

Socialist environmentalism



6.6.2017 photo shows noticeboard beside Rochdale Road, a busy arterial route into Manchester city centre. The Clough's most visible noticeboard, its been in this vandalized state for years.



6.9.2008 photo shows musical fairy-tale play in the Clough, produced by Purple Expressive Arts, organized by FoBHC. Glimpse of a pro-social, sane society.

In another case of blatant maladministration / corruption, Manchester City Council (MCC) recently granted planning permission for their new, second-rate visitor centre in the Clough, on false grounds, falsely claiming there were no objections.

Friends of Boggart Hole Clough (FoBHC) objected & presented an alternative, community proposal - the *North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre* - to start restoring the biodiversity health of the irreplaceable *Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands* of Bailey's Wood & the Clough by creating woodland conservation management jobs & training.

MCC says there's no money to fund this vital work.

Is this excuse (& the aforementioned maladministration / corruption) not an indictment of the Labour Party who run MCC, of the powers that be ?

Britain's economy produces enormous wealth, but where does this wealth go ?

Its syphoned off, squandered on profiteering & militarism - the dead end of capitalist imperialism.

The world's wealth should be spent on restoring people & wildlife to a healthy condition.

Two recent emails regarding these matters are set out in the pages below - the 1st from FoBHC replying to the 2nd from a local MCC Labour Party councillor.

The dead end of capitalism necessitates establishing socialism



1. Email sent: 20th June 2017 22:14

From: Peter Milner @ FoBHC.

To: Hannah Priest @ MCC.

Copied to: 71 people including MCC North Area Parks Manager.

Subject: Re Re North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal.

To: Cllr Hannah Priest, 1 of 3 Charlestown Ward Councillors (all Labour Party members) at Manchester City Council (MCC).

Copied to: some Friends of Boggart Hole Clough (FoBHC) & others.

Hannah,

Re Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough.

Thanks for your 29.5.2017 email below, about which a few comments follow.

Please see two PDFs attached, which set out recent email correspondence, referred to below, between MCC & FoBHC:

1. *North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre - a community proposal*, FoBHC, 29.4.2017.

2. *Update re North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre - a community proposal*, FoBHC, 28.5.2017.

Regarding a meeting, we are waiting to hear from Jon Atkin (North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team, MCC) who wrote in his 13.4.2017 email (see below & attached PDF dated 29.4.2017): “we will be putting together a new Boggart Hole Clough stakeholder group .. to which you will be invited to contribute ..”

Regarding consultations about the new visitor centre, we reiterate, the local community was deliberately excluded.

You write that “various sporting associations” were consulted & some residents of Charlestown ward, where the centre happens to be located. However, the Clough is surrounded by 3 more wards which were not consulted: Crumpsall, Harpurhey & Moston. Beside which, the Clough is of importance to North Manchester as a whole, if not to Greater Manchester & beyond.

And the Clough has a Friends group (FoBHC) founded in 2000, who were also not consulted. In your previous 21.5.2017 email, you said you were a member of the Friends of Crumpsall Park. Would you not expect MCC to consult the Friends of Crumpsall Park regarding a new visitor centre in Crumpsall Park ?

Information was withheld, not shared. Jon Atkin emailed us 13.4.2017, briefly describing the proposed new visitor centre but not telling us the planning application had been submitted & the plans were available to view on MCC's website. Subsequently, we sent him an email 26.4.2017, objecting to MCC's proposed new centre (his brief description conveying its inadequacy) & outlining an alternative proposal (these emails are below & are set out in the attached PDF dated 29.4.2017).

MCC approved planning permission (application ref 115697/VO/2017) for their new visitor centre 10.5.2017, about 2 weeks after FoBHC's 26.4.2017 email (referred to above) was sent. So when you write - “There were no objections or comments, and so planning permission was granted last month” - the first part of this sentence is untrue.

This untruth is magnified when considering the following. FoBHC's above mentioned 26.4.2017 email was posted on our Facebook page the same day & within a week received over 50 likes. Thus, over 50 people objected to MCC's proposed new visitor centre.

Therefore, MCC granted planning permission for their new centre on false grounds.

Thus, not only was FoBHC deliberately excluded from consultations, but when we understood what was afoot & submitted an objection with an alternative plan, it was ignored.

Can this be viewed in any other way than maladministration, corruption ? Is this not an indictment of the Labour Party who run MCC, of the existing set-up ?

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When MCC did consult with FoBHC there were some excellent results, e.g. in 2005, initiating Wheels For All / All Abilities Cycling on the athletics track; in 2008, the declaration of Local Nature Reserve status for the Clough; in 2009, planting the Avenue of Oaks replacing diseased Manchester Poplars; also in 2009, the refurbishment & reopening of the Lakeside Café.

Overall, however, the environs of the Clough & Bailey's Wood have reached a dire state due to the Labour Party / MCC's neglect & poor judgement stemming from its refusal to listen to / consult with the local community - the closure & demolition of Booth Hall Children's Hospital, the chain-sawing down of 3 acres of Bailey's Wood, the poor condition of the woodlands invaded by non-native plants species, the piles of rubbish, the 'sport' of fishing despite the Clough being a Local Nature Reserve to protect wildlife, the shabby plastic floating islands in the Lake, the footbridge without safety railings, the blocked drains, the dilapidated noticeboards.

And now, to cap it all, the MCC "approved" second-rate visitor centre, which is clearly not fit for purpose, bearing no relation to what the Clough & adjacent Bailey's Wood, as irreplaceable Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands, deserve & need especially in terms of restoring their biodiversity health.

Re Bailey's Wood, you write that you will be "working to improve & maintain the woodland" but without a "management proposal". How do you intend to "improve & maintain the woodland" ? Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands are vulnerable ecosystems, easily damaged.

FoBHC's conservation volunteering experience in the Clough (from 2002 to 2014) showed that volunteers cannot, & should not be expected to, restore the biodiversity health of these woodlands, the scale of the task is too great. Besides, why should responsibility for such vital work be shouldered by volunteers ? Properly paid woodland conservation management jobs & training should be provided.

In our previous 26.5.2017 email, 3 documents on FoBHC's website were listed re Bailey's Wood including the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit's *Ecological Assessment & Management Proposals* (October 2015).

FoBHC's *Combined archaeological & ecological preliminary proposals to sustainably regenerate Bailey's Wood* (14.5.2016) doc, which develops the GMEU's proposals above, states: "We urge Manchester City Council to create interesting, worthwhile paid jobs, employing a team of local people as archaeological & ecological apprentices / assistants / conservationists to conserve, understand, sustainably regenerate the natural / historical environment of Bailey's Wood – eradicate invasive non-native plant species e.g. Japanese Knotweed, excavate possible middens of the former Booth Hall, excavate & permanently display in-situ remains of former Lion Field Bleach Works, remove accumulated rubbish, re-open the brook running through the woodland, create a green network linking Bailey's Wood to Boggart Hole Brook & the Clough, thus enabling these ancient woodlands to thrive .."

You write, "I understand .. the fear you have for the state of our green spaces .. we need to be pragmatic about this. There is no funding available for a Discovery Centre .."

Have you / MCC tried to find such funding ? As discussed in our previous 26.5.2017 email below (email also set out in attached PDF dated 28.5.2017), the examples given of recent new-build discovery centres demonstrate that funding is available.

Should it turn out that there actually is no longer funding available, is this also not an indictment of the existing set-up, the powers that be ?

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The world's wealth should be spent on restoring people & wildlife to a healthy, thriving condition.

Socialism would *be pragmatic about this* by ensuring there is *funding available* to restore the Earth's health.

Peter.

P. F. Milner, Acting Secretary, FoBHC ...

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2. Email sent: 29th May 2017 22:55

From: Hannah Priest @ MCC.

To: Peter Milner @ FoBHC.

Forwarded by FoBHC to: 11 people.

Subject: Re North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre - a community proposal.

Hi Peter,

Thanks for getting back to me.

To answer your questions:

The planning permission for the new centre was open to consultation/objection as all planning applications are. There were no objections or comments, and so planning permission was granted last month. The funding for this project was secured some time ago. I'd be more than happy to come along to your next committee meeting to talk through the architect's plans with your group. Please just let me know the time and place, and I'd be happy to attend.

The plans for the new Visitors Centre have been discussed with many local residents. It was on the front page of a leaflet put through every door in Charlestown in 2016, and myself, Basil and Veronica discussed it with any interested residents during door knocking sessions. There has also been consultation with the various sporting associations that use the park, and details of the project have been posted on Facebook and Twitter. I must say, there has been no objection made by any Charlestown residents so far.

You will get absolutely no argument from me that sporting activities are currently taking priority over conservation activities. I understand your frustration (and the fear you have for the state of our green spaces), and I am working hard to address this where possible. However, we need to be pragmatic about this. There is no funding available for a Discovery Centre, and I can't see anything in your proposal to suggest a way that we might raise the required money to build such a centre. As such, I have to support the fully-funded proposal to build new changing facilities and community activity rooms, as it is the only viable option open to us at the moment.

I think you may have misunderstood my comments on Bailey's Wood. This is not a management proposal, and there is no draft document to be shared at this stage. Rather, myself and a group of residents have formed a Friends of Bailey's Wood community group, which will be working to improve and maintain the woodland. If you would like to support this new group, it would be great if you could share our Facebook page on your own page to encourage more residents to get involved with our activities and plans.

Please do let me know if you would like me to attend a meeting of your group to talk more about the new Visitors Centre. Look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes, Hannah.

Cllr Hannah Priest, Labour Member - Charlestown Ward ...

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POSTSCRIPT Earlier emails referred to in 2 emails above, are set out in PDFs listed on page 2 above, which can be found on our website, as can the PDFs mentioned below.

MCC's granting of permission to demolish the Administration Building of the former Booth Hall Children's Hospital, is the other case of maladministration alluded to on page 1 above. See PDF: *Objections to demolition of former Booth Hall Children's Hospital - petition, email transcripts including complaint regarding lack of public consultation, etc, from 2008 to 2016*, FoBHC, 23.2.2016.

Boggart Hole Clough environs has historical associations with socialism going back at least to Peterloo; in the preceding days protesters practiced marching drill on White Moss above Bailey's Wood. Sam Bamford (1788-1872), a Peterloo protest leader, author of *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, was a local resident who wrote about the Clough. In 1896, the Independent Labour Party held mass meetings in the Clough addressed by Ben Tillet (Dockers' leader), Emmeline Pankhurst (Suffragette leader) & Keir Hardie (first Labour Party leader). See PDF: *Boggart Hole Clough & the 1896 Campaign for Free Speech*, FoBHC, 24.8.2016.