

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT LIAISON GROUP held at Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon on Friday, 31 March 2006

PRESENT: Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs J Chandler, J D Fell and County Councillors Mrs E Kadic

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss H Ali, Mrs J Arnold, Mrs C Bulman and Mrs S Martin.

10. MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of the word "Anti" in the heading of Minute No.7 (b) to read "Anti Littering Campaign", the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Liaison Group held on 14th October 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

12. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

In receiving and noting the contents of the Senior Ranger's report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) comment was made as follows:-

(a) Volunteers and Staffing

Members were pleased to note the contribution that continued to be made by volunteers, a number of whom had registered disabilities.

(b) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period October 2005 – March 2006, together with the income generated were presented. Members were pleased to note that the number of users were of a similar level to those of the previous year and that bookings for the Centre over the summer period were currently being made by a number of local schools.

(c) Cafe

Members were pleased to note the continued success of the café over the winter period.

Further to Minute No.7(c), Members were informed that the

initial architectural plans for the extension of the café had not been appropriate. Subsequently, members of paid staff and volunteers had been invited to submit their own ideas which would be presented to the District Council Architect in due course. Having noted that the cost of the extension was likely to be in the region of £150,000 and would need to be funded from an MTP bid, Members supported the conclusions that an extension to the rear of the premises with a slight extension at the front would be the more suitable option.

The Senior Ranger reported on the potential to generate additional income through the sale of ice cream from an automated machine. Members noted that the purchase of an ice cream machine would offer a number of benefits and having been acquainted with the advantages of purchasing a machine outright as opposed to entering into a leasing arrangement, it was

RESOLVED

that the Senior Ranger be authorised to secure the purchase of an ice cream machine for the café at a estimated cost of £5,000.

(d) Events and Activities

The Senior Ranger presented the Group with details of the events and activities at the Centre over the autumn/winter period. Members were pleased to note the success of the Boxing Day walk and noted that due to popular demand, two Bentwood Furniture courses had been arranged for the forthcoming year.

(e) Wider District

Members noted the range of work being undertaken in other parts of the District and in particular, mention was made of the involvement of staff and volunteers in planting trees and shrubs in Coneygear Park with local school children. Furthermore, the Group were informed of the role played by Hinchingsbrooke Country Park staff in the emergency repairs at the Houghton Mill Bridge over the Christmas period.

(f) Park Management

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various work being undertaken at the Country Park which included the annual maintenance programme. Particular mention was made to the "Trolls Bridge" which had been replaced by the Rangers and volunteers, and the repairs to otter holt.

(g) Miscellaneous

Members were informed that the recent publication of an article in the "National Birding" magazine concerning woodpeckers within the Park had generated visits by a number of interested birdwatchers.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to a question concerning the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Members were informed that the organisation was still in existence and would be donating £2,500 towards the forthcoming Literacy Week in May. The Youth Offending Team were continuing to do useful work within the Park as part of their rehabilitation programme.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that the next meeting of the Joint Liaison Group would be held on 13th October 2006.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Ranger, the Countryside Services Manager and all staff and volunteers for their contributions to the management of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

15. SHORT WALK AROUND THE PARK

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Group were acquainted with proposals to encourage pedestrians to access the Park by the footpath through the woodlands as opposed to the access drive. Having acknowledged that this would form a long term project, and that there would be a number of changes within the next 12 months, Members noted that the plans would provide benefits from a health and safety perspective, whilst also serving an educational purpose.

Following on from the discussion, the Senior Ranger led Members on a short walk around the Park to visit the café and to view the proposals for the new woodlands entrance route.

Chairman