EA Update #1, March 2024

Hello and thank you for completing our survey and asking to be updated on developments arising from the Environment Agency's plans for Manor Farm Park.

EA's Flood Defence Proposals and Manor Farm Park

Survey:

Thank you to everyone who has got in touch with us following the news that the Environment Agency (EA) is proposing to install potentially significant flood defenses in the park. And a big thank you to the 400+ people who have also taken the time to complete our survey in response to this. The survey is already proving very helpful in gauging public feeling which can be shared with the EA and other key stakeholders. There is an overwhelming view that the current proposals are unacceptable.

If you know others who have yet to complete it, they can do so via Environment Agency threat to Manor Farm Park (smartsurvey.co.uk) but the survey is closing this weekend.

The survey included requests for people able to get involved in practical ways such as delivering leaflets, and we would like to thank new volunteer supporters Helen, Joyce, Claudia, and Cedric who put up our new orange banners at entrance points to promote the survey, as well as to others whose assistance was not needed.

Environment Agency meeting on 27th February:



Committee members and Trustees of the Cadbury Barn Trust met with four representatives from the Environment Agency and took the opportunity to walk through the park with them to highlight the impact of the current proposals.

A number of park users also who happened to be in the park took the opportunity to voice their thoughts and concern as well.

The site visit was followed by a full and frank discussion with the EA.



Key points from the meeting were:

- Confirmation that the proposals are at a very early stage and much more work will be needed in relation to modelling and option appraisals.
- The modelling so far is based on a worst-case scenario in terms of maximum volumes of water which could be retained, and many more studies and modelling exercises are being undertaken.

- We were able to suggest alternative proposals which could support flood reduction without such an impact on the landscape which they assured us will be considered, in particular a limited scheme using only the Great Meadow.
- The EA acknowledged that the concept designs had caused a lot of concern amongst local residents.
- All developments have to demonstrate a 10% biodiversity gain, and the EA ecologist Adam Noon (formerly a park ranger who knows Manor Farm Park very well) elaborated on some ecological benefits which could be derived within the scheme.
- The EA recognized the need for alternative approaches to reach people who may not be able to access information online or whose primary language is not English.

Since the meeting, we have submitted an extensive list of questions for written answers, covering forecasting and modelling, presentation of the plans, alternatives considered, economics, permissions needed, national and local policy and legislation, assessment of impact, mitigation and replacement of amenities and environment, construction, operation and maintenance, and risks. We are grateful to a number of relevant professionals including civil engineers, surveyors and even a hydrogeologist who have offered their help to identify pertinent issues.

There is still a long way to go, the EA have indicated that work on these proposals could take several years but initial discussions with them on the 27th were relatively positive.

Preliminary investigations:

As part of the options appraisal some preliminary work taking ground samples will be taking place around the park after Easter. This is not the start of any construction work but is a geological survey which will be instrumental for the EA to understand what could or could not be done in relation to any proposals within the park. Temporary tracks will be installed to protect the grass while equipment is moved around the park and there will be a temporary 'welfare area' for the contractors. The EA have given us assurances that they will try to minimize the impact on park users and the environment during the approximately three weeks that this will take.

Future engagement:

The EA have undertaken to continue to liaise closely with The Friends and will be arranging wider public engagement opportunities in the future. They have agreed to attend our **Lark in the Park** event on **8th June**. They will also provide an update at our **Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 10th July**; this meeting is for paid up members of the Friends of Manor Farm Park.

The EA has met with BVT, the Parks Manager, Councillor and our MP. We are also liaising with all these people and agencies and letting them know your views, however we encourage you to contact local Councillors Miranda Perks (miranda.perks@birmingham.gov.uk), Jamie Tenant Jamie.Tennant@Birmingham.gov.uk and MP gary.sambrook.mp@parliament.uk yourselves.

Donations:

We have already received donations, including a couple of very generous ones, totalling more than £300 which has covered the costs of our new banners and the survey. Thank you to everyone for their support no matter how small. If you would like to donate to future costs you can do so by online banking to 'Friends of Manor Farm Park' (business account) Sort Code: **20-08-44** A/C number: **40430692.** Reference: "<Your name(s)> FLOOD". Alternatively, pay by PayPal - simply click PayPal.me/FoMFP2023 , it will ask you to sign into your account, just take it from there.

Staying informed:

To keep up to date with latest developments log on to the Environment Agency website which has just been updated: Bourn and Lower Rea Flood Risk Management Scheme - Environment Agency - Citizen Space (environment-agency.gov.uk)

We also recommend that you sign up to receive their regular newsletters. You can join from the web, email your contact details to TheBournFRMS@environment-agency.gov.uk or call its National Customer Contact Centre during office hours on 03708 506 506. We also encourage you to send your comments and thoughts to them directly on the proposals as they are currently presented. We are happy to receive copies of your submissions.

Bournville Village Trust, who own Weoley Hill Park, and whose Scheme of Management and Design Guide apply to much of the local area, has issued a statement and FAQs on the proposals and which can be found at www.bvt.org.uk/our-communities/bournville-flood-risk-management/

As well as these updates, keep an eye on our Facebook page and noticeboards. We are also linking up with Weoley Hill, where the parkway adjacent to the A38 is also a part of the proposed scheme. Weoley Hill residents have set up www.saveourparks.co.uk where all groups across the three affected parks will link together to try and influence the final proposals. Some of our members attended their recent packed public meeting.

We have issued press releases to local media following the Birmingham Mail article based on the EA's information 'Plan to stop devastating floods in Bournville' . In their latest article 'Residents fight disgraceful flood storage' they have presented views of people who oppose the scheme. Although the quotes were not provided by ourselves, they certainly demonstrate the strength of feeling locally which we are picking up in the survey.

Membership:

Issues arising like the EA proposals show how very important it is to have organisations such as the Friends to protect the park, represent the interest of park users and the local community, and to mobilise individuals and networks quickly when needed. Almost 20 new members have joined us in the past few days. If you are not already a member and would like to join to find out not just about the EA developments, but also everything going on in the park and to be kept up to dates with activities and events then please get in touch with our Membership Secretary on fompfmembership@gmail.com for details; membership remains at just £5 a year.

If you know someone who would also like to be updated on just the EA plans for Manor Farm Park they can write to MFPFloodupdates+subscribe@googlegroups.com
Thanks for your interest, we will keep you informed when we have more information to share.