

# Senior Ranger's Report

March 2020 – September 2020

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## STAFFING

Some of the pressure on the team was relieved as cover was no longer needed at GCN. However, COVID 19 lead to the halting of volunteer workparties which has helped increasing work on the small staff team.

The Park became significantly busier due to the lockdown with additional visitor numbers being driven by pressures on mental health, the need to exercise in a safe and socially distanced way and those who are remote working seeking fresh settings to do this from – particularly in good weather.

This situation was made even more challenging as our attempts to embrace social distancing initially lead to us setting up a rota to have one staff member on site at a time. This reduced our ability to work efficiently and meant some tasks which require more than one staff member for safety reasons, such as chainsaw work, could not be undertaken.

## VOLUNTEERS

When the COVID 19 lockdown was first announced we halted all volunteering.

More recently we have restarted most volunteer roles – this was done in a phased way whereby we invited less vulnerable groups back first allowing us to slowly adapt to new working practices. Workparties have been thoroughly risk assessed and safe working practices put in place to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID 19.

We have not yet welcomed back all SEN volunteers.

The Green Team volunteers have started back week beginning 28th September.

## COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

As described above we have faced huge challenges completing the country park's usual management work. It is a great testament to the whole team that we have been able to complete the following.

During lockdown, the Rangers have been extremely busy due to increase park usage however we were able to Complete the following Tasks:

- Keep up with increased litter and antisocial behaviour.
- Maintain mown amenity grassland areas and mown paths.
- Install the first layer of a new path along the Top Ride in Bob's Wood. This ride has become very wet in previous winters so the new path will be of great help.
- Carry out important tree safety works.
- Repairs to potholes around the Main Lake Path.
- Carry out a major "spring clean" tidy up and re-organise of the yard and workshops.

Since the Volunteer Workparty has returned we have been able to undertake the following tasks:

- Install a new post and rail fence around the area that is becoming part of the yard extension
- Carry out the seasonal wild-flower meadow cut. - This is ongoing but due to favourable weather is ahead of schedule and producing a good result.
- Refurbish and repair park furniture and signage.

Looking Forward we aim to:

- Finish cutting the last meadows.
- Cutting back invasive willows around the Main Lake.
- Cutting reeds in selected areas of the Main Lake.
- Hedge laying round the Christy Drive balancing pond.
- Felling in the New Plantation
- Tree works around the Ornamental Lake

## **COMMUNITY GROUPS**

All community group activities halted due to Lockdown, but many have now resumed with suitable safety procedures

### **Huntingdon Canoe Club**

Activities restarted in line with British Canoeing Guidance.

### **Huntingdonshire Beekeeper's Association**

The viewing gallery refurbishments have been completed but the gallery has remained closed. The grand opening event will be rescheduled at a future date.

## **SATELLITE SITES**

### **Views Common**

The site has been heavily affected by the A14 works and additional work to repair a gas main near the Iron Bridge in Huntingdon. As a result, very little management has taken place.

We have been in discussions with the District's Tree Officer about conserving some Veteran and rare species of Oaks on the site.

### **Stukeley Meadows**

This site has also been affected by increased usage due to COVID 19. We have been assisting with maintaining the closure of the play equipment and with additional litter picking. The "mini meadows" have been cut as part of the usual management of the site.

### **Spring Common**

The meadow has been cut and removed from site. This has included the pictorial meadow area which, although successful was positioned on top of the naturally occurring Cowslips. It remains to be seen whether these will recover in future years.

We are planning to cut back, and stump treat the willow encroachment on site this winter.

### **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE**

The centre reopened for one booking a day using both rooms to allow for social distancing on July 20<sup>th</sup>. Most organisations have now got used to remote meetings, so bookings are significantly reduced.

However, the weekly dog training and Youth Theatre have restarted, Blood Transfusion service are having monthly sessions and a new Jiu Jitsu fitness group has started.

July to March 31<sup>st</sup> bookings predicted £7,000 however there is a provisional new weekly booking worth and additional £1700

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	<b>2020/21</b> March to September
<b>countryside centre bookings</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>countryside centre number of users</b>	<b>7253</b>	<b>11404</b>	<b>12965</b>	<b>12931</b>	<b>620</b>

The member of staff employed within the countryside centre left in July and has not been replaced, so costs have been reduced. The Countryside Manager is currently managing the bookings with the ability to negotiate timings and charges.

### **CAFÉ**

Catering income over the café counter	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 2020	2020 2021
<b>Quarter 1</b> April - June	£55,681	£45,005	£53,687	£18,117 COVID closed until 23/05/2020
<b>Quarter 2</b> July – September	£52,600	£51,962	£64,650	£49,709 20/9/2020
<b>Quarter 3</b> October – December	£33,364	£38,896	£29,348	
<b>Quarter 4</b> January - March	£28,249	£43,749	£23,679 16/03/2020 closed due to COVID	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£169,896</b>	<b>£179,612</b>	<b>£171,364</b> (budget £155,000)	

The café closed its doors on the 16<sup>th</sup> March and reopened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May following the outbreak of COVID-19. Since reopening it has been “grab and go” mainly with only one member of staff and shorter opening hours.

The result of this has been better than could have been imagined. Through selling pre-packaged goods the dates are longer and waste is near zero. Other than making sandwiches there is no food prep, and our percentage of overall profit is now higher at around 68% with staffing costs being at an all-time low.

It is not known how this will change in the winter, as eating ice cream outside is popular in warm weather. Currently considering options for hot take away if the demand is there.

Going forwards, plans for better facility, more like a restaurant are needed as part of the development. In the meantime, looking to change the café into a quality gift sales point, with grab and go options to be sustainable over the development phase and regardless of COVID situation.

## **EVENTS**

What started out as a fully packed events calendar ended up being a blank sheet, we cancelled Robin Hood day, Mother's Day roast, Easter Sunday fun day and the food festival. The grotto will be recreated as a zoom call from Santa, and New Year's Eve party will not occur.

Taking into consideration of all the rules that now surround social distancing and bubbles, we marked 104 squares 4m x 2m for a maximum 6 people. These "boxes" were pre booked and 6 films shown followed by use as a boogie boxes for a 70's 80's night.

These events were welcomed by all who attended adding they felt safe and the event was well organised. The police attended and were also content these were COVID secure

Cinema events £5550 profit

Boogie night £2076 profit

Total £7626

Significant use of Facebook has been the best way to advertise the events, and the statistics show the first post reached 25K- proving how keen people were to get out and about again once lockdown was lifted!

The image shows two screenshots from Facebook. The left screenshot is a comment from a user with a profile picture of a black circle, posted on the page of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. The comment reads: "We came to Moana last weekend and it was lovely. It was such a well-planned and fun event. Thank you so much. I would recommend it to anyone...as long as the sun shines!!" It has 3 likes and was posted 1 hour ago. The right screenshot is a post from the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park page, posted 1 hour ago. The text of the post says: "Really enjoyed this evenings showing of Rocket Man. Very well set out and organised. We will be back next week to watch Grease 😊 Well done and thank you to all who organised it." Below the post is a "Message" button and a prompt to start a private conversation with the page in Messenger. At the bottom of the post are buttons for "Like", "Comment", and "Share".

16 June - 13 July · Last 28 days

39.3K

Post Reach

24.8K

Engagements

3.5K

Link Clicks

### Posts ?

27 posts published in the last 28 days.

#### MOST ENGAGING

#### RECENT

##### MOST ENGAGING POSTS



**Flix & Picnics - Every Saturday**  
16 June

Reach **25.1K**  
Engagements **5K**



**When booking for flix and Picnics**  
12 July

Reach **5.5K**  
Engagements **1.4K**



**Flix & Picnics - Every Saturday**  
17 June

Reach **7.5K**  
Engagements **1.2K**



**We are delighted to...**  
10 July

Reach **4.6K**  
Engagements **759**