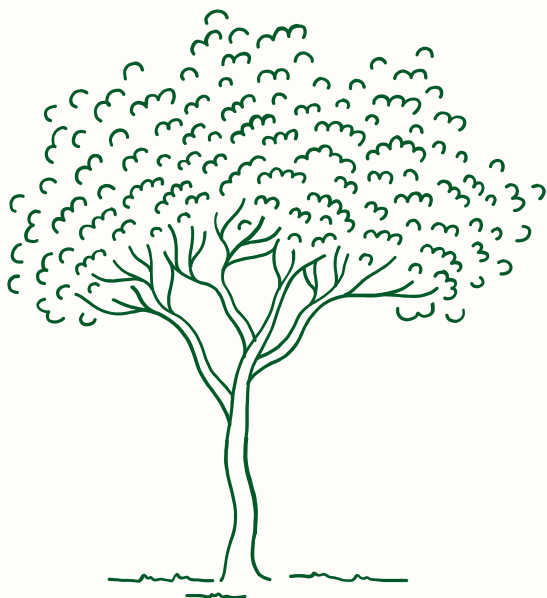


Why did you choose FPA as a placement?

While studying Geography at university, I wanted to gain some work experience within the environmental sector. The FPA project was perfect for this. My main drive towards choosing this placement was the ability to work within a variety of different projects, all contributing to the city's green delivery model. To be able to contribute towards a placement where I can make a difference to other people's lives through the promotion of green spaces was an exciting prospect. Spending the past 3 years of my life up in Birmingham, I have grown to love the city. The FPA project allowed me to combine my passion for the environment and all things sustainability; alongside promoting community cohesion and engagement. I was also interested in working in the environmental sector of my local council after university, therefore choosing this placement would help me gain essential skills I can take to new roles.

What have you learnt/enjoyed?

My time on the FPA project has been thoroughly enjoyable, it's been amazing to work with a team of people who are so passionate about green spaces and the environment. To be able to share this passion has been an amazing experience. My background in Geography is primarily focused on the physical side of geography, but this project has allowed me to delve into more human aspects of green spaces; something of which I have not experienced before. The support from Debbie and Sam has been amazing, and I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside the two of them, creating early years resources; in particular, leading and creating the book trail was great fun. Overall, my experience has been great for learning new skills. Working on this project throughout the pandemic has been enjoyable to step away from the stresses of final year, contributing to a cause I'm so passionate about.



Has it made you have different ideas about future careers or specialist studies?

Before joining FPA, I knew I wanted a career in a setting which involved the environment and community. However I was unsure as to where my degree could take me. This entire experience with FPA has highlighted that working within council departments on environmental projects can offer this sort of role. Which has inspired me to apply for a similar role within my local home council, whereby I will be running environmental projects similar to FPA project across the council. I am awaiting a response from this role however, either way if I receive the job offer or not, this experience has confirmed my drive to work within the council, being able to give back to the community I have lived in for my whole life.

A NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR BIRMINGHAM'S GREEN SPACE

PARKS AND FPA 'JOLLY'

In June we held two 'Jolly' events organised to provide an opportunity for the wider Parks staff to both learn about the current phase of the FPA project and the direction it is taking, and to exchange thoughts and ideas. We shared and discussed the City of Nature Vision document and welcomed input from all.

The informal events were held at Perry Hall Playing Fields and Kings Heath Park on lovely sunny days with refreshments and interactive sheets to gather more information from all those who attended.

A follow-up feedback form and questions answered on each day showed that the events were found to be useful, with the majority requesting to be kept up to date with the FPA programme via email and newsletters. We even managed to 'recruit' 10 more volunteers to help support the development of our new 25 Year Vision for Green Spaces!

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 OF NATURE UPDATE

We have been extremely busy this month on creating our City of Nature vision. Firstly, it was fantastic to see so many of you join us for our public engagement webinars over the last month. It was great to hear the enthusiasm for the vision and to get some early thoughts on our thinking around creating a City of Nature. We will be doing a lot more engagement in Autumn so make sure you keep an eye out for this!

We have also been discussing the vision to key stakeholders within the council, with positive discussions being held with key work areas including Inclusive Growth, Housing Development, Education & Skills and Public Health (to name just a few!). These discussions have been crucial in shaping the vision and create strong working relationships for the City of Nature to be transformed into reality. We recognise that our aspirations cannot be tackled singularly and will require a cross council approach to make sure nature is at the heart of decision making. We have also held positive discussions with other organisations such as the Canal and River Trust and Birmingham's Children Trust to test our draft outcomes and ensure joined up thinking across the city.

We are now into the final stages in creating the vision document, with the final tweaks being made. To make the vision really come to life, we have Reeves PR on board to help with visuals as well as the University of Birmingham Film School students who are creating some excellent videos. We can't wait to share this with you all soon!

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.

WELLBEING USER GUIDE

Jeevan, our GP registrar has been working on a Wellbeing User Guide (WUG), created to help residents moving into new homes understand the abundance of green capital that is available to them locally. The guide also provides some information about "the big 5" which are 5 disease processes that are ubiquitous to all citizens of Birmingham. (High cholesterol, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, anxiety and depression). We hope this document will empower citizens to take control of their health and have greater equity with regards to green spaces, and we'll be releasing the document for feedback soon.

GREEN SPACES FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING MASTERCLASS

The Future Parks team in Birmingham would like to invite you to an online masterclass in using parks and green spaces for improving Health and Wellbeing. If you are involved in any work to help our citizens improve their health and wellbeing, then this masterclass is for you. We have three dates to choose from – please register here - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-receive-mother-natures-love-a-guide-to-connect-you-with-nature-tickets-161008610087> The sessions will be delivered by Dr Jeevan Swamy, GP registrar. We look forward to seeing many of you there!'

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.

LITTLE GREEN CHAMPIONS

Little Green Champions are all the five and under children out there who are eco warriors, connect to nature, love their park, helping wildlife and, or are just generally having fun playing and learning in Birmingham's green spaces.

"There's a reason birdsong, rainfall and crashing waves are some of our favourite sounds. Nature makes us happy. We know that nature is good for our wellbeing and there's plenty of evidence to back this up. It's not just for adults; children benefit from exploring nature too. The feeling of a snail's smooth shell, the smell of damp seaweed and the sound of sticks splashing in a river – it's moments like this that help children grow and connect with their natural world." – National Trust.

That's why The National Trust created '[50 things to do before you're 11½](#)' followed by [What's '50 things' all about?](#) to encourage families to play in nature together and build an enduring connection with wildlife. The Naturally Birmingham Project works closely with the National Trust to develop actions that help Birmingham's residents to get involved with green spaces and that also goes for families with children who are five or under who we call "Little Green Champions". It's not just a case of getting outdoors or visiting your local park – we want children to really explore nature in all seasons, and "build memories of nature to last a life time" as one grandmother put it.

Research tells us experiences of connecting with nature boost children's physical, social and mental development. When we build a connection with nature, we're more likely to care for it in return. This means children who explore and enjoy nature are more likely to look after it, stand up for it and take action to protect it as they grow older. Sir David Attenborough said "No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced." And it's lots of fun too. If you aren't sure where your local park is you can find parks in Birmingham here: [Find a park | Birmingham City Council](#) - just use your postcode to find green spaces by you.

What's even better is there aren't just 50 things that you could do, there are hundreds of ways to connect to nature and get involved with Birmingham's green spaces, but we are suggesting that you try just 5 things before your children are over 5 years old, Get Moving, Grow Together, Connect to Nature, Learn More and Shout about it! – do these at least once in all four seasons, rain or shine – every year. We all want children to explore their senses in the wild, care for plants and creatures, and reflect on their feelings in different landscapes so we are now growing Little Green Champions in Birmingham and you can find out how you can join in the fun here: [Little Green Champions – Naturally Birmingham Future Parks Project](#) and if you do, don't forget to - Shout about it!



DAWBERRY FIELDS COMMUNITY WORK

We have also received some lovely pictures from one of our test sites, Dawberry Fields. The community group there meets every two weeks to litter pick, clear up, or do anything they feel is beneficial to the site. More recently they have taken part in a family events day and have been putting up bunting around the park - there's always plenty going on, so if you'd like to find out more, check out their [Facebook Page](#).



SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FRAMEWORK

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE STEERING GROUP

Wherever we present our 25 year vision for Birmingham City of Nature- the same question gets asked- how are you going to pay for this?

Part of this Future Parks Accelerator is a sustainable finance steering group working with the city treasury and finance teams and external green investors. We are searching for new and innovative ways to fund future improvements that would green Birmingham. This is trying to learn lessons from other FPA cities in the UK, our Biophilic Cities Network globally and other best practice examples.

One of the most significant future routes is simply to join up better across the council; where shared outcomes could be achieved by shared investment or shared service planning. It is this joined up approach that the city needs to move towards in order to address its climate emergency; so all departments are willing and open to achieving these changes. This does represent the greatest challenge of all those faced by this Future Parks Accelerator programme; but we are making significant progress. In future newsletters we hope to be able to publish our draft plans and ideas once we are confident in their funding and resourcing.

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.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAP FOR BIRMINGHAM

The Future Parks Accelerator programme is sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This is the same Department responsible for the Index of Multiple Deprivation, (IMD). This is the national index all cities use to measure the degrees of deprivation in all areas of their cities. This data then informs city policy and priorities.

What the COVID-19 global pandemic has shown is that people all over the world, and right here in Birmingham, have struggled to access good quality urban green space or parks, as a relief from isolation and lockdown. Currently this national index contains no recognition of the

importance of access to green space. A very large number of authorities in England have also declared climate emergencies, including Birmingham; 11th June 2019. This national index does not at present contain any reference to climate change or its impact on the city. The two most visible impacts being the Urban Heat Island- where built up areas get hotter and remain hotter during heat waves- affecting the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable. In extreme circumstances this can lead to hospitalisation or even premature death. The second climate factor being the risk of flooding.

So, Birmingham has acted as a national trial in building a new map and data base for the city combining all these factors. Public Health also measure 'Excess Years Life Lost'- in each city- this is really a measure of where and why people live less long depending on their location. Sometimes described as peoples lives being determined by their Postcode rather than their Genetic code.

Our Environmental Justice Map for Birmingham brings all these factors together to illustrate where the priorities for future green space improvements need to be. The city is now sharing this idea and trial with MHCLG and other Government Departments as a recommendation of what other cities could easily do- if asked to by Government. What it would provide them with is a much strengthened argument for nature in cities and the values of their parks networks. We will keep you posted on how those negotiations with Government go.

SKILLS SHOWCASE DATES

Our Skills Showcase Events for July are now live and we really hope you come and join us. These sessions are completely free to attend and will be fun, informal and interactive sessions. The perfect opportunity for you to learn more about the great outdoors and all of the opportunities available from Urban Forestry and Environmentalism to Landscaping and Farming. Don't forget to sign up using the links below but be quick – spaces are limited to 15 each.

	Monday 12 th July	Tuesday 13 th July	Wednesday 14 th July	Thursday 15 th July	Friday 16 th July
10am – 12pm	A morning at Stechford Park with Debbie and Sam @STECHFORD RECREATION GROUND	No session	Join Ian McDermott to learn all about Arboriculture and Urban Forestry. @ WARD END PARK	Join David Horsfall, to hear all about Tyseley Energy Park and the River Cole Project @ TYSELEY ENERGY PARK	Join Kier Arborists & Environmental Managers @ WARD END PARK
1pm – 3pm	No sessions	Come down to the farm and learn all about how the farm works.... @FORGE MILL FARM	Join us for a tour of hidden oasis within the City with the Wildlife Trust. @ECOPARK	Join Jane Findlay Chartered Landscape Architect, President of the Landscape Institute @SUTTON PARK	Join Kier Arborists & Environmental Managers @ WARD END PARK

- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158099587121> - Monday 10-12pm
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158101520905> - Tuesday 1-3pm
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158101711475> - Wednesday 10-12pm
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158101855907> - Wednesday 1-3pm
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158101109675> - Thursday 10-12pm
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158101972255> - Thursday 1-3pm
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158102403545> - Friday 10-12pm
- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158102995315> - Friday 1-3pm



Still not had enough of FPA? You can visit our website here:

<https://naturallybirmingham.org/>