



## Firs Farm Community Hub gets off to a busy start

The long awaited Community Hub at Firs Farm opened its doors to the public for the first time in February, providing food, drink and a warm welcome for visitors to this attractive and family-friendly area of grassland, trees, hedgerows and a well established wetlands.



More than eight years of hard work and fundraising effort by the Friends of Firs Farm finally paid off when the Community Hub opened its doors to the public for the first time at 8am on Friday 23rd February. The new public facility will be open seven days a week from 8am to 4pm, and these hours might be extended in summer.

Throughout the day snacks and drinks will be on sale at Leon's Cafe, run by Richie Hardwicke of Chi Chi's in Green Lanes. The accessible toilets are there for anyone who just needs to "pop in", and the hub has the first Changing Places toilet for people with special needs in an Enfield blue/green space.



All this in an area that is some distance from shops, cafes or pubs, but has been increasingly popular with visitors of all ages since a buried stream was "daylighted" (brought back to the surface) and its water used to create

a wetlands haven for a wide range of flora and fauna.

The hub is being operated by Home Care Preferred Social Enterprise, led by Managing Director Ken Waterhouse. Ken is well known to many local people as the founder of Homecare Preferred, offering care for people in their own homes, in the area. A Winchmore Hill resident, Ken has been involved in local charity and community events over the years and is keen to work with the Friends to establish the hub as a venue for a wide variety of activities for people of all ages.



Home Care Preferred Social Enterprise is the community arm of Ken's company. Ken has appointed a Hub and Events Manager, Anastasia Scheepers.

The hub includes an events space suitable for fitness classes, parties, community events, music and comedy, business meetings, and much more. The events area will be fitted out soon and available for hire. Anyone interested in hiring this space or holding classes/events, can visit [hallbookingonline.com/firsfarm](http://hallbookingonline.com/firsfarm) or email Anastasia Scheepers, [ffch@homecarepreferred.com](mailto:ffch@homecarepreferred.com).

Dogs won't be allowed inside the hub, apart from assistance dogs. However, dogs are loved and will be welcome in a special dog friendly zone near the takeaway serving hatch.

The successful opening of the community hub is a tribute to the hard

work and tenacity of the Friends of Firs Farm who, under the leadership of Toni Guiver, have had to overcome various setbacks.

The Friends have raised more than £300,000 to buy and fit out the modular hub building, through applications to grant bodies, crowdfunding and local community events. There is an ongoing crowdfunding campaign which has so far raised more than £30,000.

Looking back over the eight years of fundraising effort, Toni comments: "It wasn't a sprint, it was a marathon!"

She says the new hub will help many different groups: "It won't be only our community who'll reap the benefit, it will encourage more people to 'get out and get active' in Firs Farm, join the gardeners and other volunteering teams to support the charity, caring for the space for the benefit of people and wildlife.

"Schools are particularly keen to spend more time in Firs Farm, which will be more accessible to them with the new facilities to tap into."

### Fundraising: not quite there

The Friends of Firs Farm aren't yet quite there with their fundraising efforts. More money is needed to create a permeable hardstanding area for outside tables and chairs. They're keen to have this ready for the summer.

As well as inviting people to keep contributing to the crowdfunder, they'd like people to organise fundraising events - if you'd be interested, please contact [friendsoffirsfarm@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoffirsfarm@gmail.com).

