

Fourth Reserve Foundation



Annual Report 2020 - 2021

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Fourth Reserve is a charity that was established by local residents in December 2017 to preserve and protect the New Cross to Forest Hill Railway Cutting and in particular the section that runs behind Buckthorne Road and between Courtrai Road in SE23 and Dalrymple Road.

The Forest Hill to New Cross Railway Cutting is a Metropolitan Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. There are only three Metropolitan SINCs in Lewisham Borough including this railway cutting and yet despite this areas such as the Buckthorne Road section are threatened by property development ownership, land encroachment and/or an absence of woodland management allowing the build up of fly tipping, rubbish dumping and invasive bramble inhibiting wildlife development.

In 2020 the Fourth Reserve worked towards four key objectives:

1. Enhancing the space to be more inclusive and attract community involvement, interest and support.
2. To 'green' the unwelcoming space outside the reserve including addition of trees, planters and pocket garden to better link the two sections of the railway cutting.
3. To introduce regular monitoring of wildlife and maintain records for biodiversity outputs.
4. To begin restoration work on the reed bed while waiting for Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding to be released.



Completion of outdoor classroom/gathering space 2020



Foraging fence and garden space 2020

This evaluation, conducted between January 2020 and January 2021, considers the Fourth Reserve's objectives and looks at outcomes achieved in order to generate a picture of the charity's effectiveness in meeting these objectives.

Project 1: Enhancing the space to be more inclusive and attract community involvement, interest and support

The objective was make the nature reserve space more accessible to the community while maintaining the need to restrict access in order to protect and support wildlife.



Nursery children picking tomatoes 2020



Eco Toilet 2020

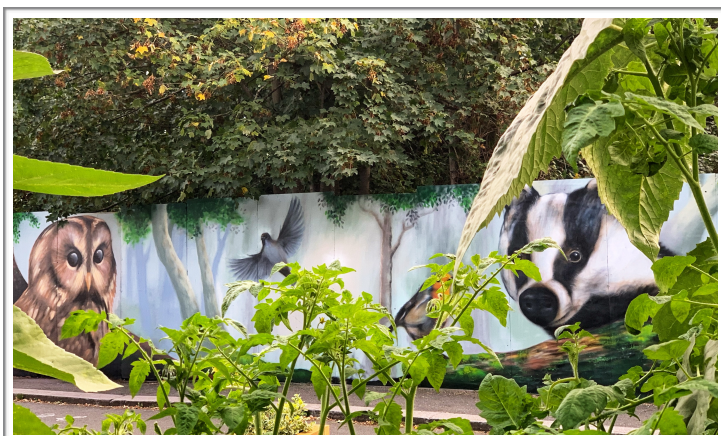
Outcomes:

- An eco-toilet was installed on site to overcome the barrier faced by some visitors of not having a toilet on site. This is a problem particularly experienced by women and the need was highlighted by the Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network when discussing access for muslim women and girls. The funding for the toilet was from the Feminist Review Trust.
- In addition to the exterior greening project (See Project 2) the fence line of the reserve was transformed into a foraging fence and garden in order to engage passers by when gates are closed. The fence line will eventually have a variety of berries for passers by to pick and volunteers are encouraged to take home produce such as tomatoes and chives.
- Paths in the reserve have been widened and wood chipped to make the space more accessible and to enable visitors to walk and pass each other while observing the pandemic social distancing guidelines.
- With improved access small groups were able to visit the reserve during the pandemic for limited periods and experience much needed green outdoor space including the local nursery, cubs/scouts and children with additional needs.

Project 2: Green the space outside the reserve including addition of trees, planters and pocket garden:

The objective was to link the two sections of the Buckthorne Cutting by creating a green space outside the reserve that included trees, planters, pocket garden and art work.

Through liaison with Lewisham Borough and ideas generated by the community during the No Car Day event held in September 2019 the Fourth Reserve and local volunteers succeeded in creating a space with the introduction of 5 trees, plants, two murals and a pocket garden.



Eddystone Park: Murals 2020



Outcomes:

- The area was formally closed off with planters that were funded by Lewisham Borough Council.
- Additional planters were made by volunteers and plants/trees were sourced via monetary donations and residents contributing their own garden plants.
- Two murals were completed. The smaller mural was funded by Network Rail and the larger was funded by local residents. The artists contributed their time for free.
- A pocket garden was created on a grey paved space that previously attracted fly tipping and waste.
- Families and friends now meet daily in this space to talk, eat and socialise. Children love the pocket garden and mural and the space has been a vital resource during an unexpected pandemic when meeting indoors has been severely restricted during the 2020-2021 period.
- There was a significant increase in Fourth Reserve membership and volunteers. This project attracted huge local interest and provided a positive community focus during a pandemic when many were struggling with the challenges of loss, poor health and isolation.

Project 3: To introduce regular monitoring of wildlife and maintain records for biodiversity outputs.

The objective was to record on site in order to evidence biodiversity and notable habitats thus enabling the charity to monitor progress as we continue to enhance and create habitats that attract/protect wildlife from 2021 onwards.



Toad (Section A) 2020; Stag Beetle (Section A) 2020; Fungi (Section B) 2020; Slow Worm (Section C) 2020

Outcomes:

- A Fungi survey took place between October 2020 and December 2020 with 40 fungi recorded.
- Stag beetles and slow worms were recorded and shared by local residents. Records were sent by the charity to Greenspace Information for Greater London (Gigl). Gigl reports are used by local councils, planners and developers in planning application processes.
- Trees of note were measured on site and recorded with Lewisham Council planning department and the Woodland Trust Tree Inventory including notable hawthorne trees with pleaches. This work prevented an application to fell a 350 year old oak tree.
- Sound recordings of a tawny owl were shared with Gigl along with records of newts and a toad.
- All volunteering sessions and visitor sessions as well as biodiversity records were shared with the Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership who collate records for borough wide biodiversity evidence.

Project 4: To begin restoration work on the reed bed while waiting for Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding to be released.

The objective was to begin restoration work on the reed bed with the information advice given by ecologist Alan Scott while awaiting NCIL funding.

Outcomes:

- As advised 1/3 of the reed bed was cut back and bramble removed. Reeds are returning healthier than before.
- No further work was possible due to constraints around funding and permissions. The NCIL funding was postponed due to the pandemic and permissions have been difficult to obtain due to lack of over-arching responsibility for the site. Although designated a Nature Reserve and use as a nature reserve is permitted according to land registry deeds, neither the council who negotiated the designation or the land owners have been forthcoming with permissions that would enable more effective conservation work.
- Several septarian nodules have been unearthed on the site resulting in a visit from the London Geopartnership who have been assessing the site for Locally Important Geological Site designation. The nodules are millions of years old and create underground springs which are likely to be the cause of the reed bed. It is rare to find septarian nodules in situ and so this site is scientifically important. This was an unexpected but welcome outcome of work on site.



Reed bed on hill 2020 Reed bed on hill 2020



Septarian nodule 2020

Additional outcomes:

Aside from the four key objectives there are also a number of additional outcomes that are worthy of note. During the 2020 pandemic it was possible to dedicate time to researching the site in order to seek evidence that could afford the site additional protections. The site was also surveyed twice by the London Geo-partnership due to the discovery of septarian nodules in several places along the whole length of the Buckthorne Cutting. Finally campaigning continued in order to protect the Old Scout Hut site at Courtrai Road.



Scouts at Courtrai Road 1914



1600 Map of Brockley Green by Ralph Treswell

Outcomes:

- London Geopartnership surveyed sections B and C and confirmed two places where the septarian nodules appear to be in-situ. A report has been written and recommendation made for a Locally Important Geological Site designation. There is currently only one other LIGS in Lewisham borough (Blackheath Gravel Pits) and one site with the higher designation of Regionally Important Geological Site (Beckenham Place Park).
- Research was undertaken that looked at historical land ownership, woodland archeology and scouting heritage. Several important findings have helped to elevate the importance of the Buckthorne Cutting including both internationally important and locally important people having lived at the location of the Courtrai Woodland, evidence of ancient woodland and the importance of the Courtrai Site (Section A) as one of the oldest scout sites in the UK. Evidence was submitted to the council for consideration.
- During the pandemic the importance of urban green space and particularly urban woodland has been elevated. With further rubbish dumping and trespass on the scout hut woodland site at section A the charity have continued to lobby the council for support and enforcement action was again taken against the land owner in December 2020.
- The outdoor classroom/gathering platform (the Raven's Nest) was finally completed after many delays as well as an improved fire-pit area. These provide useful spaces but also look stunning at the bottom of the steps overlooked by majestic oak trees.

6) Income and Expenditure

In 2020 the Fourth Reserve received funding mainly from Cottage Day Nursery (site hire), the Feminist Review Trust, Crofton Park Assembly funding and donations from visitors. The funding paid for the eco toilet, the sink unit, plants, trees, the decking, joists and other materials to complete of the 'Raven's Nest', skip hire, strimmers, mural costs and various tools/water hose.

	2020 Restricted	2020 Unrestricted	2020 Total	2019 Total
RECEIPTS				
Assembly Funding	450		450	1,500
Barclays Bank			0	189
Co-op			0	9,676
Cottage Day Nursery hire	1,095		1,095	0
Donations		3,375	3,375	0
Feminist Review Trust	4,000		4,000	0
Greggs Grant			0	0
Groundwork			0	0
HPP Wildlife Grant	500		500	0
Lottery Awards			0	9,000
Rude Health site hire	270		270	
Tesco Bags	1,000		1,000	3,000
Grants and Donations	7,315	3,375	10,690	23,365
			0	0
Income from Fundraising Activities	0	0	0	0
TOTAL RECEIPTS	7,315	3,375	10,690	23,365
PAYMENTS				
Assembly Funding	450		450	1,500
Barclays Bank	31		31	158
Co-op	5,092		5,092	4,581
Cottage Day Nursery hire	919		919	0
Feminist Review Trust	1,352		1,352	0
Greggs	157		157	486
Groundwork	14		14	0
HPP Wildlife Grant	0		0	0
Lottery Awards	7,960		7,960	1,040
Rude Health site hire	270		270	0
Tesco Bags	1,000		1,000	2,999
Unrestricted General Expenses		2,485	2,485	0
Project & Maintenance Payments	17,245	2,485	19,731	10,764
			0	0
Fundraising Payments	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
Administration Payments	0	0	0	0
TOTAL PAYMENTS	17,245	2,485	19,731	10,764
Net Receipts/(Payments) for the Year	-9,930	890	-9,040	12,601
Add Cash Balance at 1st January	0	13,284	13,284	683
CASH BALANCE at the END of the YEAR	-9,930	14,174	4,244	13,284
Assembly Funding			0	0
Barclays Bank			0	31
Co-op	2		2	5,094
Cottage Day Nursery hire	176		176	0
Feminist Review Trust	2,648		2,648	0
Greggs			0	157
Groundwork	2		2	15
HPP Wildlife Grant	500		500	0
Lottery Awards	0		0	7,960
Rude Health site hire	0		0	0
Tesco Bags	1		1	1
Unrestricted Charity Funds		916	916	26
RESERVE FUNDS at the END of the YEAR	3,329	916	4,244	13,284

7) Conclusion

The Fourth Reserve achieved its key objectives in 2020 however some projects are on-going and works continue as required including for example the reed bed restoration work. In 2021 we will be focusing on protecting the Courtrai woodland site and returning it to community use, increasing biodiversity and sharing information about the site.

- Increasing biodiversity through hedge laying, bird feeding stations, creating ponds, dead wood and meadow grassland habitats as well as reed bed restoration.
- Working in partnership with the scouts, the local council and local residents to begin to return the scout hut area to appropriate woodland/community use. This includes the disused space outside the woodland.
- Participate in the wider Great North Wood project from June 2021 through activities such as educational walks and information sharing.
- Continue work to make the site and information as accessible as possible by introducing noticeboard/signage and sheltered space for example.
- Pursue policy protection opportunities with research evidence through for example the Local Plan and heritage/green space designations.



Summer 2020 - front of reserve



Winter 2020 - rear of reserve

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Chairperson

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