The Visitor Centre is soon to be replaced, Manchester City Council (MCC) recently told us. In response, Friends of Boggart Hole Clough (FoBHC) emailed MCC – extract below:

“Please see two photos attached, courtesy of The Wildlife Trusts / Essex Wildlife Trust, downloaded from their website (essexwt.org.uk), showing two recently opened new-build Visitor Centres, examples of the sort of building we / you should surely aspire to for the Clough.

1st photo: Bedfords Park Visitor Centre, Havering-atte-Bower.

2nd photo: Belfairs Woodland Centre, Leigh-on-Sea. Their website says that this “Centre provides a space for schools, groups and families to learn about south Essex’s fantastic ancient woodlands in an interactive way ..”

You write, “we will be engaging park stakeholders about the future uses of the Visitor Centre as well as the direction of travel for the Clough as a whole ..” As we said in previous email, the design / specifications for the new building will largely determine these “future uses” & “direction of travel”.

In 2008, with our full support, MCC in association with Natural England declared the Clough a Local Nature Reserve, unambiguously indicating “the direction of travel for the Clough as a whole”.

We urge you to take this opportunity to reinforce that progressive decision, thereby demonstrating management coherence & continuity, by building a new Visitor Centre worth building, appropriate for a Local Nature Reserve, for North Manchester’s Ancient Woodlands, celebrating this rare natural asset, helping kick-start & sustain the long-overdue woodland management to restore biodiversity health, to begin realizing the area’s potential, by establishing the Boggart Hole Clough & Bailey’s Wood: Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal.”

This email & other email correspondence between FoBHC & MCC, regarding this subject, is set out in full in pages below.
CONTENTS
Page 1 ........................... Title – Photos 1 & 2 – Summary.
Pages 3 – 8 .................... Email Correspondence (10 items).
Page 8 ........................... Photos 6 - 8.

ABBREVIATIONS
S106 Agreement money: Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 as amended - monies paid by developers to planning authorities to offset costs of mitigating external impact of developments.
MCC: Manchester City Council, local planning authority & landowner of Boggart Hole Clough & eastern two-thirds of Bailey’s Wood.
GMEU: Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, local authorities’ department.
LNR: Local Nature Reserve; in 2008, MCC declared Boggart Hole Clough a LNR.
FoBHC: Friends of Boggart Hole Clough; in 2015, FoBHC replaced the name BHCCAT.
PFM: Peter F. Milner, BHCCAT / FoBHC Acting Secretary, peterfmilner@hotmail.com

INTRODUCTION
This document presents transcripts of email correspondence between FoBHC & relevant MCC personnel re sustainably regenerating Boggart Hole Clough & adjacent Bailey’s Wood & thereby the wider North Manchester area.

Emails were kept together (emails sent separately were pasted in) to form coherent narrative & enabling reference to be made to earlier emails.

EDITING
Emails presented same as emails normally viewed with latest email first & earliest email last.
Abbreviations above usually used in the email transcripts.
Occasional notes inserted into (or between) the transcripts, which were not in the original sent emails, are [bracketed] in red type.
Deletions, irrelevancies dealing with other subjects, indicated by 2 dots .
For brevity, job titles etc of MCC personnel are given once but not usually repeated thereafter.
To further condense the text, greetings (‘Dear’ etc) & farewells (‘Yours sincerely’ etc) are sometimes omitted.
Besides above amendments, emails presented verbatim.

IMAGES
Photos 1 & 2 on page 1 above: courtesy of The Wildlife Trusts / Essex Wildlife Trust (www.essexwt.org.uk). These 2 photos were attached to email 1 on pages 3 & 4 below.
Photos 3, 4 & 5 on this page below: taken by PFM; photo 3 taken 28.6.2016, photos 4 & 5 taken 8.4.2017. These photos were not attached to any of the emails below.
Photos 6, 7 & 8 on page 8 below: courtesy of Google Earth, imagery date 6.2.2009. These photos were not attached to any of the emails below.

REFERENCED & RELATED DOCUMENTS all of which can be seen on our website www.boggart.org.uk

REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

RELATED DOCUMENTS
5. Objection to proposed demolition of Lodge Gatehouse of former Booth Hall Children’s Hospital, FoBHC, 6.5.2015.
6. Objections to demolition of former Booth Hall Children’s Hospital - petition, email transcripts including complaints regarding lack of public consultation, etc, from 2008 to 2016, FoBHC, 23.2.2016.

Three photos of the present Visitor Centre (not attached to any of the emails below):

Jon,

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

Further to our 13.4.2017 email & your email reply of same date, both of which can be seen below.

We requested you “inform us about what architectural designs for a new Visitor Centre are under consideration & allow us to publish them online (on our website & Facebook page) so that everyone can see & discuss the proposed plans & take part in this decision.”

You declined our request, instead writing that the new Centre “should include a stores area, an office for Parks staff, a community space, small kitchen area, toilets & FA standard changing rooms” - i.e. much the same as the present Centre, reflecting a blinkered, dismal view regarding the quality of Visitor Centre suitable for the Clough.

If the new Centre is not a substantial upgrade, it hardly seems worth the public expense of demolishing & re-building it; refurbishment would seem more appropriate.

You wrote, “Because of the varying funding streams, the purpose & use of the new visitor centre .. were fairly ‘locked down’ from the start ..”

So, despite our repeated requests to be consulted (as detailed in our email below), MCC selected these “funding streams” which it “locked down from the start” – i.e. from the start you locked us out from any say regarding which funding streams to apply for.

Thus the community’s knowledge & experience of the Clough, accumulated by FoBHC over 17 years, was ignored.

Consequently, predictably, you have overlooked the essence / uniqueness of the Clough & adjacent Bailey’s Wood as North Manchester’s Ancient Woodlands, more precisely Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands, habitats described by the government’s adviser on the environment as “irreplaceable” (English Nature, 2002) & “of prime ecological & landscape importance” (Natural England, 2014).

At a meeting in 2005, Julie Connor (North Manchester Partnership Manager, MCC) proposed a “new, enlarged Visitor Centre to replace, in same general area as, present prefab Visitor Centre. Suggestions that it should serve as Boggart Hole Clough & Bailey’s Wood (both Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands) Activity Visitor Centre / Woodland Heritage Centre / Biodiversity Restoration Centre with café, class / meeting rooms, forestry products workshop, specialist Natural Woodland Conservation Management library, exhibition space, offices, storerooms, etc.” – quoted verbatim: item 6.2 of Minutes of FoBHC 6.7.2005 Open Meeting (these Minutes can be seen on our website).

We stand by this 12-year old proposal, which we recently reworked for a nearby location – see PDF on our website: Re-uniting Bailey’s Wood & Boggart Hole Clough, FoBHC, 10.7.2016.

- email continued on page 4 -
Please see two photos attached, courtesy of The Wildlife Trusts / Essex Wildlife Trust, downloaded from their website (essexwt.org.uk), showing two recently opened new-build Visitor Centres, examples of the sort of building we / you should surely aspire to for the Clough.

1st photo [Photo 1, page 1 above]: Bedfords Park Visitor Centre, Havering-atte-Bower.

2nd photo [Photo 2, page 1 above]: Belfairs Woodland Centre, Leigh-on-Sea. Their website says that this “Centre provides a space for schools, groups and families to learn about south Essex’s fantastic ancient woodlands in an interactive way ..”

You write, “we will be engaging park stakeholders about the future uses of the Visitor Centre as well as the direction of travel for the Clough as a whole ..” As we said in previous email, the design / specifications for the new building will largely determine these “future uses” & “direction of travel”.

In 2008, with our full support, MCC in association with Natural England declared the Clough a Local Nature Reserve, unambiguously indicating “the direction of travel for the Clough as a whole”.

We urge you to take this opportunity to reinforce that progressive decision, thereby demonstrating management coherence & continuity, by building a new Visitor Centre worth building, appropriate for a Local Nature Reserve, for North Manchester’s Ancient Woodlands, celebrating this rare natural asset, helping kick-start & sustain the long-overdue woodland management to restore biodiversity health, to begin realizing the area’s potential, by establishing the Boggart Hole Clough & Bailey’s Wood: Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre – a community proposal.

.. PFM ..

2. Email sent: 13 April 2017 13:23
From: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
To: PFM @ FoBHC.
Subsequently FoBHC copied this email to: 41 people including MCC Charlestown Ward Councillors.
Subject: Re Proposed new Visitor Centre at Boggart Hole Clough.

Hi Peter,

Many thanks for your communication. The new Visitor's Centre should include a stores area, an office for Parks staff, a community space, small kitchen area, toilets and FA standard changing rooms. The funding behind the building work is not just from Section 106 but also includes substantial sports-related funds - hence the emphasis on the changing room facility, to accompany the new football pitch inside the track area.

Because of the varying funding steams, the purpose and use of the new visitor's centre - and hence the design - were fairly 'locked down' from the start and so were not a matter for direct public debate in specific terms, other than the new facility clearly benefitting a range of park users and assisting the MCC staff to help maintain and oversee the Clough.

As soon as final costings against budget have been agreed, we will be engaging with park stakeholders about the future uses of the Visitor's Centre as well as the direction of travel for the Clough as a whole as we begin to build up a new Park Plan for the Clough, as directed by the new 10 Year Parks Strategy for Manchester (which is about to be published).

As I stated previously, we will be putting together a new Boggart Hole Clough stakeholder group to help form and deliver the Park Plan, to which you will be invited to contribute alongside everyone else.

We will be in touch again in due course.

Best, Jon.
Jon Atkin, North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team, The Neighbourhoods Service, Growth and Neighbourhoods Directorate, MCC, Visitor Centre, Boggart Hole Clough ...
Email sent: 13 April 2017 08:22
From: PFM @ FoBHC.
To: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
Copied to: 41 people including MCC Charlestown Ward Councillors.
Subject: Proposed new Visitor Centre at Boggart Hole Clough.

To: Jon Atkin, North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team, MCC.
Copied to: some Friends of Boggart Hole Clough.

Jon,

Section 106 Agreement money relating to site of the former Booth Hall Children’s Hospital.

Further to your 30.3.2017 email below.

You write, “as soon as we have more of a firm time-line for the demolition & re-build of the Centre, we will be calling together a new group of Boggart Hole Clough stakeholders (including yourself) to discuss the future use of the Centre ..”

This sounds like you wish to consult us after, instead of before, decisions are made about building a new Visitor Centre & the spending of public S106 Agreement money on this project.

Clearly, “the future use of the Centre” will depend upon prior decisions regarding the architectural design / plan / capacity / specifications for the new building.

The emails in the re-attached PDF (Re-uniting Bailey’s Wood & Boggart Hole Clough, FoBHC, 10.7.2016) show we have been asking to be consulted about this & related matters since 13.1.2014.

For example, our 22.3.2015 email to your predecessor Pauline Clarke asked “What architectural designs are being considered for a new Visitor Centre ? When will you share all this information with us ? Your 22.1.2014 email below said ‘We will be holding a number of workshops in the next few months at which we will be able to share initial thoughts & seek views.’ Over a year later we are still waiting to hear when these consultation workshops will be held ..”

Now, over 3 years later, you tell us that no such consultations will take place after all but instead you will call a meeting “to discuss the future use of the Centre” i.e. apparently after decisions regarding the architectural design of the new Visitor Centre will have been made.

You write, “We’d like to help refresh & expand the Friends group .. We already have a number of interested people ..”

We look forward to meeting these “interested people.” Please let them know FoBHC contact details & tell them Saturdays 10am outside the Lakeside Café is a weekly opportunity to meet together throughout the year.

For our part, “We’d like to help refresh” Labour Party controlled Manchester City Council. Include us / the Friends group / the general public / everyone in decision-making instead of excluding us. Such a change in the Council’s attitude would be very - ‘refreshing’.

Transparency or secrecy, debate or dictate, consult or ignore, engage or disregard, involve or alienate, inclusion or exclusion.

Please inform us about what architectural designs for a new Visitor Centre are under consideration & allow us to publish them online (on our website & Facebook page) so that everyone can see & discuss the proposed plans & take part in this decision.

.. PFM ..

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4. Email sent: 30 March 2017 09:19
From: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
To: PFM @ FoBHC.
Copied to: 5 people.
Subject: Re Boggart Hole Clough.

Hi Peter,

Regarding the ecology report and the visitor's centre, as soon as we have more of a firm time-line for the demolition and re-build of the Centre, we will be calling together a new group of Boggart Hole Clough stakeholders (including yourself) to discuss both the future use of the Centre but also other matters like the Ecology Report. We'd like to help refresh and expand the Friends group to include as many stakeholders as possible - including the various sports groups and regular dog walkers. We already have a number of interested people.

.. Jon Atkin, North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team .. MCC ..

5. Email sent: 30 March 2017 07:48
From: PFM @ FoBHC.
To: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
Copied to: 5 people.
Subject: Boggart Hole Clough.

Jon,

We note in your .. 22.3.2017 email [This email, regarding FoBHC’s use of a storeroom at the Visitor Centre, not reproduced below] .. that you mention the Visitor Centre is to be demolished. Why is this ? What is proposed to replace it ?

Please see PDF attached (previously emailed to you 2.8.2016): Re-uniting Bailey’s Wood & Boggart Hole Clough (FoBHC, 10.7.2016) which reviews email correspondence between MCC & FoBHC, going back to 13.1.2014, concerning the Visitor Centre’s future among other matters.

Also, whatever happened to the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit’s draft management plan for the Clough ? You will recall our email correspondence (the latter part of which, from 2016, I’ve pasted in below) regarding this matter.

..PFM ..

[Re emails 6 & 7 below.

To date (29.4.2017), MCC has not responded to our Combined archaeological & ecological preliminary proposals to sustainably regenerate Bailey's Wood (FoBHC, 14.5.2016).

Nor has MCC responded to our Re-uniting Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough (FoBHC, 10.7.2016), notwithstanding that one element of these proposals is now redundant – see note bottom of page 8 below.]

6. Email sent: 03 August 2016 09:35
From: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
To: PFM @ FoBHC.
Subject: Re Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough.

Dear Peter,

Many thanks for your email. We are in fact still awaiting the report, so I will chase this up again. The other actions should then follow on from the detail of the report.

.. Jon Atkin, North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team .. MCC ..
7. Email sent: 02 August 2016 21:49
From: PFM @ FoBHC.
To: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
Copied to: 25 people including MCC Charlestown Ward Councillors.
Subject: Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough.

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

Jon,

Re proposals to sustainably regenerate Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough.

1. Further to my 9.5.2016 email below titled Bailey's Wood. You responded in 2 emails below (9.5.2016 & 10.5.2016) to the 1st paragraph of that email regarding GMEU's Boggart Hole Clough report, saying that you expected to receive it by the end of the week. That was 12 weeks ago. We hope you will share this GMEU report with us enabling us to comment upon & have an input into its proposals.

2. Further to the same 9.5.2016 email below titled Bailey's Wood. After the 1st paragraph discussed above, the email responded to GMEU’s October 2015 Ecological Assessment & Management Proposals for Bailey's Wood, developing their proposals into a set of combined archaeological & ecological proposals. We have received no response from you to our proposals. Please find PDF attached: Combined archaeological & ecological preliminary proposals to sustainably regenerate Bailey's Wood, FoBHC, 14.5.2016.

3. Further to my 10.7.2016 email titled Re-uniting Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough regarding the site of the former Booth Hall Children's Hospital which lies between these two Ancient Woodlands. Likewise we have received no response from you to that email. Please find 2nd PDF attached: Re-uniting Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough, FoBHC, 10.7.2016.

We hope we will hear from you shortly re the 3 matters discussed above.

.. PFM ..

8. Email sent: 10 May 2016 08:45
From: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
To: PFM @ FoBHC.
Subject: Re Bailey's Wood.

Hi Peter,

I have heard back from Derek who said he will send over the report to me by the end of the week.

Best regards, Jon.
Jon Atkin, North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team .. MCC ..

9. Email sent: 9 May 2016 08:31
From: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
To: PFM @ FoBHC.
Subject: Re Bailey's Wood.

.. I've actually sent him a couple of emails but will chase him up again; he did apologise for the lateness of the report.

.. Jon Atkin, North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team .. MCC ..
10. Email sent: 9 May 2016 08:26
From: Peter Milner @ FoBHC.
To: Jon Atkin @ MCC.
Copied to: 26 people including MCC Charlestown Ward Councillors.
Subject: Bailey’s Wood.

.. Thanks for your 6.4.2016 email below which says "I will chase up the report with Derek." This refers to Derek Richardson at the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) who said in his 15.3.2016 email pasted in below that the GMEU ecological report for Boggart Hole Clough would be ready by the end of March. We hope you will soon forward us a copy of this report. We were pleased to receive an earlier GMEU report from you, which is discussed below.

Re Ecological Assessment & Management Proposals for Bailey’s Wood, GMEU, October 2015 …

[This email is set out in full in PDF - Combined archaeological & ecological preliminary proposals to sustainably regenerate Bailey’s Wood, FoBHC, 14.5.2016 – which can be seen on our website.]

Below, photo (plus 2 enlargements) courtesy of Google Earth, imagery date 6.2.2009 (not attached to any of the above emails).

Photo 6. Bailey’s Wood at top / north. Boggart Hole Clough to south. Former Booth Hall Children’s Hospital between the two Ancient Woodlands. Visitor Centre north of reddish Athletics Track.

Photo 7. Visitor Centre at right. Lodge Gatehouse, of former Hospital, at top left.

Photo 8. Visitor Centre, with central yard.

The Lodge Gatehouse, last remaining building of the former Booth Hall Children’s Hospital, was demolished 8.2.2017, objections to its demolition having been dismissed by MCC, along with our proposal that the building be preserved as a memorial to the former Children’s Hospital & converted for re-use as a visitor centre for the surrounding Ancient Woodlands – see PDF on our website: Re-uniting Bailey’s Wood & Boggart Hole Clough, FoBHC, 10.7.2016.