

# Senior Ranger's report

September 2016 – February 2017

## **STAFFING**

Ian Jackson stepped down as Hospitality Manager in December 2016. His duties of managing both the café and Countryside Centre are being covered by the Café Supervisor, Countryside Manager and part-time Administration Assistant.

The full time Ranger, Sam James, left in January. As his contract initially ran until September 2017, his position is currently being filled by two other existing HDC staff members – Jane Moore (Countryside Services Development Officer), who will work 2 days a week, and Amrita Huggins, who has just finished a contract with the Arboriculture Team and will now work at HCP 3 days a week. A full time Ranger position will be advertised later in the year.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Currently each week HCP staff work with the following regular volunteers;

- 6 days' worth of SEND (Special Educational Need and Disability) placements, funded by CCC.
- Regular practical work parties on Wednesdays and Thursdays, averaging 12 volunteers a week. This is a roughly equal mix of retirees, and those working part-time or looking for employment.
- 2 days' a week of a supervised 1:1 placement.

Many of these volunteers will be helping to lead sessions for visiting school groups, and we would not be able to run a number of events throughout the year without their help.

We also host the Green Team twice a week, a SEND group of 10 adults and 2 supervisors from Huntingdonshire Regional College, who work around the district on countryside management and horticultural projects. Their work is invaluable and to a very high standard.

On Sundays, we host groups from the YMCA, with supervisors (who have had tool training at HCP) working with young offenders on tasks allotted to them by the ranger on site – usually 2 supervisors and up to 6 young people.

<http://theymca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Youth-Justice-Service-Reparation-Booklet.pdf>

We also have a number of volunteers who return between their time spent at college/university, and we currently have 3 work experience placements confirmed for the summer, with another 3 pencilled in (usually May – July)

## **WIDER DISTRICT**

Countryside service staff and volunteers are based at key sites but often work jointly on specific tasks. Recently Staff and volunteers spent 2 days at the Community Nursery in Godmanchester, helping to dig up and grade saplings in preparation for the parish tree planting scheme. This was particularly significant this year as the Tree Wardens role is ceasing.

A member of staff from HCP spends part of their week managing other sites in Huntingdon, including Stukeley Meadows, Spring Common and Views Common. They are now spending some of that time working with a supervised SEND group from HRC, completing management tasks on Spring Common.

## **PARK MANAGEMENT**

- Completed all High Level Stewardship (grant funded) works at HCP and Spring Common – grass cutting and removal, scrub clearance, pond restoration works.
- Completed the rebuild on the damaged jetty on the main lake.
- Undertaken a full tree survey of HCP, with the majority of the ensuing safety work carried out. N.B. Storm Doris hit the district in late February, resulting in damage to a number of smaller trees, as well as 3 significantly sized trees - 2 of which were due to have remedial work performed on them as a result of concerns raised during the surveys.
- Completed felling/coppicing and replanting of rotational woodland to produce logs for heating of Countryside Centre.
- Ongoing winter management that includes; reed clearance, hedge cutting and hazel coppicing (including producing bean poles and pea sticks for the Community Nursery). Some woodland products have been sold to schools for use with Forest School activities and den building.

## **CAFÉ**

The drier winter months have again shown how significant the weather is regarding the café income

September 2014-February 2015	£40118
September 2015-February 2016	£47928
September 2016- February 2017	£53,692

Notably the recent Lego event that occurred in half term meant the overall income for the café for the week was £5,797 compared to £3,630 in Feb 2016

(Note these are figures over the counter and do not account for staff time or food costs etc)

## **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE**

This winter we have tried more of the adult craft workshops including willow basket making and creative textiles. People who have attended have commented on the venue and quality of teaching so we will continue to try to increase this type of use

The income for room-hire has remained consistent at £7700 for the same period for the last two years.

However, since Alex has been taking the bookings the income for March this year has risen considerably. It is predicted to be £2,425 compared to March last year £625. We recognise occupancy is key and have recently taken some more unusual bookings including “sound yoga,”

some birthday parties and arranged to work with a local undertaker to host some life celebrations if they have future requests.

## **EVENTS, ACTIVITIES and PROMOTIONS**

### LEGO event

This 3 ½ day event was run in partnership with the Great Fen team (as HDC are project partners). We provided the venue for free & helped with publicity. From the Great Fen team;

*“It was the biggest event that the Great Fen have held and proved to be very popular with 418 people booked in for brick and build sessions over four days. We tried to get as many people to sign in through a free raffle so we think that we have had a total of 1066 people (maybe more) through the doors over the 4 days.*

*We raised £8 from JustGiving texts, £2,667 through the book and build sessions and £764.00 through people viewing the map and doing crafts in our Wildzone. We had lots of press coverage over the week, with Look East, ITV News, Radio Cambs, Cambridge TV and lots of press.”*

<http://www.greatfen.org.uk/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-39029245>

Alongside that, 211 children enjoyed a wildlife map-reading challenge that encouraged families to explore the park– set up by Alison Gray (Events and Promotions), and run over the 3 days by HCP volunteers.

### Santa’s Grotto

Santa’s Grotto made a successful return. 128 children met Father Christmas & enjoyed a festive story. Well over 100 other children joined us during the day for crafts, gift stalls and face painting. Many more followed a festive trail around the site over the Christmas holidays. We will be looking into the possibility of expanding it to two days for 2017

### Volunteer lunch

The Countryside Centre played host to a Christmas soup and sandwich lunch in December, to say thank you to all the volunteers from around the district who give their time to perform so many duties on behalf of HDC’s Countryside Services team. Approximately 90 volunteers attended on the day from all the sites.

From April 2016 to Dec 2016 Countryside Services as a whole benefitted from 2,300 days of work from volunteers. The Rangers could not provide the services that they do without such immense help.

<http://paxton-pits.blogspot.co.uk/2016/12/volunteer-party.html>

### Other news;

- HCP has hosted a number of cross country events, including the yearly Frostbite League race, and a cross country meet organised by RAF Alconbury American High School, with schools from around Europe taking part.

- Huntingdon parkrun have come to an arrangement with Indigo Parking Services, to provide free parking every Saturday morning for those taking part in the race at the park. This has helped to alleviate some of the parking issues experienced in and around Christie Drive.  
<http://www.parkrun.org.uk/huntingdon/news/>
- Willow basket-making workshop – 7 people attended a session using poplar, willow and dogwood cut from the park. 6 more joined a beginners' workshop this year. As they are proving financially successful, a number of extra workshops have been booked for the year.
- Our Facebook page continues to be a great resource for promoting the park, as well as all the events and activities that take place. We currently have over 3700 likes.

<https://www.facebook.com/hinchingbrookecountrypark>

## FINANCIAL POSITION

### HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2016/17

	Budget	Forecast	Variation
	2016-17	2016-17	
	£000s	£000s	£000s
<b>Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and Management</b>			
Staff	129	112	(17)
Running Costs	20	22	2
Income	(54)	(51)	3
<b>Total Country Park and Management</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>(12)</b>
<b>Countryside Centre</b>			
Staff	70	67	(3)
Running Costs	16	14	(2)
Income	(37)	(31)	6
<b>Total Countryside Centre</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Cafe</b>			
Staff	45	64	19
Running Costs	51	55	4
Income	(133)	(141)	(8)
<b>Total Cafe</b>	<b>(37)</b>	<b>(22)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total Hinchingsbrooke Country Park</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>4</b>

## HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET 2016/17 to 2017/18

	Budget 2016-17 £000s	Budget 2017-18 £000s	Variation £000s
<b>Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management</b>			
Staff	129	102	(27)
Running Costs	20	21	1
Income	(54)	(53)	1
<b>Total Country Park and Management</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>(25)</b>
<b>Countryside Centre</b>			
Staff	70	44	(26)
Running Costs	16	17	1
Income	(37)	(41)	(4)
<b>Total Countryside Centre</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>(29)</b>
<b>Cafe</b>			
Staff	45	57	12
Running Costs	51	60	9
Income	(133)	(143)	(10)
<b>Total Cafe</b>	<b>(37)</b>	<b>(26)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>(43)</b>