

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

Meeting/Date: Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group
21st November 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Member Cllr Julie Kerr

Report by: Parks & Countryside Development Coordinator and
Commercial Manager

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report summarises the summer and autumn 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 – JULY TO OCTOBER 2025

1.1 STAFFING

- Two Rangers and one Assistant Ranger are based at Hinchingsbrooke.
- One staff member is currently on paternity leave.
- The Head Ranger position is being covered by the Parks & Countryside Delivery Manager while staffing is under review.
- One of the two Weekend Wardens secured a new position as Apprentice Ranger at Paxton Pits. All Rangers and the Delivery Manager are working weekends as part of a rota to help fill the gaps and to ensure that Paxton Pits and Hinchingsbrooke remain staffed at weekends.
- Work-parties are run regularly with volunteers to support contracted staff.
- A new district wide Events Development Manager (Juliette Richards) and a Visitor Experience Manager (Scott Fagg) for Hinchingsbrooke Country Park are now in post.
- The cafe is being supported by a member of staff from One Leisure.

1.2 VOLUNTEERS

- Work-parties are continuing to work at full strength with some new volunteers joining.
- SEN volunteer numbers are consistent.
- The Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park have a new Chairman who is very proactive and is keen to raise the profile of the Friends and support the park.

1.3 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

In July, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park received their Green Flag Award following a mystery shop visit to assess the site. Anglia in Bloom judges also visited the park in July this year and met Rangers and volunteers as well as the Friends group.

Meadow management work started earlier than usual this year due to the drought conditions in Spring and early Summer. Since then, work has continued to install additional benches in the park, replace a large section of fencing along the park boundary and carry out path surfacing repairs. Other projects and tasks include;

- The creation of a tree nursery by the final Groundworks Green Skills project in July. The work party volunteers joined this group to install deer fencing around the outside of the tree nursery. Groundworks are running a community tree planting event on 2nd December.
- Trolls Bridge near the Ornamental Lake has been replaced by a new bridge constructed and installed by Rangers and volunteers.
- Reed management work around the Wildlife Lake has been carried out to ensure the vegetation doesn't overcrowd the lake and that it remains a diverse habitat for dragonflies.

- Wildlife monitoring continued through the summer months including butterfly, reptile and grassland surveys. Winter bird surveys have started this Autumn.
- Orchard management work has been carried out with the help of volunteers.
- Sensory raised beds which were installed earlier in the year were planted up with plants with different smells, textures and colours.
- Log piles have been moved and wood is being processed, some of which is being sold and delivered in tonne bags by the Arb Team. This is generating some income for the park.
- Preparations are now underway to clear the buildings in anticipation of the HCP capital development work to starting. This has been a real team effort with staff and volunteers working hard together to get the site ready.

Looking Forward...

- Continuing to action the demobilisation plan to prepare for the building works on site.
- Tree planting in the tree nursery, filling hedgerow gaps and in Bobs Wood.
- Carrying out the woodland management and routine safety tree work.
- Continuing to install more, new and improved, post and rail fencing to replace the old design which is starting to fail.
- Installation of interpretation features such as way markers.
- Maintenance of park furniture such as picnic benches.

1.4 COMMUNITY GROUPS

Established groups are all operating well, including weekly Parkrun and monthly Zigzag runners, open water swimmers, mountain bike training, and Huntingdon Canoe Club. Fireflies Forest School continues to offer a variety of sessions during term time and in the school holidays.

1.5 CAFÉ

	2023/24 Outturn			2024/25 Outturn			2025/26 YTD Actuals			2025/26 Forecasted Outturn		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Forecast	Variance
Staff	65	114	17	163	141	-22	104	79	-25	179	104	-75
Running Costs	90	131	41	123	161	38	66	89	23	113	142	29
Income	-175	-238	-45	-191	-296	-105	-127	-231	-104	-218	-306	-88
Total	-20	7	13	95	6	-89	43	-63	-106	74	-60	-134

Compared to the 2024/25 out-turn, the café at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park has delivered another strong year for income generation, exceeding its income target by over £100k year to date, forecast is expected to be £88k better than budget due to the opening of a temporary café when the development at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park starts. This has resulted in an overall out-turn of £60k surplus, significantly better than the £74k budget deficit.

1.6 EVENTS, ACTIVITIES and PROMOTIONS

July – October 2025

Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesdays 2 nd , 9 th , 16 th , 23 rd , 30 th July
Back to Wilderness (axe & knife throwing)	Saturday 12 th July
Hinchingbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Week commencing 14 th July
Bartlett Automotive Staff Summer Party	Sunday 27 th July
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 28 th – Wednesday 30 th July
Cambridgeshire Deaf Association BBQ	Monday 28 th July
Bear Hunt & Picnic (One Leisure)	Thursday 31 st July
Wellies in the Woods (Groundworks)	Fridays 1 st , 8 th , 15 th 22 nd and 29 th August
Harvey Robinson Staff Fun Day	Saturday 2 nd August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 4 th – Wednesday 6 th August
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesdays 6 th , 13 th and 20 th August
Bear Hunt & Picnic (One Leisure)	Thursdays 7 th , 14 th , 21 st and 28 th August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 11 th – Wednesday 13 th August
Groundwork Community Engagement	Monday 18 th & Tuesday 19 th August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 18 th – Thursday 21 st August
Grafham Pay & Play	Saturday 23 rd – Wednesday 27 th August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Tuesday 26 th – Thursday 28 th August
Groundwork Community Engagement	Monday 1 st & Wednesday 2 nd September
Wellies in the Woods (Groundworks)	Fridays 5 th , 12 th and 19 th September
Hinchingbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Thursday 11 th September
Back to Wilderness (axe & knife throwing)	Saturday 11 th October
Cambourne Village College Curriculum Extension Days	Tuesday 21 st & Wednesday 22 nd October
RAF Wyton Cross Country League Race	Wednesday 29 th October

1.7 COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

- No bookings have been taken since 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	£15,493