

FPA NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2022

FPA COHORT EVENT

Hi, the FPA Communications Support Officer, Hayat here.

The FPA Cohort event was in Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, on Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th March 2022.

DAY 1

Fortunately, it was a warm sunny day and the park looked heavenly. After arrival, we started the afternoon with lunch while chatting happily with our teammates. Then followed the welcome talk given by Victoria Bradford-Keegan, Delivery Director for the Future Parks Accelerator Programme.

Shortly after we had a ten-minute walk and talk through Cannon Hill Park with someone new. Throughout this walk, we discussed 2 questions: Name one thing you're proud of and one thing you're looking forward to in your work for the FPA programme. I was pleased to hear that the City of Nature Plan was approved, and I am looking forward to seeing the plan in action with the trial parks.



When we got back from the walk, we worked with our own cities as a team for the FPA evaluation. 'A SWOT analysis on long-term system change. This session will directly support our evaluation next steps with Sheffield Hallam University.' We used flipcharts with post-its to note our strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats. Someone observed that most cities had similar threats and strengths. After a quick break with snacks and tea, we had 2 peer sessions that we got to choose weeks/days before via SurveyMonkey. There was comms surgery, net gain, the Skill Mill, producing resources, activating green spaces, and habitat banking.

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I picked 'Comms surgery' and 'Activating green spaces', I found both sessions to be extremely helpful, and again there was a similarity in problems. One of which is it's very easy to reach people who are already interested in nature but difficult to reach others and minorities. A peer mentioned it was like 'converting the converted'. We shared ideas and helpful resources. When we got back to the main room we discussed with our table what we'd learned in these sessions.

Lastly, there were a few words from Isabel Hunt, Executive Director of Business Innovation and Insight at the National Lottery Heritage Fund. By this time it was already dinner - which was nice loved the tomato basil soup starter. During the meal, we had so many interesting conversations. At around 9PM everyone went home or back to their hotels. That's all for the first day of the cohort event. It was pleasant to see everyone in person. I left feeling more connected to my colleagues and excited for the next day.



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DAY 2

On day 2 we started the day with our chosen activity: 18 holes of mini-golf, swing fit, or a walk through the Martineau gardens. Swing fit, I learned was actually swing dance steps and music to make exercise more enjoyable- apparently it was loads of fun, they even got cute sparkly headbands with feathers to go with the swing era vibe. My choice of activity was mini-golf, which was enjoyable, it was nice being outside in the sun, canon hill park is so beautiful, and we were lucky enough to have both of our cohort days with perfect weather.



We then met back at the MAC and had some tea/coffee and snacks. refuelling for the next session. Then followed a fun superhero-themed interactive session working with our table from the Communications Consultant, Rachel Jeffcoat, and Matt Locke from "Storythings" the content and strategy agency, called 'Future Parks Acceleratic Universe'. On the flipchart, we wrote about our origin story and our meteoric rise. We selected 'wonderwom(e)n' for our superhero because the team started as predominantly women. Our superpower was 'Making the invisible, visible' which I think fits perfectly. Nature tends to be forgotten and it's our job to get everyone to recognize its value. The kryptonite was bureaucracy, our defining moment is the birth/emergence of the 'City of Nature' (June/July 2021). Each city presented theirs and again there was a trend in ideas.



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The final session of the event was 'Future focus' with Victoria and our Development Directors Ellie Robinson and Drew Bennellick to look forwards to together.

Lastly, we had a quick lunch break then jumped right into the concluding moments with a speech from Harry Bowell, Director of Land and Nature for the National Trust. We also watched a video on how to start a movement from which I learned that being the first person to do something means nothing if it weren't for the first follower having the courage to join in and show others how to follow.

I don't think I will forget this cohort event as it was far better than I'd imagined it would be. Everyone was very social and seemed to naturally flow together, sharing ideas in person was more personal. I took every chance to ask questions when I didn't understand, and none were left unanswered. It was clear to tell that it was more than just a job for them through their enthusiasm.



recently, one of our treasured and dedicated team members has left his role; Daniel Lloyd the future park project officer. Also the author and producer of these newsletters.

FAREWELL MESSAGE TO DANIEL LLOYD

Daniel you have contributed so much to this project and we can't let that go unnoticed. you've played a key part in getting the City of Nature project to where it is today.

Your continuous support, encouragement, and guidance will not be forgotten. You are the mentor that every star-eyed new employee needs. Patiently answering all the hundreds of questions that I had.

It's been a few weeks since you left but it feels like so much longer. I have had a wonderful experience working with you over the past months.



Thank you for all you have done. All the best to you in your new job. You will be greatly missed.

IMPORTANT NOTE: FROM APRIL OUR NEWSLETTERS WILL BE MOVING TO THE BULLETIN BOARD ON THE BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL WEBSITE.

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