

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **FRIDAY, 24 MARCH 2017** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact
(01480)**

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2016

**Democratic Services
388169**

2. MEMBER'S INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda Item.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

Following variations to the Membership of the Group by the District Council's Cabinet, to note the Membership for the remainder of the Municipal Year –

(a) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors Mrs A Dickinson, T F Hayward, R J West and J White.

(b) Cambridgeshire County Council

Councillor Peter Ashcroft

4. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 11 - 16)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period September 2016 to February 2017.

**J Arnold / C Moss
07810 637547/388207**

5. FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK (Pages 17 - 24)

To consider a report by the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

**Jim Milligan
451568**

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group will be held on 13th October 2017 at 10am.

Dated this 15 day of March 2017



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.*

Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests

- (4) *If a Member has a non-statutory disclosable interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote providing you do not breach the overall Nolan principles.*
- (5) *A Member has a non-statutory disclosable 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 a disclosable pecuniary interest, 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, or*
 - (c) *it relates to or is likely to affect any body –*
 - (i) *exercising functions of a public nature; or*
 - (ii) *directed to charitable purposes; or*

- (iii) *one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a Member or in a position of control or management.*

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 Tony Roberts, Democratic Services Team, Tel No. 01480 388169/e-mail Anthony.Roberts@huntingdonshire.gov.uk 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 Elections & 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.

This page is intentionally left blank

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 14 October 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.
Councillors Ashcroft, Mrs A Dickinson and T Hayward.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R C Carter.

IN ATTENDANCE: .

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That District Councillor R West be elected as the Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Following which Councillor R West took chairmanship of the meeting.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest received from those Members that were present.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That District Councillor A Dickinson be appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The Membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for 2016/17 was noted as follows:

(a) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

Councillor P Ashcroft

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors R C Carter, Ms A Dickinson, T F Hayward and R J West.

The Group welcomed County Councillor P Ashcroft as the new County Council Member to the meeting and expressed their satisfaction at finally having Cambridgeshire County Council representation at the meeting.

6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

In receiving and noting the content of the Senior Ranger's report on park activities for the period March – August 2016, comment was made in relation as follows:

Volunteers

Volunteers provided significant assistance to the Rangers and details of the various volunteers were provided within the report, including one who was studying ecology at university. A university student had previously used Paxton Pitts to complete their studies and it was noted amongst the Joint Group how it could raise the profile of the Park if it too was used for the same purposes.

Park Management

During the spring and summer the wide ranging role of the Rangers focussed on the visitor experience such as dealing with first aid incidents, litter collection and answering queries as well as the main practical tasks of mowing, strimming and hedge-cutting.

Over the next three to six months the Rangers would focus on larger scale works.

Unfortunately, the Park had experienced small scale vandalism, in particular to the fence around the play area and one of the new outdoor shelters.

Staff at the Park had attended an Away Day at Ferry Meadows in Peterborough which had been useful to generate new ideas for the Park. Rutland Water Nature Reserve had been considered as the venue. However, the costs had made it too prohibitive and the Great Fen had been unable to accommodate on the chosen date. It was confirmed that the Team would consider organising another Away Day in the future and had also offered reciprocal arrangements to the Staff at Ferry Meadows

Café

The Park and consequently the Café had been busy during the summer due to the weather which had resulted in an increase in café revenue in comparison to the previous financial year.

This had been assisted by the Park being the venue for the Active

Lifestyles Sports Taster Day on 24 July 2016 where nearly 1000 people had attended the event.

In response to a question it was hoped that the Park would host another Active Lifestyles Sports Taster Day. However, this was dependant on the Active Lifestyles Team successfully securing the necessary funding from grants and lottery funding.

It was noted that the various improvements within the Café had been successful including the removal of some internal seating, the introduction of a simplified summer menu and contactless card payment to improve serving customers.

Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

A new Committee having been formed was working effectively and currently looking to establish a bird box sponsor scheme to provide much needed nest sites to raise additional income. The Friends had recently agreed to provide a new Tern raft (similar to the very successful ones at Paxton Pits), and were considering other priorities for future funding bids.

In response to questions it was explained that the Committee consisted of approximately seven people with a membership of 120. As a registered charity the support of the Friends was vital as they were able to access grants for various projects to improve facilities throughout the Park.

To fully appreciate the work of the Friends, the Joint Group requested that a report be presented to its next meeting as it would be beneficial to understand the Projects they had undertaken.

The Chairman had unfortunately been unable to attend the last Friends' Annual General Meeting. However, hoped to attend the next Annual General Meeting which would be held on 24 May 2017.

Financial Position

Members' attention was drawn to the financial position of the Park. It was noted that the increase in income entered into the Café budget as part of the Zero Based Budget exercise had been achieved and was expected to be exceeded.

The Joint Group congratulated the staff at the Park for the positive financial position within the budget.

It was enquired whether the savings required to be generated via the budget process was having a detrimental impact on services provided and Countryside Services Team. It was explained that when considering the budgets for the forthcoming financial year it was necessary to look at resources differently. For instance volunteers provided a vital service for the Park. However, there were resource implications and the Park needed to be mindful of how many volunteers it recruited due to the training requirements. A recent training event provided to volunteers on bush cutting had been economically viable at a cost of £1,000 as it had trained twelve

people. It was noted that the Park was considering hosting a recruitment day for volunteers.

The Joint Group acknowledged that although the cost of a service was able to be identified it was the value that was not always realised. The Joint Group stated that it was important to value the current services and expressed concern that if the budget was further reduced the impact this would have on vital services.

The Joint Group was particularly disappointed that the post of Tree Warden had been deleted last year as part of the Zero Based Budget exercise. The Joint Group considered this was an essential service that did not cost a significant amount. The service also impacted on the Town and Parish Councils, who it was noted had been approached to consider whether they would be willing to contribute funds to re-establish the post.

Whilst discussing matters relating to the Park one of the Members, being a frequent user of public transport, noted that it was difficult to access the Park on a Sunday using the Stagecoach bus service as the B Route 'Peterborough, Huntingdon, St Ives to Cambridge' terminated at Huntingdon Railway Station. This created significant problems for passengers wanting to access Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, in particular for passengers that were less mobile and unable to walk the considerable distance to either Hinchingsbrooke Hospital or Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, resulting in the additional expense of the need to use the services of a taxi.

Given that Sunday was generally when people had the time to visit friends or relatives in hospital and for leisure pursuits, the Joint Group agreed that it would be of mutual benefit for the B service to be provided on a Sunday to Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, as this would increase both passenger numbers and visitors to the Country Park.

The Joint Group subsequently tasked Chairman of the Group to write a letter to the Managing Director of Stagecoach to request consideration of the matter.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

8. CONTRACTURAL ARRANGEMENTS AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

The Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group gave consideration to an exempt report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the contractual arrangements and potential improvement programme at

Hinchingbrooke Park, detailed within the submitted report.

During discussions on the matter the Group noted the lack of engagement that Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) had taken in Hinchingbrooke Country Park, given that there had been no County Council attendance at the meetings until the recent appointment of County Councillor Ashcroft.

In addition to the significant revenue burden that the District Council incurred for the maintenance of the Park, the Council also invested considerable Officer time and effort in ensuring the Park continued to operate as a success.

The Group acknowledged that the Park was much more than a community asset – it was a prime green space that included a significant area of biodiversity that required sensitive management and protection, as well as providing a variety of recreational and nature conservation activities.

Having been considered by the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group, the report was to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) prior to determination by the Cabinet.

In noting the contractual arrangements in place and their implications, the Group endorsed the recommendations as contained within the exempt report and made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet, whereupon it was

RESOLVED:

to endorse the recommendations as contained within the submitted exempt report, including the additional recommendations to the Cabinet.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on 24 March 2017 at 10am.

Chairman

This page is intentionally left blank

Senior Ranger's report

September 2016 – February 2017

STAFFING

Ian Jackson stepped down as Hospitality Manager in December 2016. His duties of managing both the café and Countryside Centre are being covered by the Café Supervisor, Countryside Manager and part-time Administration Assistant.

The full time Ranger, Sam James, left in January. As his contract initially ran until September 2017, his position is currently being filled by two other existing HDC staff members – Jane Moore (Countryside Services Development Officer), who will work 2 days a week, and Amrita Huggins, who has just finished a contract with the Arboriculture Team and will now work at HCP 3 days a week. A full time Ranger position will be advertised later in the year.

VOLUNTEERS

Currently each week HCP staff work with the following regular volunteers;

- 6 days' worth of SEND (Special Educational Need and Disability) placements, funded by CCC.
- Regular practical work parties on Wednesdays and Thursdays, averaging 12 volunteers a week. This is a roughly equal mix of retirees, and those working part-time or looking for employment.
- 2 days' a week of a supervised 1:1 placement.

Many of these volunteers will be helping to lead sessions for visiting school groups, and we would not be able to run a number of events throughout the year without their help.

We also host the Green Team twice a week, a SEND group of 10 adults and 2 supervisors from Huntingdonshire Regional College, who work around the district on countryside management and horticultural projects. Their work is invaluable and to a very high standard.

On Sundays, we host groups from the YMCA, with supervisors (who have had tool training at HCP) working with young offenders on tasks allotted to them by the ranger on site – usually 2 supervisors and up to 6 young people.

<http://theymca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Youth-Justice-Service-Reparation-Booklet.pdf>

We also have a number of volunteers who return between their time spent at college/university, and we currently have 3 work experience placements confirmed for the summer, with another 3 pencilled in (usually May – July)

WIDER DISTRICT

Countryside service staff and volunteers are based at key sites but often work jointly on specific tasks. Recently Staff and volunteers spent 2 days at the Community Nursery in Godmanchester, helping to dig up and grade saplings in preparation for the parish tree planting scheme. This was particularly significant this year as the Tree Wardens role is ceasing.

A member of staff from HCP spends part of their week managing other sites in Huntingdon, including Stukeley Meadows, Spring Common and Views Common. They are now spending some of that time working with a supervised SEND group from HRC, completing management tasks on Spring Common.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Completed all High Level Stewardship (grant funded) works at HCP and Spring Common – grass cutting and removal, scrub clearance, pond restoration works.
- Completed the rebuild on the damaged jetty on the main lake.
- Undertaken a full tree survey of HCP, with the majority of the ensuing safety work carried out. N.B. Storm Doris hit the district in late February, resulting in damage to a number of smaller trees, as well as 3 significantly sized trees - 2 of which were due to have remedial work performed on them as a result of concerns raised during the surveys.
- Completed felling/coppicing and replanting of rotational woodland to produce logs for heating of Countryside Centre.
- Ongoing winter management that includes; reed clearance, hedge cutting and hazel coppicing (including producing bean poles and pea sticks for the Community Nursery). Some woodland products have been sold to schools for use with Forest School activities and den building.

CAFÉ

The drier winter months have again shown how significant the weather is regarding the café income

September 2014-February 2015	£40118
September 2015-February 2016	£47928
September 2016- February 2017	£53,692

Notably the recent Lego event that occurred in half term meant the overall income for the café for the week was £5,797 compared to £3,630 in Feb 2016

(Note these are figures over the counter and do not account for staff time or food costs etc)

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

This winter we have tried more of the adult craft workshops including willow basket making and creative textiles. People who have attended have commented on the venue and quality of teaching so we will continue to try to increase this type of use

The income for room-hire has remained consistent at £7700 for the same period for the last two years.

However, since Alex has been taking the bookings the income for March this year has risen considerably. It is predicted to be £2,425 compared to March last year £625. We recognise occupancy is key and have recently taken some more unusual bookings including “sound yoga,”

some birthday parties and arranged to work with a local undertaker to host some life celebrations if they have future requests.

EVENTS, ACTIVITIES and PROMOTIONS

LEGO event

This 3 ½ day event was run in partnership with the Great Fen team (as HDC are project partners). We provided the venue for free & helped with publicity. From the Great Fen team;

“It was the biggest event that the Great Fen have held and proved to be very popular with 418 people booked in for brick and build sessions over four days. We tried to get as many people to sign in through a free raffle so we think that we have had a total of 1066 people (maybe more) through the doors over the 4 days.

We raised £8 from JustGiving texts, £2,667 through the book and build sessions and £764.00 through people viewing the map and doing crafts in our Wildzone. We had lots of press coverage over the week, with Look East, ITV News, Radio Cambs, Cambridge TV and lots of press.”

<http://www.greatfen.org.uk/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-39029245>

Alongside that, 211 children enjoyed a wildlife map-reading challenge that encouraged families to explore the park– set up by Alison Gray (Events and Promotions), and run over the 3 days by HCP volunteers.

Santa’s Grotto

Santa’s Grotto made a successful return. 128 children met Father Christmas & enjoyed a festive story. Well over 100 other children joined us during the day for crafts, gift stalls and face painting. Many more followed a festive trail around the site over the Christmas holidays. We will be looking into the possibility of expanding it to two days for 2017

Volunteer lunch

The Countryside Centre played host to a Christmas soup and sandwich lunch in December, to say thank you to all the volunteers from around the district who give their time to perform so many duties on behalf of HDC’s Countryside Services team. Approximately 90 volunteers attended on the day from all the sites.

From April 2016 to Dec 2016 Countryside Services as a whole benefitted from 2,300 days of work from volunteers. The Rangers could not provide the services that they do without such immense help.

<http://paxton-pits.blogspot.co.uk/2016/12/volunteer-party.html>

Other news;

- HCP has hosted a number of cross country events, including the yearly Frostbite League race, and a cross country meet organised by RAF Alconbury American High School, with schools from around Europe taking part.

- Huntingdon parkrun have come to an arrangement with Indigo Parking Services, to provide free parking every Saturday morning for those taking part in the race at the park. This has helped to alleviate some of the parking issues experienced in and around Christie Drive.
<http://www.parkrun.org.uk/huntingdon/news/>
- Willow basket-making workshop – 7 people attended a session using poplar, willow and dogwood cut from the park. 6 more joined a beginners' workshop this year. As they are proving financially successful, a number of extra workshops have been booked for the year.
- Our Facebook page continues to be a great resource for promoting the park, as well as all the events and activities that take place. We currently have over 3700 likes.

<https://www.facebook.com/hinchingbrookecountrypark>

FINANCIAL POSITION

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2016/17

	Budget	Forecast	Variation
	2016-17	2016-17	
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management			
Staff	129	112	(17)
Running Costs	20	22	2
Income	(54)	(51)	3
Total Country Park and Management	95	83	(12)
Countryside Centre			
Staff	70	67	(3)
Running Costs	16	14	(2)
Income	(37)	(31)	6
Total Countryside Centre	49	50	1
Cafe			
Staff	45	64	19
Running Costs	51	55	4
Income	(133)	(141)	(8)
Total Cafe	(37)	(22)	15
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	107	111	4

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET 2016/17 to 2017/18

	Budget 2016-17 £000s	Budget 2017-18 £000s	Variation £000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management			
Staff	129	102	(27)
Running Costs	20	21	1
Income	(54)	(53)	1
Total Country Park and Management	95	70	(25)
Countryside Centre			
Staff	70	44	(26)
Running Costs	16	17	1
Income	(37)	(41)	(4)
Total Countryside Centre	49	20	(29)
Cafe			
Staff	45	57	12
Running Costs	51	60	9
Income	(133)	(143)	(10)
Total Cafe	(37)	(26)	11
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	107	64	(43)

Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

At the Friends' AGM in May 2014, a number of the existing committee members stepped down after several years of dedicated service. In their place, a new committee took shape with a mixture of experienced hands, as well as some new volunteers (which included a new Chairman and Secretary).

Shortly afterwards, a change was also made after the HDC Operations restructure, with the Senior Ranger at the park becoming the HDC representative on the Friends committee.

Since then, the new committee has made some significant contributions, including;

- Upgrades and amendments to the constitution, the first significant changes since 2003
- A brand new style of newsletter has been produced for members (see copy attached)
- From March 2015 – March 2016, membership has grown from 132 to 167, a 26% increase.

Going forward, the Friends have just drafted a letter to be circulated to all existing groups that use the park. The aim of this letter is to ask for help from these groups in raising funds for the park – a copy is attached with this report.

Finally, below is a list of some of the major projects the Friends have funded, or contributed towards, over the years;

Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Summary of main items purchased/supported Y/end

2006	Tramper purchase		£5,626
2007	Literacy project		£2,300
2008	Park projects	£3,323	
	Litter project	£1,653	
			£4,976
2009	Café Furniture	£2,000	
	Orchard project	£2,000	
	Camera System	£385	
			£4,385
2010	Bat Boxes	£200	
	Interpretation Boards	£2,209	
			£2,409
2011	Interpretation Boards	£4,000	
	Microscope	£385	
			£4,385

2012	Oxmoor Project		£500
2014	Assisted Cycle	£1,800	
	Café Furniture	£600	
	Telescope	£367	
	Park Anniversary Celebrations	£500	
	School visits subsidy	£200	
			£3,467
2015	Decking	£6,066	
	FCC (10%)	£2,325	
	Fencing	£2,233	
			£10,624
			£38,672

For 2016, the Friends contributed £1800 towards the footpath improvement works at the entrance into the park from the nearby 'Christie Drive' housing estate, as well as agreeing £2000 towards a custom-made tern raft (currently being built), to provide much needed habitat on our wildlife lake.

Newsletter

January 2017



Registered Charity No: 1051042

Many of you will know Chris Jordan, a faithful and active Friend since the very beginning, in the 1990s. He has worked both as a volunteer and committee member, serving as Membership Secretary and editor of this Newsletter until full time caring for his mother necessitated him standing down in 2014. His mother died recently, and on behalf of all of the Friends we would like to extend to him our deepest sympathy at this sad time.

As we start the new year there is nothing yet to report on the car parking issues. The review of all HDC car parks by the Council Car Parking Manager, reported in the October 2016 Newsletter has been completed but no recommendations or other information has been released.

The new tern raft, funded by the Friends, is currently under construction and we hope it will be towed out to its permanent position on the Wildlife Lake sometime in early spring, in good time for the start of the breeding season. Rangers from Paxton Pits, where recently installed tern rafts have proved very successful, are providing expertise and have offered to help with the installation. Terns are now on the amber list as a species declining in numbers, and although terns do come to the Park, there are no suitable nesting sites at present. Regular visitors will have noticed that the old raft has now been removed.

COMMITTEE

Chairman

David Thorogood
01480 456380

Membership/Treasurer

Malcolm Robinson
01733 810708

Secretary

Jenny Bowers

Other Members

Margaret King
John Holland
Ray Bowers
Graham Taylor

Ranger Representative

Jim Milligan (HDC)

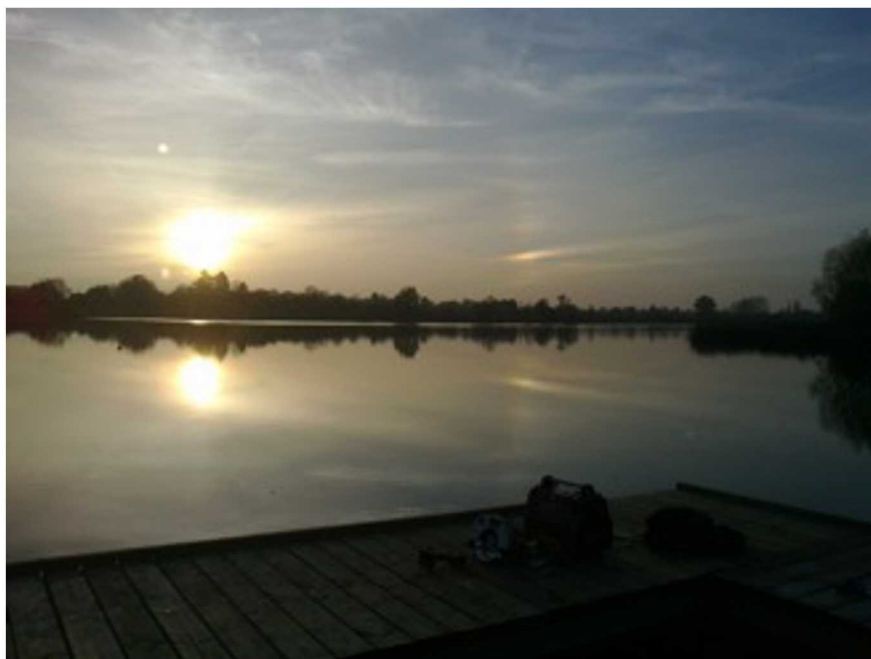
Contact us

e-mail

friendshcp@yahoo.com

or write

c/o the Visitor Centre,
Hinchingsbrooke Country Park
Brampton Road,
Huntingdon,
PE29 6DB



Winter sunset over the Main Lake from the new jetty. Peter Browning

We have applied to the Woodland Trust for a package of 420 'Wild Harvest' tree saplings for planting in March. The packs are funded by Sainsbury's, IKEA, the Peoples Postcode Lottery and Yorkshire Tea. The trees are all grown in the UK and include rowan, hazel, blackthorn, crab apple, dog rose and elder, and would provide food for wildlife as well as blossom and berries for us to enjoy. If our application is successful, the new saplings will provide some replacements for trees the rangers working with the volunteers have had to remove, and some trees to border the opened up woodland rides.

David

Chairman

More 'Behind the Scenery' - this time from Volunteer Peter Browning

Peter writes 'The volunteers have continued to be very busy working up to the Christmas break. Tasks have included clearing and burning overgrowth in the area of the Spit, cutting willow on the bund, rebuilding the jetty on the main lake, refitting refurbished bench tops, cutting back vegetation and creating hibernation areas in the Snake Pit to name but several. A number of us even completed a brush-cutter course which is like strimming, only with attitude!



Sam, Peter and Ross
working on the jetty

Let me introduce myself. My name is Peter Browning and I have been working, mostly on a Wednesday, as a Countryside Services Volunteer since May 2014. My background is military as I joined the RAF in, as I like to put it, the patriotic afterglow of an England World Cup victory in 1966. I served 37 years as an Aircraft Technician and left to join the MOD where my final job was an Environment related one. I became interested in the Environment when I took a course on the subject as part of my OU degree.

How did I get involved with working in HCP? Well, I had been working in the OXFAM Bookshop in Huntingdon and for a number of reasons became bored and frustrated with it. I regularly saw one of my neighbours leaving or arriving home on a Thursday wearing a green polo shirt. I questioned him about it, came to see Peter Hobbs, the Head Ranger before Jim, was offered a volunteer position and quite frankly have not looked back.

One of the first tasks I was involved in was the erection of the Friends' funded wooden fence around the children's play area. It was a task that required team work and no small amount of physical effort. It probably was an ideal task to start on, as it put me into contact with all the Wednesday crew from the start.

What tasks do I prefer to do when I am in the Park? I get a huge sense of achievement from tasks such as erecting or refurbishing "dead hedges" as for, hopefully, many months I can see that they are still doing the job they were put up for. Also I was involved in fixing a memorial bench in place where the donor family had asked if it could be finished for Christmas. The target date was met and I visited the bench during the Christmas period and found that flowers had been placed nearby. I now find that whenever I pass that bench I stop for a few moments to check that it is ok.

What jobs don't I enjoy? Anything that is the result of vandalism! I have been involved in several; including repairs to fencing and repairing the wooden bridge over the Brook. I still put the same effort into the task. It just leaves me angry and frustrated that the valuable time of the volunteers is used up in repairing the damage caused by mindless individuals. I cannot understand why they do it and never will.

Talking about repairing fences: several weeks ago, first job of the day - more repairs to the fence on the North side of the play area that Alex Burke (one of our teenage volunteers) and I repaired the previous week! Grrrr! Just finished when a little tyke comes tearing round the corner and starts climbing the fence! "Oy" says I, using my best Sgt Major's voice. He drops off the fence and his mother catches up with him. "How dare you run away from me!" I can confirm that she was a lot fiercer than me!

No doubt our return after the Christmas break will be met with a new series of challenges. Bring them on, I say!

and 'Behind the Scenes at our Sconery' (Café)... from Ian Jackson

2016 saw many changes in the HCP café. Jamie Gillies left after Christmas, and Ian Jackson was brought in as Hospitality Supervisor to oversee some commercial changes. Sadly for us Ian has been offered a new position and moved on just after Christmas. We will miss him and wish him every success in his new job. He very kindly wrote this piece for our Newsletter about his work last year with our super hardworking café team, just before he left.

'The main goal was to smarten up the appearance of the café and to create more space for customers to move in and out. The café had previously become very crowded at peak times, such as the summer holidays and during activities such as the parkrun. Three lots of the tables and chairs were removed to create more space. To further add to the ambience the posters displayed on the windows were removed as they had been blocking natural daylight. They are now displayed on a board immediately outside the café.

In addition, the dishevelled looking tramper shelter that was creating a bit of an eyesore in front of the café was dismantled. Plans are already in place to erect it in a more discreet location under the trees at the side of the café. Also, the rangers and volunteers have done a great job of clearing and tidying the small garden next to the café. This is still work in progress, but with its new shelter in place, I'm sure it will become a very popular area over the coming year.

Many other small changes were implemented as well. The design of the café menu has been improved and the menu simplified. There are however, a greater variety of soft drinks available, and we have moved to plastic bottles from cans. The café purchased a chip scuttle and a contactless card payment system, both of which helped to improve the speed at which we can serve customers.

Most importantly, we have increased the number of casual staff to cover the very busy weekend shifts. Erin, Taylor, Nicole, Rodell, Jake and Finlay all joined this year, and have integrated very well into an already highly efficient team.

All these changes have contributed to a successful year financially for the café. Takings are expected to be up by over £17,000 in the first 3 quarters of the financial year.'

Following Ian's departure, Jeff has been upgraded to acting Manager.

Good luck Jeff and congratulations to you and all the café team, regular staff and volunteers, for your magnificent contribution to the success of the Park in 2016.

Father Christmas and elves at the 2016 Christmas event



Update on the butterfly count (see Oct 2016 Newsletter)

One day in late November
It came as a surprise.
A Red Admiral flew right by me,
I hardly believed my eyes.
But that was not the last time
I saw a butterfly.
On December 6, in the park,
A Peacock flew right by!

Sue Wilkins

Bon Voyage, Sam! (Bottom right above)

Ranger Sam, another familiar face in the Park, will be away travelling in the Far East for the next few months.

We wish him all the very best for his adventures and are delighted that his initial 2 year contract has now been renewed. We look forward to seeing him again when he returns, as no doubt will our remaining (even harder pressed) Rangers Jim and David!

MONEY MATTERS

One of the aims of the Friends is to raise funds to help maintain the Park

Park Cards £1.50

blank inside for your messages, available from the Committee or the Cafe



THANK YOU

Margaret King
who with John Holland and other helpers organised the very successful

Tombola

at the Christmas Event
raising over £100 for our funds
and to

Hotel Chocolat and all the other kind friends of the Park who donated prizes and/or bought tickets

Help the Friends Committee

If you love the park and would like to help, in a general or more specific way, (and/or add to your cv) and could offer a little of your time, talents, energy and ideas to help us help the park, **contact us at** friendshcp@yahoo.com

I probably say it every year, but the park looked stunning during the autumn months. The staff and volunteers particularly enjoy this time of year, with temperatures ideal for practical outdoor work, and the colour changes in the foliage providing a wonderful backdrop.

It is during this time we try to complete as much of the work as we can around our waterways, with low water levels allowing us to access much of the vegetation near the edges, and this has included

- Clearing one side of the bund (the path between the two big lakes)
- Cutting back willow to open up viewpoints around our lake
- Completing repairs to the jetty
- Refurbishing many of the lakeside benches in our workshop (a good wet weather job!)
- Removing encroaching willow from the wet flower meadow near the wildlife lake.

One other job was to renovate our log otter holt, which we had installed the previous year. I haven't seen an otter at the park in my seven years here, but a Brampton resident (thanks Steve) proudly showed us the photos he took of an otter in our wildlife lake – I'd like to think I'm not the jealous type..

Staff and volunteers of Countryside Services continue to help each other across the district with rangers from Paxton Pits helping with some of our woodland management work this winter, and a team from the park joining others to sort and replant thousands of small trees at the community nursery in Godmanchester (as part of the parish planting scheme).

In recognition of all the hard work that volunteers put into all our sites around the district, the park hosted a thank you lunch in early December (and provided some silly games to boot). It was great to see so many volunteers from around the district attend, and gave them all a chance to meet other volunteers (either from other sites, or the same site but different roles/days). Wildlife surveys, practical tasks, fundraising, events and activities, promotional campaigns, grant applications – the list of jobs performed is endless, and our district would be so much the poorer without their efforts.

We hosted an extra two parkrun races over the festive period (as well as a successful Frostbite League race in December). Parkrun have also obtained permission to make free use of one of the hospital car parks on Saturday mornings, which should help alleviate some (though we recognise not all) of the parking issues we have in and around the park during race time.

Many of those involved with parkrun are also a part of Team Bex, and in the last newsletter I mentioned how they were trying to fund a defibrillator for the park. That fundraising campaign was successful, and the kit has been installed on the side of the café. A big thank you goes out to all those involved – we hope it never needs to be used, but it could save someone's life one day. It also means we can loan out our portable defib. to provide cover at other locations/events.

Finally, I have to mention our Festive day (including Santa's Grotto), which proved a huge success - Leonberger dogs as reindeer, volunteers as elves, crafts and activities on the day, and huge thanks to Graham, one of your very own Friends' committee members, for agreeing to step into the breach, or at least a certain red and white costume, a few days beforehand.

Happy New Year to you all!

Jim



16-18th February

Great Fen LEGO Build

Various LEGO activities,
also a

Map Reading Challenge

for families 11am-4pm,

small charge per child, for some
events, some bookable



call 01480 388111
for details of events
or to book for any of the
following

28th February

Willow Basket Making Workshop

£65pp inc materials and
refreshments, minimum age 14

17th March

Glitter Stitched Flowers Workshop

with Alex Waylett, £45pp
bring your sewing machine

26th March

Photography Workshop

with Ryan Jarvis - learn how to
improve your pictures with your
digital SLR or bridge camera. £50pp

July 31-August 1st

Applique Linen Panel Workshop

also with Alex - 2 days.
£95 + £8 materials

see websites and fliers
for further information on
events in the park

[www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/
countrysideevents](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/countrysideevents)



Letter from the Chairman of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

To User Groups in Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Organisations



Working Together for the Country Park

As a group of regular users of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park you will share our determination to help maintain and where possible improve our valued Park despite continuing pressures on the District Council's budget. The Friends assist by tapping into funds not available to the Council, such as donations and grants from charitable bodies. While hundreds of people use the Country Park each week only 160 households are members of the Friends at present. We need more members in order to raise more funds for Park projects and to represent a wider cross section of Park users.

We would appreciate your help. There are a number of ways in which your group can assist us and the Park, for example by:

- encouraging your members to join the Friends. Household membership costs £6 per annum Forms are available in the cafe.
- donating towards Park projects via the Friends' collection box in the cafe
- supporting Friend' stalls at events eg by giving draw or tombola prizes
- directly raising funds for Park projects
- helping the Rangers with events in the park or on specific projects
- funding specific items for the Park such as picnic benches or cafe furniture
- contributing to our regular newsletter

In addition, your members may be able to offer help and advice/particular expertise/knowledge which the Friends could draw on such as help in applying for grants. They may also have contacts with companies which may be willing to help e.g. by contributing money or volunteer time or sponsoring specific projects. If so please let us know at friendshcp@yahoo.com.

The Friends Committee is also keen to increase and broaden its membership to make it more representative This will help ensure that the views of a wider range of users are taken into account in determining priorities for spending and fundraising. In particular we would like to recruit a representative of the Park runners, someone to represent parents and children and representatives from other user groups. If you or any of your members who are also members of the Friends are interested in joining us please let us know by e-mailing friendshcp@yahoo.com. Our AGM is on 24 May 2017.

Thanks

David Thorogood

Chairman of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

This page is intentionally left blank