



Fire threat to ancient wood

By Ann Bronkhorst

During the long dry spell through May and early June, Coldfall Wood suffered a series of fires, most of which seem to have been started deliberately.

The worst period was two weeks in mid-May when fires were started twice a day, usually in the evening but sometimes in daylight hours. Several fires left smouldering overnight were found and put out by early walkers. One fire had been lit at the base of a mature oak tree, causing deep charring.

Police presence

Local Haringey councillors, police and the fire service responded promptly to the many reports sent in by passing walkers and by the Friends of Coldfall Wood. The police increased their patrols in the wood and visited Fortismere School to flag up the dangers

of lighting fires in woodland and the penalties if caught. Warning posters were put up around the wood but some were deliberately torn down.

The woodland floor and the log piles are habitats for many small creatures and plants, some quite rare. After a prolonged dry spell woodland can become tinder-dry and a small fire, whether started accidentally or deliberately, can spread fast.

Properties bordering the wood could be at risk, too, in those circumstances, so householders as well as walkers are asked to phone 999 if they suspect that a fire has been started anywhere in Coldfall Wood.

Parking campaigners facing huge legal costs

Campaigners seeking to overturn the increased charges imposed by Barnet Council on residents in the borough's Controlled Parking Zones suffered a setback last month when a High Court Judge declined to set a limit to the legal costs resident David Atfield would have to pay if his legal action fails.

However, at a public meeting held at the New Local Café on the High Road, around 100 supporters were told of alternative plans to limit the cost of losing. These include instructing solicitors to act for David Atfield on a 'no win, no fee' basis, and seeking insurance cover to pay Barnet Council's costs if he loses at trial.

The meeting was also told that barrister Lindsay Johnson, who has been advising the campaigners, has re-confirmed his advice that there is a strong legal case for overturning the charges, with prospects of success assessed at 70% to 75%.

Council's costly defence

Barnet Council has estimated that their costs of defending the claim will be around £50,000 and David Atfield points out that even the insurance premium to cover such a large sum will be substantial. "One reason that Barnet's costs are estimated

to be so high is that they have retained one of the country's leading public law QCs to act for them," he said. "However we proceed, it's clear that we need to crank up our fundraising efforts."

The legal action turns on whether it is lawful for a council to increase CPZ parking charges in order to fund other transport projects, such as road repairs across the borough, which is how Barnet say they intend to spend the extra money. The case against Barnet is likely to come to trial in the autumn. Barnet CPZ Action is seeking donations to support the legal action and hope to return the bulk of the donated money if the action is successful at trial. Donations can be made online at www.barnetcpz.blogspot.com or by cheque made payable to 'Barnet CPZ Action' to 88 Summerlee Avenue, N2 9QH.



Martin teachers in China at the Chinese exhibition to show the project

China trip brings a project to life

By Sarah Stanton and Lucy Williams, Martin School teachers

On Saturday 21 May, we travelled from Martin Primary School to China to visit our partner school in Longjiang, Shunde. The visit was the culmination of a project on Living Healthily between grades 4, 5 and 6 in China and Year 1 and 2 in England.

As project leaders we were greeted warmly by the school's team of 15 English teachers and the pupils. We were delighted to receive gifts of recipe books and wonderful examples of the children's work to bring back to London, including videos the children had recorded with their parents, recipes and posters.

Similarities and differences

Visiting the school certainly was an eye-opener! We found some aspects very similar to British education; the kindergarten involved lots of stories, singing and playing and was very colourful. In some classes children had talking partners with whom they practised their English, ICT was used

in teaching and learning was interactive. However, many things were very different. The curriculum includes respected and wonderful Chinese traditions such as calligraphy, art and dance, which children are taught from a young age. Classes of 45-50 children learn at individual desks and have various teachers through the day, each specialising in a subject.

We were particularly impressed by how well the children co-operated and got on with each other. When we taught them how to make pancakes, which they thoroughly enjoyed,

they took turns with no arguing or sulking. We're still not sure what their secret is!

Living link

For us, the project has now come alive. We know the people at the end of our emails, we know the children who write and send letters and we now know how much the project and the link with Martin Primary School means to us. We are very excited about learning with the Chinese students about the Asian games being held next year and the Olympics in London. Our link is stronger than ever.

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