

Lancaster District Green Spaces Forum Minutes

Meeting held on 24 October 2017, hosted by Green Lancaster, Lancaster University, and preceded by a tour of Green Lancaster's Eco Hub. The meeting was held in the Eco-Hub barn, which is heated by a wood burning stove.

Topic: Sharing Local Green Spaces activities and finding ways to connect with Green Lancaster

Attending: Paul Cambre (Green Lancaster), Pete Turnbull (LGS Forum Chair, Friends of Barley Cop Woods), Jean (Lancaster Green Spaces Trustee) and Brian O'Neill (Friends of Ryelands Park and Friends of Lune Bank Gardens), Gill Davies (Friends of Greaves Park), Joy Greenwood (Friends of Williamson Park), Hilary Smith (Friends of Williamson Park and Friends of Dorrington Road Woods and Park), Brian Jones (Friends of Lune Bank Gardens), Louise Belcher (Friends of Thwaite Brow Woods and Friends of Carnforth Coke Ovens), Kamilla Elliott (LGS Forum Secretary, LGS Trustee, Friends of Ryelands Park)

Tour of the EcoHub

Local green group representatives were immensely impressed by the ingenuity, variety, and innovative practices of Green Lancaster, a partnership between Lancaster University and the Lancaster University Students' Union founded to develop and disseminate sustainable practices in gardening, fuel conservation, ecology, etc. In addition to green travel and recycling initiatives, Green Lancaster maintains a green space, the EcoHub, developed from former scrubland. Students volunteer their time to cultivate crops in raised beds and a tunnel, made of a special polythene tunnel designed by Lancaster University technology students for optimal lighting. There is a wildflower meadow, an orchard with 150 fruit trees, a willow copse, a hedge planted by 800 local primary school students, a compost centre, a picnic area with a wood-burning brick pizza oven, and a willow circle classroom. Students have even attempted stone walling. Events include a harvest festival with pumpkin soup and folk dancing in the barn, 'pick your own fruit' activities, selling organic produce at a weekly university market, cooking workshops, and a who-can-grow-the-hottest chili challenge. The chicken run houses 15 ex-battery hens; students voted not to breed them, but only to offer a refuge for them. The LU Ecology Society provides info sessions on ecology and conservation and has built a bird hide; three bee hives are planned for next year and a greenhouse for growing year-round crops. Green Lancaster received a water conservation grant for water harvesting via a solar pump and drip irrigation—the system was designed by a Lancaster University student. There are plans for a wetlands/pond area, a forest garden, an experimental growing area, a keyhole bed, and to continue the gravel path that makes the hub accessible. Green Lancaster has a no spray, petrol free policy and a no mow, no dig system of agriculture.

Funding for renovation and building projects has been provided by the National Union of Students; Lancaster University now provides the annual operating budget. Sales of produce grown bring in further funds that are reinvested in Green Lancaster projects.

Discussion: How to connect up local groups with Green Lancaster

Paul Cambre said that the EcoHub barn is available for use by local green groups. It has electricity and audiovisual facilities and a meeting space. A kitchen is being developed and there are plans for further restoration of the building.

Paul also indicated that local groups could ask Green Lancaster to contribute to volunteer workdays.

Hilary Smith reported that student conservationists from Green Lancaster had volunteered to help with the path in Dorrington Road Woods

Green Lancaster volunteers each month for the Fairfield Association and is involved with Claver Hill.

Green Lancaster would also consider loaning their tools which could be delivered by their electric van.

Paul suggested that local green groups contact Kate Jackson, in charge of volunteers at the Student Union. The Freshers Fairs in September/early October and Refreshers Fairs in January are good places to recruit volunteers—Green Lancaster has a marquee where local groups can leave information.

Paul: August is the best month for international students to volunteer. Undergraduates go home for the summer, but postgraduate volunteers continue year-round.

Brian Jones and ?? indicated that they had developed a rambling guide for students some years back, but that the university had not been interested in supporting its production.

Paul thinks that in the current climate, they would be very interested.

Paul suggested that Lancaster Green Spaces considers having a student rep or trustee on the board to develop further connections between the university and local groups.

What local green groups can offer Green Lancaster

Workshops communicating specialist knowledge to students e.g. in medicinal gardening, foraging, woodland training, etc.

Jean suggested that Lune Bank Gardens offer a garden history tour to students

Local green groups could also organise a scavenger hunt for students to locate and explore local green spaces.

Group reports

Friends of Williamson Park

Recent and current work includes planting 45,000 bulbs, cleaning and relocating bird boxes, installing new bat boxes, seeking advice for reservoir renovation, hoping to add vegetation and floating islands, orchard work, raking the wildflower area and sowing new seeds, and developing another wildflower area. We discussed holding the June 2018 Lancaster Green Spaces Forum at Williamson Park, including a site tour

Friends of Barley Cop Woods

Working on path/access in excessively muddy conditions, managing trees, coppicing, and felling. Wood is available if needed for the Williamson Park hedge; Carnforth Coke ovens knows someone who does charcoaling

Friends of Carnforth Coke Ovens: soil is being removed from a fire oven in order to conserve it. We saw a photo of a coke oven in Kendal where this process was complete.

The next Lancaster Green Spaces Forum will be held in February at the Morecambe Town Hall and the topic will be the Local Development Plan.