

Chair's Report 2015

I am pleased to report that for CREOS this year has been a little less hectic than last year. We have maintained a steady course, balancing conservation work and enjoyment of our open space, without having to face any of the major planning threats that have troubled us in previous years.

It was an active summer involving two different visits from volunteering groups. On the 5th of July, the "Day of Hope", a number of local church-going families came along to help with haymaking and litter clearance. It was a delightful opportunity for some really young volunteers to have their first go at conservation work. Not long after, on 18th July, CREOS benefitted from a group of around 30 corporate volunteers from the Bank of America, who came for an intensive work day. Not only did the bank provide volunteers, but also some funds to buy tools. A woodland glade was cleared, the allotments access road was improved and two new paths into the meadow were almost finished in just one day.

This year also saw the start of a very supportive relationship with both Highgate Wood School and with Veolia waste collection services. HWS are the official tenants of the CREOS site, but do not have the resources to do more than mow the sports field and empty the litter bins that lead to it. They are therefore pleased to be helped by the vigilance of CREOS and its volunteers and have not only pledged to donate £1,000 per year to help with maintenance of the site, but also this year they have purchased and installed 6 dog waste bins around the fields. Initially there was no arrangement in place for the emptying of these bins, but after a very tricky couple of months Veolia came to the rescue and are now emptying the bins on a regular, but voluntary basis, as part of their community service work. They have been a tremendous help in removing all sorts of waste from the site, including a very dangerous length of broken railings near the allotments road entrance. We were also lucky to receive a gift of two park benches from the London Wildlife Trust this summer. Unfortunately however, before they could be properly installed, they were taken to furnish the den that serves as a hideout for a few local youths just behind the meadow. Veolia's handyman has offered to install them both on proper concrete bases at the edge of the school sports field and it is hoped that this will take place later this month.

This summer of course was the time for CREOS's 30th Anniversary celebration on the meadow. Despite the postponement of the event due to excessive rain, more than 50 people attended and enjoyed a barbecue, educational games, dog competitions and a raffle. We are hoping that this year, even though it is not a special anniversary, we will be able to enjoy an even bigger and better event on the meadow on 28th June.

Last year's renovation of the CREOS footpaths has held up well. Our big project, the Woodland Walk, provided a mud-free path towards the tube station throughout the entire winter. Even at the height of the winter rains, when a couple of ponds formed on either side, at the bottom of the steps, the path itself remained dry. The CREOS wood chip paths became a bit muddy in places during the worst of the winter, but were a great improvement on last year and regular maintenance on work days helped to provide a mud-free route across the whole area.

As always there has been a lot to do on our monthly workdays: path repairs, planting of spring bulbs, cutting back undergrowth and the usual litter picking. This year we have been fortunate to have the help of John Hayes in mowing the meadow more expertly than before and it looked wonderful with its grassy pathways throughout the summer.

The changes to the Hanley Car Park area have been this year's biggest success. Despite last year's setback in not obtaining the grant we had applied for, we were determined to go ahead with improving this most neglected part of our domain. We decided to do it a step at a time: first, with the help of a small grant from Haringey and with support from Veolia and from Shepherd's Cot Trust, we started by making a new path from the Greenway into the car park. Next we dug over and replanted the area destroyed by trampling, cleared the car park of weeds and installed a litter bin and a dog waste bin. Since this has been done there has been a marked decrease in littering, as the area has had a more cared-for look and the number of people passing through has increased. Many have thanked us and said that the work was much appreciated and

well worth the effort. In fact the Hanley Tennis club have even nominated CREOS for a Woodland Award for these improvements to their car park area. The final stage of this upgrade is to be completed within the next few days. LBH have agreed to the funding of two steel bollards to prevent motorcycles from accessing the new path and these are already ordered and on their way. In addition, following on from the trial closure of the Crouch End Playing Fields at night during the summer months, organised by CREOS in conjunction with SCT, there is soon to be a vehicle access gate on the road to the Hanley car park. This will allow the club to control who enters and when, effectively closing off the car park to traffic at nights. This restricted access will hopefully put paid to the fly tipping that has been going on for years and also the continual disturbance to local residents from loud music and partying 'til the early hours of the morning.

In the coming year it is hoped that funds can be found to repair the dilapidated iron railings at the Allotments access road entrance, where a missing section has lead to the dumping of a large mound of garden waste. Further improvements to the surface of the corner of the access road itself might also be included, if funding permits, and some hard core has already been donated as a basis for this.

I would like to finish by saying a big thank you to the wonderful volunteers who turn up regularly on the monthly workdays and to the committee colleagues who have worked so hard all year round. Special thanks go to Mel Cairns who is retiring from the committee after many long years of valiant service.

Glenys Law, May 2015