

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP 25TH March 2011

**SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT
September 2010 to March 2011**

STAFFING

Future Jobs Fund employees finished last week. There are currently no similar schemes but investigation into offering work placements in the café are being made

The Housing Growth funding has finished so Judi is returning to HCP as senior ranger. Pete Hobbs will continue to run all practical teams working at HCP and around the north of the district

Pat has been accepted for voluntary redundancy to help save Countryside costs.

Beth Gordon will have a holding brief whilst the work of Operations is completely reviewed and departments possibly amalgamated

Judi will additionally support the countryside team with reference to budgets, personnel and H&S issues and have a bigger role with business aspects and increasing income whilst minimising costs.

Kirsty Drew will take on the planning aspects of Pat's job and continue to support the Great Fen Project

Paul Claydon is going to move from HCP to Paxton Pits from April onwards as over time they will take on more land responsibility and lose one member of staff. The number of days worked on the Ouse Valley Way will drop from 3 to 2 per week.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers: Sept to March inclusive: 500+

At the moment, each Wednesday we are having 9 volunteers a day

Instead of the traditional but costly bowling, this years volunteers "thank you" day was a games afternoon held at HCP

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Number of Groups/people from beginning to September 2010 end Feb 2011 was as follows:

	Groups	Number of People	Income
01/10/06-28/02/07	132	2544	£12,000
01/10/07-28/02/08	139	3218	£17,000
01/10/08 – 28/02/09	172	3845	£20,300
01/10/09 – 28/02/10	173	3786	£25,000
01/10/10- 28/02/11	136	3307	£20,278

These figures include income from all headings to the countryside centre, room hire, Teas & coffees, equipment hire etc.

These included such groups as: Cambs Advisory Service, Early Years & Childcare, Forensic Science Service, Learning Disability Partnership

We are currently looking to cut costs and overheads but to increase income through additional usage. Any additional hours will be covered by existing Rangers

Publicity has been changed to encourage more family parties and to increase use at weekends.

The decision has been made not to offer any discounts on room hire. Investigations are currently being made to try to secure grants to cover the room hire to allow wildlife groups to still use the facilities

CAFÉ

With careful management the staff rotas have been amended and wages costs are more under control. The income for the whole year is less than expected and this can be directly attributed to the weather and to car parking charges.

3 young people continue to volunteer in the café and we have a regular adult volunteer to help one morning a week. We are looking to increase this.

In accordance with the council aims to cut costs, staff in the café volunteered to drop their hours to 30 per week and to work even more flexibly. This should make a saving of approximately £14,000 but will continue to cover basic opening hours. Additional support at weekends will be provided mainly by Judith.

Following a visit to Brandon Country Park, a small range of sales goods has been purchased to raise income. Initial signs are that visitors have been impressed by the choice of goods. The range will change once patterns of popularity have been established and to reflect the season. At present, no additional display units have been purchased.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

No events brochure has been published for the year 2011. Events run by Rangers will not occur this year, but Rangers will instead support other groups eg Friends groups.

Santa's grotto was extremely popular and very successful with the weather being kind to us. A profit of £600 was made. Talks have been held to establish ways to improve this and make it even better if it is considered worthwhile

A successful "Potato day" was organised by the local self sufficiency group

2 excellent Frostbite races have been hosted

WIDER DISTRICT

Holt Island –the circular part of the boardwalk has been completed, well ahead of expectations. And the section from the entrance to the

loop has been started with much of the funding coming from the FHINR

There is a good possibility that an otter is living on the island. It has been sighted several times by a boat owner, but as yet, not seen by any Rangers

Coneygear Park has suffered from

i) an attempted break in - 2 people were caught and taken to court
ii) the wooden screen of the rangers hut was damaged when a moped was propped against the building and set on fire. The cost of the repairs is £1250

Spring Common- hedgerow along the astro turf play field has been dramatically cut back, early to stop any growth covering the footpath

PARK MANAGEMENT

Tree surveys & associated work

Path repairs around the lake and at the bottom of the wildlife wood

A hedge has been planted along the top of with Wildlife Wood to stop the number of informal paths that were being created. Some 20 volunteers worked for 3 weeks and have used trees from the Nursery to create the screen

To improve the quality of the muddy footpaths in Bobs Wood, a trial has been established using eco grid from Holt Island. This has not incurred any costs.

Bird hide by the wildlife lake has been replaced

Ash and willow regrowth around the lake has been cut

FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

The Christmas Shopping day raised £280

FHCP have agreed to run events on Good Friday and to repeat the Christmas Shopping Fair to raise funds

New interpretation boards have been funded by the Friends

FUTURE BUDGET POSITION

Countryside will need to make a 40% saving over the next three years. This equates to approximately £200,000 in total per year. The proposed cuts are shown below

Year 1, £100,000 2 staff will become redundant and savings will be made to the revenue budget

Year 2, £50,000 It is expected that additional income should be generated to cover this

Year 3 £50,000 Some staff savings will probably need to be made unless additional income can be generated

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