

SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT FOR April 2012 to September 2012

STAFFING

Staffing structure for Greenspaces is still not resolved although progress has been made and suggestions put forward. 1 full-time and 1 part-time appointments to the Green spaces team (replacing staff who have recently moved away.) Countryside has seen no changes.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers: April to Sept inclusive: 900 practical working days at HCP alone including 7 school work experience students, one long term student from Shuttleworth and one from Bournemouth university studying for a degree in applied biology and wildlife conservation.

The café has 2 regular volunteers and DofE students help each Sunday

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Working figures regarding number of groups/people from beginning April to end September 2012 was as follows:

| | Groups | Number of People (includes school children) | Number of schools |
|-----------------------|---------------|---|--------------------------|
| 01/04/07 - 30/09/07 | 181 £20311 | 4334 | 30 £4095 |
| 01/04/08 - 30/09/08 | 197 £20346 | 5679 | 39 £5377 |
| 01/04/09 - 30/09/09 | 188 £17859 | 4690 | 17 £2844 |
| 01/04/10 - 30/09/10 | 187 £16260 | 5107 | 30 £4012 |
| 01/04/11 – 30/09/2011 | 159 £20,258 | 5273 | 23 £4985 |
| 01/04/11 – 30/09/2012 | 120 £17513 | 4747 | 16 £3326 |

These included such groups as: our regular, repeat bookings from Early Years, Cambridge Advisory Service and new users Huntingdonshire Inter faith organisation as well as several private parties.

CAFÉ

With appalling weather between April and June, the cafe income was £10,000 less than the same period last year. The following months have been on a par, but again some days in the summer have been way below expectation, directly attributed to wet weather.

With just 2 permanent staff we then rely on casuals to keep costs down. This can add stress on days of sickness or holidays, and when there are buffets in the countryside centre.

Food prices have risen, yet the amount spent is roughly £2000 lower than this time last year. Roughly equivalent to 33% of the £10,000 as would be expected

Work is currently being undertaken to calculate the value of buffets being provided on site. It may be that a decision is made to stop providing them and outsource on behalf of countryside centre users, as previously happened.

FINANCIAL POSITION

The outturn for last year, and the controllable budget and forecast for the current year are:

| | OUTTURN | BUDGET | FORECAST |
|--|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2012/13 |
| | £000s | £000s | £000s |
| Hinchingbrooke Country Park | | | |
| Staff | 129 | 129 | 132 |
| Running Costs | 34 | 43 | 43 |
| Renewals Fund Contribution | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Income | (32) | (30) | (29) |
| Total Country Park and Management | 141 | 152 | 156 |
| Countryside Centre | | | |
| Staff | 74 | 75 | 75 |
| Running Costs | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| Income | (49) | (47) | (47) |
| Total Countryside Centre | 29 | 35 | 33 |
| Cafe | | | |
| Staff | 53 | 58 | 54 |
| Running Costs | 36 | 36 | 36 |
| Income | (103) | (112) | (100) |
| Total Cafe | (14) | (18) | (10) |
| Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park | 156 | 170 | 185 |

HDC budgets are prepared and monitored on a controllable cost basis. They do not include support costs (for example HR, Payroll, ICT, Finance etc) or capital charges. Last year these amounted to £50k.

Country Park and management income for 2011/12 includes £16k funding from the County Council for volunteer placements, £5k for work on Colne Graveyard, £4k for sales of souvenirs and £3k for commuted sums for maintenance. Sales of souvenirs are forecast to be £2k less in the current year due to the poor weather.

Country Park and management running costs for 2011/12 included a £4k under spend on transport and £2k on site work.

The budgeted surplus for the cafe has proved to be an overly ambitious target. The budgeted surplus has been reduced from £34k to £17k by transfer of savings from elsewhere in the Green Spaces budget. However, in addition to being an attraction to visitors, the surplus still represents a financial contribution to the overall expenditure of the Country Park.

The forecast reduction in the Cafe surplus reflects the impact of the poor weather.

The original objectives of the Countryside Centre were educational research and visits. However, over 60% of the Centre's expenditure is funded through income generation.

Business Rates of £2k each year are no longer payable on the Countryside Centre as it has been taken out of rating.

From 2013/14 onwards HDC's medium term plan assumes a further £50k a year saving on Countryside overall. How and if this should be done is under review.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Sports taster Day – 600 people had a go at many different sports and met people from the local sports clubs. A dry day meant an excellent turn out. The number of activities offered is growing each year. This event led to the busiest day ever in the cafe!
- Following a change of thought, a few additional events have been added compared to last year, and an internally produced activities leaflet has been produced. Free pond dipping and mini-beast hunting events have been very well received at HCP and countryside as a whole is beginning to get back “on the radar” as places to go when families are looking for activities.
- Some 917 pupils attended school visits at HCP organised by Rangers.
- The popular Santa’s Grotto is going to be 23rd December

WIDER DISTRICT

- Less input with the “in bloom” events this year, due to staff cuts and redistributing staff time. However winners within the district in which we have significant involvement included silver for Moor in Bloom, silver gilt St Ives, and gold for both Godmanchester and Huntingdon.
- Stukeley Meadows has had more input this year as we are no longer employing Wayside Wildlife due to budget cuts. The impact has been felt more this year with additional cutting and hedgerow work required.
- Colne graveyard continues to have regular work parties and recently Rangers have met some new volunteers keen to improve interpretation as well as help with mowing.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Tree surveys & associated work
- Very large chestnut tree beside lake felled due to disease. Timber to be used in boiler
- CC has planned a new boiler which hopefully will prove to be more efficient and therefore reduce costs. Funded by HDC environment team who obtained a grant to forward energy savings around the district
- Snake pit has had major work party from MOD working on clearing the area and improving hedgerow
- 2 bike shelters have been erected thanks to a green transport grant

FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- Two more Trampers been purchased with support from Huntingdon Freemans Charity
- Halloween disco on 27th October
- Christmas Shopping day is on November 22nd