

SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT March to September 2015

STAFFING

Following Pete Hobbs retirement in February, Hinchingsbrooke has been one member of Ranger staff down until September. It has therefore been a tough summer featuring juggling acts with staff rotas, events and activities!

Jim Milligan was appointed Senior Ranger at the end of July and Sam James as Ranger at the beginning of September.

Jim has no staff management experience but plenty of experience with volunteers and knows all the sites, staff and machinery very well.

Sam has been a volunteer and had short term contracts with Countryside over the past 6 years, so together with David, 3 full time staff now undertake all the practical work at HCP, the Commons and various small pocket parks. This is all part of a slimmed down Countryside Service.

The Countryside Centre administration tasks have been covered by temporary agency staff. Lesley the Countryside Centre cleaner has taken the caretaker position at PFH, leaving a vacancy.

The new operational restructure and proposals will be explained separately

VOLUNTEERS

April to August inclusive: 530 volunteers helped with the general up keep, larger practical tasks, school visits and events. Their help has been significant whilst we have been short of Rangers, but several long term volunteers have recently moved from the area.

WIDER DISTRICT

We had to undertake some "LEAN" thinking this year and have undertaken all the essential grass and hedge cutting at Spring Common, Stukeley Meadows and Views Common with the help from other Rangers, but only attended one external event-careers at Wood Green in March.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Maintained the newly erected 320 metres long fence and 7 gates around the play area. We have suffered some vandalism with people using the timber within for camp fires. However, on the whole, we have received many compliments about the dog free area, and most dog owners are respecting it.
- The new shelters and decking now have the benches fixed, and have been very popular throughout the summer.

- Whilst the water levels remain low, repairs have been made to the pond dipping platform on the main lake, and the jetty was destroyed by a storm so that is the next project.
- We did not enter the Country Park category within in Anglia in Bloom this year. However, the Huntingdon committee did bring the judges for a visit and the park was nominated in, and won the “Best Biodiversity” category. This is two years running and reflects the dedication of staff and volunteers.

CAFÉ

The young café team have worked tirelessly during the summer and the feedback from customers has been positive, as they have tried new food items. Income **over the counter** is up £9,000 on this period last year.

Adverts for casual staff are currently open as some of the youngsters left for university or are now seeking full time employment.

As part of the restructure, the supervisor’s role may well be combined with a hospitality role in the Countryside Centre which we believe will improve service efficiency. A new job description and evaluation date will be required.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Staff and volunteers led 23 school groups. A further 23 used the park without Ranger support on the day, but we provided maps, information & instructions or equipment for about 50% of these. In the fine weather, special needs groups visited nearly every day but on the whole we are not involved.

28 Beavers/Brownies/Scouts booked to use the country park this year but many more use the facility without us knowing. This year we did not offer to work with any groups because of the pressures on staff time-we could not work into the evenings and still cover the day time commitments.

As part of the review of countryside, work is occurring to increase occupancy of the Countryside Centre. Research into patterns of use has occurred and these findings are currently being formed into a simplified letting procedure using daily delegate rates. This will necessitate a rewrite of the booking system but long term should maintain our priority customer and minimise the paperwork.

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

- Evening Bat Walk x2
- Hosted Huntingdonshire Sports Festival in partnership with Sports and Active Lifestyles team (a very wet day!)
- Mini-beast Day x2 very popular thanks to facebook!

- Bear hunts x2 very popular thanks to facebook! (And another one booked for November)
- Bell boating session in partnership with Sports and Active Lifestyles team- but this year were not as popular as in previous years
- Den building (a very wet day!)
- Hosted HBKA Honey Show and Wildlife Trust plant sale
- Big Draw - 4th October
- Each Saturday Park Run has approx. 15 runners. "Team Bex" charity run had 500+ attendees and was featured on Anglia News

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

For a variety of personal reasons the majority of the long standing committee resigned at the AGM in May. However we have managed to gather a very enthusiastic team of individuals to form a new committee. They are considering changing the membership renewal date to all the same and offering direct debit payments.

They have created a list of ideas for next year, specifically fund raising to improve a footpath off Christie Drive and to provide more toddler specific play equipment.

They have allocated tasks so responsibility is shared and have attended one event to sell quiz sheets and publicise the Friends as they recognise that they need to be more visible amongst park users. Their next event is the annual Christmas fair (Nov 15th)

FINANCIAL POSITION

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2014/15

	Budget 2015-16	Forecast 2015-16	Variation
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management			
Staff	120	117	(3)
Running Costs	29	43	14
Income	(54)	(70)	(16)
Total Country Park and Management	95	90	(5)
Countryside Centre			
Staff	60	58	(2)
Running Costs	14	6	(8)
Income	(40)	(34)	6
Total Countryside Centre	34	30	(4)
Café			
Staff	62	65	3
Running Costs	44	45	1
Income	(105)	(120)	(15)
Total Cafe	1	(10)	(11)
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	130	110	(20)