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| | | AGENDA ITEM 5 | |
| | | GTP/01/15 | |
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| Meeting: | GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD | | |
| Date: | 23 January 2015 | | |
| Great Notley Country Park Site Report January | | | |
| Enquiries to: | Tim Dixon Head of Country Parks Essex County Council Email :tim.dixon@essex.gov.uk | | |

Country Park activities

A variety of events took place over the summer at Great Notley Country Park including, the Grey Hound Show and parking for the Tour De France.

“Park Run” started over the summer months and has proved to be very successful. On average we welcome around 100 runners per week. Park Run is a voluntary organisation where a group of runners meet every Saturday morning at parks across the country and complete a 5km course. The event is completely free to enter and encourages all ages to join in and run for fun. Park Run has also held a joint event with Witham Running Club. One of the aims is to encourage Park Run runners to join a running club.

The site is becoming very popular with green gym type exercise, such as Boot Camps. We now have three different Boot Camp groups using the site.

Work on the play equipment safety surfaces was started and completed ready for the summer holidays. The new safety surface, Tiger Bark, comprises of a bonded shredded rubber material. It is a cost effective solution due to its durability and low maintenance requirements.

We also had the annual play inspection and the inspector was impressed with the improvements that have made around the play trail and to the individual items of play equipment. However, as the play equipment is now six years old and parts are starting to need to be replaced. One of the poles for one of our largest pieces of play equipment had to be removed and reported to the manufacturers due to rot.

The frontage of the Discovery Centre has been resurfaced ready for the summer period and this was well received by our visitors. The new surface reduces the amount of mud brought into the centre and also aids access to the building for less able visitors. The addition of extra new picnic benches in this area, made by one of

the rangers, was also appreciated by visitors. The two pathways leading up to the Discovery Centre now need to be improved and we are working on this, along with the landscaping of the frontage to improve the overall look of the Discovery Centre.

Further to the new frontage, additional ground works around the Discovery Centre were completed, as new gabions were constructed and installed by the rangers.

We are aiming to award a contract to upgrade a 1000m of footpath within the park. Quotes have been obtained and we will be expecting works to be completed before Easter. A new tractor and flail has been ordered and will be arriving on site early spring 2015. This will assist with on-site and Flitch Way maintenance.

With all the recent rain, the park is already beginning to look rather water logged. The rangers are continuing with further drainage work around the site.

We are looking to recruit a new ranger, as one of our rangers left to take up a new role in Berkshire. There have been 57 applicants for the role and we are hoping to have the new person in post by the end of January.

The park also hosted a New Year's Eve Marathon which started at the Bird of freedom and incorporated the Flitch Way. Over 250 runners entered the race.

This year was the first year there has been a water vole has been seen on the lake. This is a significant sighting, as the water vole is becoming an endangered species in the UK. A Barn Owl has also been seen hunting along the play trail mounds. It has also been a record year for orchids on the site, with Bee and Pyramidal Orchids showing in most of the meadows on the park.

Report by Steve Bunn, Head Ranger, ECC Country Parks