

**THE BYTHAMS WOODLAND TRUST**  
**(Registered Charity 1100816)**  
**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010/11**

**Introduction**

I am very pleased to be able to introduce the seventh Chairman's Report for the Bythams Woodland Trust (BWT). I can only cover a very brief synopsis of the huge amount of work that has gone on both behind the scenes and on our many working weekends during the past year.

**Constitution**

There have been no major constitutional issues this year and it is pleasing to note that the one we have in place is still working well. The annual returns to the Charity Commission are up to date and were completed on time. New Committee co-options were made at the AGM in 2010 and all of these have made a considerable contribution to the work of the Trust.

The Management Committee met on seven occasions, including the AGM.

**Land Ownership**

After a very protracted conveyancing process, it is pleasing to confirm the acquisition of 1.33 hectares (3.3 acres) of land to the north of the Spinney as the new Meadow Project. This will give us a lot more space to create a very different, but still exciting natural wild biodiverse environment.

**Funding**

It was a relatively quiet year in actually receiving any new funding, though considerable effort has been expended in securing a major capital funding application.

We were able to draw down the final year of the Grassroots Fund which has provided a three year funding package specifically for our day to day running costs, eg; paying insurance. It is of note and even possibly concern that as yet there does not appear to be any new scheme of this type to which we could apply.

We were very pleased to receive the second year payments from Castle Bytham, Little Bytham and Careby Parish Councils whose contributions are critical to help with the day to day running costs of the Spinney. Without these funds, our financial position for running costs would be significantly weaker.

As a result of BWT volunteers helping out with the Bythams Music Festival in August, we were again on their shortlist of local charities and were given £250 for the third year running.

The major application (£49,500) to the Community Spaces programme funded through the Big Lottery has taken up a great deal of time to complete to a Stage 2 submission. We submitted in July, following excellent advice and support from our Groundwork Facilitator, Julie Fulton, but then had to jump through a number of hoops and hurdles to respond to questions and issues raised by Groundwork. These included a new planning application, as the scale and scope of what we wanted to do was outwith the planning approval we already had. To do this we needed to engage the services of a specialist Landscape Architect, Don Munro, who in fact had prepared the original site layout designs ten years ago. To pay for his services, we also had to prepare a Development Grant application for £1000. Final Stage 2 submission was made in early April and we were informed in early June that we had been successful. (Further details on this will be made available at the AGM).

### **Site Works**

As the site matures, the work schedule during the year remains demanding, not only in terms of general maintenance, but also our developing projects. The Spinney is a big site to look after - mowing, strimming, clearing fallen branches, chipping and tidying.

A main area of work remains the sensory garden which has required a lot of digging and loosening up the soil prior to some intensive planting days and then the weeding. We have also prepared a pathway from the main site to the new Meadow. The heritage orchard is developing well and there have been many favourable comments from visitors. A trio of oak benches was installed at the under 5's play area.

A plan for the remediation of the Meadow was put in place, but could not be implemented at the appropriate time as we did not own the site, We therefore decided to leave it uncropped for the first year, but with the help of local farmers the thistles, ragwort and other undesirable weeds have now been sprayed off and the site cultivated to create a seedbed. An area of Wild Songbird Seed Mix has been sown along the top edge of the field to provide food for birds throughout the winter months. Next to this we plan to plant a strip of nectar flower mix to encourage insects such as bees and butterflies. The remainder of the field will be seeded using green hay harvested from local species-rich grassland sites, in conjunction with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

## **Health and Safety**

This remains a key priority and a continuing requirement of our insurance arrangements. The Spinney is a natural wild woodland and there will always be an element of adventure in what we do. We do not want to take all the fun out of the site by making it a sterile play environment, so we are careful to manage the adventurous elements of those activities and attractions that we provide. All our play equipment conforms to recognised EU standards and we have proper risk assessments that are continually reviewed. Notwithstanding this, in terms of how we operate on site, we have reviewed our health and safety policy and revamped our procedures.

In November twelve of our Committee and helpers undertook a half day training in First Aid provided by the St John Ambulance, which has been really useful and for which we are extremely grateful.

## **Links with School and Community Groups**

The BWT maintains its close links with the Bythams Primary School and organizations like the Guides, Brownies and Rainbows. The school is making greater use of the Spinney at different times of the year so that children can experience the changing shape of nature at first hand.

The Spinney continues to provide work experience for Duke of Edinburgh students and we have a good balance between those who have helped out for a number of years as well as new starters.

The BWT organized promotional stalls at both the Little Bytham Fete and Castle Bytham Fair and these were very well received. We aimed to publicise ourselves to a wider community audience and combined a good display of photographs with a quiz on what types of trees and animals you can see at the Spinney.

## **Publicity and Promotion**

We regularly publicise our working week-ends and events in the Glenside and Gavin Pye has updated our website at <http://community.lincolnshire.gov.uk/thespinner>.

We have investigated how best we might optimize voluntary donations and giving and as I write, we have just signed up to a new scheme <http://www.charitygiving.co.uk/bythamswoodland>

## **Future Plans**

Now that our major funding application to the Community Spaces programme has been successful, there will be a significant increase and enhancement to the play opportunities for the over 5's. Though most of this work will be carried out by contractors approved through a tender process, there will still be lots of work for the BWT. Similarly, the Meadow is likely to be a challenge and must be seen as a long term project to come to fruition.

We are delighted to retain the hard core of willing volunteers who give up a couple of hours every other week-end, and it was great that on certain key dates a lot of extra helpers joined up to work on the sensory garden. The BWT is always looking for more friends and newcomers to join us to help with what we are trying to achieve for local people. If you have some spare time, or know of someone who does, then please do come and join us!

And of course, while the adults are working, the children who come down to the site take part in some of the most fantastic play experiences that nature can offer - adventurous, dirty, rough, creative, destructive, re-building, active, physical, healthy - the sort of play opportunities many of us probably had twenty or so years ago but sadly do not seem so prevalent today. You only have to look at their faces at the end of an afternoon to see how much fun they all have!

## **Thanks**

There are so many people who deserve to be thanked for the tremendous time and effort that they have put in week in, week out. Judith Smith continues to mastermind the regular on-site works. She is "the boss" and is always well supported by her family Charles, Eric and Angus; Sam Adams has kept us in a very sound financial shape managing our growing and more complex budgets with great skill; Gavin Pye has always been ready to help out with emergency repairs and Simon Garbutt has led the team in designing and working on the sensory garden. Luke Houghton and Gillian Twine from Clipsham together with children Thomas and James have been very willing newcomers.

The Duke of Edinburgh students have made a real difference this year - Dan and Will Adams, Edward Sheehan, Michael Digan and Matt Green.

The Bythams School and FOBS have again been very supportive throughout the year. James Shawley, the Head Teacher, is a great believer in the value and importance of the Spinney as part of the school's environmental curriculum.

Behind the scenes, there are BWT friends who sit on the Management Committee to make sure our governance is good. Thanks to the Willoughby Arms for allowing us to use their premises for our meetings, to the Police who keep an eye out for us, and to The Glenside News, for

regularly publishing our news and stories. In particular, Tim Rasell continues to provide superb support, advice and guidance on the development of the sensory garden for which we are really grateful.

We must also thank Michael Blank of Buckles for providing legal advice and support in the acquisition of the Meadow site, Don Munro for his Landscape Architectural guidance and Julie Fulton and the Groundwork Project Officers for their help in getting us through the Community Spaces funding programme.

We are also very appreciative of our funders - the local Parish Councils, Lincolnshire County Council, South Kesteven District Council, the Grassroots Fund and Community Foundation Lincs and Bythams Music. Without their support, we could not do what we do.

Finally, our heartfelt thanks must go to the local community and especially the children who use the site for their play, adventure or simple relaxation and without whose presence, support and interest, the whole thing would not be worthwhile.

Dr Patrick Candler  
Chairman of BWT  
10.06.11