

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

Meeting/Date: Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group
DATE. 18th July 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Member
Cllr Julie Kerr

Report by: Acting Head Ranger and Assistant Ranger

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report summarises the winter months, the progress and issues over the period and provides a summary of the future months.

Recommendation:

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

HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

1.1 STAFFING

- Two Rangers and one Assistant Ranger are based at Hinchingsbrooke typically working Mon to Fri.
- One staff member is currently on light duties due to a **non-work**-related injury.
- The Head Ranger has left the council and position is under review.
- Weekends are covered by Weekend Wardens. The site is covered every weekend.
- Work-parties are run regularly with volunteers to support the limited staff.
- The Café and Events Supervisor has left the council as part of the Commercial restructure. Two new roles are currently being advertised with a closing date of 29th July. These are Events Development Manager and Visitor Experience Manager.

1.2 VOLUNTEERS

- Work-parties are continuing to work at full strength, some volunteers have moved on, but their places have been quickly filled.
- SEN volunteer numbers are consistent.

1.3 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

Harvest season has arrived early due to drought conditions during Spring and early Summer. Rangers are engaged in hay meadow management already across the district. Prioritised park furniture maintenance has been completed, and we hope to revisit this after the early hay cut.

- Footpath repairs on grass footpath North of main lake and the path leading to the new plantation
- Tern raft uncovered before tern nesting began
- Wildlife surveys have been carried out including orchid and butterfly surveys. Orchid numbers have suffered this season due to adverse climate conditions and grazing by non-native invasive species.
- Mowing of paths and park started early in the season but has not been needed as much due to drought conditions.
- Due to vandalism, the decking area by café has been restored in a temporary capacity due to the development project.
- Reed cutting to maintain views from bird hides due to new health and safety regulations around working near water. Training has been requested for future years.
- Memorial benches have been installed using a byproduct of milled timber from winter woodland management.
- Repairs of Trolls bridge are underway but have taken longer than planned due to staffing capacity.
- The final GroundWorks GreenSkills project is also due to begin on site Wednesday 9th July. This project aims to create a tree nursery on site.
- New benches and a new fence have been installed.

Looking Forward...

- Complete hay meadow management.
- Completion of repairs to Trolls bridge.
- Installation of interpretation features such as way markers.
- Continuing to install more, new and improved, post and rail fencing to replace the old design which is starting to fail.
- Maintenance of park furniture such as picnic benches
- Starting woodland management works

1.4 COMMUNITY GROUPS

Established groups are all operating well, including weekly Parkrun and monthly Zigzag runners, mountain bike training, and Huntingdon Canoe Club.

1.5 CAFÉ

	2023/24 Outturn			2024/25 Provisional Outturn		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actuals	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Staff	65	114	17	163	139	-24
Running Costs	90	131	41	123	159	36
Income	-170	-228	-45	-191	-296	-105
Total	-15	17	32	95	2	-93

	2023/24 Outturn			2024/25 Outturn		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance
Staff	65	114	17	163	141	-22
Running Costs	90	131	41	123	161	38
Income	-175	-228	-45	-191	-296	-105
Total	-15	17	32	95	6	-89

Compared to the 2023/24 out-turn, the café at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park has delivered another strong year for income generation, exceeding its income target by over £100k. However, this success has been offset by higher-than-expected running costs, which, have resulted in an overall out-turn of £6k – significantly better than the budgeted deficit of £95k.

1.6 EVENTS, ACTIVITIES and PROMOTIONS

May 2025 – July 2025

RAF Wyton 8k	Wednesday 7th May
Hinchingsbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Wednesday 14th May
ZigZag Birthday Run	Sunday 18th May
Camswim English Channel Training Camp	Thursday 22nd to Sunday 25th May (Early Mornings)
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 4th June

Bark In The Park	Saturday 7th June
CANCELLED DUE TO WEATHER	
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 11th June
Hinchingbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Friday 13th June
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 18th June
BRJ Club Run	Saturday 21st June (4.30am to 9.30pm)
Orienteering Training	Wednesday 25th June
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 25th June
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 2nd July
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 9th July
Hinchingbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Week commencing 14th July - Date TBC
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 16th July
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 23rd July
Cambridgeshire Deaf Association BBQ	Monday 28th July
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 30th July
Bear Hunt & Picnic (One Leisure)	Thursday 31st July

1.7 COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

- The business support officer continues to manage the booking process for the countryside centre.
- No bookings are being taken from September in readiness for the expected development works.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/25	2025/26 to date
Bookings	412	42	124	199	118	104	32
Users	12931	1033	3473	6160	3559	4173	
Income	£31,590	£4,572	£14,150	£28,721	£26,500	£35,413.80	£12,873.36