

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **FRIDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2013** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

A G E N D A

APOLOGIES

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

To elect a Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th April 2013.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, non-disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

To appoint a Vice-Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

To note the Membership of the Group for 2013/14 as follows:

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council

Councillor Sir P Brown

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, R B Howe and R J West.

6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 5 - 8)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period April to October 2013.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 21st March 2014.

Dated this 3 day of October 2013



Head of Paid Service

Notes

1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

- (1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*
- (2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it -*
 - (a) *relates to you, or*
 - (b) *is an interest of -*
 - (i) *your spouse or civil partner; or*
 - (ii) *a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*
 - (iii) *a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

and you are aware that the other person has the interest.
- (3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*
 - (a) *any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;*
 - (b) *any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*
 - (c) *any current contracts with the Council;*
 - (d) *any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*
 - (e) *any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*
 - (f) *any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*
 - (g) *a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

Other Interests

- (4) *If a Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote.*
- (5) *A Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest where -*
 - (a) *a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area*

for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or
(b) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the descriptions referred to above, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association

and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

2. Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings

The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening at meetings. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and available via the following link - [filming, photography and recording at council meetings.pdf](#) or on request from the Democratic Services Team. The Council understands that some members of the public attending its meetings may not wish to be filmed. The Chairman of the meeting will facilitate this preference by ensuring that any such request not to be recorded is respected.

Please contact if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (under Councils and Democracy).

If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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Agenda Item 2

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park on Friday, 26 April 2013.

- PRESENT: Councillor M G Baker – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs L Kadic and R J West.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor N J Guyatt and Mr N Green.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mr J Craig, Mr P Hobbs and Mrs A Jerrom.

8. MINUTES

Subject to the amendment of the name Mr N Brown to Mr N Green in the list of attendees, the Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 12th October 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Further to Minute No.6 para. (i), it was agreed that a site visit to Godmanchester Community Nursery, the new boardwalk at Holt Island and the Colne graveyard be arranged for June 2013. With regard to the Community Nursery, Mrs Arnold explained that Urban and Civic had been funding a member of staff to work with the nursery staff in order to gain the knowledge required to carry out future tree planting at the Alconbury Enterprise Zone.

9. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

10. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

In receiving and noting the contents of the Senior Ranger's report, comment was made as follows:

(a) Staffing

Members were advised that the staffing restructure had been completed. Mr P Hobbs had been confirmed as the Senior Warden, Mrs J Arnold the Countryside Services Co-ordinator and Mr J Craig the Green Spaces Manager. In addition Mr J Milligan had been promoted to Ranger and Mr B Gardner who had been responsible for Coneygear Park would now be based at Hinchingsbrooke and look after Coneygear Park when

required.

Mrs Arnold explained that a reduction in hours by the admin officer had provided funding for an extra warden to cover the busier summer months.

No further areas could be identified for savings.

(b) Volunteers

The Group noted that 844 volunteers had provided the equivalent of 5064 man hours of work between September and February.

(c) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period September 2012 to February 2013 inclusive were presented, along with figures from the previous six years for comparison. Although group bookings had fallen as a result of the economic climate, income continued to increase, more volunteers were being trained and educational opportunities were being increased in order to attract older students and provide out of season opportunities.

(d) Café

Visitor numbers to the café had fallen as a result of the appalling weather conditions, however the café supervisor had worked hard to try and maintain levels by competitive pricing, careful purchasing and the introduction of a medium priced lunch option. A recent upturn in the weather had resulted in a recent Saturday being the café's busiest ever.

(e) Events and Activities

The Senior Ranger informed the group of the various events and activities that had been held since the last meeting. A highlight of the period had been Santa's Grotto which had attracted 192 children despite the very wet weather.

Subsequent to the report being written 'parkruns' had commenced, the free 5km runs took place every Saturday morning and were expected to attract in excess of 100 runners.

The park, in association with the Active Lifestyles Team and with the aid of grant from Cambridgeshire County Council, was in the process of obtaining a selection of adapted bicycles for people of all abilities to hire.

(f) Wider District

Members noted a range of work that had been undertaken in other parts of the District. It was reported that Hinchingsbrooke rangers and volunteers had assisted with the installation of a

new hut at Holt Island and had taken over all practical work at Stukeley Meadows Local Nature Reserve as a contractor was no longer employed for the purpose. The management plans for Spring Common and Stukeley Meadows had also been updated.

(g) Park Management

A new efficient wood fired heating system had been installed at the Countryside Centre and new night storage heaters had been installed in the Visitor Centre and staffroom. Work on improving the woodland rides in Bob's Wood and the New Plantation had commenced. Tree safety surveys had also been carried out and remedial work was under way.

(h) Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

As a result of fundraising £400 had been provided to the rangers for the purchase of a bird watching scope and tripod to help with the wetland bird survey.

(i) Financial Position

Members' attention was drawn to the park's controllable budget and forecast for 2012/13 and the budget for 2013/14. Members were advised that based on current figures the forecast outturn remained fairly accurate. It was explained that the café remained efficient and was expected to break even despite the weather.

Thanks were expressed to Mr Hobbs and all the staff and volunteers.

In response to a request from an Executive Councillor for any further activity development ideas, Mrs Arnold explained that a programme of events had been arranged, including a walking festival during May. The festival encompassed 90 events many of which would be held on countryside sites. More importantly, the attraction of many volunteer leaders from numerous organisations and the use of sites and routes around the District would publicise the work of not only Countryside but the Council as a whole. Members were reminded of the physical and mental benefits of the park and its associated events to the residents of the District. It was suggested that all elected members be invited to a development day to raise awareness of the park and the wider work carried out by Countryside Services.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 11th October 2013.

Chairman

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SENIOR RANGERS REPORT March 2013 to October 2013

STAFFING

- Country Park Summer Assistant employed from May to September to help with school visits and summer events program.
- Seasonal Café Assistant employed from June to November to cover the café busiest period and holidays.
- Nick Atkins, full time Café Assistant, left at the end of September and the position is currently being advertised and interviews will take place on the 21st October.

VOLUNTEERS

April – August inclusive: 683 volunteers providing 4098 hours of work.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Working figures regarding number of groups/people from beginning April to end September 2012 was as follows:

	Groups	Number of People (includes school children)	Number of schools
01/04/07 - 30/09/07	181 £20,311	4334	30 £4095
01/04/08 - 30/09/08	197 £20,346	5679	39 £5377
01/04/09 - 30/09/09	188 £17,859	4690	17 £2844
01/04/10- 30/09/10	187 £16,260	5107	30 £4012
01/04/11 – 30/09/2011	159 £20,258	5273	23 £4985
01/04/12 – 30/09/2012	120 £17,513	4747	16 £3326
01/04/13- 30/09/2013	133 £12,400	4442	24 £5049

These included such groups as: our regular, repeat bookings from Early Years, NHS, Fostering and Adoption, Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency as well as several private parties.

CAFÉ

Takings in the Café are always weather dependent. Spring was cold and wet and takings were down on the previous year, but the summer has been warm and long and takings are up on the previous year as shown in the financial page report.

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

- 24 school visits – 1513 pupils and staff
- Summer events program with 27 events which attracted 1410 people to take part
- Sports Festival in the Park (17 different sports) encouraged 500 people to have a go.
- Mud, Sweat and Gears and St Ives Cycle Club held a mountain bike race which attracted 350 riders, including some of the best riders in England, plus 100's of spectators.
- Annual Honey Show hosted by HBKA attracted 200 people to learn about bees and to buy honey
- During July and August 58 other groups held smaller events here that 2195 people attended

WIDER DISTRICT

During the period from March to September Hinchingbrooke Rangers and Volunteers have helped out on 10 other countryside sites. They have helped with such jobs as erecting barbed wire fences at Wilhorn Meadow, clearing fallen willows from the Ouse Valley Way and ragwort pulling at St Neots Common.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Path repairs around the lake, necessary after the winter floods– raised and piped two areas.
- Installed a 40ft container for adapted bicycles project
- Built aggregates bays
- Improvements to lake edge grass path – including some re-routing

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- Provided 5 new tables for the café
- Purchased an adapted bicycle (2 seat quad) to add to the Adapted Bicycle Project.

FINANCIAL POSITION

The outturn for last year, and the original controllable budget and forecast for the current year are:

	OUTTURN	BUDGET	FORECAST
	2012/13	2013/14	2013/14
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park			
Staff	134	135	139
Running Costs	38	41	41
Income	(31)	(31)	(29)
Total Country Park and Management	141	145	151
Countryside Centre			
Staff	70	75	62
Running Costs	5	5	5
Income	(41)	(48)	(33)
Total Countryside Centre	34	32	34
Cafe			
Staff	54	60	56
Running Costs	33	36	36
Income	(84)	(115)	(105)
Total Cafe	3	(19)	(13)
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	178	158	172

HDC budgets are prepared and monitored on a controllable cost basis. They do not include support costs (for example HR, Payroll, ICT, Finance etc) or capital charges. Last year these amounted to £50,000.

Country Park and Management

Country park and management staff costs includes £6,000 for a Summer Assistant which is offset by staff savings elsewhere including the reduced staff hours at the Countryside Centre.

Country park and management income for 2012/13 included £16,600 funding from the County Council for volunteer placements, £5,000 for work on Colne Graveyard, £3,900 commuted sums for maintenance and £2,500 for sales of souvenirs. Income for 2013/14 is forecast to be in line with the previous years results with exception of the work on Colne Graveyard where a price reduction is under discussion.

Cafe

Last years exceptionally poor weather led to a small deficit for the Cafe of £3,000. The forecast for the current year of a £10,000 surplus reflects more typical trading conditions. Whilst the forecast surplus of £10,000 is less than the budgeted surplus of £19,000 it still represents a financial contribution to the overall expenditure of the Country Park.

Careful management of the staff budget with reduced use of temporary and casual staff has enabled a forecast saving of £4,000 to partially offset the forecast income shortfall.

Countryside Centre

The original objectives of the Countryside Centre were educational. However, approximately half of the Centre's expenditure is through income generation.

The reduced staff hours at the Countryside Centre have been used to partially offset the reduction in income and part fund the Summer Assistant.