

Protecting our natural heritage

FRIENDS OF BOGGART HOLE CLOUGH

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Friends of Boggart Hole Clough (**FoBHC**), before 2015 named Boggart Hole Clough Community Action Trust (**BHCCAT**), was founded in 2000. FoBHC works with, among others, Manchester City Council (**MCC**), landowner of Boggart Hole Clough (**BHC**) & most of Bailey's Wood.

Boggart Hole Clough & Bailey's Wood are the two main ravines of the Boggart Hole Brook Basin.

The Clough became a *Municipal Park* in 1894 & a *Local Nature Reserve* (LNR) in 2008.

Adjacent Bailey's Wood is neither a Park nor a LNR - we suggest that it should be both.

Community proposal to re-unite Bailey's Wood & the Clough via an **ECO-BRIDGE** creating an

Ancient Woodlands Park

providing **Multiple All-Abilities Outdoor Activities**.

Prompted by MCC's proposal for a new visitor centre, FoBHC developed an alternative community proposal - the **North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre** - to facilitate the appreciation, preservation & re-unification of Bailey's Wood & the Clough & the provision of multiple all-abilities outdoor activities.

Multiplying all-abilities outdoor activities, building on the success of the All-Abilities Cycling scheme initiated in 2005, making the Park a leading specialist provider of shared outdoor activities for people with & without disabilities, would promote social inclusion.

Archaeological excavation & permanent display of any in-situ remains of the former *Lion Field Bleach Works* at the west end of Bailey's Wood (until recently the Boggart Hole Brook Basin was a centre of the textile bleaching, dyeing & printing industry) would begin to reveal North Manchester's role in the Industrial Revolution.

Bailey's Wood & the Clough contain *Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland* described by Natural England as "irreplaceable" & "of prime ecological & landscape importance." Greater Manchester Ecology Unit has reported both woodlands to be in a poor condition. Restoring their biodiversity health requires eradicating invasive non-native plant species e.g. Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam, & removing accumulated rubbish.

A green network physically re-connecting the fragmented woodland habitat, e.g. re-uniting Bailey's Wood & the Clough, via eco-bridges (overpasses & underpasses) enabling people & wildlife to move safely & unhindered around the whole Boggart Hole Brook Basin area, would further assist the restoration of biodiversity health.

Such environmental conservation is essential & benefits everybody - it should be one of society's basic public services alongside free, high quality education, housing, health care, recreation, utilities, transport, etc.

As part of a fundamental **Public Services Regeneration** programme, we suggest, government should provide funding to implement this multi-faceted, North Manchester based proposal: to construct the 1st of a series of Eco-Bridges, to build a new visitor centre worth building, to create properly paid jobs, employing a team of archaeological & ecological conservationists to preserve, understand, sustainably regenerate this natural historical environment, & employing a team of social carers to organize & supervise Multiple All-Abilities Outdoor Activities, thus making this proposed **Ancient Woodlands Park** a truly thriving place for people & wildlife.

The following pages contain a summary of 12.7.2017 MCC / FoBHC meeting discussing some of the above matters.



Summary of 12.7.2017 MCC / FoBHC meeting which took place, starting 3.30pm, at the present BHC Visitor Centre, Charlestown Road, North Manchester.

Meeting called by Jon Atkin (North Area Manager, Citywide Parks Team, Neighbourhoods Service, Growth & Neighbourhoods Directorate, MCC) - 26.6.2017 email to Peter Milner (Acting Secretary, FoBHC): "Boggart Hole Clough visitor's centre .. We are now in a position to meet with the various stakeholders that use and support Boggart Hole Clough to discuss the next phase of the re-build of the Visitor's Centre. Would yourself and the Friends like to attend a meeting to discuss your ideas? .."

Above email forwarded to 65 FoBHC contacts. When date / time of meeting arranged, around those who expressed interest in meeting, details emailed to same contacts, inviting all to attend. Meeting also advertised on our Facebook page.

Our comments at the meeting were made in the context of previous proposals etc of FoBHC, MCC & others, including such information as found in documents listed chronologically below; when specifically referenced in text below, referred to as Docs 1, 2, 3, etc; with exception of Doc 1 (see internet link), all these docs can be seen on our website:

1. *A Framework for the Future - Green Networks with multiple uses in & around towns & cities*, Research Report 256, English Nature, 1997. Link - <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/77041>
2. *Minutes of 14.9.2005 Executive Committee Open Meeting*, BHCCAT, 30.11.2005.
3. *BHC Waterbirds Survey - spreadsheet 1: 2004-2005*, BHCCAT, 25.12.2005.
4. *Birds injured, some fatally, by fishing hooks & lines in BHC during 2006*, BHCCAT, 16.3.2007.
5. *BHC - Biodiversity Management Plan*, Ecology Services UK Ltd, 29.6.2007.
6. *Twelve suggestions for Site Specific Allocations in the Irk Valley - Submission to MCC Local Development Framework - Core Strategy Issues & Options Consultation*, BHCCAT, 8.2.2008. See suggestions 2, 5 & 6.
7. *Equal Opportunities Policy*, BHCCAT, 24.2.2013.
8. *Restoring the Clough's biodiversity health - introduction*, FoBHC, 19.2.2015.
9. *Japanese Knotweed in BHC environs*, FoBHC, 24.9.2015.
10. *Bailey's Wood Site of Biological Importance (SBI) - Ecological Assessment & Management Proposals*, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), October 2015. GMEU is a department of the Greater Manchester local authorities.
11. *BHC SBI - Ecological Assessment & Management Proposals*, GMEU, April 2016. FoBHC only received this doc from MCC 14.7.2017, subsequent to 12.7.2017 meeting.
12. *Combined archaeological & ecological preliminary proposals to sustainably regenerate Bailey's Wood*, FoBHC, 14.5.2016.
13. *Re-uniting Bailey's Wood & Boggart Hole Clough*, FoBHC, 10.7.2016.
14. *BHC New Build [Visitor Centre] - Existing & proposed site plan*, MCC, September 2016.
15. *BHC New Build [Visitor Centre] - Proposed layout plan*, MCC, March 2017.
16. *BHC New Build [Visitor Centre] - Proposed elevations*, MCC, March 2017.
17. *BHC New Build [Visitor Centre] - Design & Access Statement*, MCC, 16.3.2017.
18. *North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre - a community proposal*, FoBHC, 29.4.2017.
19. *Update re North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre - a community proposal*, FoBHC, 28.5.2017.
20. *Socialist environmentalism*, FoBHC, 21.6.2017.

Present at meeting: Ceri Houlbrook, Hannah Priest (Charlestown ward Labour Party Councillor, MCC), Jon Atkin (see above), Joyce Lightfoot, Lee Preston (BHC New Visitor Centre Project Lead, Head of Sports, MCC), Mervyn Romain, Peter Milner (Acting Secretary, FoBHC), Tony Ganner, Veronica Kirkpatrick (Charlestown ward Labour Party Councillor, MCC).

Apologies for absence: Mildred Willner, Rob Butler.

This summary of 12.7.2017 meeting is split into **4 inter-related proposals** elaborated by FoBHC. After the meeting, FoBHC further elaborated these proposals as set out below. None of the photos (nor the visual plan, page 5) in this doc were presented at the meeting.

Proposal 1.

MCC proposes to provide “FA standard changing rooms” in the new Visitor Centre (Doc 18, page 4). MCC’s promotion of football in the Clough (e.g. these proposed *FA standard changing rooms* & recently created football pitch in middle of athletics track) does not appear to provide for people with disabilities / learning difficulties / special needs. If there is such provision (adaptive sport / para-sport), it is not emphasized as a priority.

In 2005, MCC in association with FoBHC launched the *Wheels For All / All-Abilities Cycling* scheme on the athletics track (see photo 1 below), as can be seen in the Minutes of Meetings on our website (Doc 2).

This scheme, now run by Simply Cycling, still flourishes. The scheme was originally partly inspired by the nearby Booth Hall Children’s Hospital & intended to indirectly support the hospital by enabling the Clough (by providing outdoor facilities / services) to be used by disabled people. Despite protests, the hospital closed in 2009.

In memory of the hospital, to continue the area’s tradition of health care, we suggest that all outdoor activities taking place in the Clough should be geared to enabling disabled people to fully participate, by providing outdoor facilities / services, as exemplified by the *All-Abilities Cycling* scheme.

This *All-Abilities Cycling* scheme is not segregational, exclusively for the disabled. On the contrary, its all-inclusive, encouraging participation of the disabled alongside the able, able-bodied, beginners & veterans, of all ages.

Likewise, FoBHC’s proposed **Multiple All-Abilities Outdoor Activities** scheme, making the park a leading specialist provider of shared outdoor activities for people with & without disabilities, would promote social inclusion.

FoBHC’s *Equal Opportunities Policy* (Doc 7) states our commitment to social inclusivity, against exclusivity.

These proposed multiple all-abilities outdoor activities, besides the current cycling on the athletics track, should include football (mentioned above) & other athletics. Perhaps also e.g. all-abilities playgrounds, outdoor gyms, ropes courses, etc, suitable for different age groups.

And non-play / non-sport activities e.g. all-abilities guided walks. As a Local Nature Reserve, all-important should be regular nature-based all-abilities outdoor activities, e.g. wildlife observation & recording led by GMEU ecologists.

FoBHC has led weekly Natural Heritage walks since 2004, exploring the area’s natural & cultural history; this walk always starts by counting populations of the lakes’ Waterbird species producing a long-term survey (see e.g. Doc 3).

FoBHC does not support the so-called ‘sport’ of fishing in the Clough which is a Local Nature Reserve where wildlife should be protected from harm & where therefore this blood sport should be prohibited (see Doc 4).

All-abilities outdoor activities should also include arts events. In 2008, the lead role in the *Boggarts of Boggart Hole Clough* musical fairy tale play was performed by a local actor with Down’s syndrome. The play was produced by local group Purple Expressive Arts, organized by FoBHC (see photo 3 below).

FoBHC proposes MCC creates properly paid jobs, employing a team of social carers to organize & supervise this **Multiple All-Abilities Outdoor Activities** scheme.

The proposed new Centre should facilitate this **Multiple All-Abilities Outdoor Activities** scheme, functioning as its organizing office as well as providing changing room facilities. The Centre’s further proposed functions (**proposal 2**, page 4 below) should also incorporate this *All-Abilities* social inclusiveness.



Photo 1 taken 19.10.2005, courtesy MCC Zest.



Photo 2 taken 10.4.2005.



Photo 3 taken 6.9.2008.

Proposal 2.

Lee Preston: "Planning permission for a new Visitor Centre was granted in May. There's 3 years before this permission expires which gives time for changes to be made .."

FoBHC believes the Multiple All-Abilities Outdoor Activities scheme (**proposal 1**, page 3 above) should imbue the proposed new Centre's further purposes - facilitating the appreciation, preservation & re-unification of Bailey's Wood & the Clough, the two main ravines of the Boggart Hole Brook basin / watershed.

MCC says the proposed new Centre (Docs 14-17), which is smaller than the present building, is "designed to operational requirements .. that better suits present day requirements .." (Doc 17). This projected smaller building reflects the fact that MCC does not consider woodland conservation management to be an operational requirement.

Both Bailey's Wood & the Clough contain Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW). The government's adviser on the environment describes ASNW as "irreplaceable" (English Nature, 2002) & "of prime ecological & landscape importance" (Natural England, 2014). In 2007, Ecology Services UK Ltd reported the Clough's ASNW be in an "unfavourable condition" (Doc 5). The adjacent Bailey's Wood ASNW is in a similarly poor condition (Doc 10). Not only does MCC's proposal not take into account the conservation management requirements of the ASNWs, it takes no account whatsoever of these woodlands, they may as well not exist. Unfortunately, MCC's neglect, lack of interest in these woodlands, has been long apparent. ASNWs are rare in Britain, very rare in a city. ASNW is the essential character of Bailey's Wood & the Clough, what makes them unique but they require conservation management. The new Centre should serve as the organizational & educational hub of this ecological conservation work.

Archaeological excavation & permanent display of any in-situ remains of the former *Lion Field Bleach Works* at the west end of Bailey's Wood (until recently the Boggart Hole Brook Basin was a centre of the textile bleaching, dyeing & printing industry) would begin to reveal North Manchester's role in the Industrial Revolution (Doc 12). The new Centre should also serve as the organizational & educational hub of this archaeological conservation work.

FoBHC's suggestion to name the new Centre the '**North Manchester Ancient Woodlands Discovery Centre**' (Docs 18, 19) is intended to promote the woodlands via the name of the building itself whilst describing its proposed encompassing function - a combined **Natural Heritage Conservation & Education Centre - 2 sides of the same coin**, under one roof:

1. Natural Heritage Conservation Centre - where a paid team of Archaeological & Ecological Conservationists can store equipment, train, research & plan work, with purpose of the proper conservation management of these woodlands, revealing their human history through archaeological excavations (see above) & restoring their biodiversity health (eradicating invasive non-native plant species e.g. Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam, & removing accumulated rubbish) thereby optimizing the woodlands' ability to function as Manchester's lungs, producing oxygen, absorbing carbon dioxide, & to enable the woodlands to function as described below;

2. Natural Heritage Education Centre - where visitors (through an archive, exhibitions, talks, etc) can learn about this Ecologically & Archaeologically rich, natural historical environment; where teachers can store educational resources, re the same, facilitating the woodlands' potential to be utilized by Manchester's schools as natural outdoor classrooms (the Centre providing classroom space when inclement weather), developing the forest school / outdoor curriculum idea for children to learn about the woodlands' ecological evolution & accompanying human habitation / activity as recorded in archaeology, folklore, industrial / social / cultural history; & to learn about the archeological & ecological conservation work. Thus reconnecting local people with their natural heritage, inspiring children, encouraging them to explore & engage with the natural historical world.

Lee Preston: "I completely agree with what you've been saying .."

FoBHC's aspiration - a new Centre fit for purpose, a striking building signifying / symbolizing the heritage significance of these two Ancient Woodlands for Manchester.

Veronika Kirkpatrick: "It should be an attractive building."

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Rather than end up with a diminished, less useful Centre, as MCC proposes (see top of this page), FoBHC suggests the presently existing building should be reconfigured, refurbished, to the requirements / for the functions discussed (**proposals 1 & 2** above; see also Doc 18, page 3). Someone suggested this should include a roof garden café !

Proposal 3 - two in one, 1st proposal creating 2nd.

MCC's current plans for a new Visitor Centre (Docs 14-17) do not consider realizing the site's full potential.



1. FoBHC visual plan.



2. Location not known.



3. Netherlands.



4. Flathead, Montana.



5. Birkenau, Germany.



6. California.



7. Wachtung, New Jersey, USA.



8. Brisbane, Australia.



9. Colona, Illinois (Mule Deer).

Photos above from the Internet - 1: Courtesy of Google Earth, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky; 2 - 9: Public domain.

Photos 2 - 9: examples of eco-bridges - 7 overpasses, 1 underpass.

The Clough became a *Municipal Park* in 1894 & a *Local Nature Reserve (LNR)* in 2008. Adjacent Bailey's Wood however is neither a Park nor a LNR - we suggest that it should be both.

FoBHC's visual plan above shows an **Eco-Bridge** crossing Charlestown Road physically re-uniting Bailey's Wood & the Clough, enabling people & wildlife to move safely & unhindered between the woodlands, assisting the restoration of biodiversity health by beginning to re-connect fragmented habitats (Docs 6, 12, 13). Thereby, in effect, creating an **Ancient Woodlands Park**. The eco-bridge's placement & size / shape are not intended to be definitive. In this location, construction of an eco-overpass appears more practicable than an eco-underpass.

FoBHC sees this as the 1st of a series of eco-bridges (overpasses & underpasses) creating a green network enabling people & wildlife to move safely & unhindered around the whole Boggart Hole Brook Basin area, de-fragmenting the natural woodland ecosystem, presently split apart by roads into unhealthy isolated pockets. In turn this area should be re-connected via eco-bridges to surrounding areas, potentially producing a country-wide eco-engineering scheme, interweaving the natural & built environments, helping restore the ecosphere to a healthy condition (see *Manchester - Natural Woodland City*, FoBHC Facebook page, posted 22.1.2017; to be published on website).

In 1997, the government's advisory agency on the environment published a report, *A Framework for the Future - Green Networks with multiple uses in & around towns & cities* (Doc 1), advising: "Green networks are natural, or permanently vegetated, physically connected green spaces (page 3) .. Green networks with multiple uses & values in urban areas go beyond the early ideas that they are important simply for recreation & for beauty. They address also the needs of wildlife, flood control, improved water quality, outdoor education, community cohesion, local transport & many other urban infrastructure needs (page 5) .. Multifunctional green networks are important components in making towns & cities sustainable (page 18) .."

Adjacent to the present Centre is a plot of land, also owned by MCC, containing a derelict bungalow. This plot forms a corner of the crossroads, one road from which is the main avenue through the Clough (see FoBHC visual plan above). Corners at crossroads are important in urban design. This spatial layout presents an opportunity to bring both plots together to improve this main entrance to the Clough, perhaps e.g. by placing the new Centre at this corner, creating a good quality, impressive corner building (see examples in Doc 18).

Proposal 4.

Lee Preston: “The proposed new Visitor Centre is costed at £650,000 - funded from 3 sources: S106 Agreement money from development of site of the former Booth Hall Children’s Hospital, MCC & Sports funds .. We could perhaps adopt a modular construction which could be added to at a later date when there may be more funds available.”

Considering what’s been said (pages above) regarding the great potential for a new Centre, MCC’s plan (Docs 14-17) seems poor value for money, which will produce only a paltry outcome, a woefully inadequate facility.

MCC has acquired Sports related funding. There should also be Biodiversity Health related funding (including for constructing ecological / green infrastructure e.g. an eco-bridge) & Heritage Education related funding (including for archaeological excavation/s & in-situ display/s) available.

Environmental conservation is essential & benefits everybody - it should be one of society’s basic public services alongside free, high quality education, housing, health care, recreation, utilities, transport, etc.

Good, just, egalitarian, responsible, truly representative (i.e. socialist) government/s would ensure the country’s wealth benefits everybody, not just a few - distributing / sharing wealth equally, universal economic equality.

Such government/s would regenerate public services by nationalizing these industries, widening their scope (by including e.g. environmental conservation) & improving their quality (by initiating e.g. universal university education, 100% renewables electricity generation, industrialized 100% recycling).

Instead, we have anti-social/ist, irresponsible, capitalist government/s dictating ‘austerity’, continually cutting the funding of public services, throwing them into crisis in order to outsource them to charities & corporations, privatizing them, for the benefit of a profiteering minority at the expense of the exploited majority.

This deregulating & dismantling of public services, forcing communities to compete against each other for funds from charities inevitably results in unequal, unfair distribution of funds, some communities successfully winning funds at the expense of others.

Public parks are an example of this - their voluntary sector *Friends* groups are expected to waste their time competing against each other for funds from charities when all parks need funds.

Distribution of charitable funds is largely in the hands of their unaccountable wealthy donors - a distribution of wealth closed to democratic / public control, review, scrutiny. Consequently, wealthy communities become wealthier, poor communities become poorer.

Responsible government/s would make an objective scientific assessment of what is required to restore the country’s / the world’s biodiversity / ecological / environmental health as part of restoring societal health generally & provide the necessary funding to carry this out (see Doc 20).

As part of a fundamental **Public Services Regeneration** programme, we suggest, government should provide funding to implement FoBHC’s multi-faceted, North Manchester based proposal (outlined in pages above): to construct the 1st of a series of Eco-Bridges, to build a new visitor centre worth building, to create properly paid jobs, employing a team of archaeological & ecological conservationists to preserve, understand, sustainably regenerate this natural historical environment, & employing a team of social carers to organize & supervise Multiple All-Abilities Outdoor Activities, thus making this proposed *Ancient Woodlands Park* a truly thriving place for people & wildlife.

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Planning permission for the proposed new Visitor Centre expires May 2020. It remains to be seen whether Labour Party controlled MCC is prepared to obtain further funds to broaden & improve their plans, or if not presently available, prepared to demand the necessary funds from central government.

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Lee Preston: “We’ll arrange to meet to update you in a month’s time.”

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No further meeting took place until a meeting was arranged for 30.9.2017, during which meeting copies of an early draft of this 18.10.2017 FoBHC doc were distributed. FoBHC summary of 30.9.2017 meeting will be produced in due course.