

SENIOR RANGERS REPORT October 2013 to March 2014

STAFFING

New Café Assistant, Stephanie James started 26th November.

Over the winter continuation training has taken place for Rangers and selected volunteers in use of chainsaws, brush cutters/strimmers. Also a tree surveying course was run for staff from all sites and two Hinchingsbrooke Rangers attended. This ensures we comply with the districts' tree strategy policy.

VOLUNTEERS

October to February inclusive: 585 volunteers providing 3510 hours of work.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The number of bookings this past 6 months has been significantly lower than previously. Our regulars (NHS, mental health trust, Cambridgeshire County Council, Foster adoption etc) continue to come within the 56 business bookings, but we are told they are not coming as frequently in an effort to reduce their costs.

The other 20 groups are natural history / schools and green spaces team meetings etc)

	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
01/03/2013 - 28/03/2014	76	2118	£12,512

CAFÉ

Takings in the Café are always weather dependent. Despite the wettest winter in history making the Park the muddiest I can remember, the Café takings have remained consistently good. This is all credit to the staff who worked very hard to provide a welcoming

atmosphere regardless of the weather, and tirelessly mopped the floor to maintain cleanliness!

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

- Huntingdonshire Athletics Club Frostbite League Race took place in December – 575 runners
- CAMSAR training exercise
- County Inter Schools Cross Country – 300+ runners
- BRJ Athletics Club Frostbite League Race took place in March – 542 runners

Three smaller groups have established themselves, with our help, over the last year to become regular weekend favourites:

- Parkrun – every Saturday morning between 60 and 120 runners take part in a 5km run
- Go Ride – An off shoot from St Ives Cycle Club offering mountain bike training to children. They are at Hinchbrooke fortnightly with up to 30 children.
- Gearo's Soccer School – football training for the under 5's. Here for an hour every Sunday morning with up to 20 little ones

WIDER DISTRICT

Hinchbrooke Rangers have been busy on the other Huntingdon sites that we manage.

- At Spring Common we coppiced 15 small trees from around the pond and removed all the cuttings from the site. This is part of our HLS commitment for Spring Common.
- We carried out some tree safety work at Hartford Wood and cut the hedges alongside the grassy paths at Stukeley Meadows LNR.

The Rangers and Volunteers have supported colleagues at Paxton Pits by

- helping with a drainage problem creating a sump through the filling lots of sand bags!
- we also helped to remove a fence line from one of the meadows.

At Stukely Meadows Railway Cutting,

we helped to remove a hectare of scrub prior to being grazed again this summer. This is part of the HLS plan for that site.

Hinchingbrooke Rangers also attended Hinchingbrooke and St Ivo School careers days.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Completed the tree safety surveys and all the remedial work. (No ash dieback has been observed)
- Planted 820 whips (small trees) in various locations around the Park (all native species and all free packs!)
- Thinned out an area of the New Plantation and planted more hazel there.
- Cut back the larger hawthorns behind the Orchard to let in more light and planted a hedge in there.
- Planted a hedge around the log sheds compound.
- Removed larger scrub and ash regrowth from south of main Lake. Part of our HLS commitment to encourage nightingales and turtle doves to nest.
- Rebuilt 50 metres of path between the Ornamental Lake and Hinchingbrooke School
- Felled 7 medium sized Sycamores to the east of the Oak Plantation and replanted with more Oak to stop the spread of sycamore and to native species management plan . chainsaw course

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

The main fundraising event was the Christmas Fair in November, and time has been spent completing an application form for funding to create a “pagoda.” They have yet to hear whether this has been successful.

Purchases on behalf of Hinchingbrooke have included

- * Light Meters
- * Combined hygrometer/thermometers
- * Compasses
- * Membership of learning outside the classroom

At a recent committee meeting members agreed in principle to fund the equipment to fence around the play equipment to create a dog free area.

FINANCIAL POSITION

		Budget	Forecast	Variation
		2013-14	2013-14	
		£000s	£000s	£000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management				
	Staff	135	134	(1)
	Running Costs	41	40	(1)
	Income	(31)	(28)	3
	Total Country Park and Management	145	146	1
Countryside Centre				
	Staff	75	62	(13)
	Running Costs	5	4	(1)
	Income	(48)	(34)	14
	Total Countryside Centre	32	32	0
Cafe				
	Staff	60	52	(8)
	Running Costs	36	36	0
	Income	(115)	(90)	25
	Total Cafe	(19)	(2)	17
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park		158	176	18

Countryside centre

We are not able to sustain the level of income achieved in the past, but with one member of staff currently part time, this has been offset for this year. Many suggestions from the "Facing the Future" process have offered ideas for this building and several will be further investigated over the coming months.

Café

The income over the counter has remained consistent as previously mentioned. The income from buffets is slightly lower, but the significant difference is that increasing food costs are currently running at 38% compared to usual 33%. A price increase in January has been implemented, and the café supervisor constantly compares suppliers' prices to achieve best value.