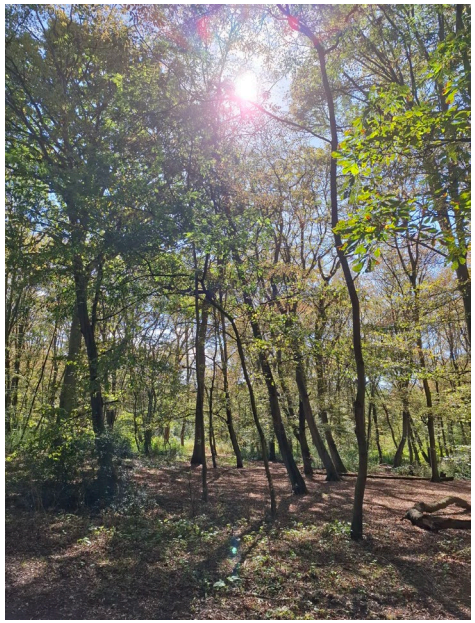
Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group

Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL

19th November 2026







Summary of Rangers Report

Successes

Since the last update, the Park has received its 9th Green Flag Award.

The Park has also retained its Country Park Accreditation





Seasonal habitat work

Cut both balancing ponds and the Snake Pit woodland glade as part of the management plan.

Woodland planting

Planted native bulbs and woodland grasses near the yard to improve the understory.

Rangers and volunteers

Penn has settled in following the site swap with Sam Dobson and is supporting volunteer work parties.

The Volunteers collectively contributed 501 days of work to the Park.



The team continues to support site development works alongside day-to-day park operations.

Summary of Support from the Friends of HCP

Bat detectors
Used for successful Family Bat Events in the new event area during the school holidays.



Equipment for practical work

Supporting the fence renewal around The Wash's pond-dipping platform for educational use. Work has begun.



Coming next

Complete the pond-dipping fence renewal.

Welcome Christian, the new BNG Ranger, in mid-November.

Plan winter bird surveys and the wider survey programme.

Summary of Friends Funded Projects

Project	Current position / next step	Target
Duck nests	Acquire remaining materials, then install when ground conditions are suitable.	Mid-November
Orchard fence repairs	Acquire materials and await suitable ground conditions. Timing aims to minimise disruption to fruit trees.	Mid-December
Otter holt	Reviewed IUCN guidance. Purchasing suitable access pipes for entry to and from the water.	Next fortnight, subject to delivery
Volunteer workwear	Sam is finalising the order. Coordinating workwear across the whole service has taken longer than planned.	Order being finalised

Proposed Survey Schedule

Indicative survey windows from the draft schedule

When	Potential surveys / assessments
Nov–Feb	Winter birds
Mar–Apr	Breeding and migrant birds. Begin water vole surveys.
Apr–Oct	Reedbed condition. Reptiles Apr–Sep.
Apr–Aug	Meadow and woodland condition
Apr–Jun	Great crested newt eDNA. Pond survey timing to confirm.
May–Sep	Bat activity / summer roosts and dragonflies
May–Jun	Orchids: green-winged in May, common spotted and pyramidal in June
Sep–Oct / all year	Autumn migrant birds / otter field signs throughout the year

Provisional: confirm priorities, survey leads and dates. Butterfly and badger survey timing remains to be agreed.



Country Park Construction

- Programme running to schedule
- The Lakeside Path is well underway to completion.
- Lindum are beginning to undertake internal works to the new visitor centre.
- The roof will be completed this month.

Country Park Construction

- **Concept Development**

Recent design work has explored a nature-inspired café concept that draws heavily on the park's landscape, wildlife and conservation values. *Wood finishes, soft greens, blues and earth tones, comfortable lounge seating and feature artwork celebrating local wildlife.*

- **Customer Engagement and Menu Consultation**

To ensure the café offer genuinely reflects visitor expectations, a public consultation is currently live: Hinchingbrooke Country Park Café – Have Your Say ☕ 🌳 – Fill out form









Aqua Park Update

- The Aqua Challenge is a flagship investment that generates new income, enhances visitor experiences, and supports the long-term sustainability of Parks and Open Spaces.
- Leveraging One Leisure's proven track record in delivering high-quality leisure experiences, the Aqua Challenge brought an exciting new attraction to Hinchingbrooke Country Park, returning Summer 2027.
- The Aqua park opened on 18th July 2026 and operated until 6th September 2026 and will reopen next summer season.









Aqua Park Update

Naming of the Aqua Park

Following a competition for the residents the name of Hinchingbrooke Aqua Challenge was chosen from a total of 132 entries. This allowed the local community to engage with the attraction prior to opening and enabled us to create a marketable brand.

Compliance and Staffing

Prior to opening all compliance documents were in place as well as all staff fully trained and in all operations. Following an Audit by the RLSS the park received a silver accreditation for compliance.

Visitor Numbers and feedback

Hinchingbrooke Aqua Challenge had a total of 3,564 visits throughout the season and received lots of positive feedback from our customers

"We had a great time, and the staff were super helpful"

"Simply amazing and best fun had in ages. Total body work out as a bonus."

"I thought the aqua park was extremely well organised with plenty of friendly staff on hand to assist in and out of the water. It was my 7-year old's first time in open water and a wetsuit - he had a brilliant time. It felt very safe with lots of lifeguards. It's pricey but I felt that was reflected in the quality and was worth it. We will definitely return!"

Summer Bat Evenings

4.77 / 5

Customer feedback rating

8 Event Evenings

204 Attendees

The ‘Friends of HCP’ funded the bat detectors which helped towards the visitors to experience the park’s wildlife.



Total income

£2,710

Reported Surplus

£1,864





Survey Response:
“Please, please continue to organise activities like this, which encourage people to engage with nature.”

Proposed HCP Events 2027/2028

Events and Workshops to be delivered at HCP in 2027/2028:

Adults Woodland Workshops

- A bird box making workshop, including a campfire and F&B offer for participants.

‘Wellbeing In the Wild’ Guided Walks

- A series of guided Wellbeing Walks with an HDC Ranger, including a campfire and F&B offer.

School Trip Visits

- Schools booking to visit HCP for scheduled nature-based activities such as, ‘pond dipping, bug hunting etc. *'Living Things and Habitats’*

Family Forest Fun Days

- Family bookings for activities during half terms such as, bushcraft activities around a campfire, pond dipping, whittling willow into ‘journey sticks’ etc.

Wildlife & Wild in The Woods

- A sunset guided walk with a Ranger around the park, using thermal cameras to see local wildlife. Wine tasting at the end of the walk.

Bat Evenings

- A presentation educating participants on bats including a guided walk with a bat detector and F&B offer.

Proposed HCP Events 2027/2028

Events and Workshops to be delivered at HCP in 2027/2028:

Trick or Trail (Halloween)

- A self-led trail within the park, foraging for woodland treasures used for arts and crafts within the VC.

Seasonal Wreath Making Workshops

- Autumn and Spring wreath making workshops – encouraging participants to forage for natural items and return to make wreaths. Including a F&B offer.

Woodland Santa Brunch

- Children's breakfast, meeting Santa and his elves in the woods. Including woodland tree craft to take home.

Christmas Market

- A one-day Christmas market within the new conference centre.

A Sparkling Christmas Afternoon Tea

- A Christmas themed, champagne afternoon tea with live carol singing and decorations.

Woodland Santa Paws Experience

- A festive treat for your furry friend! Prebooked dogs can meet Santa, enjoy a photo opportunity, dog agility activities and take a woodland paw print keepsake home.

Summary of Play Survey

- **PLAY SURVEY**

Purpose: To find out what children and families value most about the play areas at Hinchingbrooke Country Park, what improvements they would like to see, and how future play opportunities could be made more inclusive, accessible and enjoyable for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Feedback: Over 130 responses
There is strong support for adventure and climbing play, swings and slides, nature-based activities and more inclusive play opportunities. Respondents highlighted the importance of safe, fenced and dog-free play spaces, alongside shade, seating and good access to facilities such as the café and toilets.



Summary of Visitor Centre Survey

- **CAFÉ SURVEY**

Purpose: As part of the development of the new café at Hinchingbrooke Country Park, a public survey is live currently to gather feedback from existing and potential visitors to help shape the café offerings. The survey has been designed to gather insight into customer preferences, expectations, and purchasing habits, ensuring the future café offer is shaped by the needs of those who use the park.



Feedback: Over 263 responses to date!
Respondents repeatedly referenced:

- Quality food and drink
- Good value for money
- Comfortable indoor and outdoor seating
- A café that complements the natural setting
- A balance between traditional favourites and more contemporary options

What happens next? The feedback will help inform discussions about future developments to enhance the visitor experience at Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

Any Questions?