

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK
JOINT VENTURE BOARD HELD AT THE DISCOVERY CENTRE, GREAT
NOTLEY ON 31 JULY 2013**

Attendance:

Councillors:

John Jowers	- Essex County Council (ECC)
Simon Walsh	- Essex County Council (ECC)
Graham Butland	- Braintree District Council (BDC)
Mrs Wendy Schmitt	- Braintree District Council (BDC)

Officers in attendance:

Steve Bunn	- ECC/Northern Area Manager, Country Parks,
Nick Day	- Braintree District Council/Parks and Open Spaces Manager
Tim Dixon	- ECC/Head of Country Parks
Paul Partridge	- Braintree District Council/Head of Operations
Sophie Champion	- Committee Officer (ECC)

1. Appointment of Chairman

The Committee Officer invited nominations for Chairman of the Board. Councillor Mrs Schmitt proposed Councillor Jowers as Chairman and this nomination was seconded by Councillor Walsh. There were no other nominations and Councillor Jowers was duly elected as Chairman until the next annual meeting in July 2014.

2. Apologies and Substitution Notices

There were no apologies reported.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

5. Site Report from Great Notley Country Park

The Board received and noted the site report January - July 2013 (GTP/03/13) from Steve Bunn, Northern Area Manager Country Parks.

Tim Dixon, Head of Country Parks, introduced the report to the Board and advised that the visitor numbers were doing well this year due to the good weather and were on target for reaching the income target. However it was noted that wet weekends later in the year could be an issue.

It was noted that due to the investment in the play equipment, along with the café and cycle hire, the Country Park had become a destination and visitors were travelling from across the County and London to the Park. The Green Flag status had been awarded for the fifth year.

Activities

There were varied third party enquiries to use the site and a commission to the Country Park was received for these. The cycle hire had also proved popular with access to the Flitch Way from the Country Park.

Café

The catering provider had changed to 'The Wooden Spoon' which was a local family run business with good ideas for promotion. So far the café had received very good feedback. Country Parks received £50,000 from the café at Great Notley Country Park and a further £13,000 for the café at Rayne Station along the Flitch Way.

Maintenance

In the last six months grass cutting had taken place along with hedgerow work and a Hazel Coppice had been planted.

In the overflow car park field trees had been planted to distinguish the parking rows and create some shade in response to feedback which had been received.

Repairs and works on the play trail had also been carried out.

Volunteers

There were two volunteer days a week mainly on the Flitch Way through the 'Friends of the Flitch Way' carrying out various tasks.

Members discussed the following issues:

- A Member commented that the dog fouling campaign carried out in the Braintree District seemed to have been successful.
- The Chairman was pleased to note that the partnership between the County Council and Braintree District Council was working well and was reflected in the success of the Country Park.
- It was noted that on a busy day at the Park there were around 700 cars on-site.
- A question was raised regarding the on-going issue of horse-riders leaving the bridleway and using other parts of the Park. In response it was explained that despite discussions with the local horse-riders this was still an issue, particularly in the winter. Various options for addressing this problem were discussed and it was **Agreed** that ECC and BDC officers would look at possible resolutions for consensual agreement.

6. Sports Update

The Board received report (GTP/04/13) providing an update on the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park. Paul Partridge, Head of Operations, BDC and Nick Day, Parks and Open Spaces Manager, BDC were in attendance for this item.

Progress

On the 1 June 2013 Braintree District Council signed a Service Level Agreement with Braintree Town Football Club (BTFC) Youth Academy to deliver the Football Development Plan. As part of this work a programme of soccer camps were being run which had proved successful to date. The facilities were being promoted on the BTFC website along with other promotional activities.

Budget Update

During the period December 2012 to June 2013 the income was up by 14% on the same period the previous year. The total income for 2012-13 was £44.5k compared with the full operating costs of 49.5k, which was a significant improvement from the previous year and close to breaking even.

Conclusion

Great Notley Football Club remains the single biggest user but they had been unable to commit resources to help deliver the Football Development Plan. There remained difficulties with attracting usage during the day during term-time and BTFC Youth Academy programme will help address this.

BDC's new leisure contract with Fusion was now well established and discussion had commenced with them on the merits of working together. A future discussion would explore opportunities for the AGP and MUGA.

An annual report was submitted to the Football Foundation and showed an upward trend.

During the discussion the following issues were discussed:

- The County Football Association have a standard invite to monthly operational meetings and attend on a quarterly basis and their support is sought and suggested amendments are implemented.
- The hiring of the facilities is managed by BDC, however any walk-in custom is administered by the ECC staff on-site, so for the customer the service is seamless.

It was also noted that the First Great Notley Scouts were looking to have a Scout Hut on the Country Park site with the land being leased to them. However they needed to raise funds to achieve this.

7. Stakeholder Feedback

No issues have been raised by the Stakeholder Groups. It was **Agreed** that this standing agenda item would be removed from future agendas as any feedback

would be picked up through the Flitch Way Liaison Group meeting and would be reported back to the Board as necessary.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was **Agreed** that the next meeting of the Board would be arranged for January 2013.

9. Urgent Business

The Board was invited to discuss and consider options for car parking charges for sports teams hiring the MUGA. Currently each player has to pay car parking charges in addition to hiring the facility. There had been feedback regarding this issue which needed to be addressed. Currently players were required to pay the car parking charges in addition to hire of the facility, however the hire rate had been discounted to compensate for this.

Two options were presented for consideration:

- A 50% discounted car park charge added to the hire charges for long term bookings
- To build the car park charges into the hire charges based on a discounted rate per vehicle per hire session.

There were a number of considerations discussed by the Board including:

- Ensuring that any parking passes issued for the use of the facility could not be used at any other time for free parking at the Country Park.
- The need to keep the hire charges competitive for the area.
- Managing users expectations that parking should be free when a facility has been hired in line with other leisure facilities in the area.

It was **Agreed** that the Board would delegate authority to officers of Essex County Council and Braintree District Council to discuss the options, decide on a mutually acceptable and appropriate solution and provide the Board with an update at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.05pm.

Chairman