

Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board

14:00	Wednesday, 09 January 2013	The Martin Room, Cressing Temple, CM77 8PD
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Quorum: One Member from each Council

Membership

Councillor J Lucas (Chairman),	Essex County Council
Councillor S Walsh	Essex County Council
Councillor G Butland	Braintree District Council
Councillor W Schmitt	Braintree District Council

For information about the meeting please ask for:

Sophie Campion, Committee Officer

Telephone: 01245 430715

Email: sophie.campion@essex.gov.uk



Essex County Council

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Part 1

(During consideration of these items the meeting is likely to be open to the press and public)

		Pages
1	Apologies and Substitution Notices The Committee Officer to report receipt (if any)	
2	Minutes 18 July 2012 To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board held on 18 July 2012.	5 - 10
3	Declarations of Interest To note any declarations of interest to be made by Members	
4	Site Report from the Senior Ranger Great Notley Country Park To receive the site report for July – December 2012 (GTP/01/13) from Steve Bunn, Senior Ranger Great Notley Country Park.	11 - 14
5	Sports Update To receive report (GTP/02/13) from Nick Day, Braintree District Council updating the Board on the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park.	15 - 16
6	Stakeholder Feedback To receive the views and feedback of stakeholders on any of the issues raised.	
7	Date of Next Meeting To agree a date for the next meeting of the Board in July 2013.	
8	Urgent Business To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.	

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an agenda item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 or it being confidential for the purposes of Section 100A(2) of that Act.

In each case, Members are asked to decide whether, in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK
JOINT VENTURE BOARD HELD AT THE VISITOR CENTRE GREAT NOTLEY
COUNTRY PARK ON 18 JULY 2012**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Jeremy Lucas	- Essex County Council (ECC)
Graham Butland	- Braintree District Council
Mrs Wendy Schmitt	- Braintree District Council

Officers in attendance:

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

1. Apologies and Substitution Notices

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simon Walsh, ECC.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor G Butland declared a personal interest in item 5 as a Member of Great Notley Parish Council who contributed to funding the Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-use Games Area.

4. Site Report from the Senior Ranger Great Notley Country Park

The Board received the site report January to June 2012 (GTP/03/12) from Steve Bunn, Senior Ranger Great Notley Country Park. The Board discussed various aspects of the report.

Visitor numbers

Steve Bunn advised the Board that 2011/12 had been a good year with visitor numbers totalling 126,448. This figure was worked out using the car park numbers multiplied by 2.7, however it was believed that the true figure was likely to be much higher. The figures for this year would be worked out in the same way for continuity.

Staff

The staffing was up to six full time members of staff. The business case showed the funding for these posts and the net budget had remained the same. One member of staff from Braintree District Council had retired.

Staff training with the tractor and trailer had also taken place to help with the management of parks.

Events and User Groups

The Board was informed about the events taking place at the Country Park, including the evening events run by The North Essex Astronomy Group.

Services

The conference room bookings had been declining in the last few years and the staff were looking at how this service could be promoted to the private sector. Some of the options included making local businesses aware of the facilities and exploring options such as mum and toddler groups, crèche and fitness groups. Members discussed these options and the advantages of events such as Puddleducks which increase the awareness of the park for young families.

It was also noted that the Park will be receiving two mobility scooters in the near future for use free of charge around the Park.

In response to a question regarding the success of the cycle hire, it was reported that it was available once a week on a week day and at weekends and school holidays, provided by an external organisation. It had been quite quiet this year. However there were organised health rides and last year had been a good year.

Maintenance

The Board was updated on the maintenance which had been undertaken around the Park including three new bridges, fishing platforms and tree surgery.

The maintenance of the play equipment had been brought back in house.

Volunteers

There had been a Duke of Edinburgh volunteer working towards his bronze award, three work experience students from local schools and 37 volunteer days with the Friends of the Flitch Way.

Green Flag

The Park had achieved Green Flag status for the fourth year in a row.

Issues

Two car park machines were stolen at the beginning of the year. New machines with a new system of entering a registration number had been installed.

At the beginning of the year snow had caused access issues resulting in cars parked along the carriageway. The staff had contacted the Police and been told they could put tickets on those cars, however there were issues of staff safety.

The number of visitors was substantially less this year with 23,000 last April and 5,400 this April. The visitor numbers were roughly down by a third. It was hoped that the number of visitors would increase during the school holidays particularly if the weather improved.

A Member asked if there were continuing problems with the horse riders using the Park. In response it was explained that they had been told to keep to the bridleway but they continue to divert from it and during wet weather the damage was particularly bad.

5. Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area

The Board received report GTP/04/12 presented by Nick Day updating Members on the progress and performance with the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) from 1 September 2011 to 30 June 2012 under the management and operation of Braintree District Council (BDC).

NACRO (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) had been engaged to help deliver the objectives of the Sports Development Plan and in addition undertook to engage members of the community to participate in sports activities at the AGP and MUGA.

The Service Level Agreement expired on 30 March 2012 and had been extended for a further 12 months funded by BDC. The report set out the progress to date.

Paul Partridge informed Members that since the report had been written NACRO had notified BDC that the organisation was withdrawing from their work on the Braintree Community Sports Development Braintree District as it been running at a financial loss. A meeting had been requested with NACRO to discuss the future. In response to questions it was explained that the NACRO rely heavily on grants which haven't met the costs. It was suggested by Members that there may be other organisations doing similar work which could be looked at for the future.

Braintree District Council had also worked on raising the profile and public awareness of the facilities, with achievements to date set out in the report. A small grant had also been applied for from the Football Foundation to support other marketing activities.

Income had increased and profiling suggested that by year end it would have risen to £40K with full year operating costs of £50K leaving a £10K short fall which would be absorbed by BDC within existing budget. It was explained that due to the location of the facilities and travel times for schools who could use the facilities meant that increasing usage and income was challenging. The aim was to target local businesses for off-peak periods.

Great Notley Football Club was still the biggest single user, however their participation in the partnership continued to diminish and the Council was not getting sustainable support to take options forward. The Council was persevering with discussions but if that failed would be looking for another partner.

Councillor Butland as a Parish Councillor suggested that there may be opportunities for the Parish Council to assist with taking this forward.

Overall there had been good progress and there was a need for partners to commit on-going resources and time to deliver the objectives of the Football Development Plan. BDC also planned to consider whether there was any merit in having a joined up approach with Fusion, BDC's new leisure operator.

6. Stakeholder Feedback

The Board was informed that the Flitch Way Liaison Group was still meeting and no issues had been raised at the last meeting.

Tim Dixon advised the Board that the catering contractor at the park had given 6 months notice, so there would be a leasing/concession opportunity for the future. There were some interested parties and the team was currently looking at how this could be done in the future.

7. Other Issues

With the agreement of the Chairman two further issues were discussed:

- **Great Notley Scout Group**

Paul Partridge advised the Board that BDC had been approached by Great Notley Scout Group to find land for a permanent home/facility. The land at the back of the AGP which had originally been ear-marked for allotments had been suggested. This would be subject to planning permission from BDC as the landowner. Currently a feasibility study was being put together followed by a business case for a building and small car park with access from the industrial estate. The plan would be to lease the land to the Group and they would manage and provide their own facility. Whilst this would not be income for the Council it would be advantageous to the Park, potentially increasing the use of the facilities and provide the Scout Group with a permanent home.

- **Future expansion of the Park**

Steve Bunn suggested that going forward options for expanding the Park needed to be considered.

- **School Holiday discounts**

There was a proposal to offer 50% discounts for use of the AGP and MUGA during off-peak times 9am-4pm during the school holidays to increase income. The Chairman suggested that this be considered for other groups.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was **Agreed** that the next meeting of the Board would take place on Wednesday 9 January 2012 at 2.00pm at the Visitor Centre, Great Notley Country Park.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.55pm.

Chairman

		AGENDA ITEM 4	
		GTP/01/13	
Meeting:	GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD		
Date:	9 January 2012		
Great Notley Country Park Site Report July - December 2012			
Enquiries to:	Steve Bunn, Senior Ranger, Great Notley Country Park Steve.Bunn@essex.gov.uk		

The latter half of 2012 has proved to be very busy for the team. During the summer holidays, the overflow car park was opened nearly every day due to the large numbers of visitors entering the site. There were over 4000 cars in the overflow car park throughout the summer holidays. At the end of the year, the rangers organised and ran three large events at Cressing Temple. The park budget is on line and we are hoping all income targets will be achieved.

Events and User Groups

In the last six months there have been eleven third party events and activities on the site. The North Essex Astronomy Group, along with Notley staff, are still hosting their monthly meets on site and are becoming popular with the public, especially families. The group's membership numbers are ever increasing due to these events.

There have been a number of sports orientated events on site, including Born to Tri Duathlon cross country runs, organised by athletic organisations, and also monthly orienteering events, organised by Essex Stragglers. The orienteering events ranged from ones for beginners and families and also an evening event for advanced orienteers.

The Greyhound Walks organised their yearly event on site. However, unfortunately this event had to be cancelled due to bad weather but the organisers rescheduled the event for September and the event was a success. The Greyhound Walkers are a regular feature on the park and hold their monthly walks here.

The scouts and guides have visited the park throughout the year and we were even part of the nationwide Scouts Jamboree. The scouts visited us during the Jamboree and completed a task of willow coppiced within the country park. This willow was then used by the scouts to complete another task at Danbury Country Park.

Macmillan held one of their charity events on the site. This was a 5km to 10km walk, the route of which also ventured onto the Flitch Way. Trailnet, the cycle hire facility, held a couple of 'All Ability Bike Days' on the green outside the Discovery Centre. These

events are aimed at encouraging adults and children with varying physical abilities to have a go at cycling using a variety of push bikes and trikes.

The Rayne Festival was held at Rayne Station for its second year and was popular with the locals. There were three differently themed evenings, including a variety of music, sketches, comedy and poetry. There was also a family event day on the Sunday.

Braintree District Council dog wardens organised a free health check day for dogs where owners could bring their pets to the park to get them checked over.

Birthday parties and Puddleducks events are still being delivered at the park.

The rangers ran three large scale events at Cressing Temple: Spooky Fun, Cursed and Cressing Unwrapped. All three events were well attended and well received by the visitors. Cursed was run over four nights in order to increase visitor capacity. Over 3000 visitors attended the event and enjoyed being scared by our team of clowns, zombies and ghouls. Spooky Fun was well attended and maintained its number of visitors from last year. Cressing Unwrapped sold out but was perhaps too busy and will need to be reviewed for next year. One comment from one of our visitors was that their child no longer believed in Father Christmas before the event. However, after attending our event and seeing our Father Christmas, he changed his mind and now believes in Father Christmas again – priceless!

Services

Conference room bookings are still down. This could be due to the lack of facilities our conference room has, including inadequate heating and a temperamental WIFI connection and this will be further investigated. Over the summer there was a photography exhibition in the conference room and also the rangers have run ten birthday parties.

There have been six school and nursery trips to the park which have been run by the Education Team. There has also been a number of independently run school and nursery visits to the park.

Maintenance

Cutting and strimming of the grass has been carried out throughout the park in accordance with the management plan. A mosaic effect has been adopted in order to cut different areas of our meadow to improve the botanical diversity of the site. This involves cutting the areas by using a specialist machine designed for cutting on slopes. The slopes then have to be raked and removed from the site.

A newt survey was carried out over the summer period. The survey was specifically looking for great crested newts, which are present on site. We are still waiting for the full report of this survey. 1500 snakes head fritillary bulbs were planted to improve the visual appearance around the Discovery Centre and also to create an extra nectar source for bees.

The main hay meadow has been cut. This is the first time we have managed to cut the majority of the meadow due to the weather being on our side this year. General site maintenance, including litter picking, fencing repairs and play equipment checks, repairs

and maintenance, have been carried out. Two members of staff have attended a mini digger and side arm flail course which will enable us to carry out a wider variety of maintenance jobs on site and on the Flitch Way. Mowing was carried out along the whole of the Flitch Way and the Black Water Rail Trail in the past few months. This has improved visitor access on both sites.

Volunteers

Over the summer we had two Duke of Edinburgh students completing their bronze and silver awards. They helped us with small tasks and maintenance jobs on weekend mornings. We have also had six HCS students from a variety of local schools completing their two week work experience with us.

Green Flag

We have received the Green Flag award again this year, for the fourth year, and the team are very proud of this achievement.

The Country Park and team have had a good year and are looking forward to 2013.

		AGENDA ITEM 5
		GTP/02/13
Committee:	Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board	
Date:	9 January 2013	
Great Notley Country Park – Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area		
Enquiries to:	Paul Partridge, Head of Operations Email: paul.partridge@braintree.gov.uk Telephone: 01376 552525 ext 3331	

INTRODUCTION

This report provides Members with an update on the progress and performance with the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park from 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012.

At the last meeting of the Board Members were informed that BDC had engaged NACRO, under a Service Level Agreement (SLA), to support the delivery of the objectives in the Football Development Plan.

The SLA with Nacro was due to run until 31 March 2013 but unfortunately they decided to withdraw from participating in the social inclusion work in the Braintree District from 30 September 2012

PROGRESS REPORT

Although the SLA with Nacro was terminated on 30 September they had developed and delivered a number of events over the previous 6 months in support of the objectives within the Football Development Plan which has clearly demonstrated to the Football Foundation and the Football Association that we are delivering the key components of the Plan. Examples include:-

- Users of the facility being selected to take part in the FA Homeless World Cup 2012 starting at Arsenal FC's Emirates stadium in July and ending at the Manchester Utd ground in September 2012.
- A Seven-a-side football tournament held on 31st August involving local youth teams aged 14-16 years and adult team aged 17+ together with on-site promotional activity on Health & Wellbeing issues including Guides to stopping smoking.
- The delivery of a District-wide Summer Event Programme at nine different venues including Gt Notley which hosted a number of "Turn up and play" weekly sessions throughout July & August aimed at both 10-15 years old and 16-19 years old players.

Nacro's input has been invaluable in providing evidence that BDC is delivering the Football Development Plan and their input was received positively by the Football Association and Football Foundation.

To ensure continuity in this area of work BDC has been in discussion with Colchester United Community Sports Trust (CUCST) with a view to engaging them for a twelve month period from January 2013 to help deliver the Football Development Plan. This is timely as CUSCT are in

discussions with Fusion BDC's new Leisure Operator who are keen to develop a collaborative working approach regarding all of BDC leisure facilities

CUCST has produced a draft proposal to deliver the key objectives for the AGP and MUGA. This has been shared with the Football Foundation and a further meeting arranged with CUCST for 9 January 2013 to discuss the feedback.

Work has also continued to increase Great Notley Football Club's engagement as a key partner as they continue to be the largest single user of the facility. CUCST's proposal focuses heavily on working with the 'home team' to continue football and other sports development at a local level

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

Braintree Town Football Club is running a pilot programme with their Youth Academy players with block booking of several off-peak slots throughout the winter period.

Work has continued on raising the profile and public awareness of the facility. Braintree Town Football Club is displaying two advertising banners at their club ground. In addition:

- Further promotion of our – *Pitches 4Play* – brand by the use of P4P "business cards" which are handed out to customers both on site and at Leisure Centres around the District.
- Development of a "Bring your Mates" half-price promotional offer from 27th July to 9th September linked to the Olympic & Paralympics Games and aimed at the difficult to let off-peak time slots – the offer was promoted on site with dedicated posters & flyers and via the Council's web page, intranet, facebook/twitter and at local sports centres and clubs.
- Publicity banners displayed around the facility together with new "conditions of use" notices created as a result of customer feedback seeking clarification on their use of the pitches.

BUDGET UPDATE

Income received over the 6 month period was £17,729 compared to £14,470 for the same period the previous year (an increase of approx 23%).

Profiling the income based on the football season, it is expected that by the year end, it will have risen to £40k, with full year operating costs of £42.5k, which includes Nacro's reduced fee. This is an improved position from that previously reported.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall it is considered that good progress has been made with the facility and this is reflected in increased usage and income, as well as the Football Foundation decision not to have a 'special review' this year following our return of the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Review form.

Discussions will continue with Fusion over the coming year to explore opportunities for developing a collaborative/joined up approach to the future management and operation of the facility in line with our respective Business Plans.

Nick Day
Parks & Open Spaces Manager