

SENIOR RANGERS REPORT October 2014 to March 2015

STAFFING

Café

Steph James, the Café Supervisor, left suddenly mid January for personal reasons. Since then Jamie Gillies the Cafe Assistant has filled the gaps with the help of the Countryside Coordinator. He has subsequently been appointed for as cafe supervisor 18 months, whilst further review of catering within HDC is undertaken.

A new café assistant has been pointed and will hopefully start in April role of Supervisor.

Rangers

Senior Ranger Peter Hobbs, retired at the end of February and at the moment we are not allowed to advertise for a replacement. Also at the end of March Sam James, the temporary Assistant Rangers contract ends.

This means the Ranger team at Hinchingsbrooke is down too two which is unrealistic to carry on running Hinchingsbrooke and the 7 other smaller sites without a change of working practices or more staff.

Countryside Centre

We are still using agency staff to fill the Countryside Centre Assistant's role as there will be surplus admin personnel once the new Operations team has been formalised within EFH.

With less staff, our ability to support as many events without changes to the structure and organisation of Countryside, is compromised. It is recognised that significant changes will need to occur in the next three to four years.

All of the above is unsettling for the whole team. Following immense work on the ZBB review, internal studies and now currently investigation by an external consultant, it is hoped some decisions will be made soon to allow work to continue to the benefit of our users and to once again settle staff and raise morale.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer numbers remain high with 486 volunteer days of work completed in the last 5 months.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The Countryside Centre has had a steady flow of business since October 2014. The billable income for the period between the start of October 2014 and the end of February 2015 is up 18.5% from the corresponding period the previous year. (From £16,464 to £19,518).

We are receiving positive feedback and testimonials and continue to get repeat business. A large proportion of our business comes from the Cambridgeshire County Council and the NHS. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Trust are now our single biggest user. The billable income for March 2015 looks set to double that of last year, but it is important to note that we are currently reliant on a handful of key clients.

CAFÉ

The Café has continued to receive positive comments over the winter months and to have an increased footfall and therefore rise in income over the counter, which is partly weather dependant but also due to the improved customer service provided by the staff. Our home made cakes continue to receive very favourable comments.

This quarter, the amount taken over the counter is £7500 up on take last year in the same period. Over all the income over the counter is £12,000 up for the year to date. Food costs have risen too, but we have recently found a new supplier who has undercut our existing ones, so we are looking to reduce the costs but maintain the quality.

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

- Huntingdon AC held there leg of the Frostbite League series of races at HCP in December. 601 runners took part.
- February half term – Alison did a Bear Hunt which was fully booked with a waiting list. The Bear was found.

WIDER DISTRICT

Since October Hinchingbrooke Rangers have helped with:

- The production of a management for Needingworth Parish Council for their woodland. Also helped them with some tree safety work and habitat enhancement.
- 2 Spring Common work parties.
- Stukeley Meadows work party
- Removal of the barbed fence at Wilhorn Meadow.
- OVW work party

PARK MANAGEMENT

- At the end of October last year HLS grass cutting was completed in the main field and around the lake. 70 bat boxes made as part of our HLS commitment.

- The orchard was pruned.
- 2 new log sheds built and filled with split logs.
- Path from Café to Countryside centre resurfaced.
- Tree safety surveys carried out and 50% of remedial work completed so far.
- 5 large Chestnuts from Chestnut Avenue taken down to 6 metre monolith. All were diseased and potentially dangerous.
- Hazel and willow coppicing and the repair of woven willow fences.
- Tree planting in Oak Plantation and Pine Avenue

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- FHCP held a successful Christmas shopping fair in November.

The Friends have donated a total of £9350 towards the decking and outdoor shelters together with a £21,140 grant from Wren. This is in response to requests from schools as well as general public. The Friends are also buying the outdoor furniture that is needed.

FINANCIAL POSITION

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2014/15

	Budget 2014-15 £000s	Forecast 2014-15 £000s	Variation £000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management			
Staff	179	166	(13)
Running Costs	43	43	0
Income	(67)	(67)	0
Total Country Park and Management	155	142	(13)
Countryside Centre			
Staff	68	59	(9)
Running Costs	6	6	0
Income	(40)	(40)	0
Total Countryside Centre	34	25	(9)
Cafe			
Staff	67	59	(8)
Running Costs	37	37	0
Income	(118)	(104)	14
Total Cafe	(14)	(8)	6
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	175	159	(16)

The reduction in country park management staff costs is due to a ranger seconded three days per week to the nursery.

The reduction in countryside centre staff costs is due to staff vacancies less agency cover.

The reduction in staff costs at the café is due to reduced use of casual staff and a staff vacancy.

The café income is forecasted less than the challenging budget. You may also wish to note that the forecast is £9,000 more than the outturn for 2013/14 when the weather was very wet.