



*A reminder of the snow at Spa Ponds - Photo taken by Dennis Platts on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018*

### Season's Greetings to all FTNCG Members and Supporters

What a year 2020 turned out to be! The past year has demonstrated just how important local green spaces are - especially when travel restrictions are in place. Spa Ponds saw an unprecedented fifty-fold increase in visitors during the height of lockdown. What we also saw was our Wardens, Barry and Alan (often assisted by Isobella) stepping up their litter picking efforts, helping ensure the site was fit to host so many visitors.

We are grateful to everyone who has been helping FTNCG respond to the situation. We received many positive messages from local people, and it is great to feel so appreciated!

Despite the limitations, FTNCG volunteers managed to contribute more than 2,000 hours in 2020. And thanks to all this volunteering we have seen numerous improvements to the site, including: our Pond 2 reed bed becoming ever more established; the stream along the promontory deepened and reinforced; some of the sycamores removed to allow more light to reach the ground (hopefully stimulating the seed bed); several areas cleared of bramble and then rotavated - ready for pollinator seeds to be planted next year; yarrows planted; sediment removed from Ponds 1 and 2; and the removal of a number of trees that fell onto the bridleway. We also plan to do some work before the end of the year, weather permitting, to make the Chestnut Walk more attractive.

In September 2020 Mansfield District Council adopted the new Local Plan, and Spa Ponds was included as a site that is formally designated a local green space for protection due to "its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity, and richness of wildlife" and the site's ability to provide "a unique and tranquil recreational experience on the edge of...Forest Town". Such a designation may have helped us - with plenty of support from the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust - to secure future Section 106 funds to help make Spa Ponds more resilient and better able to cope with the influx of new residents as the land between the White Gates and the doctor's surgery is developed.

2020 was also a good year for training, with Phil sharing his water testing skills (Phil and Dennis are in the process of producing the training video), and Andy Hollis of Ecologic beginning our woodland management training. 2021 promises to provide further opportunities to learn from Andy, thanks to Sherwood Landscape Partnership (Miner2Major) funding, and we look forward to sharing some dates for your new diaries in the coming weeks.

In addition to a series of training sessions, 2021 will also see FTNCG progressing our new and improved Site Management Plan, as well as two projects led by Keep Britain Tidy: 'Keep the Forest Buzzing' - helping attract more bees to Spa Ponds - and 'Spawn on the Maun' - carrying out much-needed work to narrow the River Maun thus speeding up the flow to reveal gravel fit for fish to use for spawning.

On behalf of FTNCG Trustees, I would like to thank you for all of your kind support in 2020 and wish you a safe and wonderful year ahead, *Shlomo* (Chair of the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group)