

		AGENDA ITEM 5
		GTP/02/12
Meeting:	GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD	
Date:	28 July 2011	
Great Notley Country Park Report April 2011 – December 2011		
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The last nine months have been particularly varied for the team at Great Notley Country Park (GNCP). Visitor numbers are still high, especially during the school holiday periods. Easter was exceptionally busy and on one particular day there were 450 cars parked in the overflow car park, which is our busiest day to date. There has been plenty of change over the past nine months, due to change in staffing and management in the facilities at the park. The staff have at times been stretched due to taking on extra responsibilities, but have continued to provide a high quality service to the people of Essex.

The park was successful in achieving the Green Flag award for the third year running and the team are very proud of achieving this status. The team will be applying again for the award in 2012/2013. Since achieving the award the ranger staff have worked hard to address the judge's comments.

Improvement and maintenance work has included bridge and pathway repairs, removal of old rabbit fencing, tree planting and tree management, hedgerow restoration, the mowing of meadows and banks as well as the day to day site maintenance. The play equipment is now starting to show wear in places and some pieces will be in need of repair and replacement parts over the next 12 months. These repairs will be carried out ready for the new season.

The staffing on site has had a number of changes. Phil McGrath, the Braintree District Council caretaker, left us at the start of the summer holidays. The site staff took over caretaker duties, as well as doing the day to day duties. A business case was produced for the creation of a new post on the establishment. This was successful and we now have a replacement caretaker, Tony Middleditch. Tony is an asset to the team as he has a wide skill set. Pam Winter, Administration Officer, reduced her hours to part time in September. Duncan Fisher, who went on a secondment for twelve months to work in the Natural Environment Team at County Hall, is due back in January 2012. We applied for another ranger post to be created which has been approved. The recruitment

process is under way, so we will hopefully have another member of staff by February 2012.

The country park is still a popular venue for third party events, school groups, birthday parties and conference room bookings. This year third party events have included Race for Life, Alec Hunter Toddler Walk, Greyhound Dog Show, Born 2 Tri Duathalons, Essex Stragglers Orienteering event, Essex Bridleway Association rides, Cross Country Runs and cub outings to name a few. In July BBC Essex visited the site as part of their live radio competition where BBC Essex carried out a live radio treasure hunt by visiting different sites of interest around Essex.

The Great Notley Ranger team have worked closely with the staff at Cressing Temple, organising three significant events over the year, these being Spooky Fun and Cursed during the half term in October and a Christmas event, Cressing Unwrapped on the second weekend in December. All three events were held at Cressing Temple. Spooky Fun attracted around 1200 people over the two days, which was an increase on last year's event. Cursed, our scare event aimed at teenagers and adults, was very successful and attracted over 2500 visitors to the site over two nights. As this year we sold out for Cursed we plan to run the event for four nights next year. Our new Christmas event, Cressing Unwrapped, attracted around 900 people over the weekend. Every one who attended the event had a great time meeting Santa in his sleigh launch pad and seeing the different acts that were on offer.

The park has also worked in partnership with the North Essex Astronomy Group to provide monthly star gazing events at GNCP throughout 2011. The dates for 2012 are already booked and there is a possibility of the BBC joining us for the January event to link in with a live television programme.

Last year the park experienced problems with vandalism and arson. We are pleased to report that instances of vandalism have significantly reduced.

The team has continued its work with the volunteer projects such as Duke of Edinburgh students, HCS and the Friends of the Flitch Way. During the year there have been seven HCS students, which involves a year ten pupil volunteering for a two week period. The park now also offers summer holiday volunteering opportunities to Writtle College students and four students took up placements this summer. One Writtle College student has decided to continue volunteering on Mondays throughout the winter.

The rangers still have a close working relationship with the Friends of the Flitch Way (FOFW) volunteer group and hold work parties every Tuesday and Thursday in winter, and Tuesdays in summer. This year the FOFW have created two Holts at Bannister Green and Stane Street along the Flitch Way and cut back the Dunmow Cutting, which is now probably looking the best it has ever done. The FOFW and some of the rangers attended a Bee Identification day in June held at The Discovery Centre.

The Ranger team will be concentrating on carrying out land management work as per the site management plans over the next 3 months.

