

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB on Friday, 15 November 2024.

PRESENT: Councillor M L Beuttell – Chair.
Councillors C Lowe, S L Taylor and D J Shaw.

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor K Billington.

IN ATTENDANCE: .

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

11. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

The Group received and noted the contents of the Head Ranger's report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and a PowerPoint presentation on park activities for the period July to October 2024. In doing so, comment was made as follows:

Staffing

The new staffing structure within the Parks and Countryside Service was discussed, with particular attention drawn to the appointment of two Weekend Wardens which would relieve the requirement of a ranger presence within the park over the weekend. It was also noted that the appointment of a new Commercial Manager had been completed and that the appointment would be from the new year.

Volunteers

Volunteer engagement continued to successful over the period within corporate groups helping to fulfil different tasks.

Park management

Delays had been experienced to planned work due to flooding however the end date would still be achievable. It was clarified that green hay was hay which was immediately baled once cut, then moved to a receptor site where it was spread to dry when it was again

baled. This allowed for seeds, especially native species from the district, to be distributed into new areas. It was noted that the resulting hay was sold to a local farm for use with livestock.

It was reassured that a communications plan was in place to help spread the reasons behind recent tree felling within the park and the positives this would bring to the parks biodiversity. The Panel heard that alongside selling the resulting logs, the timber would also be processed through a sawmill to provide for future park projects.

Satellite Sites

Following a discussion about the internal department restructure and the realignment of Head Ranger's duties, it was agreed that future ranger reports would focus solely on Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

Café

It was reported that a positive season had been completed and that the pizza van had been a worthwhile investment.

Events

The introduction of trail packs at the park had received positive feedback and engagement whilst proving to be profitable for the park. The Wild about Huntingdonshire festival had been postponed due to flooding and adverse weather and was being rearranged for Spring 2025.

The Group heard that there would be a move during the festive season from the previous Santas Grotto to a breakfast event. Ticket sales were positive and this style of event would be easier to manage whilst works to the park and the building were in progress.

12. FINANCE REPORT

The Group received and noted the contents of the Finance report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) for the period July to October 2024. In doing so, comment was made as follows:

The Group heard that there was a forecasted underspend of £77,000 within the budget due to the delays of the park redevelopment. It was advised that the figures would be monitored as the development got underway and re-forecasted as necessary.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Group is due to be held on 25th April 2025 at 10:00am.