

Agenda Item 4
GNCP/02/22

Report title: ECC Operations update – Great Notley Country Park	
Report to: Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board	
Report author: Mark Rowley, Commercial Operations Manager (Essex County Council)	
Date: 3 April 2023	For: Information
Enquiries to: mark.rowley@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update on activity at Great Notley Country Park. Members are asked to note the report.

2. Staffing

There have been a few additions to the team, including 2 x new Park Operations Assistants (POAs). Jenny started at the beginning of this year, and we will be welcoming Spencer in a few weeks' time, after he had a successful interview last week. Our Park Manager job-share, Steff, also returns to work this week after being off on maternity leave.

3. The Country Park

We have been able to complete a variety of clearance work tasks around the park, with the help of a variety of volunteer groups. Our Ranger, Tom, has completed the annual meadow and hedgerow cut back, both at Great Notley Country Park and at some of ECC's other sites. Car park, fencing and footpath repairs have also been carried out throughout the winter period.

Repairs have been completed on the play equipment in a timely manner in order to reduce the number of pieces that are closed down at any one time. The decision has been made to remove one of the waterplay pieces, and we plan to do this when the ground has become harder but before the six-week summer holidays.

4. Sky Ropes

Sky Ropes will be open over the Easter holidays and will continue to be open at the weekends and during the school holidays after Easter. As updated previously, this facility is managed by ECC colleagues in 'Essex Outdoors', ECC's outdoor education service.

5. Events

Our third-party events continue with Parkrun, Junior Parkrun, the Greyhound Walks and North Essex Astronomy Group having regular bookings at the park. We've also had several races along the Flitch Way.

We are working with the Events team to attract more third-party events to the park, including a regular family fun day over the summer period. The Events team have produced Christmas and Easter trails for younger children and their families to enjoy during the school holidays.

6. Flitch Way

Clearance work has continued along the Flitch Way with the help of the Friends of the Flitch Way group. Recently, our Ranger has been trained to use a MEWP (mobile elevated work platform), mainly for tree work. Our Ranger has been working along the Flitch Way with the wider service's Roaming Ranger to complete tree health and safety work using the MEWP over the last four weeks, with one more week to go next week (w/c 27/03).

7. Volunteers

The Friends of the Flitch Way volunteer group have continued with their twice weekly meet up with one of our Rangers along the Flitch Way, although this did have to be reduced to once a week during the weeks whilst the tree safety works were completed. They have mainly been cutting back and clearing large amounts of vegetation along the Flitch Way, clearing vegetation at and in the lakes at Great Notley Country Park to re-establish views across the lake, and working on the willow tunnel at the park.

We have welcomed Abberton Rural Training (ART) apprenticeships for the first time this year. They will complete their six-month training programme at the end of March and have completed several projects whilst on the site twice a week with their team leaders. These tasks have involved clearing a ditch line, clearing vegetation around the lakes and the bowl area of the park, planting spring bulbs for next year, wildflower seed spreading, coppicing work, hedge gapping up, and managing the wildflower banks, amongst other tasks.

We have also had a few ad-hoc volunteer groups including MITIE (ECC's FM contractor), ECC's Emergency Planning and Resilience Team, ECC's Legal

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Services and Gridserve. Tasks have including raking the wildflower banks, litter picking, and pond and ditch clearance. We will be welcoming the ECC Emergency Planning and Resilience Team back for another volunteer task later this week (w/c 20/03).

We thank them all for their commitment and hard work over the last few months.