

Senior Ranger's report; October 2015 – February 2016

STAFFING

The new ranger team has been operating at full strength since the last committee meeting, with Sam James, the newest team member, showing the professionalism and dedication expected of a HDC ranger (N.B. Sam is currently only contracted until September 2017).

The Countryside Centre (CC) has not had a cleaner since August, resulting in the other CC staff (and occasionally café and ranger staff) fulfilling those duties - some bookings, especially in the evenings, have had to be turned down, or fitted in so that minimal room changes would be required. It is hoped a new cleaning contract will be in place in the near future. The Countryside Service administration tasks continue to be covered by part-time agency staff.

Jamie Gillies, the Café Manager, left at the end of January. His duties have been covered by the café supervisor, countryside manager, and countryside centre staff.

With Jamie leaving, and as part of the ongoing restructure, a new Hospitality Manager position has been created that will cover the running of both the café and Countryside Centre. This position is expected to be filled no later than the start of May.

A new Events and Promotions officer has also been created within the Countryside Services team, and this position has been filled by Alison Gray (who previously held the Countryside Centre co-ordinator position). She has started her new role, but cannot take on all her new responsibilities until the new hospitality manager is appointed and trained up.

VOLUNTEERS

September 2015 – February 2016 (minus a three-week break over the Christmas period), a total of 486 volunteers helped with the practical work at the park, as well as assisting with school events, and corporate and community work days. This includes work carried out by the Green team, from Huntingdon Regional College, as well as two new regular volunteers.

WIDER DISTRICT

On top of HCP volunteer work parties helping at Stukeley Meadows and Spring Common, we have also asked our volunteers to assist with tasks at the Community Nursery, in Godmanchester, as well as at Alconbury tree nursery.

In January, a ranger and a volunteer attended a careers day at St Ivo. School.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Completed all High Level Stewardship (grant funding) works at HCP and Spring Common.
- Started a rebuild on our damaged jetty (not fully completed due to high water levels).
- Undertaken a full tree survey of HCP, and have completed most of the remedial work.
- Ongoing winter management that includes; reed clearance, hedge cutting, hazel coppicing (including producing bean poles and pea sticks for the Community Nursery), log production, footpath repairs.

CAFÉ

The café has been quieter over the winter months, interspersed by busier periods during holiday times. A range of new foods have been trialled, such as a greater variety of quick pick finger foods and various hot meal specials. There have also been themed days to coincide with national celebrations, such as Pancake Day and a week celebrating Chinese New Year, and more of these are planned for the future.

Two new casual staff members have been taken on to replace Anastasia and Tabettha, who have finished college and moved on to pastures new.

Volunteers in the form of Eloise, completing her Duke of Edinburgh bronze award, Charlotte, who is a student at Hinchingsbrooke School, and Kathryn, a special needs adult from HRC (ably assisted by her supervisor) have all been assisting as well.

Finally, the café has been requesting feedback from customers, with a café voucher on offer as part of a prize draw. Lots of positive feedback has been received, and a few requests made, as part of this ongoing survey.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

October 2015 – end February 2016

2848 people have used the CC (compared to 3210 in the same period last year), though numbers of groups has remained similar (this time period - 83 groups, 21 of which were HDC based; last year it was 81 and 17 respectively).

2 schools booked the CC for activities, with a further 2 running their own activities outside after training with a ranger.

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

- Big Draw – 100 people came along, exploring the park and making maps.
- Bear Hunts x2 – these were significantly oversubscribed once advertised on Facebook, 20 young children took part each time.
- Friends of HCP – Willowfest (pre-Christmas) - making wreaths, stars and a Christmas tree, with members of the committee helping.
- Friends of HCP – Christmas Shopping Fair – all the stalls were sold, and it was a fairly busy day. Will look into possibility of hosting at a different time of year, perhaps expanding to outside as well, or in conjunction with other events.
- 2 cross-country events have taken place, one run by Hinchingsbrooke School, the other the local Air Training Corps, with several other races/charity runs planned in the next few months.
- Community pond clearance day – on the Hinchingsbrooke estate, 15 adults and 1 youngster helped clear around the pond and work on the surrounding grassland and hedgerow.
- Environment Agency work party - 10 members from the Peterborough office assisted with planting new conifers along Pine Avenue.

- Following on from the success of the 'Team Bex' charity parkrun, local parents and parkrun marshals have formed 'Junior Team Bex', who make use of the park every week, after school, to take part in fun exercises themed around running (currently 20 children, plus adult supervisors).

REGULAR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

This report, and the last one, have covered some of the one off events and activities that have occurred in the last 12 months. This has not included all the regular events and activities that exist throughout the year, organised by other groups;

- GI Jo Fitness (private business)
- Gearo's Soccer and Football Academy (private business)
- BRJ Run and Tri (sports club)
- Nordic Walking (free sessions on behalf of a private business, Nordic Wellbeing)
- Health Walks (HDC)
- Wet Leo's (social club)
- Parkrun (sports event)
- Go Ride (St Ives cycling club)
- Huntingdon Canoe Club (sports club)
- Carrie Bates Dog Training (private business)
- PEDALS adapted bikes (HDC)
- Huntingdonshire Beekeepers Association

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

With the structural changes to Countryside Services, the interaction between HDC and the Friends has been changed with regard to personnel. The Senior Range at HCP will now sit on the Friends committee, in place of Alison Gray, who will no longer be exclusively based at, or working specifically for, the country park. The Friends were also introduced to Kirsten Drew and Jane Moore, who are job sharing the newly created Volunteer Co-ordinator position, who spoke briefly about their roles, and how they can offer support and advice moving forward.

A discussion was held about trying to acquire grant funding for projects. The Friends are going to look for a volunteer who can help specifically with applying for grants, with some targeted adverts planned for the near future. As part of that, the rangers at HCP will create a list of smaller projects that are relatively easy to cost/implement, which can be looked into by anyone who shows an interest.

The Friends continue to look into ways to generate income such as trialling cards for sale at the park, with pictures of the park on them and emblazoned with the Friends logo.

FINANCIAL POSITION

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2015/16

	Budget	Forecast	Variation
	2015-16	2015-16	
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management			
Staff	120	120	0
Running Costs	29	50	21
Income	(54)	(75)	(21)
Total Country Park and Management	95	95	(0)
Countryside Centre			
Staff	60	56	(4)
Running Costs	14	7	(7)
Income	(40)	(37)	3
Total Countryside Centre	34	26	(8)
Cafe			
Staff	62	70	8
Running Costs	44	45	1
Income	(105)	(120)	(15)
Total Cafe	1	(5)	(6)
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	130	116	(14)