

QUINTON MEADOWS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

This last year has been one of mixed fortune for the Committee.

Quinton Business Park

We continued to enjoy a good relationship with the (last) owners of the Business Park (Threadneedle) through their agent, Savills. Kristin Carsberg proved most helpful in securing funding from Threadneedle to help with projects on the Local Nature Reserve. In 2022 they pledged a sum of £2,000 per annum for the next three years (or until the asset was sold, if sooner) to be used for general upkeep and/or new initiatives. Three benches were installed in January 2023, using funding obtained during 2022. We were grateful to Bennetts Landscapes (landscapers at the time for the Business Park) who installed the benches free of charge, and to the Rangers for their assistance. A sum of £107 remained, which is to be put towards a new bin on the LNR. (At the time of writing, this is still outstanding.)

A further grant of £2,000 was obtained from Threadneedle in January 2023 and paid direct to Birmingham City Council. It was agreed that these monies should be used to improve the main access track in the LNR. A meeting was held with a representative from Bennetts Landscapes in April 2023 and possible solutions discussed. Unfortunately there was no further progress. We have been assured that the £2,000 is safe, but BCC will have to engage an alternative contractor to carry out the work.

There was subsequently a change of ownership of the Business Park from Threadneedle to a new company PCP VI (B) set up by Praxis. Representatives of the Committee met with Jacob Bearman and Harry Trahair from Praxis in July 2023 and showed them round Quinton Meadows. We hope to establish a good working relationship with them.

Through Savills, we were able to obtain details of the current occupants of the Business Park and wrote to them to see if they could support the Committee either by a donation/grant or by corporate volunteering. Unfortunately there was no positive response to this approach.

An inspection by the Committee of the landscape features of the Business Parks (as part of our monitoring role) is well overdue.

Howley Grange Recreation Ground

The Committee continued to liaise with Becky Gitsham (Parks Development Officer, Dudley MBC) over various issues. We have yet to hear what, if any, decision has been made regarding the sections of collapsed metal fencing on the southern edge of the Recreation Ground. A general waste bin is also still awaited. Becky made enquiries on our behalf about the cost of marking out a junior football pitch, and arranged for us to be billed for this. She is currently on maternity leave and we look forward to her return.

More recently, we have liaised with Wayne Slater (Area Supervisor, Green Care South 1, Dudley MBC) who, when contacted, arranged promptly for the meadow area to be flailed. Over a number of sessions, conservation volunteers raked off the cuttings, created bare patches and scattered yellow rattle seeds, and spread green hay containing wild flower seeds. The yellow rattle sown last year has been successful

in reducing some of the grass, more wild flowers are appearing, and in the summer there were lots of grass hoppers in the area.

Wayne also arranged for the junior football pitch to be marked out. Unfortunately the goal posts are now misaligned so we have contacted him again asking for the one goal post to be set in the correct position. We hope that greater informal use will be made of the pitch.

Local Nature Reserve

Reference has already been made to the installation of benches and the anticipated improvements to the main access track in the LNR and installation of a general waste bin. Sections of the track become waterlogged in winter and it is hoped that improvements will make the LNR more accessible throughout the seasons.

We know that the Meadows are valued as an asset by local people and it is important to continue improving the ecology and biodiversity of the LNR. There are currently two projects which aim to do this, both of which are being carried out under the auspices of The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. One is the 'Natural Rivers and Green Corridors Project' (in conjunction with the Environment Agency) and the other the 'M5 Clean Rivers Project' (funded by National Highways). Test work has recently been carried out in connection with the latter, and we await the results. News in relation to the former project is also still awaited.

Conservation work has continued this last year, with a number of sessions focusing on creating more glades in the wooded area of the LNR and planting tree whips against the Business Park fence line near the swales. Our thanks to Chris Greasley for arranging our first Eco Fun event in April which encouraged people from outside the local area to visit the Meadows.

The longstanding financial difficulties faced by Birmingham City Council have continued to have an impact on staffing levels and input into the LNR. We are grateful to the Rangers for their support, and to Sue Amey for her involvement in the work of the Committee. Given the current financial crisis faced by Birmingham, the future is very uncertain and somewhat bleak at the present time.

Other issues

It has been a most frustrating experience trying to have our revised Constitution ratified by Birmingham City Council, which has been on-going since April 2022. The issue has been raised numerous times with Officers and the Cabinet Member for the Environment by correspondence and in person, all to no avail.

We need to ensure that the net is widened in terms of active participation in the work of the Committee, hence the need to take advantage of modern technology and social media outlets. In particular, the involvement of younger people is vital in order to secure the future of Quinton Meadows.

Finally, our thanks to all our Committee members, Council officers, volunteers and supporters for their contribution towards the work of the Committee. The year ahead looks set to be an interesting and probably a challenging one.

Peter Beck
Secretary
October 2023

Ian Dawson
Chair