

Senior Ranger's Report

March – September 2019

Matthew M^cGettigan

STAFFING

One senior Ranger and 2 Rangers are based at Hinchingsbrooke with each working one weekend in three. The staff member at the nursery has been ill since the end of August so one of the three Hinchingsbrooke Rangers is covering 2 days a week at the nursery which limits how much the three can physically work together as a team

In the café there has been an unusually high turn-over of staff as 3 have left for university and the other supervisor resigned for personal reasons. It has been hard to recruit to the role this year.

The café supervisor has taken additional responsibility for managing events and her café time is being back filled where possible. Some younger staff have been unreliable and inefficient, so we are looking at ways to incentivise young staff to remain hard working, reliable and interested through additional responsibilities.

VOLUNTEERS

Weekly work-parties have continued and numbers seem buoyant. The summer volunteer's thank you evening proved popular with positive feedback written about working as a volunteer. The Green Team volunteers have been off site for the holidays but are expected back in October.

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

Rangers and Volunteers have made good progress on a range of jobs as well as accommodating the visitors during the summer months. Only 2 work-parties were cancelled due to extreme heat. We have received a special recognition for our bio-diversity work through Anglia in Bloom which is recognition for the dedication of the team.

Despite the extremely variable summer weather the following tasks have been successfully completed:

- Install new bins, paid for with a grant obtained by park run.
- Installing an anti-slip surface on the new jetty.
- Maintenance of memorial trees – putting bark chip around base and removal of tight decorations that may damage the trees.
- Bench maintenance – sanding down, re-staining and noting asset detail ready for the introduction of the Alloy monitoring system
- Repainting and re-staining park signage, prior to any development and renewal of interpretation.
- Supporting larger public events (such as the 30th Birthday celebrations).
- Repairs to path surfaces.
- Mowing and brush cutting around paths and park furniture.
- Removal of invasive trees from wildflower meadows.
- Cutting back overgrowing vegetation from paths.
- Cutting wildflower meadows.

We have changed the mowing regime and cut the meadows later to provide better habitat for invertebrates, more time for wildflowers to seed, and a more beautiful visual landscape for visitors.

Looking forward we intend to carry out the following tasks over the winter months

- Continue to cut wildflower meadows and create habitat piles/hibernacula with the arisings.
- Process the wood felled from the Plantation last year for use in Countryside Centre
- Surface the path on the top bridle ride in Bob's Wood to discourage trampling of the area.
- Open glades in woodland to create varied woodland structure and encourage woodland flowers along the ride.
- Fell this year's section of the plantation and create a dead-hedge with the brash to protect the coppice stools and improve rates of regeneration.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

We have continued to work closely with a number of community groups including:

- **Fireflies Forest School** - The Manager is now a committee member of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and is keen to work with the Rangers to vary the provision of Environmental Education at the site.
- **Park Run** – approximately 450 participants each Saturday
- **Huntingdonshire Bee Keepers Association** had a number of organised and spontaneous visitors to the apiary, assisted with school visits in collaboration with the Rangers and hosted the judges for Huntingdon in Bloom.
The honey has all been extracted and is on sale in the café – May is the most popular time for purchases to ward off the effects of hay fever.
- **Leonbergers Club** - Water training has continued throughout the summer.

SATELLITE SITES

- Views Common, Stukeley Meadows and Spring Common are inspected and litter picked weekly.
- Practical work is carried out by rangers and work parties but some of the mowing is undertaken by Grounds Maintenance.
- The hay at Spring Common was again cut by contractors in July as this complies with the requirements of HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) The wildflower meadow areas on these sites are now being cut.

CAFÉ

Over the first two quarters approximately 70% of the budgeted income of £155,000 has been achieved.

Purchased items are now rigorously sourced from two main suppliers with costs being negotiated and monitored. At the end of March it will be possible to identify whether the profit margin has increased based on this huge shift in supplier management.

Staff costs remain one of the key issues in returning greater profits. These are inevitably higher in the summer with more staff being needed on busy days and weekends.

Income across the café counter:

	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 2020
Quarter 1 April - June	£55,681	£45,005	£53,687
Quarter 2 July – September	£52,600	£51,962	£56,149*
Quarter 3 October – December	£33,364	£38,896	
Quarter 4 January - March	£28,249	£43,749	
Total	£169,896	£179,612	£109,836*

▪ to 15/09/2019

New developments:

- Coca Cola provided new drinks fridge, two mobile fridges, merchandising and 10 parasols/stands. This is all free of charge but has improved the look of equipment
- New staff uniform
- Staffing is much tighter with daily judgement of weather/how busy park. Staff are told not to come in or go home if not required.
- Water boiler and washing machine have been replaced
- The café needs repainting– Teresa has negotiated payment of materials by FHCP. The volunteers will help to decorate the café.

EVENTS, ACTIVITIES and PROMOTIONS

- **Father's Day BBQ** – was another sell out with 67 people attending and arevenue of £650. Expenditure on food was £150
- **Robin Hood** –popular despite inclement (wet) weather and with such positive feedback we are repeating it in June 2020 . The interactive trail with Robin Hood characters in the forest was original and successful. We also had archery on the field and various other activities. £600. We arranged an outdoor, evening showing of Disney's Robin Hood
- **30th Birthday** – Activity week at the beginning of August generated publicity for the main celebrations over bank holiday weekend - approx. 3,500 thousand attended.

Temperatures exceeded 30° C so numbers were down compared to Emergency Services Day in 2018 and people didn't stay as long as expected. The event included a variety of demonstrations, stalls and activities.

Rangers and volunteers managed car parking and worked with the hospital to provide overflow facilities. This meant there were no complaints from the local housing estates. Revenue was generated through stalls, advertising and the café

- [Facebook](#) continues to be our most successful form of advertising with a following of 6220 May's count of 5500.
- Google shows 1425 visits to the website in August, of which 1186 asked for directions and 57 phoned

Looking forward:

to build on the success in 2018 Craft Fair in November and Christmas Grotto events in December

As we aim to broaden our appeal and increase income we will pilot:

mindfulness walks throughout September 2019

two Halloween Events for 7 to 12year olds on the evening of October 31st 2019

cycling and walking events throughout October half term

Festival of Happiness and Wellbeing 25 – 27th July 2020

Harvest Festival – a food based in event September 27th 2020

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

- The user demographic remains largely consistent
- Dog's Trust & Hunts Youth Theatre continue to use the CC weekly on two evenings and generate £500.00 per month between them.
- The rest are largely NHS and CCC. We continue to try to encourage new business and alternative users

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
% of bookable time used in the Countryside Centre, based on 1 full time member of staff	119%	126%	155%	135%	74%
Bookings	33	28	36	43	11
Occupancy numbers	620	838	1455	1186	356
Income from room hire	£2,500.00	£2,155.00	£2702.50	£3,088.00	£1,288.75