

FRIENDS OF BARNET ENVIRONMENT CENTRE: ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

This has been an even busier year than usual. 2025 is our 50th Anniversary year and the autumn of 2024 was taken up with preparations for displays and events to celebrate this important milestone. The exhibition celebrating the history of the Environment Centre was formally opened in the Barnet Museum's Spires Shopping Centre Unit on 30th November in the presence of The Worshipful the Mayor of the London Borough of Barnet and Philip and Janet Hulme of the Hadley Trust as well as many FoBEC trustees, members, supporters and volunteers. The display will continue in the Museum Unit in the Spires until late 2025.

We also held a 50th birthday celebration in May, 2025, and were delighted that our new MP, Dan Tomlinson, attended as well as several of our local councillors, many past members of staff and current members and volunteers. Mr Tomlinson made a short speech praising the work of the Environment Centre and then cut the 50th birthday cake to begin the celebrations.

Our educational work continues to be very important, with over 2100 young people, from Nursery to 6th Form, attending the Centre. We were fully booked from February to the end of term in July and we already have bookings for Autumn 2025 and for Spring 2026, while June and July next year are almost full. Thanks, as ever, to Robyn Stern for all her hard work and thanks as well to Sandra Morgan for all her work on school bookings over the last few years.

Our activity days during school holidays also continue to be very popular while our Summer Picnic in the Garden in June had 213 people attending, making the most of the lovely weather while being entertained by the Barnet U3A Ukelele band. Thanks again to Robyn for organising this event and to the volunteers who worked so hard to make the day such a success.

Volunteers keep the Reserve in good condition for the schools and for Noah's Ark families and staff. Work on the former attenuation ponds, now known as Hadley Pond and Willow Pond, is now complete but the maintenance is an ongoing task; we have purchased a small boat so we are able to reach the vegetation in the middle of the ponds without having to wade in. A new beech hedge has been planted to protect the Noah's Ark butterfly memorial garden, we have started to refurbish the western boundary hedge, a new dipping pond is being constructed, the Centre garden has been extended, new mini beast areas are being brought into use, our machines have been serviced, new bird boxes are being put up around the Reserve and work is currently being carried out to prepare the site for the new teaching season which starts in mid September. Another important task carried out by our volunteers is helping Robyn set up the classrooms and the Reserve for school groups and then tidying up afterwards.

The annual Dawn Chorus walk was held on May 4th (33 species including cuckoo, red kite and cormorant) and we held a Bioblitz on August 30th to identify what lives and grows on the site. This concluded with a Bat Event which included a talk followed by a walk to identify which species use the Reserve. All this information is being transferred onto the iNaturalist website, which is an international data bank.

As part of a London-wide inspection of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), the Barnet Environment Centre was given an extremely positive report by the Inspectors and we are very proud that they thought so highly of the work we do to educate local children about their environment.