

		AGENDA ITEM 3
		GTP/04/18
Committee:	GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD	
Meeting Date:	04 December 2018	
Report:	SITE REPORT	
Enquiries to:	Claire Bunn, Park Manager	

Staffing

The new part time ranger has been appointed and is expected to start in December or January. He will be covering the weekend (Friday to Monday) when there is currently no site-based ranger on site. This is currently one weekend a month. He will also be assisting with park tasks and carrying out some of the Friends of the Flitch Way volunteer days too.

Play Trail and the Park

Further resurfacing works has been completed along the play trail. The roaming rangers used tiger mulch to patch up some of the bridges where play equipment used to be. Contractors were also brought in the redo the surfacing work of the cable way and the chain path. This work has now been complete, but the equipment remains closed during the quiet season to allow for grass seed and turf to take.

As winter approaches the ranger has taken the water play out of action to avoid any damage to the pipe work over the colder weather. The newly painted ducks and whirligigs have also been reinstalled in toddler play and sand play.

The ranger has been completing the autumnal cut back of the hedges and the meadows around the park, but this work had to be cut short due to an issue with the tractor and flail at another site. Two new bridges are due to be installed next week and health and safety checks have shown there is signs on rot in these two existing bridges.

Most of the trim trail has now been removed around the park due to the wooden equipment deteriorating. The play equipment is also continually undergoing maintenance, which involves surfacing work and purchasing new parts.

Visitor Numbers

The summer holidays saw a steady number of visitors visiting the park – just under 60,000 between August to October. The park remains a popular destination for families during the summer holidays. Between August to October there were slight decreases as well as increases in the visitor numbers at the park. Overall this meant the decreases ranged from 1%-4% fall in visitor numbers for these three months. However, due to the increase in the car parking charges the overall car parking income was up by between 9%-37% over the last three months.

When compared with figures from our other country parks. The visitor's numbers are in line with other parks over the same period, although, overall the income figures were better than the other country parks.

Sky Ropes and Zip Line

The visitor numbers for Sky Ropes have decreased over the last few months compared to last year. Last year saw, on average throughout the year, 15% of park visitors using Sky Ropes, this year we are seeing 13% of park visitors using Sky Ropes. During August, September and October Sky Ropes and Sky Ropes Junior has seen nearly 7,000 visitors using the facility.

The number of school bookings that Sky Ropes has received has doubled from last year. This year there was 17 school bookings, which meant just under 500 pupils got to experience Sky Ropes.

The Zip Wire planning application was recommended to be refused at officer level and was then confirmed refused at the planning committee in October. Therefore, the project will not go ahead at the park.

Events

At this time of year, we see a lot of cross-country school races and running events at the park and along the Flitch Way. These continue up until Christmas and in to the New Year. We even have a race on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. The site hosted the annual Grey Hound Dog show in August and was well received by members of the public. The solar observing and astronomy events continue to be led by the North Essex Astronomical Society. In October the annual Born 2 Tri duathlon was held in the park.

Welly Wednesdays has now stopped for the winter period, although Messy Mondays continues in the cafes throughout winter.

School visits have now slowed down for the winter period but should start to pick up again once the warmer weather returns.

Flitch Way

Tom, the ranger, has been continuing the volunteer work parties on Tuesdays and Thursdays, mainly along the Flitch Way, but also some work parties at Great Notley Country Park. Work parties have mainly involved clearance work at Start Hill and Dunmow Cutting, along the Flitch Way. The work at the Dunmow Cutting is particularly important due to the important plant species, including Common Spotted Orchids and the occasional Bee Orchid growing along the path sides and the embankments. The volunteers have also completed work at the park involving ditch clearance and their annual maintenance of the willow tunnel near the lakes. The work completed by the volunteers has been up to their usual high standard and we thank them all for their hard work and effort.