A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in the **LANCASTER & STIRLING, CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2026** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2026

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

3. LEAD RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 11 - 38)

To receive a report by the Nature, Conservation and Volunteer Manager on park activities for the summer and autumn months 2026.

Contact Officer: N Massey - (01480) 388666

4. FINANCE REPORT (Pages 39 - 42)

To receive the Finance Report for the Park.

Contact Officer: B Channon (01480) 388388

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group will be held on 15th April 2027 at 10:00am.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

11 day of November 2026

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution

Filming, Photography and Recording (including Live Streaming) at Council Meetings

This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council.

Please contact Democratic Services, Tel No: (01480) 388169 / email: Democratic.Services@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.

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.

Attending Council and Committee Meetings

Huntingdonshire District Council welcomes members of the public to attend meetings that are open to the public.

Members of the public may attend, film, photograph, and report on meetings that are open to the public. *

In some circumstances, a meeting may resolve to exclude the public and press to consider confidential or exempt information. Where this occurs, members of the public and press will be asked to leave the meeting room for that part of the meeting.

Most public meetings are webcast live, and recordings are available afterwards. This means you do not need to attend in person to follow proceedings.

The council permits public speaking at the Development Management Committee (planning) meetings.

View further information about **public speaking at Development Management Committees [PDF, 0.5MB]**

The council permits public questions at full council meetings. View further information about **submitting a question [PDF, 0.1MB]**.

Public access and seating

Meetings that are open to the public can be attended by anyone.
Seating in public areas is limited. Where demand exceeds the number of seats available, admission will be managed on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given in the following order:

1. People who live, work or own property within the Huntingdonshire District
2. Other interested members of the public.

This means that attendees within each priority group will be admitted in the order they arrive, subject to the number of seats available.

Reserved seating

Council Meetings - If you have registered in advance to ask a public question at a meeting of Full Council in accordance with the Council's **Constitution [PDF, 1.5MB]**, a seat will be reserved for you.

Development Management, Licensing and Other Regulatory Hearings - If you have registered to speak or make representations in relation to an application or matter being considered by the Committee, a seat will be reserved for you.

You do not need to arrive early to secure your place.

When seating is full

Once all public seats are occupied, no further admission will be possible.
Standing is not permitted in meeting rooms. Additional seating cannot normally be provided, except where required as a reasonable adjustment for accessibility needs, including carers or support workers.
For meetings of the Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee and other regulatory hearings, priority will be given to applicants, objectors, registered speakers and other parties directly involved in agenda items.

Arrival, sign-in and security

All visitors must sign in on arrival.

If attendance is expected to exceed capacity, you may be asked to provide evidence that you live, work or own property within the Huntingdonshire District so that seating priority can be allocated fairly. In these circumstances, we would request a photographic ID and evidence of your address or work premises
We recommend bringing only essential items.

Bags and personal belongings may be subject to security checks. Where necessary, security staff may also conduct further searches.

These arrangements apply equally to all public attending and are intended to help ensure meetings can take place safely and without disruption.

Any personal information collected as part of the sign-in process will be used only for meeting management and safety purposes in accordance with the **Council's Privacy Notice**. Information will be retained no longer than is necessary.

Items not permitted

- Placards, banners, flags or similar items
- Knives, scissors or other sharp objects
- Whistles, air horns, loudhailers or other noise-making devices
- Bottles or other containers containing liquids, except drinking water intended for personal use during the meeting
- Any item that security staff reasonably believe could compromise safety or disrupt the meeting.

If you wish to bring large or specialist equipment into the meeting, such as recording equipment, please contact **Democratic Services** in advance via email to help avoid delays when entering the meeting.

Behaviour at meetings

Everyone attending a meeting is expected to treat others with courtesy and respect. Any form of verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated. Anyone presenting such behaviour will be asked to leave immediately.

Accessibility

If you have any accessibility requirements, it would be helpful to contact **Democratic Services** before the meeting so we can fully support you.

Speaking at a meeting or asking a question

Members of the public may ask questions at meetings of Full Council.

Members of the public may also speak or make representations at meetings of the Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee, and other regulatory hearings where public participation arrangements apply.

Please note that this must be arranged in advance in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Feedback

If you have concerns about how these arrangements were applied at a meeting, please contact **Democratic Services**.

Legal framework

*Public access to meetings, and the right to film, photograph, record and report proceedings, are governed by legislation including the Local Government Act 1972, Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in LANCASTER & STIRLING, CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN9 6DB on Thursday, 16 July 2026.

PRESENT: Councillor M L Beuttell – Chair.

Councillors Lowe, L Dewey-Beckett and W Smith.

APOLOGIES: No apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors .

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED

that Councillor M L Beuttell be elected Chair of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th April 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair at the end of the meeting.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED

that County Councillor C A Lowe be appointed Vice-Chair of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

It was noted that the membership of the Group for 2026/27 was as follows:

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council

Councillor C A Lowe

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors M L Beuttell, L Dewey-Beckett and W Smith. It was noted that there is a vacancy following the resignation of Councillor T Nelson.

6. HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

The Group heard that following a restructure of the Ranger roles, weekends at the Park were now covered by wardens and rangers and there were now dedicated rangers for habitat banking and Paxton Pits as well apprenticeship opportunities. It was noted that the Park team were working collaboratively alongside One Leisure and Operations colleagues on projects including the launch of the aquapark and sawmill.

Following a question from Councillor Beuttell, it was noted that the orchids were currently in bloom but that observation work had been pushed back in order to focus on the redevelopment project.

In response to a question from Councillor Dewey-Beckett, the Group heard that weekly site checks on tree health were ongoing and that rangers were on site daily to manage and maintain the woodland, and that they were especially cognisant of dry timber in the ongoing extreme summer weather conditions.

In answer to questions from Councillor Smith about engagement with volunteers and residents in relation to commercial activities at the park in particular the aquapark, the Group heard that the Friends of Hinchingbrooke Country Park were aware of the commercial sustainability plan for the park and that regular communication with the group continued to take place, and that they understood that a balanced approach to commercialisation was needed to ensure the continued viability of park activities. It was also advised that due to the confidential nature of the early part of the planning process there had been limited engagement with residents however this dialogue had developed as the project progressed. The team advised that lessons had been learnt from the project and that improved community engagement would be sought for future projects.

Councillor Lowe expressed concern about water quality, in particular Weil’s disease and other water borne diseases. The Group were assured that health and safety of customers was taken very seriously and that regular water testing took place with a specialist company which showed that the water was safe for people to use.

In response to a question from Councillor Beuttell, the Group heard that all safety documents and policies were kept electronically and were available on site at the aquapark should they be requested. It was noted that swimming in the area was discouraged.

It was advised that a sub contractor would remove and store the aquapark inflatable at the end of the season in addition to providing maintenance before reinstalling next year. The purchase of the inflatable had included a training package for staff which had been utilised and the additional lifeguards would have opportunities across the leisure service.

The Group heard that following competitor analysis, a lower introductory offer had been implemented to increase footfall and visibility and that there would be flexibility with pricing across the summer in order to react to the market.

In response to questions relating to the environmental impact the aquapark may have on the park, the Group heard that extensive work had been undertaken to minimise impact and that the inflatable itself was located away from reed beds to ensure that the wildlife would co-exist with activities within the Park.

Following a question from Councillor Smith, the Group heard that the new operations yard at the park was part of a collaborative approach between the Council's services and allowed for timber to be processed on site. This was beneficial to both services as well as having environmental and commercial benefits. The Group were further assured that the yard had been integrated sympathetically with its surroundings.

The Group heard that the development project was on track for completion in early Spring 2027 and an update on progress would be brought to the next meeting.

Councillor Lowe requested a report for Councillors to share with Parish Councils in relation to the community engagement work, the Officers agreed that this would be provided.

7. FINANCE REPORT

Following questions from Councillor Smith, the Group heard that there had been significant changes to the service and its structure prior to budget setting and as a result a very aggressive budget had been set. However this had proved to be too challenging in the year which had seen much transition and the Group were assured that a much more informed approach would be taken in the next round of budget setting.

It was further advised that the aquapark charges included carparking for participants and was away from the main carpark. It was observed that the ongoing development works were affecting carpark revenue due to reduced capacity but that this would be rectified as the project progressed and the new carpark was installed. Officers reassured that they remained mindful of neighbouring residents and monitored the impact of the carparks on them.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group was noted as 19th November 2026 at 10:00am.

Chair

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Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group – 19th November 2026

Report by: Nick Massey, Nature, Conservation & Volunteer Manager

Lead Cllr: Cllr Julie Kerr
Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene

Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
Brampton	Open	No

LEAD RANGER'S REPORT

Executive Summary:

This report summarises the work delivered at Hinchingbrooke Country Park from the summer and autumn months, the progress and issues over the period and provides a summary of the future months.

Recommendations

1.1. The Group is asked to review and comment upon the report and note the progress made to date.

	Key Corporate Plan Priorities
1	Improving quality of life for local people.
2	Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
3	Doing our core work well

	Place Strategy Priorities
1	Protect and enhance our natural environment
2	Support healthy, active, and connected communities

Report Author(s)

Nick Massey , Nature, Conservation & Volunteer Manager
(nick.massey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Advisory Group with an update on the management and operation of Hinchingbrooke Country Park during the Summer and Autumn 2026 period.

1.2 The report summarises progress against the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Management Plan, including habitat management, visitor infrastructure improvements, volunteering, staffing changes, and operational developments. It also provides an update on the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Improvement Project and highlights the priorities for the coming months.

1.3 The Joint Advisory Group is invited to review the progress made, note the work undertaken by the Ranger Team and volunteers, and provide any comments or observations to help inform the continued management and development of the Country Park.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 Hinchingbrooke Country Park is Huntingdonshire District Council's flagship country park, covering approximately 150 acres of woodland, grassland, lakes, and recreational space. The park attracts an estimated 300,000 visitors each year and provides a wide range of opportunities for recreation, health and wellbeing, environmental education, volunteering, and biodiversity conservation. It is managed by Huntingdonshire District Council under a long-term lease from Cambridgeshire County Council and continues to hold the internationally recognised Green Flag Award for high standards of park management.

2.2 The park is currently undergoing the most significant period of investment since it was established. The Hinchingbrooke Country Park Improvement Project includes the construction of a new Visitor Centre and café, improved visitor facilities, enhancements to accessibility, new parking arrangements, and associated infrastructure improvements. Throughout the construction programme, the Ranger Team has continued to ensure that the park remains open, safe, and welcoming for visitors while protecting its important habitats and wildlife.

2.3 Alongside the capital improvements, the Parks and Open Spaces service is now part of the newly formed Active Environments Service. This has introduced the new Nature, Conservation and Volunteer Manager role, providing strategic leadership for biodiversity, conservation, volunteering and the management of parks and countryside sites across Huntingdonshire. The Ranger Team continues to play a vital role in delivering both the day-to-day operational management of Hinchingbrooke Country Park and the Council's wider environmental objectives.

2.4 This report provides an update on staffing, volunteering, habitat management, visitor infrastructure, progress against the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Management Plan and the Improvement Project. It also highlights the key priorities for the coming months as the park continues through this significant period of change.

2.5 In July, Hinchingbrooke Country Park was accredited with the Green Flag award for a 9th year in a row.

2.6 In October, the Hinchingbrooke Country Park was once again successfully accredited with full country park status by Natural England, for another three years. HCP was awarded a Green Flag Award for the 9th year in a row.



3. STAFFING

3.1 The Parks and Open Spaces service is now part of the new Active Environments Service.

3.2 The Nature, Conservation and Volunteer Manager role provides strategic leadership for biodiversity, conservation, volunteering and the management of the Council's parks and open spaces, including Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

3.3 The Ranger Team at Hinchingbrooke Country Park now consists of one Lead Ranger and two Rangers, supported by the Nature, Conservation and Volunteer Manager.

3.4 The Rangers team is now at full capacity and participates in a weekend rota to ensure that both Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Paxton Pits Nature Reserve continue to have a staff presence during weekends and peak visitor periods.

3.5 The team continues to work flexibly across operational, visitor, conservation, and estate management functions, supported by an active volunteer programme.

4. VOLUNTEERS

4.1 Volunteer support remains an integral part of the successful management of Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

4.2 Volunteers continue to support Rangers throughout the week with practical conservation, habitat management, visitor infrastructure improvements, and estate maintenance, significantly increasing the amount of work that can be delivered each year.

4.3 Over the reporting period, the Hinchingbrooke Country Park volunteers, and Green Team collectively contributed 501 day's work of work to support the park.



Volunteer work party planting woodland bulbs as part of the Ops Yard mitigation works.



Volunteers supporting the Rangers with key habitat works.

4.4 The service continues to explore opportunities to further develop volunteering as part of the wider Active Environments Service.

5. PROGRESS AGAINST MANAGEMENT PLAN

5.1 Delivery of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Management Plan has continued throughout the reporting period despite resources being focused on preparing for the major Improvement Project.

Habitat Management

5.2 Routine habitat management has continued across the park to maintain biodiversity and visitor access.

Highlights include:

- August:
  - Butterfly surveys carried out by volunteers
  - Successful switch of Rangers based at Paxton to join team at Hinchingbrooke.
  - Trail cameras have been positioned in the wildlife wood, and a high diversity of species have been recorded.
  - Meadow management, footpath cutting back.

- September:
  - Cut balancing ponds back.
  - Successfully recruited for a new BNG ranger role
  - Improved social media presence – wildlife focus.

- October:
  - Cut back the ‘snake pit’ to maintain habitat for reptiles.
  - Replacing post and rail fencing down by The Wash pond to continue to use site for educational events
  - Orchard hedge has begun to be cut, and pruning can begin once colder weather hits.

- Lots of understorey planting has taken place in areas of the woodland to promote better flora diversity.
- Support and work by volunteers to create resources for the Paxton Halloween event – this proved to be a success and was well received by local residents.

These works contribute towards the ongoing objectives within the Country Park Management Plan and Green Flag Award standards.



Volunteers supporting with key habitat works



Volunteers supporting with seasonal Orchard works.

6. VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

6.1 The Ranger Team has continued to support delivery of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Improvement Project whilst ensuring the park remains open and welcoming to visitors.

Key achievements include:

- Supporting the Visitor Experience and Commercial teams with preparation of the temporary "Nestbox" café area.
- Supporting the Aqua Park operation and ensuring that ecological and biosecurity measure were in place to limit any impact on the environment.
- Managing and maintaining footpaths and regrowth along edges around the Park for the increased footfall over summer.
- Removal of old post and rail fencing down by The Wash pond and replacement with new materials. This will ensure it can be used in the future for other educational events.
- Maintenance of benches around park to prevent plants growing up underneath.
- Watering of memorial trees on site during drought.

The Ranger Team continues to work closely with project managers and contractors to minimise disruption to visitors while protecting the park's ecological value throughout the construction phase.

7. RANGER LED EVENTS

7.1 Over the summer, the Rangers and Events team delivered a series eight bat education and detection events at Hinchingbrooke Country Park. This was double the number of events that were delivered last year. These events were supported by the Friends of Hinchingbrooke Country Park, who funded the purchase of a further six bat detectors to allow us to increase the capacity of these events.

7.2 The events were able to engage with over 200 residents over the summer. In addition, the events made a surplus of income which can be reinvested in future events at the park, which was made possible by collaborating with the cafe team, who provided a food and beverage offer for the events.

7.3 The events were well received by those who attended them and the joint approach led to a series of series of successful events.

8. OPERATIONS YARD PROGRESS

8.1 The boundary fencing is now complete, with installation of the gate between the two yards remaining outstanding. The yard extension to accommodate the water tower has also been completed. The proposed canopy is no longer being pursued; marquee options are being explored, with careful consideration given to their appearance and visibility from outside the yard.

8.2 Environmental mitigation works have begun in the adjoining woodland. Areas affected by soil compaction from machinery have been air-spaded, and a 5 cm layer of woodchip is being applied to support soil recovery. Bulbs have been purchased and planted. A grass seed mix selected by Sam James has also been purchased, with sowing planned once the woodchip has decomposed sufficiently.

Completion of the habitat mound is awaiting suitable fine topsoil, expected to become available during the car park works. One further tree is proposed for

removal to improve ground-level light conditions and support the establishment of the grass seed, shrubs, and additional trees.

9. WHAT'S NEXT

9.1 During the next reporting period the Ranger Team will focus on:

- Winter bird surveys scheduled in throughout the winter.
- Felling in plantation woodland area as part of the ongoing HMP rotational cycles.
- Footpath repairs
- Glade creation in woodlands
- Creating invertebrate habitat on wet meadows
- Building and planting stock of black poplar & wild service

10. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

10.1 No alternative options have been considered as this report is provided for information only. The report updates the Joint Advisory Group on operational activity, progress against the Management Plan and planned future work.

11. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

11.1 Following consideration by the Joint Advisory Group, the Ranger Team will continue delivery of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Management Plan and Improvement Programme. Progress will be reported through future Joint Advisory Group meetings.

12. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

12.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

This report supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan by:

- **Improving quality of life for local people** through the continued management of a safe, accessible, and high-quality country park for recreation, health, and wellbeing.
- **Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations** through habitat management, biodiversity enhancement, volunteering, environmental education, and sustainable land management.
- **Doing our core work well** by maintaining park infrastructure, improving visitor facilities, supporting volunteers, and progressing the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Improvement Project.

The report also supports delivery of the Country Park Management Plan and the Council's wider commitments relating to biodiversity, climate resilience, and community engagement.

12.2 Financial Implications

12.2.1 The activities described within this report are being delivered from existing approved revenue and capital budgets.

12.2.2 The operational work of the Ranger Team is funded through existing service budgets. Delivery of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Improvement Project is funded separately through the Council's approved capital programme.

12.2.3 Volunteer support continues to provide significant additional value to the service by assisting with practical conservation work and visitor management activities.

12.2.4 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

12.3 Policy Implications

12.3.1 The report supports delivery of:

- Hinchingbrooke Country Park Management Plan.
- Huntingdonshire Corporate Plan.
- Biodiversity Duty under the Environment Act 2021.
- Green Flag Award management standards.
- Huntingdonshire Parks and Open Spaces management objectives.

12.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

12.4.1 The report is provided for information and does not require the Joint Advisory Group to make any statutory decisions.

12.4.2 Operational management continues to be undertaken in accordance with relevant health and safety legislation, environmental legislation, the Council's policies, and the terms of the lease for Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

12.5 Community Impact

12.5.1 Hinchingbrooke Country Park provides significant benefits for residents and visitors by:

- encouraging physical activity and healthy lifestyles;
- providing access to nature and outdoor recreation;
- supporting volunteering opportunities;
- delivering environmental education;
- providing opportunities for community events and engagement.

12.5.2 The continued management and improvement of the park contributes positively to the wellbeing of local communities.

12.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

12.6.1 The Ranger Team continues to deliver positive environmental outcomes through:

- Woodland management;
- Meadow and Grassland Management;
- Habitat Enhancement;
- Tree Planting;
- Biodiversity Monitoring;
- Sustainable use of timber;
- Volunteer Conservation work.

These activities contribute towards biodiversity recovery, climate resilience, and the Council's environmental objectives.

12.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

12.7.1 There are no adverse equality implications arising from this report. Hinchingbrooke Country Park continues to improve accessibility for visitors through accessible paths, mobility scooter provision, adapted cycling opportunities and inclusive visitor facilities. The Improvement Project will further enhance accessibility across the site.

12.8 Implications on Resources

N/A

12.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

N/A

12.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

N/A

13. RISK MANAGEMENT

N/A

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

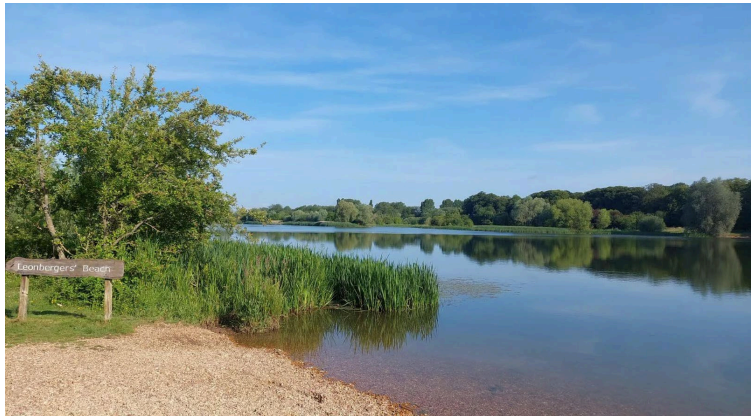
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Document List	Custodian	File Location
None	N/A	N/A

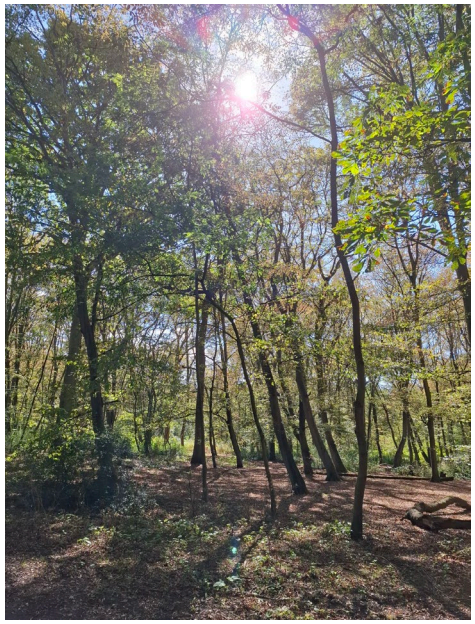
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Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group

19th November 2026







Summary of Rangers Report

Successes

Since the last update, the Park has received its 9th Green Flag Award.

The Park has also retained its Country Park Accreditation





Seasonal habitat work

Cut both balancing ponds and the Snake Pit woodland glade as part of the management plan.

Woodland planting

Planted native bulbs and woodland grasses near the yard to improve the understory.

Rangers and volunteers

Penn has settled in following the site swap with Sam Dobson and is supporting volunteer work parties.

The Volunteers collectively contributed 501 days of work to the Park.



The team continues to support site development works alongside day-to-day park operations.

Summary of Support from the Friends of HCP

Bat detectors

Used for successful Family Bat Events in the new event area during the school holidays.



Equipment for practical work

Supporting the fence renewal around The Wash's pond-dipping platform for educational use. Work has begun.



Coming next

Complete the pond-dipping fence renewal.

Welcome Christian, the new BNG Ranger, in mid-November.

Plan winter bird surveys and the wider survey programme.

Summary of Friends Funded Projects

Project	Current position / next step	Target
Duck nests	Acquire remaining materials, then install when ground conditions are suitable.	Mid-November
Orchard fence repairs	Acquire materials and await suitable ground conditions. Timing aims to minimise disruption to fruit trees.	Mid-December
Otter holt	Reviewed IUCN guidance. Purchasing suitable access pipes for entry to and from the water.	Next fortnight, subject to delivery
Volunteer workwear	Sam is finalising the order. Coordinating workwear across the whole service has taken longer than planned.	Order being finalised

Proposed Survey Schedule

Indicative survey windows from the draft schedule

When	Potential surveys / assessments
Nov–Feb	Winter birds
Mar–Apr	Breeding and migrant birds. Begin water vole surveys.
Apr–Oct	Reedbed condition. Reptiles Apr–Sep.
Apr–Aug	Meadow and woodland condition
Apr–Jun	Great crested newt eDNA. Pond survey timing to confirm.
May–Sep	Bat activity / summer roosts and dragonflies
May–Jun	Orchids: green-winged in May, common spotted and pyramidal in June
Sep–Oct / all year	Autumn migrant birds / otter field signs throughout the year

Provisional: confirm priorities, survey leads and dates. Butterfly and badger survey timing remains to be agreed.



Country Park Construction

- Programme running to schedule
- The Lakeside Path is well underway to completion.
- Lindum are beginning to undertake internal works to the new visitor centre.
- The roof will be completed this month.

Country Park Construction

- **Concept Development**

Recent design work has explored a nature-inspired café concept that draws heavily on the park's landscape, wildlife and conservation values. *Wood finishes, soft greens, blues and earth tones, comfortable lounge seating and feature artwork celebrating local wildlife.*

- **Customer Engagement and Menu Consultation**

To ensure the café offer genuinely reflects visitor expectations, a public consultation is currently live: Hinchingbrooke Country Park Café – Have Your Say ☕ 🌳 – Fill out form









Aqua Park Update



- The Aqua Challenge is a flagship investment that generates new income, enhances visitor experiences, and supports the long-term sustainability of Parks and Open Spaces.
- Leveraging One Leisure's proven track record in delivering high-quality leisure experiences, the Aqua Challenge brought an exciting new attraction to Hinchingbrooke Country Park, returning Summer 2027.
- The Aqua park opened on 18th July 2026 and operated until 6th September 2026 and will reopen next summer season.







Aqua Park Update

Naming of the Aqua Park

Following a competition for the residents the name of Hinchingbrooke Aqua Challenge was chosen from a total of 132 entries. This allowed the local community to engage with the attraction prior to opening and enabled us to create a marketable brand.

Compliance and Staffing

Prior to opening all compliance documents were in place as well as all staff fully trained and in all operations. Following an Audit by the RLSS the park received a silver accreditation for compliance.

Visitor Numbers and feedback

Hinchingbrooke Aqua Challenge had a total of 3,564 visits throughout the season and received lots of positive feedback from our customers

"We had a great time, and the staff were super helpful"

"Simply amazing and best fun had in ages. Total body work out as a bonus."

"I thought the aqua park was extremely well organised with plenty of friendly staff on hand to assist in and out of the water. It was my 7-year old's first time in open water and a wetsuit - he had a brilliant time. It felt very safe with lots of lifeguards. It's pricey but I felt that was reflected in the quality and was worth it. We will definitely return!"

Summer Bat Evenings

4.77 / 5

Customer feedback rating

8 Event Evenings

204 Attendees

The ‘Friends of HCP’ funded the bat detectors which helped towards the visitors to experience the park’s wildlife.



Total income

£2,710



Reported Surplus

£1,864



Survey Response:
“Please, please continue to organise activities like this, which encourage people to engage with nature.”

Proposed HCP Events 2027/2028

Events and Workshops to be delivered at HCP in 2027/2028:

Adults Woodland Workshops

- A bird box making workshop, including a campfire and F&B offer for participants.

'Wellbeing In the Wild' Guided Walks

- A series of guided Wellbeing Walks with an HDC Ranger, including a campfire and F&B offer.

School Trip Visits

- Schools booking to visit HCP for scheduled nature-based activities such as, 'pond dipping, bug hunting etc. *'Living Things and Habitats'*

Family Forest Fun Days

- Family bookings for activities during half terms such as, bushcraft activities around a campfire, pond dipping, whittling willow into 'journey sticks' etc.

Wildlife & Wild in The Woods

- A sunset guided walk with a Ranger around the park, using thermal cameras to see local wildlife. Wine tasting at the end of the walk.

Bat Evenings

- A presentation educating participants on bats including a guided walk with a bat detector and F&B offer.

Proposed HCP Events 2027/2028

Events and Workshops to be delivered at HCP in 2027/2028:

Trick or Trail (Halloween)

- A self-led trail within the park, foraging for woodland treasures used for arts and crafts within the VC.

Seasonal Wreath Making Workshops

- Autumn and Spring wreath making workshops – encouraging participants to forage for natural items and return to make wreaths. Including a F&B offer.

Woodland Santa Brunch

- Children's breakfast, meeting Santa and his elves in the woods. Including woodland tree craft to take home.

Christmas Market

- A one-day Christmas market within the new conference centre.

A Sparkling Christmas Afternoon Tea

- A Christmas themed, champagne afternoon tea with live carol singing and decorations.

Woodland Santa Paws Experience

- A festive treat for your furry friend! Prebooked dogs can meet Santa, enjoy a photo opportunity, dog agility activities and take a woodland paw print keepsake home.

Summary of Play Survey

- **PLAY SURVEY**

Purpose: To find out what children and families value most about the play areas at Hinchingbrooke Country Park, what improvements they would like to see, and how future play opportunities could be made more inclusive, accessible and enjoyable for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Feedback: Over 130 responses
There is strong support for adventure and climbing play, swings and slides, nature-based activities and more inclusive play opportunities. Respondents highlighted the importance of safe, fenced and dog-free play spaces, alongside shade, seating and good access to facilities such as the café and toilets.



Summary of Visitor Centre Survey

- **CAFÉ SURVEY**

Purpose: As part of the development of the new café at Hinchingbrooke Country Park, a public survey is live currently to gather feedback from existing and potential visitors to help shape the café offerings. The survey has been designed to gather insight into customer preferences, expectations, and purchasing habits, ensuring the future café offer is shaped by the needs of those who use the park.



Feedback: Over 263 responses to date!
Respondents repeatedly referenced:

- Quality food and drink
- Good value for money
- Comfortable indoor and outdoor seating
- A café that complements the natural setting
- A balance between traditional favourites and more contemporary options

What happens next? The feedback will help inform discussions about future developments to enhance the visitor experience at Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

Any Questions?

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HCP Joint Advisory Group – 19/11/2026

Report by: Ben Channon, Finance Business Partner

Lead Cllr: Cllr Julie Kerr
Executive Cllr for Parks &

Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
Brampton	Open	No

HCP Joint Advisory Group Finance Report

Executive Summary

This report provides the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Advisory Group with an overview of the Park's financial performance for the previous reporting period and its current financial position. The report summarises key income and expenditure trends, performance against the approved budget, and any significant variances that may impact the Park's financial sustainability and operational objectives.

	Key Corporate Plan Priorities
1	Improving Quality of Life for Local People
2	Creating a better Huntingdonshire for Future Generations
3	Doing our core work well

	Place Strategy Priorities
1	Protect and enhance our natural environment
2	Support healthy active and connected communities

Report Author(s)

Ben Channon, Finance Business Partner (ben.channon@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this financial report is to provide the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Advisory Group with a clear and accurate overview of the Park's financial performance and position for the reporting period.

1.1 The report also aims to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of public funds and other income sources, while providing assurance that financial resources are being managed effectively to support the delivery of the Park's strategic objectives, visitor services, environmental conservation, and community engagement activities.

2. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

2.1 Financial Implications

See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of 26/27 quarter 2 forecast performance.

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

3.1

Document List	Custodian	File Location
None		

Appendix 1.

	2025/26 Outturn			2026/27 Q1 Forecast		
	Budget	**Forecast**	**Variance**	**Budget**	**Forecast**	**Variance**
	£'000	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management						
Staff	128	137	9	115	143	28
Running Costs	47	58	11	50	36	-14
Income	-14	-39	-25	-192	-83	109
Total	**161**	**156**	**-5**	**-27**	**96**	**123**
Countryside Centre						
Staff	55	12	-43	0	0	0
Running Costs	36	19	-17	34	16	-18
Income	-17	-4	13	-53	-10	43
Total	**74**	**27**	**-47**	**-19**	**6**	**25**
Café						
Staff	159	143	-16	128	135	7
Running Costs	99	131	32	157	135	-22
Income	-201	-314	-113	-340	-241	99
Total	**57**	**-40**	**-97**	**-55**	**29**	**84**
Events						
Staff	105	111	6	76	94	18
Running Costs	0	3	3	0	4	4
Income	-21	-34	-13	-30	-66	-36
Total	**84**	**80**	**-4**	**46**	**32**	**-14**
Aqua Park						
Staff	-	-	-	68	91	23
Running Costs	-	-	-	35	45	10
Income	-	-	-	-212	-45	167
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-109**	**91**	**200**
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	**376**	**223**	**-153**	**-164**	**254**	**418**

2026/27 Variance Explanation:

Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management:

This is impacted by the project, our budget was created on the project being completed towards the start of financial year 26/27, however this has now been delayed, therefore the car park income will be £47k adverse to budget and the existing café refurbishment income will most likely not materialise until 27/28.

Countryside Centre:

Again, the impact of the project delay has impacted the hire of room income within the countryside centre, with an adverse impact to budget of £42k.

Café:

With the introduction of Nest Box within the car park, we are still providing a food & beverage service. This however has led to reduced margins on the food offering, with this being a more ‘grab and go’ offer which increases our wholesale costs. The project delays have impacted February’s forecast considerably with the opening delayed. This has led to adverse variance of £84k.

Aqua Park:

Unknown competition affected income along with additional costs not factored into the business case. Additional staffing costs were necessary to operate the car park and ensure traffic flow through the park while the project is on-going.