

The Level Project Update February 2014

The Last Project Newsletter!! We have reached the end of our restoration journey, and although the many activities and events will still go on, the construction works are by and large complete. A few things are still to be sorted out, but the whole park has now been handed back to the public to enjoy (see below), with the Velo Café open for business.



What's still left to do?

The final surfacing will go down on the Rose Walk in March - this will be the same as on the north lawns cross paths. The western quadrant lawns is still not draining properly, and as soon as the rain holds up a bit, the contractors will do the neccesary works to resolve this.

We are looking at ways to improve the skatepark boundary, which on the whole is fine, but a couple of areas need a bit of attention. The high use experienced last summer has left a few bare patches in the playground area, and these will be re-turfed in the spring.

Everything else is doing really well, and we can't wait to see how all the planting looks in the spring and summer months – especially the bulbs that a dedicated band of volunteers spent several sessions helping us plant! (See later in this newsletter.)

Velo Café

The new café opened in mid-November 2013, and is proving popular with park visitors as well as those just passing through wanting a hot drink. The tenants are committed to supporting the community life of the café, and welcome feedback on anything - from what's on the menu (or not), operational comments and suggestions, or anything else you'd like to raise with them. The café is open 8am. Contact them at bn1cafe@velo-cafe.co.uk www.velo-cafe.co.uk. There are public toilets, including a disabled toilet, at the sides of the café building; these are managed by Wettons Ltd on behalf of the council, and the contact for them is 0845 0345840 to report any maintenance issues.

Communities of The Level Forum (CoTLF) – why not join us?

The Forum, which formed a year ago, has agreed a new Constitution and will shortly be electing committee members to take things forward with the city council for the benefit of the park and all its users. The Group will have a (slightly!) different name - The Level Communities Forum.

The group has representatives from a number of community and special interest groups, as well as local residents and businesses. Members share a common interest in working with the city council to support and guide the park's future.

The group welcomes anyone who has an interest in the park and is keen to expand its membership, especially if you would like to help with communications and marketing (including social media). See contacts at the end of this newsletter.

Grand Celebration in June on The Level!

The Level will have its grand community celebration event on **Saturday 14 June, 10am-6pm**. The special events planning committee, with members from the Community Forum, has reconvened and is working with the council on the details of this community-focused event. There will be something for everyone to enjoy. Check www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/thelevel and on the park's community noticeboards for more details as they begin to take shape.

Community Rooms

Agreement has been reached on the fees, so the two Community Rooms (The MacLaren and the Elm) in the restored pavilions are now ready to hire on weekdays during the day: evening and weekend hires can be arranged as soon as additional security arrangements are made. We expect this to be within the next fortnight. Bookings are being handled by the city's council's Sports Bookings team – contact sports.bookings@brighton-hove.gov.uk, or call (01273) 292704. You can view a design plan including approximate room dimensions at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/thelevel

The People's History of the Level

We launched our special exhibition – the result of community volunteers interviewing and recording local people's oral histories – last November. We have had several public openings of the exhibition, which has been set up in the MacLaren Room, since then. With continued volunteer support, we will be able to open the exhibition on future occasions, including during [Community and Local History month](#) in May.

We have produced a colour booklet to accompany the exhibition. It's £5 (P&P free), and you can order using the details at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/thelevelhistory. See also the end of this newsletter. There are posters on community noticeboards at The Level too.

Other Activities



The Play Development team, using volunteers trained through the restoration project, is now operating free weekly [play sessions](#) every Tuesday after school, and every Saturday, 11am-1pm. Sessions are expected to continue on this basis until the end of the summer holidays. Keep an eye on www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/playbus for updates.

[Healthwalks](#) also lead weekly walks at The Level, on Thursdays at 11am, and every fourth Sunday at 11am from The Level. (Picture right.) The team is always keen to have more volunteers to lead walks across the city, and offers free training – the next course is Friday 21 March 10-4.30pm in central Hove. Booking essential. More details at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/healthwalks, or call (01273) 292564.



Christmas ... spring/summer bulbs! ... and other activities!

In early November 2013, construction workers appeared for just a moment to have come back to The Level. But thankfully it was only so The Level's Christmas tree could be installed (see right) ... and hundreds of excited people turned out later in the month to witness the switching-on of the lights by the Mayor, Cllr Denise Cobb, while the Salvation Army played festive tunes.



Then, in the immediate run-up to Christmas, we were delighted to welcome a group of enthusiastic volunteers (some of them pictured left), who knuckled down to the task of helping plant some of the 5,500 spring and summer bulbs we have in our planting plan for the park. We should have a lovely colourful show to enjoy very soon!

Activities Programme

Now the park is finished, with community volunteer support, we expect a number of scheduled activities to gradually begin appearing as part of our [Activities Programme](#).

The next regular activity is likely to be gardening clubs. These will be led by The Level's on-site Garden Manager, Steve Peters, with support from the council's Rangers Team, once Steve has moved into his own office (we expect this to be very soon.) Steve has become a familiar and reassuring sight at the park since he started working full-time on The Level last summer. He is around on weekdays (from early morning until later in the afternoons.)

If you haven't already expressed interest in gardening at The Level, contacts are at the end. We are particularly interested in hearing from special groups who would like to come and help with gardening tasks at the park.

Have a look at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/joinusonthellevel to find out about other planned activities, or use the contacts at the end if you're interested in taking part.

Anyone for chess? ... or Bat and Trap ... or Pétanque? ...

Our artwork chess tables in the picnic tabletops around the pétanque area began attracting keen players of all ages as soon as they were installed. Through the project, we have bought some chess pieces and chess clocks, which we can hire out. If you're interested in running a chess (or other board games) club in The Level's community rooms, contact us.



Bat and Trap is a traditional, regional game which was until quite recently played at The Level by Brighton Social Club members. We have a new B&T set, and would love to hear from anyone interested in helping start a local league. We hope to be able to set up a cross-border challenge with B&T players in Kent, where the game is also known.



We are also keen to contact local people interested in using the new pétanque area for regular or occasional games. We have equipment (boules) you can borrow. Contact us if you're interested.

Information Boards

There are eight information boards, spread around The Level's five entrances, where we post information and updates. The information is refreshed frequently, so do keep an eye on the boards when you're passing through or around the park.

Community Safety

We are continuing to work closely with a partnership group of community safety professionals. The Group is also meeting on a regular basis with the Community Forum. Over the next few months, look out for information at The Level showing which agencies deal with what, should you have any community safety concerns at the park. A CCTV camera, linked to the local police station and monitored 24 hours, is now in place.

Police Hub

The Police Community Hub, in the Hornbeam room in the eastern pavilion, is staffed Monday-Saturday 10-11am and 6-7pm. On Sundays, it is staffed 10-11am only. Officers patrol The Level as part of their normal work in the area outside these hours as well.

Fiona Stokes – Project Officer, Parks Projects team

Fiona left on Maternity Leave on 14 February. As well as many other projects, Fiona has spent several years working on the history and heritage project at The Level with dozens of volunteers and other local history and heritage experts. We're sure those of you who have been worked with Fiona over the last few years join us in wishing her all the best. We look forward to continuing to work with our history volunteers as we move forward.

From The Level to the Stanmer Estate?

Over The Level restoration project's lifespan, we built up an extensive contact database of people wanting to be kept informed via these regular project newsletters. Between 24 March and 4 May, the Parks Projects team will be working on a public consultation for the Stanmer Estate, and in due course we will be producing news updates for that project too. If you would like your details added to the new database, contact parksprojects@brighton-hove.gov.uk and we will add your details. www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/stanmer-estate-restoration-project

And finally ...

By the time you read this I will have moved back to Edinburgh, my home town, to take up new post with their Parks and Green Spaces department. While I'm excited about my move home, I am very sad to leave Brighton & Hove and all the people I've worked with during my time here. Working on the Level Project has been a wonderful journey, and even with its various ups and downs, I'm taking away many lovely memories.

All that's left for me to do is to thank all of you who helped this project on its way and made it all possible. I wish you and The Level all the best for the future.

All the best, Linda Anglin, 14/2/14

(Dates for your diary overleaf >>>)

Dates for Your Diary

Tuesday 25 February at 6-7.30pm.

The Level Communities Forum meeting at 6 pm in the MacLaren Room.

Saturday 14 June, 10am-6pm

Grand community celebration event at The Level

Throughout May

Community and Local History Month . Contact us on parksprojects@brighton-hove.gov.uk if you are interested in volunteering in some way during this month . More information http://www.history.org.uk/resources/general_resource_1567_55.html

Contact Us

- Get the latest updates and find out more about volunteering, events and activities at The Level by visiting www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/thelevel
- Email parksprojects@brighton-hove.gov.uk (or use the address below) if you would like to order a copy of our People's History of The Level booklet (£5), or would like to have your name on the list of volunteer gardeners – or another volunteering activity. We will contact you when activities become available.
- If you don't have access to the internet, we are happy to send you information by post. Write to us at Brighton & Hove City Council, Parks Projects Team, Hollingdean Depot, Upper Hollingdean Road, Brighton BN1 7GA, or call us on 01273 292929.
- Follow us on social media:

Facebook	www.facebook.com/parksandcountryside
Twitter	www.twitter.com/bhccopenspaces
Flickr	www.flickr.com/groups/bhccthegallery/
YouTube	www.youtube.com/BrightonandHoveGovUK