

## Chairman's review of the year – April 2017 to March 2018

During the last twelve months the Friends group has really taken off! We have established strong working relationships with Telford and Wrekin Council, Wellington Town Council, The Environment Agency, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Dothill Primary School. In addition, we also have links with the Denso Eco garden project, Friends of Wellington Station, Wellington Walkers are Welcome, the East Shropshire Ramblers, Friends of Apley Wood, The Severn Tree Trust and the Wrekin Forest Partnership. We were involved with the location of the Shropshire Way markers that guide walkers through the Reserve and are part of the Council's Street Champions litter picking initiative. We have also played an active part in the Spring and Autumn Wellington Festivals. Following the success of promotional stands at the Wellington Midsummer Fayre and Telford Lions Day on Wheels last year, we have booked places for this summer. We received a grant from Wellington Town Council this year and have been chosen by the Co-op in Tern Way as their local charity for the next twelve months.

The regular Tuesday and Saturday morning work parties have been highly successful in building a core of reliable and committed team members and continue to achieve a considerable amount of practical work in all areas across the Reserve. During the last year our activities have included Himalayan Balsam removal, appropriate control of bramble, light tree maintenance and coppicing, hedge maintenance, path restoration and maintenance, litter picking, maintaining pool margins, fence repairs, planting native trees and flowers, reed mace removal and surveying small mammals, amphibians, birds and moths. All work is referenced to the Management Plan. We also host guided walks, themed to suit each visiting group.

The water quality in the pools and streams is monitored regularly in association with the Environment Agency's 'Love Your Rivers, Telford' initiative, working in partnership with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and other organisations. This work has resulted in significant publicity and promotion of the Reserve. The public meeting we hosted in October set out the plans for three wetland restoration/flood relief projects in a joint venture with the Environment Agency, Telford and Wrekin Council and Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Two of these projects have just been completed and the third is scheduled for autumn 2019. These were one aspect of the work being done on the Reserve highlighted in the BBC's 'Countryfile' programme that was broadcast on 25 March.

One of the exciting developments this year has been the increasing involvement of Dothill Primary School. In October the Friends ran an outdoor education programme for those pupils who were not able to attend the school's week at the Arthog outdoor activity centre. Since then, follow up activities have included wild flower and seed planting, water testing, the founding of the Junior Friends group, an Amphibian Day and an appearance on 'Countryfile'!

The Friends group has managed to influence the replacement of two of the Reserve's dilapidated bridges and we are continuing to press for the main path by the wetland area to be re-laid to allow easier access for wheelchair users.

We continue to strengthen links with the local community through face-to-face communication, written information and Facebook (on which we currently have 400 followers). As part of the Telford 50 celebrations, we have created a '50 Tree Trail' around Dothill LNR. Leaflets have been produced to guide visitors along the trail. The 'Official Opening' and first walk will be on 4 May.

We have achieved a lot this year, but I think it is important at this point, to remember Denis Allen, who campaigned passionately over many years to protect that vulnerable 130 acres of open green space that is now Dothill Local Nature Reserve.

On behalf of all our members I would like to thank the Friends Committee and the work party volunteers for their enthusiasm, commitment and support during another hugely successful year.

Andy Harnell

(Chairman)