North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal

“It would be wonderful if we had something like this in North Manchester” writes a local councillor, who then refuses to support the proposal.

Local councillors (all Labour Party members) refuse to support the best for Bailey’s Wood & Boggart Hole Clough, for North Manchester residents.

Three recent emails - 1st from FoBHC replying to 2nd from Manchester City Councillor, quoted above, replying to 3rd from FoBHC - are set out in full in pages below.

For earlier email correspondence between Friends of Boggart Hole Clough (FoBHC) & Manchester City Council (MCC) regarding this matter, see North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal (FoBHC, 29.4.2017) doc on our website.
1. Email sent: 26 May 2017 08:08
From: Peter Milner @ FoBHC.
To: Hannah Priest @ MCC.
Copied to: 87 people including MCC North Area Parks Manager, 17 MCC Councillors (Executive Members for the Environment, Culture & Leisure, Health, Schools, & Neighbourhood Services, & 3 from each of the 4 wards surrounding the Clough & Bailey’s Wood, including the Leader of the Council, excluding Councillor to whom email addressed) & local MP Graham Stringer.
Subject: 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).

Hannah,

Re Bailey’s Wood & Boggart Hole Clough,

Thanks for your 21.5.2017 email below.

You write, “as you know, the plans for the visitors centre in Boggart Hole Clough are already finalised & approved”. No, we didn’t know, this wasn’t made clear in the MCC North Area Parks Manager’s emails which are included in the re-attached PDF: North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre - a community proposal, FoBHC, 29.4.2017.

We don’t doubt that “the local councillors fully support the plan for this new building.” But does anyone else support it ? Despite repeated requests, we still have not been shown the architectural designs / drawings. Why are the plans a secret ? We can only conclude that the plans are so feeble & paltry that MCC is too ashamed to reveal them.

The emails reproduced in the re-attached PDF show there’s been no public consultation whatsoever regarding this matter. The local community has been totally disregarded, deliberately excluded from the decision-making process.

You write that you are “not convinced it would be wise to derail this project now”. We are convinced the project needs, not de-railing, but re-railing - radically improving along the lines of the Boggart Hole Clough & Bailey’s Wood Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre proposal thereby respecting, celebrating & helping to conserve these two irreplaceable Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands.

You write that “The examples of discovery centres you include in your proposal are really interesting, and it would be wonderful if we had something like this in North Manchester.” You then contradict this by writing “I don’t think we could find .. funding for a centre devoted mainly to conservation.” But the examples of discovery centres themselves prove otherwise, demonstrating that such funding is indeed available.

You write, “We also have to balance the need for conservation / education with the need to improve sports facilities ..” The situation in the Clough is imbalanced - sports facilities have been improved in recent years, whereas the need for conservation / education has not been addressed.

Your email suggests you’re developing a management proposal for Bailey’s Wood. In this regard, please note particularly the following documents on our website:


2. Combined archaeological & ecological preliminary proposals to sustainably regenerate Bailey’s Wood, FoBHC, 14.5.2016. This doc reviews & develops GMEU’s proposals in doc 1 above.


We would be pleased to receive a draft of any proposed woodland conservation management plan you produce for Bailey’s Wood & for your permission to publish it on our website enabling everyone to read / review it.

In conclusion, we hope you will change your mind regarding the proposed Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre & decide to support it after all - a new visitor centre worth building, helping to sustainably regenerate North Manchester.

Peter.
P. F. Milner, Acting Secretary, FoBHC ...
2. Email sent: 21 May 2017 10:37
From: Hannah Priest @ MCC.
To: Peter Milner @ FoBHC.
Subject: Re North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal.

Hi Peter,

Thank you for copying me into your email. I wanted to get in touch with you directly to talk about the proposal, but also to let you know about other issues to do with the ancient woodlands in the ward.

The examples of discovery centres you include in your proposal are really interesting, and it would be wonderful if we had something like this in North Manchester. However, as you know, the plans for the visitors centre in Boggart Hole Clough are already finalised and approved, as I'm not convinced it would be wise to derail this project now. The funding for the new visitors centre is contingent on improving the sports offer in the park (the money has come from external sources, all of which are sports-related), and, being realistic, I don't think we could find an equivalent amount of funding for a centre devoted mainly to conservation. We also have to balance the need for conservation/education with the need to improve sports facilities and activities in the park. I know from my own experience as an officer of Friends of Crumpsall Park that this balance is often difficult to get right.

The new visitors centre is needed, and the local councillors fully support the plan for this new building. However, we also need to address the need to conserve and understand the (seriously neglected) ancient woodlands in our area. I've begun this work by seeking Tree Preservation Orders for Bailey's Wood, and forming a new Friends of Bailey's Wood group (beginning its activities this afternoon) to take care of this part of the woodland. The scope for activities in Bailey's Wood, including some sort of 'discovery centre' is huge, but first we must reverse the decades of neglect our forest has suffered.

I'd be happy to talk to you more about this. Please do let me know if you have any questions.

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

3. Email sent: 15 May 2017 08:16
From: Peter Milner @ FoBHC.
To: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
Copied to: 90 people including 17 MCC Councillors (Executive Members for the Environment, Culture & Leisure, Health, Schools, & Neighbourhood Services, & 3 from each of the 4 wards surrounding the Clough & Bailey’s Wood, including the Leader of the Council) & local MP Graham Stringer.
Subject: North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal.

To: Jon Atkin, North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team, Manchester City Council (MCC).
Copied to: some Friends of Boggart Hole Clough (FoBHC).

Jon,

Boggart Hole Clough & Bailey’s Wood: Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal.

We hope you will soon respond to our proposal in the 26.4.2017 email below, sent nearly 3 weeks ago.

Please see attached PDF, which includes above mentioned 26.4.2017 email, outlining the proposal: North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal, FoBHC, 29.4.2017.

Many people support this proposal, see e.g. our Facebook page – www.facebook.com/boggart.org.uk

Ignoring this proposal, as various previous FoBHC proposals have been ignored (some mentioned in attached PDF), will surely tend to further alienate people from local government, the powers that be.

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

The 26.4.2017 email mentioned in above email, & earlier email correspondence re this subject between FoBHC & MCC, is set out in the North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal (FoBHC, 29.4.2017) doc on our website.