



friends of the earth Bromley

January 2021

No 396

Our Next Meeting

Paula Lloyd

*From the Bromley Holistic
Therapy Centre*

'Pursue What's Pure -
Toxic Free Living'

Essential Oils and Related Products - ethically sourced, respecting
and supporting communities, the earth and our health.

Virtual meeting

*Due to Coronavirus and following advice from Friends of the Earth, our
December meeting will be a virtual one. See page 2 for full details.*

Usually 7.30pm The Friends Meeting House, Ravensbourne Road, Bromley

Everyone always welcome

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NEWSLETTER

January Meeting Participation

If you would like to be involved in the January Monthly Meeting, then it will be a virtual Zoom meeting once more. Please let us know if you'd like to attend by either emailing bromleyfoe@gmail.com or leaving a message on 020 8289 1503, and we will then send you details of how to join in, nearer the time.

You can either join using your computer (with video or without) or on a smart phone. There is usually a phone number to dial in for any other phone available.

Specific meeting content details are below. The first half will be our speaker and the second half will be for BFoE business.

If you can't attend this meeting, or just find yourself with some spare time, perhaps we can encourage you to become 'Armchair Activists'. Do your own bit of campaigning, perhaps inspired by something in our newsletters, and let us know what response you get.

Diary Dates

Please note that due to the Coronavirus, many events have had to be cancelled

5th Jan (Tues) BFoE Monthly Meeting 7.30pm. Speaker Paula Lloyd from the Bromley Holistic Therapy Centre gives a talk entitled 'Pursue What's Pure - Toxic Free Living' Essential Oils and Related Products - ethically sourced, respecting and supporting communities, the earth and our health. This will be followed by the AGM

29th-31st Jan RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>

This is correct at the time of going to press but obviously will be updated in the next monthly newsletter. If you need any further information on any events in the meantime, you can email us on bromleyfoe@gmail.com

If any of the items in this newsletter make you angry, delight you, enthuse you or cause you any emotion other than apathy, then please jot down a line or two and send it into the newsletter.

Note that there are several internet links in this newsletter which may be impractical to type into a browser. If you would like access to any of them then please let us know and

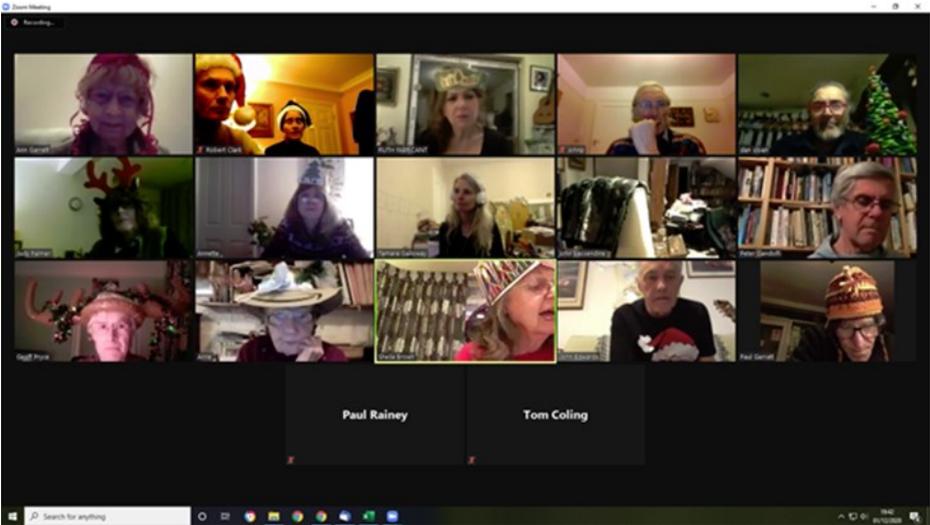
Next Newsletter Copy

Any news, articles, poems, questions, views, articles for sale will all be considered for publication. Please send them to the editor via one of the methods below to arrive not later than **midnight Friday 15th January**

Post: 17 Everard Avenue, Hayes, Kent BR2 7LR

Email: Robert.clark9@btinternet.com (please write 'Newsletter' in the subject line)

Disclaimer: Please note that any opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Bromley Friends of the Earth or of Friends of the Earth.



December Monthly Meeting Report

It was our Christmas social and we drank and ate whatever we liked in our own homes. Christmas jumpers, and hats made from recycled material, were prevalent, some of which were incredibly creative. Judy Palmer kindly provided a quiz which we all enjoyed and there was a good deal of social banter.

Thanks to everyone who 'turned up' and we hope you had a good Christmas over this locked down time.

Tea in Clay Cups

Stations in India switch to humble earthen kulhads in move to cut down on toxic waste and boost incomes of village potters in New Delhi.

The Guardian reports: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/03/all-change-indias-railways-bring-back-tea-in-clay-cups-in-bid-to-banish-plastics>

Ecosia

Ecosia search engine - it's not a browser application such as Google Chrome, Microsoft Bing, Apple Safari etc. The browser is the software application that connects you to the internet and the search engine is the page that then appears from which you do your internet searching.

Ecosia makes money every time it is used and it invests in planting trees. At the time of writing they have planted 115 million trees. They are also concerned with energy generation and currently provide 100% more renewable energy than they need to operate, from their solar generating projects. This makes Ecosia 200% energy efficient.

It's nice to know that with every web search you do carbon is being saved. <https://youtu.be/Hfr4nGq2G2U>

All photographs in this issue by Bethan Clark

The Green Room

Ann Garrett

I paid my first visit to The Green Room recycling/organic shop in November, and received a great welcome from Fatos and Kevin who run the shop !

It is very convenient and is situated next to Boots in Station Approach, Hayes.

I filled up many of my plastic bottles, and then had a look round 'the treasure trove' of a shop full of organic products, beautiful cards and gifts.



After this I had a delicious takeaway coffee!

When restrictions allow, Fatos and Kevin will open up their cafe again at the back of the shop, and I will certainly look forward to future visits! Highly recommended.

The Green Room
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BR2 7EQ

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Please note that the Green Room is closed over Christmas and reopens on 5th January.

FoE Metro Mayor Webinar Meeting Report

Ann Garrett

This was held on November the 22nd, attended by 21 people, and chaired by Simon Bowns.

The following items were proposed as a result of discussions during the workshops:

- Ensure that election candidates are accountable.
- Lobby Sian Berry and Caroline Russell, the present GLA Green Party GLA members, as well as new local candidates.
- Make efforts to network and involve community groups in any process.
- An idea was suggested to set up a Climate Systems Assembly.
- Importance of need for local councils to establish climate action plans.
- Co-creation of climate action plans to share expertise.
- One-to-one meetings with incumbent mayors.
- Time scales: Oct - Dec/2020 - Regional campaign action planning, Jan - March /2021 - meetings with candidates, hustings hosting, vocal media work, green jobs



promotion, April - June - monitoring of mayor pledge actions.

Climate Action Plans - there are 10 priorities.

These include - Ensuring infrastructure is in place, tree cover, green jobs, zero carbon city wide regions, protection for workers, renewable energy pension schemes, divestment from fossil fuels, monitoring of planning laws, review of local plans, local transport provision, and air quality initiatives.

Mums For Lungs

Did you know that emissions from domestic wood burning more than

doubled between 2003 and 2018 and accounted for **38% of PM2.5 emissions** in the UK in 2018?

Even the most 'eco-friendly' wood burning stoves emit high levels of particulate matter. Domestic burning of house coal, smokeless solid fuels and wood is the single largest source of harmful particulate matter emissions in the UK, contributing three times as much pollution as road transport.

Our latest campaign, covered in The Independent, aims to raise awareness of just how harmful wood stoves are. We are:

1. Debunking some of the myths that surround wood burning on social media.

2. **Writing to councils** asking them to raise awareness of the dangers of wood burning and to ask residents not to use stoves unless they are the only source of heat.

Asking magazines to stop publishing promotion material for wood burners and to communicate the public health impacts of woodburning to readers. Please help us raise public awareness of the dangers to health from wood burning.

Mums for Lungs

Valley School Green Wall

The green wall has been installed at Valley Primary School, Shortlands.

MUMS FOR LUNGS
CLEAN AIR | HEALTHY KIDS

WOODBURNING

Myth Busters

"I have a Defra approved Eco-Stove. Surely, it must be much safer than any other wood stove?"

DEFRA admit that even an Ecodesign stove contributes substantially to particulate emissions



Pictured is a small section of some of the defences implemented to protect pupils and staff against the fumes from passing and queuing traffic.

Responses to Bromley's Open Space Strategy 2021-2031

We are all blessed to live in such a green area. We owe it to future generations to maintain the environment in a sustainable way and to help reverse the damage to biodiversity, climate and air quality. The more people that **respond by the deadline of 7th January 2021** the more chance of the Council being more ambitious in their plans for the Open Space.

Here are responses from two of our members to the Open Space Strategy. We would like to encourage as many of

you as possible to send comments in, no matter how brief.

Here is a copy of the draft strategy: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/6482/draft-open-space-strategy-2021-2031>

You can respond by answering the questionnaire at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XNWWJGC>

Response 1 - Diana Hurd

While I believe the strategy is aiming to provide a better provision for the residents of BLB, I am slightly concerned that spaces have been divided up according to their main function and that therefore any 'improvement' will prioritise this function over the environment or biodiversity. For example, Norman Park is seen as a sports/recreation ground, and other features, such as its proximity to woodland and its waterway might be overlooked in favour of improving its sports facilities. This may lead to some economic gain and an arguably more human-friendly space but at the expense of the space's biodiversity and environmental credentials.

I am concerned that economic function or the need to fund 'improvements' will lead to green spaces being turned into manicured and highly constructed spaces. I am also very wary of the phrase 'fit for purpose' which sounds like every green space has to earn an economically governed and specifically 'human-oriented' right to be there. For example, Queens Gardens, where a restaurant – economically useful and enjoyable – has been built on a green

space (ironically the very green belt land the strategy boasts of having), and a very pristine and ordered playground has been built in front of it. In some ways great for people, but little thought has been given for the environment except for a few easy to maintain bushes. We may think that Bromley has an abundance of woods, meadows, and 'wilder' landscapes, but we should not be so complacent. In this era of climate change and habitat loss, our green spaces have a function to protect the environment too and every space in the borough can help do this. Now, I can see there are references in the document to this, for instance on page 19, and on page 26, it is mentioned in the 'Action' to be taken. **However, the environment and biodiversity need to be a central part of ALL 'improvements', regardless of whether they are in a more countrified or more urban part of the borough, and regardless of whether there is a sports facility in it or not. There should be a more holistic view of the environment across all the open spaces.** To return to the Norman Park 'improvement', any work on the infrastructure should stick to the original footprint of infrastructure/buildings and not eat into green land. Moreover, there should be spaces left 'wild' in every scheme and trees planted, for example the woodland next to the athletics track in Norman Park must be protected and ideally enhanced through widening and/ or rewilding. Whilst new trees are essential going forward, existing and mature trees must be protected as these provide the best carbon sink and homes for wildlife.

Following on from my previous point, the environment should be mentioned in each of the strategic objectives. For instance, 'Fit for Purpose' Open Space Portfolio' should consider opportunities to implement environmental and biodiversity objectives too, as all open spaces should have the 'purpose' to be as environmentally friendly as possible. 'Financially Viable Open Space Portfolio' could be setting out how to gain funding for making the space greener; and there are, and will be, funds available for this. I was pleased to read about initiatives to provide more electric vehicle charging points in car parks and green energy projects in strategic sites. However, solar panels should be on built-land/ buildings, not on green spaces.

There needs to be reference to a 'strategic objective' within the strategy to increase tree cover – ideally to double it. Trees have the potential to 'improve' our lives too both on a local, national, and international level and there should be specific mention of this in the document. **Therefore, mention of the number of trees to be planted should be a mandatory part of any scheme.** On page 28, there is talk of exploring 'natural regeneration of open space over traditional tree planting'. Rewilding should definitely be part of this strategy BUT this should only be in viable areas where this could successfully take place, for example around existing woodland so it is easy for seedlings to grow. Rewilding in the wrong place could lead to an unmanageable tangle of brambles. **There is still a place for tree planting,**

for example on roads and in urban areas, which will be economically viable and successful if it is prioritised over the growing and planting of expensive annuals, as I believe the strategy is hinting at (though never explicitly saying). Strategic tree planting could even help with flood management, as demonstrated in the Glasgow scheme. For example, in Norman Park, trees could help drain the wetter areas next to the wood and in the corner of the grass-covered land near the Hayes Lane car park.

I hope that ‘implement floral bedding transformation’ means converting it into something more sustainable that demands less watering/cultivation and planting costs, and includes more tree planting. Even the most urban parts of the borough should see this transformation, as wildflowers in meadows instead of mown grass, and even tree flowers, will create so much more biodiversity and still be an absolute pleasure to enjoy. If this is what this ‘transformation’ is referring to, it is ironic that there are pictures of floral bedding displays on page 15 and page 18, when the Council is supposedly repurposing such beds for more sustainable planting.

It should be stated that volunteers (such as the friends groups mentioned in the strategy) and homeowners should be actively encouraged to help care for trees in times of drought and the Council should have a system to water newly planted trees in parks/ along roads. If idverde can empty park bins, mow grass, etc and if salt can be

put on roads, and hanging baskets can be watered, then a way can be found to water newly planted trees during the summer months. I do not believe this is too difficult, nor in any way too expensive. Use the savings from the removal of bedding plant schemes to fund this, or use grants available from central Government or the Woodland Trust for tree planting. **I would also like to know what green credentials idverde has as an organisation. It is good to hear of their part in an environmental scheme in central Glasgow, but it would also be good to hear, in the strategy, what their green ethos is.** How do they care for the spaces they manage sustainably, for instance?

My final point is that the Holland Park scheme is so successful because it is part of an ‘almost wild’ landscape. If you live in an urban environment, it is wonderful to feel closer to nature (as we experienced when everything stopped during lockdown) and this is true whether you are a child in a playground, right through to old age. Obviously, if this can happen right in the middle of central London, then we can have ‘wild spaces’ right in the middle of Bromley. Building restaurants etc on green land and creating highly managed spaces should therefore not be part of the portfolio going forward.

I will end on a question: could Bromley Friends of the Earth be part of the Friends Consortium and one of the ‘Partners’ mentioned on page 4? We would love to be consulted too and would want to work with the Council on delivering a greener, more biodiverse,

economically viable, and enjoyable portfolio of open spaces for Bromley.

Diana Hurd

Nature and Trees Campaigner for Bromley Friends of the Earth

PS Points made in bold are directly related to what I believe should/should not be in the strategy.

Response 2 - John Pavitt

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

1.1.1 Thank you for providing the opportunity to consider and comment on the Open Space Strategy. The strategy not only sets out the plans for the next few years but helps readers to understand more fully the wide extent and usage of the green space in the Borough,

1.1.2 Residents and visitors to the Bromley Council area are blessed with a huge amount of open space. The outer London Boroughs can, in part, be regarded as the lungs for London and Bromley is the largest and greenest London Borough

1.2 Background

1.2.1 The Bromley Borough boundary surrounds an area of some 15,000 hectares. Of this area about half is designated Green Belt. This includes some 5,000 hectares of farmland. In addition, there are approaching 140,000 households in the Borough the majority have gardens or have some open space around them. It is estimated that this

could represent a total of some 2,000 hectares of urban gardens in the Bromley Borough

1.2.2 The Open Space Strategy identifies some 168 sites, covering a total of some 2,800 hectares in area, that are managed by the Borough and to which the Strategy applies. It includes parks, playgrounds, sports grounds, gardens, allotments, cemeteries, commons, woodlands, and open space.

1.3 Need to Widen the Scope of the Open Space Strategy

1.3.1 Although the Strategy identifies 168 specific sites, for which the Council are responsible, the strategy appears not to clearly include other open space for which the Council is also responsible for maintaining. The green areas and open space that spring to mind include: some 110 hectares of grass verges, over 300 public rights of way amounting to some 120 miles in length, over 100 miles of unmetalled green margins at the side of rural roads. These are set out in more detail in item 2 below.

1.3.2 All the open space to which the Open Space Strategy specifically refers and the other green areas for which the Council are responsible are within given boundaries. However, they are generally adjacent to other open space or green areas. Nature does not recognise human boundaries. It is therefore vital that the Open Space Strategy takes account of the environment of the Borough as a whole.

1.3.3 The Council is therefore urged to work positively with other landowners, managers, and stakeholders

to make all open space more sustainable. For the benefit of our children and grandchildren it is essential that we do all we can to improve biodiversity and help nature to reduce atmospheric carbon and pollution.

1.3.4 The comments set out below are aimed at enhancing the environment for now and the future.

2.0 COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY SITES NOT INCLUDED IN THE STRATEGY

2.1 General

2.1.1 There are several open space areas included below where the Council are responsible for the maintenance but do not appear to be mentioned in the Open Space Strategy. It is strongly considered that these areas should be included and clear plans to ensure they contribute to biodiversity and a more sustainable environment.

2.2 Green Urban Verges

2.2.1 The 110 hectares of green urban verges in the borough are generally maintained as a monoculture that does not exist in nature. They are regularly cut at significant cost and often to within an inch of their life. The cutting process also contribute significantly to ambient air pollution, particularly in dry weather.

2.2.2 There is an environmental and financial case to move from monoculture grass verges to one that is managed to benefit wildlife and pollinators with meadow type flower rich habitats. Such wilding of our urban verges can provide a path for

pollinators to spread and thrive. The variety and colour of flowers also makes an attractive addition to the local amenity.

2.2.3 Local authorities that have gone down this route have found they have saved scarce resources and improved the environment.

2.2.4 To be successful, it is essential that the local residents are made clear about the purpose and benefits of the change.

2.3 Urban Rights of Way

2.3.1 These alleyways or footpaths are usually paved but often have green margins that are usually regularly cut. As with urban green verges there are benefits in wilding the green margins of our rights of way. In doing so they improve the environment and provide excellent habitats for natural plant life and pollinators.

2.4 Rural Rights of Way

2.4.1 These are usually not paved and invariably cross privately owned land, but the Council have the responsibility to ensure they are safe and passable for walkers or horses where they are designated as bridleways.

2.4.2 Such rights of way are sometimes routed across farmland and in some cases, there are fences either side and already have natural habitat. In managing these rural rights of way, it is important the Council ensure they are contributing to the biodiversity of the area and offer suitable habitats for wildlife.

2.5 Unmetalled Margins of Rural Roads

2.5.1 There are some 100 miles of unmetalled green margins at the side of rural roads. These are often havens for biodiversity and wildlife habitats and need to be managed as part of the Open Space Strategy.

2.5.2 Some of these unmetalled margins, particularly where the rural road is busy with fast moving traffic, have large amounts of litter accumulating for months. This not only seriously spoils the amenity of these lovely roads, but the litter is a hazard to wildlife.

2.5.3 There should be a programme to frequently and regularly remove any litter from the unmetalled margins of rural highways. The hazards of doing so on busy roads is fully understood. However, there are systems of work and times when this work could be done safely and effectively in accordance with proper risk assessments.

3 URGENT NEED TO REVERSE DECLINING BIODIVERSITY

3.1 Background

3.1.1 There is no doubt that biodiversity is in decline and nature is in trouble. The reasons for this are diverse and include, climate change, pollution, land management and urbanisation.

3.1.2 This decline is recognised by the Government and the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on the Council to conserve all biodiversity. The duty as

set out is, '*Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat*'.

3.1.3 Supporting biodiversity is one of the key Priorities in Building a Better Bromley 2020. There is therefore, an urgent need to have much higher ambitions and targets built into the Open Space Strategy

3.1.4 The basic habitat requirements for wildlife is the need for food and water, as well as safe shelter to live and breed.

3.2 Council Managed Sites

3.2.1 Although the Council are responsible for a great deal of green space, a high proportion of the space is monoculture grass with much of it regularly cut to within an inch of its life. Such management is not conducive to biodiversity. It is fully recognised that sports grounds and some areas in parks need to be grass and regularly cut. However, on many sites there are areas of parks and sports grounds where it could be wilded and made suitable for biodiversity and for nature to successfully develop.

3.2.2 In some sites, cut grass area is never utilised for any purpose. In other places the margins of sports fields and parks could be made suitable for biodiversity to thrive.

3.2.3 Ideally the margins should consist of long grass and plants and where possible a shrub area and backed up with trees.

3.3 Land Not Managed by the Council

3.3.1 There is a huge amount of green space that is not managed directly by the Council. These areas could include school grounds, sports fields, farmland, gardens, and open space managed privately or by other organisations. There is also scope in many of these areas to turn any redundant areas or margins to be wilded and made biodiversity friendly.

3.3.2 It is suggested that the Council expand their Open Space Strategy to consider improving the biodiversity of the Borough as a whole. This could be based on well-designed education and promotion as well as examples on Council managed land to help other landowners understand the importance and benefits of improving biodiversity.

4 MANAGEMENT OF THE EXISTING PUBLIC TREE STOCK

4.1 Background

4.1.1 There are over 70,000 publicly owned trees, including some 36,000 street trees, some 24,000 parks trees and over 10,000 trees in schools. In addition, there are thousands of trees in private gardens and on land owned and managed by other organisations.

4.2 Beneficial Use of Tree Cuttings

4.2.1 The management of this tree stock produces large amounts of cuttings that are often chipped, and sometimes burnt on site. It is suggested that the strategy should consider productive sustainable ways to make the best use of the products of the

urban forest.

4.2.2 In some woodland areas such as Hayes Common a great deal of work is done to manage the area. A lot of work is undertaken thinning to allow more biodiversity. The problem is that a much of the light thinnings are burnt on bonfires onsite. This is a significant cause of air pollution as well as a waste of a resource that could be put to better use. The practice should be stopped. It is suggested that the Open Space Strategy will be amended to stop bonfires.

4.2.3 There is technology that would convert wood chippings into hydrogen and high thermal efficiency energy or heat. Hydrogen production has yet to be commercialised and it hoped the Council and the contractor will investigate the practicalities and economies of using Gasification or other technologies to produce Hydrogen which will be an important resource as we move away from fossil-based fuels. As the technology is new it is likely to need Government support initially. If the technology looks promising it is suggested that the Government be lobbied for assistance in development. It is essential that we make the best use of the latest technology to improve the environment

4.3 Management of Street Trees

4.3.1 Where Street Trees are newly planted there are a number that do not survive their early years if there is a long dry spell. It is suggested that where new trees are planted nearby

neighbours are asked to adopt the tree and water it as required.

5 NEED TO INCREASE THE TREE STOCK THROUGHOUT THE BOROUGH

5.1 Background

5.1.1 The Council have set a target of increasing tree planting by 10% over 10 years. This is an incredibly low ambition that should be urgently reviewed and revised upwards. The review should take account of all the benefits and possibilities set out below.

5.1.2 Trees are a vital resource for absorbing and storing carbon from the atmosphere and helping to mitigate climate change. They also have many other benefits:

5.1.2.1 They release oxygen through photosynthesis

5.1.2.2 Many tree species of trees can help to reduce air pollution. There is also opportunity to protect sites vulnerable to air pollution, such as schools with green walls.

5.1.2.3 Trees can act as a noise barrier.

5.1.2.4 Trees can help to reduce the potential for flooding and erosion by lowering ground water run-off. This is particularly important on slopes and hillsides.

5.1.2.5 Trees are also an important habitat for wildlife. They offer safe shelter and food for a variety of wildlife. It has been stated that a mature Oak Tree can be home to some 500 species.

5.1.2.6 Where carefully located they can provide important shade for animals, property, and people.

5.1.2.7 Trees are a valuable source of timber for a variety of purposes and are a long-term financial asset. Many trees can provide an ongoing food and medicinal source with an income if harvested.

5.1.2.8 They have aesthetic value and can provide a local amenity asset.

5.1.2.9 In urban areas it has been shown that trees in the area can increase property values.

5.2 Scope to Increase the Tree Stock in the Borough

5.2.1 Although there are very many trees in the Borough there the benefits of tree shown above make a strong case to massively increase the tree stock in the Borough.

5.2.2 There is a national drive to increase the stock of trees. It is hoped that the Council will take the opportunity in the Open Space Strategy to widen its scope. The objective should be to seek opportunities to increase the tree stock on Council owned and other open space.

5.2.3 It is also suggested that they take the opportunity to educate and promote the benefits of trees on suitable open space managed by others.

5.2.4 Landowners should actively be encouraged to plant trees in appropriate sites.

5.2.5 It is hoped the Council could initiate a Tree Friends Group that could actively promote the benefits of trees with landowners.

5.2.6 There would be benefits in creating a crowd funding initiative to help in the development of tree planting initiatives.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY

6.1 General

6.1.1 The Council have a legal duty to ensure that any work they, their contractors or sub-contractors do is undertaken in a safe manner and not a hazard to the health, safety and welfare of staff or the public.

6.1.2 There is a requirement for each operation to be subject to task and route risk assessments. In addition, there must be a Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) risk assessment for any substances that are hazardous to health. Substances can take several forms but can include chemicals, cleaning products, dusts, fumes biological agents etc.

6.1.3 The Open Space Strategy links to Building a Better Bromley (2020). One of the five key priorities is 'Prioritising the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of Residents'. Just as an aside the Health, Safety and Wellbeing should be prioritised for everybody including staff, traders, and visitors as well as residents. However, from a resident's point of view the Council does not always make it a priority. Some examples are set out below.

6.2 Use of Rotary Mowers on Grass Verges Particularly in Dry Weather

6.2.1 When grass verges are cut in dry weather using a rotary mower clouds of visible dust and invisible

particulate matter are frequently created. Inevitably these clouds include particulate matter, which is very hazardous. This operation can sometimes happen during long periods of dry weather when the grass has turned yellow and there is nothing to cut.

6.2.2 Such an operation is not only a risk to the nearby staff but also to the public. In addition, it appears to be a complete waste of scarce resources and money.

6.2.3 The Open Space Strategy must ensure that this practice is ceased as soon as possible. There must also be regular on-site monitoring by the Council to ensure the practice is ceased.

6.1 Use of Mechanical Leaf Blowers on Hard Surfaces

6.1.1 These are commonly used by the Council's contractors following the use of rotary mowers on grass verges. The mowers spread grass cuttings all over the footway and the carriageway.

6.1.2 The mechanical blowers are then used to blow the grass from the footway onto the grass sward and from the carriageway into the channel. In doing so the process creates clouds of visible dust in dry weather. Inevitably the process also recirculates any particulate matter that has accumulated on the hard surfaces.

6.1.3 Again, this practice is not only hazardous to staff but also the public. The particulate matter can stay in the atmosphere for a couple of days. It has

be demonstrated that exposure to particulate matter is very harmful to health.

6.1.4 It is necessary to cease the use of mechanical leaf blowers on hard surfaces unless the surface has been recently washed by heavy rainfall or other washing.

6.2 Friends Groups or Individuals Removing Litter from Busy Road Edges

6.2.1 Volunteers are often seen doing a fantastic, but very hazardous job removing litter from the edges and channels of busy 40 MPH roads.

6.2.2 In the past the grounds contractor has said that they do not clear such litter from open spaces near to road edges as their insurance does not permit it. This statement did seem strange as they are constantly seen cutting roadside grass verges.

6.2.3 A large friend's group, removing litter from the edges of busy 40 MPH roads as well as working in the channel, said that it was OK as ID Verde insured them!! The only safety precautions they had was to wear hi vis waistcoats. There was nobody from ID Verde visible to monitor what they were doing.

6.2.4 The whole practice raises many worrying questions and issues.

6.2.5 Quite simply this dangerous practice must be prevented from happening before there is a serious accident.

6.3 Ice Cream Vans Left with

their Engines Running

6.3.1 The Council currently charge an Ice Cream Van to operate from a location on the Open Space at Fishponds Road and possibly at other sites as well. It is standing there for many hours with the engine running. It is a diesel engine which, even if it is a recent model, still produces hazardous pollutants including dangerous particulate matter. This inevitably raises local ambient air pollution.

6.3.2 Obviously, children are attracted to an ice cream van. It is a popular site and anybody in the vicinity will be exposed to the pollution.

6.3.3 Many local authorities have taken action to prevent idling ice cream vans in their area. In some public parks power points have been installed to prevent the need for the engine to be left running.

6.3.4 Apparently, the engine on ice cream vans only needs to be left running to operate the whipped ice cream and ice slush equipment. They can sell solid ice cream lollies etc without the engine running as they are from the onboard fridge powered by a battery which is charged overnight. Therefore, it is not necessary for the engine to be left running to allow the van to sell ice creams.

6.3.5 If the Council is genuinely Prioritising the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of Residents' they should not be allowing or charging traders to pollute the atmosphere.

6.4 Fencing of Rights of Way

6.4.1 Some of the public rights of way are very narrow and, in some cases, they are fenced. This is more common in rural rights of way. In some cases the fence includes exposed barbed wire which may even be at eye level. This can be a hazard, particularly where the surface is uneven. If walkers stumble or fall the exposed barbed wire can create a serious injury

6.4.2 Even though the fences are often the responsibility of the landowner to maintain it is the Council's responsibility to ensure the rights of way are safe to use by the public. The Council regularly inspects the rights of way and are asked to ensure that any unsafe access is reported, and action taken to make it safe.

7 DELIVERY AND MONITORING OF THE STRATEGY

7.1 Contract Management

7.1.1 It is understood that the Council have transferred their client-side management functions to the contractor, and this includes drafting the Open Space Strategy.

7.1.2 It is appreciated that it would be a leading grounds maintenance and landscape contractor with wide experience. However, it is not clear what the benefits there are making them responsible for the Council's client function. No doubt it would be possible to combine some roles and achieve a monetary saving. However there are downsides to such an

arrangement and these need to be assessed and fully costed and risks assessed. Some of the issues are set out below:

7.1.2.1 The Council have a legal duty to provide their Council Taxpayers with best economic, environmental, and social value. On the other hand a contractor has a duty to maximise a profit. In some circumstances these diametrically opposed objectives can create a problem.

7.1.2.2 In competitive tendering it is necessary for the successful contractor to minimise profit margins to win the contract. This can mean that to maximise profits some companies may be tempted to take short cuts. To ensure this does not happen it is necessary for the Council to have sufficient skilled, experienced client monitoring staff. Their role is to physically check the work is undertaken in accordance with the specification and to ensure the work the Council pay for is done properly.

7.1.2.3 As stated above the Council have a legal duty to ensure their contractors undertake the work in a safe manner. This also requires skilled and experienced client staff to physically monitor the work as it is being undertaken to ensure it is not a hazard to staff or the public.

7.1.2.4 Some contractors are skilled at winning tenders at unsustainable rates and relying on nit picking the contract specification to maximise profits. To avoid this escalating cost the Council need skilled and experienced client management.

7.1.2.5 If a contractor consistently fails

to perform there are provisions to terminate such contracts. The best way to guard against a disruption to the service is to have a skilled experienced client capable of running the service until it can be retendered.

7.1.2.6 It is not unknown for a company to go into liquidation. Again an experienced client side can ensure any service disruption is minimised.

7.1.2.7 Over the period of a long running contract there can be a need to make contract variations to accommodate issues that were unforeseen when the contract was let. This requires a skilled and experienced client to negotiate on an even footing with a skilled contractor.

7.1.2.8 Prior to the end of any contract it is necessary for the Council to have the skills and experience to review the work and prepare the new specification and contract documents for tender.

7.2 Preparation of the Draft Open Space Strategy

7.2.1 It is stated that the contractor prepared the strategy in collaboration with the Council. It would be helpful if the Council explains in the Strategy the parameters and scope, they gave the contractor for preparing the draft Open Space Strategy.

7.2.2 It should also be clarified the roles of the Contractor and the Council in assessing the responses to the consultation on the draft Strategy and who will decide on any changes that are required.

8 COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELFARE

8.1 General

8.1.1 The Council recognise the vital contribution Open Spaces play in helping to maintain and develop the health and welfare for the community. The facilities include children's playgrounds, sports grounds, allotments, outdoor gyms, volunteering, leisure gardens, exercise circuits as well as space for safe walking and running.

8.2 Facility Development

8.2.1 It is considered there is scope to promote the facilities to the general public more positively. This could be in conjunction with the Public Health Department who have a direct interest in enhancing healthy living. The more people that can be helped to keep fit and healthy can help to reduce pressure on our health services.

8.2.2 It is important to positively encourage regular exercise of some description and help people to appreciate the benefits to their health.

8.2.3 It is apparent from casual observation that many of the excellent facilities are underused. Therefore there appears to be an important job to be done.

8.2.4 As an example it would be helpful to monitor the use of say children's apparatus in playgrounds to establish which facilities are the most popular. This would help to manage and develop playgrounds with the best and most popular apparatus.

8.2.5 There is also potential to

increase the number of outside gyms. These can help to encourage adults to take up more regular exercise.

8.2.6 In some woodland areas there are the remains of numbered circuit training routes. The aim was to run or walk round the circuit and stop at each numbered point to undertake a suggest exercise. It may be worth resurrecting such routes and prompting their use. It would be cheap to establish and not too intrusive.

9 CONCLUSION AND ACTION

9.1 It is good that the Council are consulting on the draft Open Space Strategy. It is hoped that all comments are carefully considered and adopted where appropriate. It would be helpful if, where it is not possible to adopt suggestions, there is clear explanation for the decision.

9.2 As stated above biodiversity is in decline and nature is under threat. It is important that the Council review their target of increasing spaces for biodiversity much more than the current 10% over 10 years.

9.3 There should be no misunderstanding about how important this is. Unless the trends are reversed there will in the future be difficulty producing enough food to feed ourselves. In 2017 when Michael Gove was the Secretary of State for the Environment, he warned that the UK is 30 to 40 years away from the eradication of soil fertility. Bromley being the greenest borough in London is ideally placed to help reverse these real threats. As it is proud to be the greenest

Borough in London it is ideally placed to lead the way.

9.4 It is therefore vital that the Open Space Strategy be widened to include all open spaces for which the Council is responsible. It should also include advice and information to the owners and managers of all open space in the Borough. As stated above nature does not recognise human boundaries.

9.5 The Open Space Strategy should be strengthened to bring biodiversity and nature conservation to the forefront with clear objectives and ambitious, specific, and clear targets.

9.6 In addition it is set out above how important trees are for a sustainable future. It is therefore vital for a sustainable future that the Council have a much more ambitious target in the programme for tree planting. The Council is also well placed to take the initiative to promote tree planting on suitable land not managed by the Council.

9.7 As stated above Council have a legal duty to ensure that any work, they or their contractors or sub-contractors do, is undertaken in a safe manner and not a hazard to the health and welfare of staff or the public. There are several issues set out in item 6 above that need to be urgently addressed.

9.8 The Council do need an effective client side, to ensure that the work the Council pay for is best value, and is carried in a safe manner that is not a hazard to staff or the public.

9.9 It is important that it should be

made clear in the strategy how the Council will ensure the provisions and targets set out in the final document are fully delivered. In addition it should be clear how any failures in the contract and will be dealt with.

9.10 Bromley Council is well placed to initiate and manage an education and promotion strategy and programme to enlighten and encourage all landowners, managers, and stakeholders to improve biodiversity and conserve nature for the benefit of all and future generations.

9.11 It would be beneficial to positively promote the facilities available and the benefits to the community in maintaining and developing health and welfare. The facilities available need to be designed and maintained to attract a wide range of users.

9.12 It is also important that the curriculum in schools includes environmental issues as they are the generation that are likely to be affected most and will need the skills to deal with it. Bromley along with other local Authorities must lobby the Government to make significant curriculum changes that will fully equip them for the future.

9.13 It is obvious that if people are unaware of the problems, they cannot begin to change their practice.

Miller's Mutterings

Chris Miller - Court Lodge Farm

A short mutterings this month as it has been quiet here on the farm, the crops are just gently doing their thing. Not a cold November but fairly wet. We are again on the look out for aphids but to date there seem to be only very low numbers so not worth spraying them. The reason we keep an eye out for aphids is because they spread a virus which stunts the growth of the cereal and robs us of crop.

Steve has been recovering from another new knee, so Pete has been busy with maintenance work around the farm and an extension on his house.

Still hearing sky larks in the sky which is joyful, and seeing jays in the garden; always seem to see more in the autumn. Pleased to report that I have seen either redwings or fieldfares flying around the hedgerows. I wasn't close enough to identify which but always good to see them and hear them.

Keep a look out at the farm entrance, as an old friend will be returning!

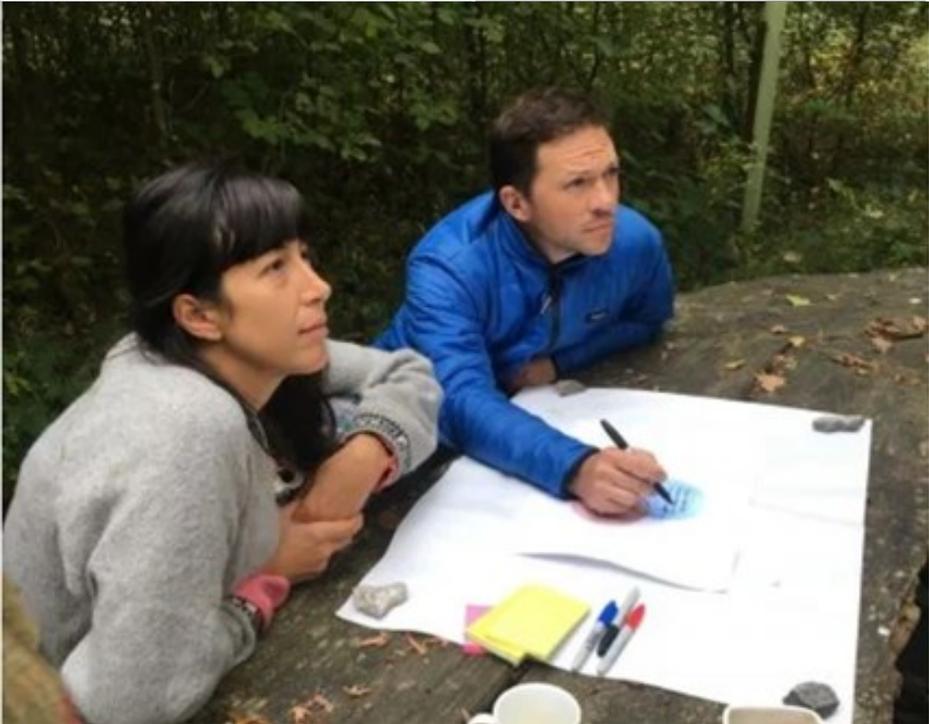
Sun through the apple trees on Christmas day

Means a fine crop is on the way

According to tradition and observation, it is important to have a fine Christmas Day to ensure a good spring and few late frosts.

Frosts "cut" apple blossom and ruin crops, so a sunny Christmas means a frost free May and a good autumn.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas



National FoE CEO Appointments

Throughout 2020, a key focus for the Board, along with the Trustees of Friends of the Earth Charitable Trust, has been the appointment of a new permanent CEO, following Craig Bennett's move to The Wildlife Trust.

After a lengthy and thorough recruitment process (more details of which are provided below), the Board and Trustees are very pleased to announce that Miriam Turner and Hugh Knowles (pictured) have been appointed as Co-CEOs of Friends of the Earth.

Acting as Interim Co-CEOs since February, Miriam and Hugh have very effectively led the organisation through a hugely

challenging period and we are excited for the future of Friends of the Earth under their leadership. Read more about Miriam and Hugh: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/about/friends-earth-appoints-new-ceo>

Campaigns

New FoE campaign areas!

Recently Friends of the Earth have re-organised their campaign areas into the following:

- Climate** - this covers
 - Heathrow
 - Green & fair recovery
 - Climate friendly communities
 - Renewable Energy

Nature -

Trees & bees

System Change -

Trade

Planning & Environmental law

Anti-racism

Consumption -

Food & the environment

Plastics

This gives local groups many opportunities to engage with other organisations to work on an issue within their community.

We have our AGM In January which gives us the ideal opportunity to discuss any thoughts and ideas you may have to work on any of these areas. Please take the time between now and then to have a think about it and join us on January 4th! Or if you are unable to, send an email to bromleyfoe@gmail.com and we will add the thought to the list.

Judy Palmer

Climate, Energy and Transport

Climate Action Training and Action Plan

I recently undertook 3 zoom sessions with Friends of the Earth on 'Getting your Council to adopt a climate action plan.' As part of the training we were told to look at two links to see how our authority is doing:

The first link shows you how climate friendly Bromley is according to FoE.

The second link is to the 'climateemergency.co.uk' website, where you can see whether or not your council has signed up to

acknowledge the 'emergency' and has a Climate Action Plan. (Bromley hasn't signed up as yet). However, Bromley does have a draft Open Space Strategy, and an Air Quality Plan. (I've read the first one and commented on it).

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-friendly-communities>

<https://data.climateemergency.uk/councils/london-borough-of-bromley/>

During the last session we were supposed to draft our own 'plan of action'. Below is what I drafted. If anyone has any thoughts on this, or would like to get involved as part of a 'Bromley Climate Action Team', then please let me know:

Get informed: read the Council's draft Open Space and Air Quality strategies (and any other relevant strategies) and see where there are shortfalls/strengths. Also read through FoE's Climate Action Plan on their website.

Have a 'Bromley Climate Action Team' meeting to discuss what the shortfalls/strengths are **and identify the main action points to discuss with the Council.**

Contact William Huntington-Thresher and/or Will Harmer re getting the Council to sign up to the Climate Emergency Action network with details of their plans, and ask them for a meeting (or if not possible then write) to discuss this and FoE's Climate Action Plan.

Reflect on the discussion and any response from the Council and **use any information to plan what to do next – i.e. whether or not we need to take further action and if so, what.**

Possible further action may take the form of:

A stall/event with a photo stunt/banner inviting the press/press release.

Petition/online petition or survey of local people's opinions followed up by a social media campaign

A vigil outside Council offices when an environmental meeting is taking place

Action points on our BFoE website/twitter/Instagram page

Diana Hurd

Nature/Trees

Celebrating Trees Campaign Webinar

As the Tree Campaign in its current form is drawing to a close, FoE recently held a webinar to celebrate the successes of the campaign. The successes have been many: 12 councils and Water UK have committed to doubling tree cover, ambitious tree planting promises have been made by politicians and 10,000 responses were made via FoE to the draft England Tree Strategy. Also Exmoor is the first national park to set a woodland cover target and Dartmoor may soon follow. After hearing about these, it was then great to find out about three local group initiatives.

The first was called 'The Lockdown Wood Project' and was coordinated by Newbury FoE and presented by Susan Millington.

The group had had little response when they asked their Council to double tree cover, so they wanted to start planting trees themselves but were aware of the shortage of locally grown saplings. Then the lockdown started, and they became aware that local people were now out in their gardens more, weeding out opportune saplings, and that the community might actually be a good source of locally grown trees. Moreover, they realised that many people wanted to thank keyworkers or might want to dedicate a tree to a victim of Covid, so they decided on the idea of a memorial wood. They asked the Council for some land and were actually given 3 small areas. They wanted to keep it a community event and informed the public by asking the press to publicise the cause and by putting up posters. The Council also helpfully sent information out. 100 home-grown saplings are now ready to plant next year and they have also sourced 1800 trees from the Woodland Trust.

The second initiative was a 'Tiny Forests' project by the Caerphilly Action Group.

Tiny forests are approximately the size of a tennis court and were first devised by Dr Akira Miyawaki in the 1970s. (If you want to know more, take a look at this link: <https://earthwatch.org.uk/get-involved/tiny-forests>).

The planting is far more dense than native forest and it is very good for biodiversity, carbon uptake and noise/pollution. However, there are a few

stipulations that make them slightly more difficult to set up than a traditional forest, e.g. the saplings need to be a certain height, which means the free trees supplied by the Woodland Trust would not be big enough to plant.

The group contacted the Councillor responsible for the environment and he/she agreed that they could use part of a local park. However, the Council could only help with manpower and provision of land, and could not give any financial support. The scheme has now reached the soil survey stage – which is necessary as the trees are so densely planted that they need a suitably fertile soil.

The final campaign was carried out by the Rostrevor Action Group in Northern Ireland and was called ‘The Invisible Tree’.

Colum Sands told us about a development that was planned on a shoreline by a wood, right next to said tree, which was a magnificent and fully mature oak. They started by writing to complain but the response was as if the tree didn’t exist, so they decided to highlight its existence and its importance. Using ink gathered from the galls from the oak, they made placards which they took to a Council meeting. But the Council approved the development anyway. Then they got as many people as they could to photograph/video themselves next to the tree, while speaking of its importance and how trees had had a key impact on their lives. They signed their names in the gall ink and some of them were quite famous musicians etc. (Colum Sands is a musician). Still, they lost the

judicial review.

However, last year a photographer from the BBC turned up out of the blue, and said he wanted to photograph the winning entry to the Woodland Trust’s Tree of the Year. The tree was featured in national papers also; and as it happens, the developer has been unsuccessful in selling the development plans even though they have been approved. A reprieve for now anyway!

It was really lovely to hear these inspiring stories and I do hope that we, as a group, can add a success like this to the list.

Diana Hurd

Plastics

My Plastics Journey

Things have moved on considerably in the way of eliminating plastic from products and their packaging and it’s been good to see so many refill shops popping up locally. We’ve all been working at cutting down our plastics usage. I’m pleased to have largely moved away from using clingfilm to doing what my mother used to do: covering those pots of leftover food in the fridge with a saucer or, more recently, I bought some silicone lids from Lakeland in varying sizes to fit over dishes (can also be used in the microwave). When purchasing fish in Waitrose we use our own container and I now have some of those net bags for loose fruit and vegetables. For the past year I’ve been refilling washing-up liquid, detergent and liquid soap containers at local refill shops. At our

last Traidcraft* stall before the Lockdown, I purchased a shampoo bar (like a soap bar), and am also using a Vanish bar for pre-treating laundry instead of the plastic spray bottle version.

*Footnote regarding Traidcraft. If anyone wants any Traidcraft products, contact Sheila who is able to place orders via our local person, or you can order online.

Sheila Brown

Supplies That Don't Cost the Earth

This is a regular reference point for useful and practical resources, helping us to sustain the greenest lifestyles we can. These are not recommendations from Bromley or National FoE, but are just suggested by BFoE members. Any suggestions or reviews gratefully received. bromleyfoe@gmail.com



Products of the month

Last month, I introduced Sweet Freedom Chocolate Spread with No Palm Oil, which says it donates 10% of profits to the Orangutang Project.

Yesterday I encountered its cousin, Sweet

Freedom Hot Shot, which can be used to make a hot chocolate drink or as a chocolate sauce, so we tried it with ice cream – delicious!

Woodlands Farm eggs from Kent are free range and delicious. They are packaged in a form of plastic



made from waste plastic from the sea and 100% recyclable. Locally we have found them at Coles butcher in Green Street Green and from Porters greengrocer at The Crescent, Green Street Green and also at Burlington Food Hall, Chislehurst, and undoubtedly other local outlets. Do let us know!

Recommendation of Local Shop for IT & Phone Repair

I recently had a fault with my android phone, I thought I knew the problem and was wary of being overcharged. A local FoE member suggested I try a new shop in Orpington. This had only just reopened after lockdown and was very helpful, with an estimate in a few hours, and with a no repair no fee policy which impressed me. The estimate was £25, which I was happy to pay, and I picked it up the next day. Other local repair shops often charge £20 -£30 just to look at an item.

I also asked about a simple windows 10 machine for use as a local charity office admin machine. I was shown two at £150 each. Excellent value for simple Internet desktop PCs.

Orpington IT Centre, 92 High St,
Orpington BR6 0JY
(Opposite Aynscombe Angle)

www.orpingtonitcentre.co.uk

Peter Gandolfi

No/Low Waste Shops

Alexander Stores, 61 Beckenham Road.
Green Room, Station Approach, Hayes.

The Burlington Food Hall, Chislehurst High Street (Next to the Post Office):
www.burlingtonfood.co.uk

Internet

Peep Eyewear revitalise vintage frames or recycle those that can't be reused.
<https://www.peepeyewear.co.uk/peep-donation-address>

If You Care products including recycled tin foil and sandwich bags: <https://buyifyoucare.com/>

<https://www.peacewiththewild.co.uk/>

Wide range of biodegradable and natural products: <https://www.mygreenpod.com/>

Ethical' products news and advice: <https://www.ethicalsuperstore.com/>

<http://www.greenfinder.co.uk/>

- a useful directory of environmental companies for all kinds of things.

Naturallythinking, Unit 2 Mill Lane Trading Estate, Mill Lane, Croydon, CR0 4AA, 020 3856 3588: <https://naturallythinking.com/>

Crowdfarming, wide selection of directly supplied products from farmers around the world, many organic: <https://www.crowdfarming.com/en>

Facebook

Greener & Cleaner Bromley (& Beyond)
Consumer action!

Hayes Life Freebeecyclers There may be something similar in your area.

Reuse

If you have any items that you no longer need and that could be of use to someone then please let us know and we will publish them in the Newsletter. Alternatively, you could bring them along to our monthly meeting and put them on the table in reception. Any donations to BFoE from sales will be greatly appreciated.

List Of Roles

Everyone can be contacted via the groups email address: bromleyfoe@gmail.com

Acting Co-ordinators/Mentors:

Sheila Brown 01689 851605
Ann Garrett 020 8460 1295

Treasurer:

Sheila Brown

Press Team:

Ann Garrett

Programme Organiser:

Sheila Brown

Outings Organisers:

John & Sue Boccock 0208 290 0485
Merchandising: Anne Clark

Membership Secretary:

Dan Sloan 07414 920920

Newsletter Production:

Dan Sloan

Instagram and Twitter Admin:

Emmanuelle Coetzee

Fundraising Officer:

Bill Priestley 01689 820469

Admin Team:

Judy Palmer, Rob Clark, Annette Rose

Bromley Environmental Network BEN

Reps:

John Pavitt, Judy Palmer

Web Site & Technical Support:

Peter Gandolfi, Mary Ingledew

Refreshments

Mary Ingledew, Sylvia Chance

Meeting Reporters:

John & Sue Boccock, Anne Clark, Annette Rose, Peter Gandolfi, Sheila Brown - further volunteers for this team would be welcomed

Campaigns (Updated categories. See item on page 21) You can join one of these new campaign teams at our AGM during the January monthly meeting or by emailing the BFoE email address.

Climate:

Nature:

System Change:

Consumption:

Planning Monitor:

Newsletter Editor:

Rob Clark 020 8289 1503
robert.clark9@btinternet.com



Non-members Section

If you are not a member of Bromley Friends of the Earth (BFoE) then hello to you. We are an active local group affiliated to national Friends of the Earth concerned with promoting the understanding of environmental issues. We also campaign on these issues at a local, national and international level.

If you would like to know more about who we are and what we do, please contact either of our acting co-ordinators Sheila Brown or Ann Garrett (their details are inside the back page of this newsletter.) Alternatively you can come along to one of our monthly meetings held on the first Tuesday of every month at the Friends Meeting House, Ravensbourne Road, Bromley - that's towards the bottom of the

Membership Application/Renewal* Form (*delete as appropriate)

I would like to support Bromley Friends of the Earth and enclose my annual subscription (£8 single/£15 couple/family.) I also enclose a donation (optional) of £..... to help towards the work of our local group.

Name:

Address:

Post Code: Phone No:

Email address:

Do you have any hobbies or interests that may be of use to the group?

.....

Please return this form to: Bromley FoE, 2 Bucks Cross Cottages, Chelsfield Village, Orpington, Kent BR6 7RN. Other enquiries regarding the group should be sent to bromleyfoe@gmail.com or contact one of our co-ordinators via their details inside.