

# Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board

<b>13:30</b>	<b>Wednesday, 01 March 2017</b>	<b>Conference Room, Cressing Temple, CM77 8PD,</b>
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**Quorum: One Member from each Council**

## **Membership**

Councillor K Twitchen  
Councillor S Walsh  
Councillor G Butland  
Councillor W Schmitt

Essex County Council  
Essex County Council (Chairman)  
Braintree District Council  
Braintree District Council (Vice-Chairman)

**For information about the meeting please ask for:**

Sophie Campion, Committee Officer

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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	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> The Committee Officer to report receipt (if any)	
2	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> To note any declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct	
3	<b>Minutes</b> To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board held on 20 July 2016.	5 - 10
4	<b>Site Report</b> To receive the site report (GTP/01/17)	11 - 12
5	<b>Artificial Grass Pitches and Multi-Use Games Area</b> To receive a report (GTP/02/17) and update from Nick Day, Street Scene and Parks Manager, Braintree District Council.	13 - 14
6	<b>Presentation of Great Notley Masterplan Baseline Report and Next Steps</b> To receive report (GTP/03/17) and presentation. <i>Report To Follow</i>	
7	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b> To agree a date for the next meeting of the Board.	
8	<b>Urgent Business</b> 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.

**9**

**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 A MEETING OF THE GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD, DISCOVERY CENTRE, GREAT NOTLEY, WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 2016 AT 10.00AM**

**Present**

**Councillors:**

S Walsh (Chairman)  
G Butland  
W Schmitt

Essex County Council  
Braintree District Council  
Braintree District Council

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The following Officers were present in support of the meeting:

Tim Dixon	Head of Country Parks, Essex County Council
Nick Day	Parks and Open Spaces Manager, Braintree District Council
Paul Frainer	Natural Environment Manger, Essex County Council
Jennie Duffy	Area Manager, Country Parks, Essex County Council
Sophie Campion	Committee Officer

**1. Appointment of Chairman**

The Committee Officer opened the meeting and invited nominations for Chairman of the Board. Councillor Butland proposed Councillor Simon Walsh as Chairman. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Schmitt. There being no other proposals Councillor Walsh was duly elected as Chairman.

**2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

The Chairman invited nominations for a Vice-Chairman of the Board. Councillor Butland proposed Councillor Wendy Schmitt as Vice-Chairman. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Walsh. There being no other proposals Councillor Schmitt was duly elected as Vice-Chairman.

**3. Apologies and Substitution Notices**

The Committee Officer reported apologies for absence from Councillor Kay Twitchen, Paul Partridge, Head of Operations, Braintree District Council and Andy Wright, Corporate Director, Braintree District Council.

The Board wished to pass on its thanks to the Committee Officers who had been supporting the Board on an interim basis over the past few meetings.

**4. Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman declared a personal interest as a Member from the Uttlesford Division under item 8 – Strategic Park Review.

## 5. Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 6. Country Park Site Report

The Committee considered the Site Report (GTP/05/16) presented by Tim Dixon, Head of Country Parks, Essex County Council.

### Staffing

The Board was advised that the senior site ranger was currently on maternity leave and a ranger to cover this period had been appointed and was due to commence in the next two weeks. The Board wished to pass on its congratulations and best wishes to Claire Bunn the senior site ranger on the birth of her baby.

### Changing Places Facility

This new facility comprising of a disabled toilet and changing area complete with hoists is now complete and Members were offered an opportunity to view the facility after the meeting. The official opening was due to take place at the end of July.

### Discovery Cafe

The Café opened in April and had received good feedback so far.

### Car Parking

A software update had been installed and this had improved the system. Future upgrades were likely to include contactless or pay by phone options.

### Maintenance

- Some hedge laying had taken place and more was due to take place later in the year.
- Replacement of some bridges around the park had taken place.
- Most signs around the park had now been repainted.
- Volunteers were helping to clear and replace two fishing swims.
- The play equipment maintenance had been completed in time for the summer holidays.

### Green Flag

The Park had been entered for a Green Flag award after a period of not entering due to the cost involved. Following a question from the Chairman it was confirmed that the cost was £350 plus the time and effort of the staff at the Park to prepare for it.

*[Post Meeting Note: It was confirmed after the meeting that Great Notley Country Park had received Green Flag status and the Members wished to pass on their congratulations to the team on achieving this]*

### Budget Costs

Last year the budget had been subsidising the revenue cost for Sky Ropes. Within the controllable budget there was comfortably a net zero cost, despite a

reducing contribution from Braintree District Council and maternity cover of the ranger post.

#### Potential Investment

- £175k for footpath maintenance from capital money for all Essex County Council Country Parks
- £50k to refresh the play trail

The Head of Country Parks requested support from the Board to pursue these options. Following a question regarding the capital fund programme, it was confirmed that this could be managed as a service.

It was **Agreed** that the Board supported pursuing the options listed above for potential investment at the Park.

#### Aerial Runway

Subject to the 5 year Strategy Plan there was potential to consider the option of an aerial runway at the Park. The cost of this would be around £100k with the potential of £20k a year payback. This idea had been flagged up on the capital programme as it was an obvious next step at the Park following trends and due to Sky Ropes there was the on-site expertise to manage it. The equipment would complement the existing equipment offer at the Park and would be physically the longest aerial runway in the region. However the viability, cost and demand for the equipment would need to be looked at and it would be subject to planning permission. The staff to operate it, the booking system and marketing were already in place due to the current offer at the Park. A business case for feasibility could start to be looked at ahead of the 5 year plan.

Members raised the issue of the current landscape where the aerial runway would go, which included the Bird of Freedom at the top of the hill. It was suggested that this would need to be carefully looked at so the tower for the aerial runway would not obstruct the bird feature. Members considered that the option of an aerial runway was worth investigating and would welcome further information on the viability of the facility to tie in with the 5 year strategy.

It was **Agreed** that the Board welcomed investigation into the feasibility of an aerial runway at the Park.

Councillor Schmitt wished to feedback on a member of the team, Jenny, who had collected saplings for the Park from her on two occasions, had worked really hard and was an asset to the Park. Having been advised that Jenny was currently on sick leave, the Board wished to pass on their best wishes to her.

## **7. All Weather Football Pitches**

The Board received a report (GTP/06/16) and update on the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) from Nick Day, Parks and Open Spaces Manager, Braintree District Council.

There have been 19 sports organisations booking the facilities on a regular basis over the past 6 months. The income received for the year 2015/16 was £43k which was almost a break even position.

Due to the grant funding provided by the Football Foundation in 2009, Braintree District Council was required to fill in an annual Monitoring and Evaluation survey with detailed data by the end of July. This report would be brought to the next meeting of the Board for information.

Braintree District Council has continued to work with Braintree Town Football Academy (BTFA) in providing free coaching for children working towards BTEC Level 3 qualifications in Sports Management, organising Soccability festivals each year aimed at young people from local schools with disabilities and also soccer camps in the school holidays.

For the future it was explained that as the facility is not full size there are some limitations on future development. However having liaised with the Football Association, whilst a full size facility would not be supported at this site, it may be supported on another site in the Braintree area.

In response to Members' questions the following points were made:

- The Monitoring and Evaluation from the Football Foundation would continue for up to 25 years and within the Terms of Deed the facility could be reclaimed if the criteria are not met. However the Council has a good working relationship with the Football Foundation with interaction and feedback and the facility is well used and profitable.
- Concern was raised that if a full size facility were to be sited somewhere else in the District could it affect the usage at Great Notley, but it was considered that whilst this may be the case there was hidden demand around the area.
- With regard to capacity it was reported that the facility was used 90% during peak periods and around 35-40% during off-peak times. The school holidays were fairly well booked out and there needed to be some down time to carry out maintenance of the facility but there was capacity during off-peak times. The BTFA were concentrating on promoting these times.

The Board noted the report.

## **8. Update on Great Notley Country Park Strategic Review**

The Board received a report (GTP/07/16) and update from Paul Frainer, Natural Environment Manager, ECC on the Great Notley Country Park Strategic Review.

It was explained that the purpose of the review was to look at baseline data to produce a strategy vision for the next 15 years. This would take into account new development in the area and planning for the future.

A steering group had been established between Essex County Council, Place Services and Braintree District Council who had held their first meeting in July.

The work streams forming the basis of the project were:

- Physical Constraints
  - Stakeholder Analysis
  - Market Information
  - Operational Analysis
- Page 8 of 14



- Finances
- Options

Collation of data would commence over the autumn once the strategy for stakeholder engagement has been agreed by the respective marketing leads from both BDC and ECC Country Parks. A Member Briefing was then planned for September. The options would then be considered based on the information collected.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The Chairman requested that for Member engagement in September a date be set as soon as possible.
- Members welcomed this review and were keen to see the Country Park promoted as part of a wider offer of leisure facilities in the area. A query was raised regarding options for linking promotion and advertising with other facilities such as the Racecourse at Great Leighs and Braintree Freeport. In response it was advised that there had been some promotion already relating to the Sky Ropes course and it was noted that with new development in the area this was a good time to be proactive with promotion of these facilities.
- The Chairman also asked how bordering Districts such as Uttlesford were being engaged in the project. It was confirmed that from a planning perspective there was cross boundary engagement and it was also acknowledged that there were facilities such as Hatfield Forest in Uttlesford to consider as part of the offer in the wider area.

The Board noted the update and wished the officers well in taking the review forward.

## **9. Update on Proposal for Car Parking Improvements**

The Board received a tabled report (GTP/08/16) and update from Nick Day, Parks and Open Spaces Manager, Braintree District Council on car parking improvements.

A local business, Tamdown Engineering Group, close to the Country Park had been considering the need to relocate due to a lack of parking. However as a way forward the business had offered to fund a re-design of the public car park at the country park and provide an additional 100 spaces. In return for this investment their staff would be permitted to use the car park free of charge.

Planning permission had been granted for a reduced number of 70 parking spaces.

A meeting had been held on 17 June between Essex County Council, Braintree District Council and Tamdown to agree actions for the way forward. Tamdown would be providing method statements for the landscaping works, construction plans and a programme of works. A legal agreement was to be drawn up between Tamdown and the two Councils.

Both Councils were keen to ensure that the needs of the Country Park are not compromised, but it was considered that the improvements would have no overall detrimental effect and would be beneficial for visitors and increase usage of the facility.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- It was confirmed that the decrease to 70 parking spaces was acceptable.
- It was reported that the work was likely to commence in September, following the completed method statements being submitted, and only take a few weeks to complete. The process would be strictly monitored and the Country Park would not take on any risk associated with the project. A quality finished product was expected.
- It was confirmed that the parking spaces used by the staff of Tamdown would be for their cars and not any large company trucks.
- It was clarified that the extra spaces would be for the full use of the Country Park visitors at weekends and there would be no specific reserved spaces during the working week.

The Board noted the report.

#### **10. Date of Next Meeting**

The Board **agreed** that the next meeting be held in early December 2016 to consider the outcomes from the Strategic Park Review. The Committee Officer would schedule a date in consultation with the Members.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11am.

Chairman

	<b>AGENDA ITEM 4</b>
	<b>GTP/01/17</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>1 March 2017</b>
<b>Report:</b>	<b>Country Park Site Report</b>
<b>Enquiries to:</b>	<b>Tim Dixon, Head of Country Parks Essex County Council</b>

### **Site Update February 2017**

We had a successful summer, with August being our busiest month attracting 34,339 visitors. Visitor numbers in general at the park between April and September were slightly higher (106,680) than our 3 year average for the same period (98,589).

The summer tasks were all completed including the meadow cutting, grass mowing, strimming and hedge trimming. Cleaning the building, doing health and safety checks and managing the pitch bookings were also picked up by the team over this period.

The play trail inspection and maintenance procedures have been reviewed and updated over the summer with guidance from a Health and Safety Advisor. Based on his recommendations a new Play Equipment Policy was produced along with a Risk Assessment, Works Log and recording system to ensure we have thorough records. We have decided to have a contractor come in on a monthly basis to do our operational inspections and a further sign has been put up at the far end of the climbing forest to ensure public coming on to the play trail from this access point can see the information. Remedial works have also been carried out on a number of pieces to ensure they comply with relevant standards. Looking into 2017, we will be extending our play trail offer with Timberplay having recently been awarded the tender. Up to three pieces of high quality Richter equipment will be installed, which is of the same material currently in the park. The pieces will add to the exciting combination of equipment already on offer, and broaden the play value of the park.

The car parking system has been working well with much fewer setbacks than it had when it was installed. Harri Ewen has been key to ensuring any faults and issues were dealt with swiftly during the summer while I was settling in as Site manager. We now allow PARC access to the system to input and edit their registration numbers. We are soon to be introducing a contactless function across the pay machines and installing a £1 upgrade to accommodate the new coins coming out in March. We have continued to push our season ticket's this year, with the most recent promotion offering 3 months free to those who haven't had a ticket before. Income from parking reached over £25,000 in July and over £50,000 in August, reflecting the good weather we had over the Summer Holidays.

The 'Outdoor café' ended their contract at the start of October and 'Lily's café' opened in their place with a contract running until March. Rob Holdaway (the new manager) and his team are settling in well and are enjoying working at the park. They have updated their signage to reflect the new brand and sell a range of hot and cold snacks, cakes and ice cream. They have also started selling a small selection of outdoor toys such as balls, kites and Frisbees.

In terms of Marketing, there has been a steady increase in the number of page likes, both on the Great Notley Facebook page and the Sky Ropes page over the past 6 months. The page also shows an increase in reach during the summer peak time, showing good engagement. One of the most successful posts to date featured Sky Ropes mascot Cyril the Squirrel doing a take on the John Lewis Christmas advert. It had a good level of engagement and a reach of 149K people.

Tony, our Caretaker, has returned to work following a period of sickness, alleviating the additional workload from the rest of the team.

We are also looking at a wider upgrade of signage across all of the country parks concentrating on Threshold and entrance signs.

There is some grass/ground erosion around pieces of play equipment and areas that have had heavy footfall. The Rangers will be topping up gravel areas such as the Windpipes and fishing swims during winter and re-seeding areas such as Waterplay in the Spring.

The smaller 'run-off' lake is beginning to look quite overgrown so I will be seeking advice from the Environment Agency about how much of the reed system should be cleared to make sure it is working as an attenuation lake. The Rangers will also be working on clearing areas around the fishing swims.

A member of the public contacted the service about the possibility of planting trees at one of the parks due to a BBC news article reporting that tree planting was at an all-time low. It was decided Gt Notley would be a good park to do this and we have identified areas that can be planted. He will be liaising with the woodland trust initially.

The park has been awarded the Green Flag and will be continuing to work to the standards required to maintain this status year on year.

Steffanie Robertson, Interim Site Manager

		<b>AGENDA ITEM 5</b>
		<b>GTP/02/17</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD</b>	
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>1 March 2017</b>	
<b>Report:</b>	<b>ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCH AND MULTI-USE GAMES AREA</b>	
<b>Enquiries to:</b>	Nick Day, Street Scene & Parks Manager Braintree District Council	

## **SPORTS FACILITIES UPDATE**

This report provides Members with an update on progress and performance with the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park from 1 July 2016 to 31 January 2017.

The main partner organisation using the facilities is Great Notley Youth Football Club, but over the last 7 months a total of 35 different football teams representing 16 sports organisations have used the facility on a regular basis. These include Gt. Notley Youth FC, Braintree Town Youth FC, Silver End Utd FC, Rayne FC and Gt. Leighs Youth FC. This equates to around 1,651 hours of bookings being made either through the football clubs or by casual users of the facility during this period.

Income received so far this financial year comes to £31k. The projected income for the full year is £42k which is in line with the budget figure for 2016/17.

## **EXTERNAL MONITORING OF THE FACILITY**

The annual Monitoring and Evaluation form (a condition of the grant) has been completed and returned to the Football Foundation.

The information required for the survey includes the number, type and size of the organisations using the facility, the number of bookings each one makes over the year and their pattern of use, i.e. peak, off-peak, weekend or week day.

The survey was completed in October 2016 and submitted to the Football Foundation on 1 November and we are currently awaiting their response.

## **FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE**

We have continued to work with Braintree Town Football Academy who are now part of the registered charity, Community Iron (CI), which has been set up to encourage sport and community cohesion across the Braintree District.

CI runs a traditional (free to students) Further Education College programme offering BTEC vocational qualifications in Sports Management. There are sixty 16 -18 year old boys and girls on the programme which lasts 2 years. This is NOT an “elite players only” programme, but is an alternative to more traditional school and college based programmes.

The academic programme receives some Further Education funding and is delivered by an external provider, Virtual Learning UK. Community Iron supervises all the practical work (coaching) associated with the course. This is primarily based around football, and all coaching takes place at The Discovery Centre.

In association with Essex FA, CI also runs 3 Soccability Festivals each year, providing football opportunities for people with disabilities by inviting schools from Essex to send teams to participate in skills sessions and tournaments at The Discovery Centre. Academy coaches and students take an active part in these sessions which have been attended by over 50 students per festival. This has been extended to offer regular weekly disabled sport coaching - initially in Colchester - but with the aim of developing this in Braintree in the future.

CI also continues to run the holiday Soccer Camps weekly during half terms and the Easter and Summer school holidays. Typically 30 children attend from 10am to 3pm each session and they receive mementos and 'challenge' trophies. BDC supplies the pitch and CI supplies the coaches and equipment.

The next event being run by CI at the Country Park is a Schools 6 a-side football competition taking place on Thursday, 2 March 2017, where the winners get a chance to play at Wembley!

CI also provide pre-academy coaching sessions in the evening when local youngsters from any club (or no club) are welcome to come along and get specialist football coaching from CI's Braintree Town Academy coaches. There are 2 sessions held each week: one for 7-11 and one for 12 -15 yr olds.

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Looking ahead over the longer term, we will be carrying out a condition survey of the playing surface of the AGP to ascertain when it will require replacing, as it is nearing its 10 year anniversary and is showing signs of wear and may need replacing sooner than originally expected. A sinking fund is being maintained to pay for this replacement which currently stands at £116k.

The future of the AGP and MUGA and the other sports facilities at the Park are being considered as part of the strategic review in order to inform the future vision for the Country Park over the next 10-15 years, taking into account future growth and development e.g. Garden City Developments and the opportunities (including funding) this might bring.

We are currently in discussion with colleagues in Environment and Leisure over the future management and operation of the sports facilities and how this can be encompassed in the Council's overall Leisure Contract with Fusion Lifestyle, with particular emphasis on how we can make use of an integrated online booking system covering all of the Council's sports facilities.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Members note the report.