

## Creating a Bee World by Bromley Friends of the Earth

### **Welcome to the Bee World of Bromley Friends of the Earth (FoE)**

This is the timeline of how Bromley FoE created a mini bee world on Tugmutton Common together with the Council and the Tugmutton Friends Group who help maintain the Common.

In 2012 we celebrated the Queen's 60 years on the throne but during those 60 years the UK has unfortunately lost 97 percent of our natural grasslands. To help try and rectify this, Bromley FoE joined in the national Friends of the Earth's scheme to create 60 new Bee Worlds all over the UK, hopefully giving the bees and other pollinators a small haven of essential food and shelter.

Our aims were not only to create a hospitable environment for bees in the local area, but also to make links with the local community and inform the public on the importance and urgency of helping our bees. All over the UK local groups will be joining Friends of the Earth in campaigning for a national Bee Plan, to help protect all species of bees.



### **Our story begins:**

**July to August 2012** The Group found out about why we need bees. We learnt that bees help produce 75% of crops worldwide. We find out that without bees our economy will suffer and that British bee numbers are declining dramatically.

We held stalls to help inform the public and to ask for them to call for a 'National Bee Plan' to protect our food supply and our economy.

And on two particular days – at Keston Countryside Day and the Cudham Village Fete, members dressed up as bees! We gave away free packets of wildflower seeds that attract bees plus posters of bee friendly plants. Lots of interest was shown from the public and many people signed up to the 'The Bee Cause.'

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**August to September 2012** The national Friends of the Earth conference took place while all these activities were going on and one of the workshops was on creating the national 60 Bee Worlds, very inspiring stuff.



**September to October 2012** After Conference Bromley FoE had a monthly meeting and decided if the Group could find a suitable site we would go ahead with the creation of a Bee World. Luckily one of the Council's Biodiversity & Natural Heritage officers thought part of the Tugmutton Common site would be ideal and responded to our request.



After walking round the site one rather damp Autumn morning agreement was reached with the Council and BFoE that it was ideal!



### **November 2012**

**8<sup>th</sup> November** Bromley FoE members visited the site on Tugmutton Common. We measured the site and decided it needed placing away from the shadow of overhanging trees. Our next step was to plan how the site will be dug over in preparation for planting in early Spring 2013.

**20<sup>th</sup> November** Several FoE members attended the Sevenoaks FoE group meeting. A very interesting talk was given by Dr. Nikki Gammans from a project which is reintroducing the short-haired bumblebee. She described the problems faced by our bees and how practical projects can

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help. It was shown that without our bumblebees the countryside would look very different. Almost all 24 species of our UK bumblebee are now thought to be in decline.

During this month we also approached Darrick Wood Junior School to see if they would be interested in participating in a project to help promote the bees protection.



### December 2012

We copy the bees and go into hibernation! Well, only partially, as we have some planning to do and a team of volunteers to organise.



### January 2013

We started the New Year with the Group's Annual General Meeting and with renewed vigour started to plan various Bee Walks across the Bromley Borough to help promote awareness.



### February 2013

At the beginning of the month two of our campaigners met to decide dates and firm up plans to begin working on the plot.

**5<sup>th</sup> February** The monthly meeting of Bromley Friends of the Earth took place and we discussed our plans and enrolled volunteers to work on the plot. Then a few days later one of our Bee Campaigners met up with the Council's Biodiversity Officer and some of the Friends of Tugmutton group on site to firm up details preceding our first dig. And to enrol some more volunteers to help with the dig!

**16<sup>th</sup> February** Our first dig took place. BFoE members met up with the Biodiversity Officer and some **very** helpful Friends of Tugmutton. We went to

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work digging over the compacted soil and grass and left the soil for the Council to collect and compost.



**20<sup>th</sup> February** A talk was given to the Orpington branch of the National Women's Register. Members showed a great deal of interest in the Bee World project and we discussed the problems of the decline in bee numbers.



**21<sup>st</sup> February** Bromley Friends of the Earth held a planning meeting. We discussed progress on the project so far and agreed funding for a competition to be run with pupils from Darrick Wood Junior School.



### **March 2013**

**2<sup>nd</sup> March** Our second dig at Tugmutton took place. Bromley Friends of the Earth members were again helped by the Friends of Tugmutton. As some people re-dug the soil, breaking down the larger clumps, others pulled out the worst of the couch grass preparing it for raking and seed sowing next time.

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**5<sup>th</sup> March** It was the monthly meeting of Bromley Friends of the Earth and we updated the group on the progress we had made on the site and collected a box of promotional aids for the Bee Cause.

**8<sup>th</sup> March** A couple of the campaigners met again to discuss how a future presentation to Year 5 of Darrick Wood Junior school was progressing. A meeting with a member of staff had been set up to discuss it.

**12<sup>th</sup> March** And following on from this, the meeting at Darrick Wood Juniors went ahead and the plans were firmed up and a date set for the Power Point presentation to take place at the end of April. We made a quick inspection of the site too that day, and hoped that the snow nestling in the clumps of soil would melt away and the soil warm up by the time we were planning to sow our seeds!

**15<sup>th</sup> March** The group had a day of action on Bromley High Street. Given that the weather was against us, we had a surprisingly large number of people stop and sign our Bee Cause postcards to David Cameron, urging him to create a national Bee Plan. And to take away some of the wildflower seeds to create little havens for the bees elsewhere.



**23<sup>rd</sup> March** In the midst of the snowy weather one of our campaigners took part in a Friends of the Earth day in south London, when lots of 'Bee campaigners' came together to discuss the Bee campaign and to go on two rather cold walks!



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### April 2013

**2<sup>nd</sup> April** The group had a monthly meeting and were lucky to have Dr Nikki Gammans speak about her project, the reintroduction of the short-haired bumblebee, together with other facts and figures about bees in general.

**6<sup>th</sup> April** This saw three of the campaigners out at the site, on the first day of the gradually warming weather, sowing most of the wildflower seeds. They also met up with the Council's Biodiversity Officer to discuss details of the 'opening' day to be held the following Saturday. She also took away the FoE plaque which the Council were going to mount on a plinth to be placed near to the path adjacent to the plot.

**13<sup>th</sup> April** Launch day! Luckily the weather was kind to us and two of the local councillors, together with Cllr Colin Smith, the Council's portfolio holder for the Environment, came along to aid the promotion of the site. Bromley FoE members, the Council officers and the Friends of Tugmutton all came together for tea and honey cake to toast to its success. Several members of the public showed a great interest in the site.





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**24<sup>th</sup> April** We visited Darrick Wood Primary School to give our powerpoint presentation to 90 Year 5 children. The children listened well, especially when we read out a list of foods we wouldn't have without bees – the list included pizza and chips!

The talk covered why we need bees, what are the problems for our bees, what Friends of the Earth is doing about it, and about Tugmutton Bee World which is close to their school. The children were asked to enter a competition to design a bee friendly garden. We asked them to include bee friendly flowers, water, long grass and some wood for solitary bees to live in.

We were delighted to hear that the children are going put the project into action and part of their wildlife area in the school grounds will become a bee friendly area.



May and June

Spring comes to our Bee world! After the cold weather and with a late Spring, some of the wild flower seeds are beginning to germinate and we can see the meadow begin to grow.

15<sup>th</sup> June

Friends of the Earth had a walk in Jubilee Country Park. It was led by Dr. Nikki Gammans who is leading a project to reintroduce the short haired bumblebee back into Britain. We were able to catch and identify a number of different species of bumblebee and found out much more about these important creatures.

Our Future Plans–

A powerpoint presentation about bees to another local Primary School

Information stalls to be held at Keston Countryside Day and Chelsfield fair. We will have a bee quiz for the public to fill in to raise awareness of the plight of our bees.

We will continue to work towards the development of a National Bee Plan.