

# *Friends of Walton Colliery Nature Park*

## *Newsletter*

### *May 2011*



May 2011 welcomes the arrival of our first AGM, signifying the end of a productive first twelve months of our friends group.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us to date, we trust you have found it as enjoyable and interesting as we have.

Whilst the work to improve the site for users and preserve it for its wildlife is ongoing, here's the story so far.....

Back in March 2010 a group of inquisitive people met for the first time at a WMDC public meeting about the future of the Walton Colliery site. Here the five year management plan to develop a visitor friendly conservation site was explained by countryside ranger John Baxter, and a Friends group began to form. Out of these interested people, eight of us took the plunge and volunteered to be committee members, taking responsibility for practical works, raising funds, gathering support, and ensuring the site is enjoyed by all.

Governed by our formal constitution, the five year management plan, and nature's own calendar, we started with the smaller practical tasks whilst planning for the larger!

Spring saw litter picking days, where vast amounts of debris was removed; the memorial garden was cleaned up and replanted; and 'Snake Rock' was pruned of brambles and saplings so our grass snakes could bask and breed in style whilst improving the visual appeal for visitors.

Summer gladly brought some sunny days but sadly increased littering and damage, particularly due to the anti-social behaviour of frequent drinking parties and drug use which resulted in the removal of the bird hide. The Friends group however cleared up! Our working days included more litter picking and the construction of new fencing where the Hide had once stood. We also finally achieved the erection of correct safety fencing (courtesy of British Rail) to close up the open railway line; installed several new benches around the site; and took up planting 150 heather plants on the banking of the central lake. Plus we held our first exhibition stand at 'Anglers Park Open Day', and offered a badger talk at our public meeting thanks to Pam Walters.

Autumn provided us with the opportunity to cut back some over grown vegetation, including at the entrance to Shay Lane car park improving visibility and access. The committee set up their bank account with each member making a personal donation. We actively began researching funding possibilities to enable us to improve the perimeter pathway at the southern end of the site, which suffers from poor drainage, but which WMDC hadn't budgeted the estimated £10,000.00. Much

work was completed on researching solutions, planning appropriate works, and sourcing grants; applications for funds were submitted.

Winter covered the entire site with deep snow! Although very scenic this prevented any practical works and revealed damage in its thaw. Many fish were lost due to the frozen waters, and many paths were destroyed due to heavy use in saturated conditions.

We also, with huge sorrow, had to say good-bye to our dedicated ranger, and founder member, John Baxter who retired as a result of council cut-back pressures. We welcomed Andrew McGuinness as our new ranger. Indeed the site itself met new characters in the form of a collection of ponies, these escaped from their usual field and B&B'd on our site for a short time – clearly a stamp of approval – but were removed as such residency is not permitted.

Our public meeting looked forward to brighter days as Mr Bedford held a presentation on the butterflies we're all likely to see in our park.

Spring bursts into life in more ways than one....not only have we been blessed with glorious temperatures but with the granting of our £10,000.00 bid!!!! The Big Lottery Fund has accepted our proposed project to improve the pathways on the south side, and we congratulate the team for all their hard work. It is expected that these major works will start next month so please bear with us whilst the necessary work is completed.

A meeting was held at Anglers Country Park between WMDC, our Friends group, and the main horse-riding users of the park, to discuss the winter damage to the pathways and determine fair and appropriate usage. Up to fifty people attended and a new set of rules for usage

proposed. WMDC will be using this information to create guidance rules for riders, cyclists, and walkers alike, which will be displayed at the entrance. We have applied to the WMDC Community Chest for £1000.00 to cover the costs needed.

We are also launching a photograph competition. Walton Colliery Nature Park has such diverse offerings it's impossible to see them all! Please take your camera and snap its best bits!



Looking ahead there is much work to do and we welcome further support; if you are interested in giving time or a small donation to continue the improvement of Walton Colliery Nature Park, please email [fwcnp-secretary@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:fwcnp-secretary@yahoo.co.uk)

Look out for details of further working parties and events. Enjoy your Park!



**LOTTERY FUNDED**