

SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT FOR September 2012 to March 2013

STAFFING

- The restructuring of Countryside Services has been completed and staff positions have been formalised.
John Craig is the Green Spaces Manager, Judith Arnold is the Countryside Services Co-ordinator, Peter Hobbs is the Senior Ranger.
Jim Milligan is now a Ranger (as opposed to being assistant ranger.)
Brian Gardner, Coneygear Park Ranger is now based at Hinchbrooke and works at Coneygear as required.

VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteers: September to February inclusive: 844 volunteers providing 5064 man hours of work

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Number of Groups/people from beginning of September 2012 to end February 2013 was as follows including 12 Natural history groups, 3 schools and 22 countryside events or Green-spaces meetings

	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
01/10/11 - 28/02/12	121	3665	£17,623
01/10/12 - 28/02/13	113	3427	£18,510

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

With additional training facilities being created by the County Council, it is a concern that some of our Early Years or CAS bookings will be encouraged to use their own provision. In light of this, we are investing in training more volunteers and in having a qualified member of staff to deliver educational opportunities to older students. Publicity to invite schools and colleges to visit from further afield is currently being worked on. This will hopefully fill gaps if the conference bookings do fall.

CAFÉ

- The adverse weather conditions have reduced the numbers of visitors coming to the park by approx 20,000 in the 4 months between October and February. This has a direct impact on Café takings which are proportionately down. For example, taking for the two week Christmas/New Year period were down by £1250 compared to the previous year.
- Café Supervisor has introduced a medium priced lunch option to try to boost lunch time takings in the cafe
- The number of buffets provided to the countryside centre for the same period this year (25) and last year (24). Prices have been put up to £6.95 per head to reflect rising food costs but careful purchasing keeps costs as low as possible.
- With respect to rising food costs, the café supervisor is continuously monitoring and reviewing all our supplier's prices and adjusting the ordering accordingly in an effort to keep the Café prices competitive and good value for our customers.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Hosted HBKA Honey Show
- Wildlife Trust Plant Sale
- Huntingdon AC held their round of the Frostbite League here attracting 500 runners
- CAMSAR held a search and rescue exercise here
- Santa's Grotto, despite a very wet day, was visited by 192 children
- Hosted an HDC lead Inter-faiths day.
- Hosted several cross country races – Hinchbrooke School, Alconbury High School, Air Cadets.
- Organised and hosted several children's activities - Big Draw, Bear Hunt

WIDER DISTRICT

- Hinchingsbrooke Rangers and Volunteers have helped with the installation of the new hut at Holt Island
- Taken over all practical work at Stukeley Meadows Local Nature Reserve now that we no longer employ a contractor to do this.
- Updated the management plans for Spring Common and Stukeley Meadows.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- New wood burner fired heating system installed in the Countryside Centre
- New Night Storage heaters installed in the Visitor Centre and staffroom
- Started work to improve woodland rides in Bobs Wood and the New Plantation
- Tree safety surveys completed and remedial work well under way (due to much of lakeside being under water for several weeks at a time we haven't been able to do anything in that area!)
- New log storage shed built. Lockable doors made and put on other sheds
- 415 whips (small trees) planted along edge of old llama fields by Wildlife Trust Watch Group.

FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- Held a Halloween Disco in the Countryside Centre. 50 children attended.
- Organised a Christmas Shopping Fair - all stalls were taken.
- Given the Rangers £400 for a bird watching scope and tripod to help with the wetland bird survey they carry out on the Hinchingsbrooke Pits for the BTO

FINANCIAL PARAGRAPHS – HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK MARCH 2013

Financial Information

FINANCIAL POSITION

The controllable budget and forecast for 2012/13 and the budget for 2013/14 are:

	BUDGET 2012/13 £000s	FORECAST 2012/13 £000s	BUDGET 2013/14 £000s
Hinchingsbrooke Country Park			
Staff	129	136	138
Running Costs	43	40	44
Renewals Fund Contribution	10	10	11
Income	(30)	(29)	(31)
Total Country Park and Management	152	157	162
Countryside Centre			
Staff	74	70	75
Running Costs	4	5	5
Income	(49)	(39)	(48)
Total Countryside Centre	29	36	32
Cafe			
Staff	58	53	55
Running Costs	36	34	37
Income	(112)	(88)	(110)
Total Cafe	(18)	(1)	(18)
Total Hinchingsbrooke Country Park	163	192	176

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 £0.05m.

PARK MANAGEMENT

The £9,000 increase in the staff budget for park management comprises pay award £2,500, staff changes set out at the start of this report £3,200, and training £3,300.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The original objectives of the Countryside Centre were educational research and visits. However, over half of the Centre expenditure is funded through income generation. The income budget has proved to be overoptimistic and an £8,000 shortfall has been forecast. Alternative custom is being sought to reduce the shortfall in future years. A trial reduction in core staff hours with additional hours in the summer is expected to generate some compensating savings and this is reflected in the budget for 2013/14.

CAFE

The cafe's trading history since the new premises were opened is shown below.

	Staff	Running	Income	(Surplus)
		Costs		or Deficit
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Budget 2013/14	55	37	(110)	(18)
Forecast 2012/13	53	34	(88)	(1)
Actual 2011/12	53	36	(103)	(14)
Actual 2010/11	77	37	(120)	(6)
Actual 2009/10	78	36	(110)	4

Despite the difficult trading conditions due to very poor weather the latest forecast is for the cafe to break even. The improved cost control introduced in 2011/12 has been sustained through 2012/13 with reduced forecast surplus entirely due to the drop in income. Taking these factors into account it reasonable to forecast an operating surplus for future years.