
Minutes of the meeting of the Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board, held in The Discovery Centre, Great Notley Country Park, CM77 7FS on Monday, 06 November 2017

Present:

Councillors:

S Walsh (Chairman)	Essex County Council
W Schmitt (Vice-Chairman)	Braintree District Council
G Butland	Braintree District Council
M Steptoe	Essex County Council

The following Officers were present in support of the meeting:

Dominic Collins	Director of Economic Growth and Localities
Tim Dixon	Head of Country Parks, Essex County Council
Paul Partridge	Head of Operations, Braintree District Council
Steve Wilson	Street Scene and Parks Manager, Braintree District Council
Sophie Campion	Democratic Services Officer

1 Membership and Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman
Democratic Services Officer in the Chair

The Democratic Services Officer advised that under the Joint Working Agreement the Board was required to appoint a Chairman for each municipal year and invited nominations for Chairman.

Councillor Schmitt proposed Councillor Walsh and this was seconded by Councillor Butland, there being no other nominations Councillor Walsh was duly appointed as Chairman.

Councillor Walsh in the Chair

The Chairman invited nominations for Vice-Chairman and proposed Councillor Schmitt and this was seconded by Councillor Butland. There being no other nominations Councillor Schmitt was duly appointed as Vice-Chairman.

The Board noted the change in membership as set out in the Agenda.

2 Apologies for Absence

It was noted that the following officers regretted they were unable to attend the meeting, Cherie Root, Braintree District Council, Andy Wright, Braintree District Council and Claire Bunn, Ranger, Essex County Council.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board held on 1 March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Proposed Indoor and Outdoor Activities

The Board received a presentation by Paul Partridge, Head of Operations, Braintree District Council.

The Board was advised that David Lloyd was interested in developing an indoor and outdoor activity adventure park at the site. David Lloyd was looking to open adventure parks at 12 locations by 2021 and Great Notley had been identified as an ideal location to consider developing such a park. Some initial discussions and meetings had taken place to discuss the concept.

The strengths and opportunities were set out which included the location and current success of the country park and extending the park's facilities to all-year-round. It also offered opportunities for increased revenue for Braintree District Council and Essex County Council and new employment opportunities for the area.

The issues for consideration included the impact and potential cost of re-locating the grass pitches and the significant impact on the football clubs that use them. Planning approval would be needed for the large building and it was also noted that the car parking for the facility would be free which was a possible conflict with the parking charges and income stream for the County Council, although they would be separate facilities.

The next steps, subject to Member approval, were:

- To continue the dialogue with David Lloyd to finalise a 'best offer' to both Councils, to the end of January 2018.
- Subject to completion of above, establish a Joint Working Group to develop a Joint Business Case by 30 April 2018.
- To identify options for relocating the grass pitches and discuss with various football teams by 30 April 2018.
- The Great Notley Joint Venture Partnership Board (JVPB) to review the Business Case in May 2018.

The Director of Economic Growth and Localities considered that this could be a great opportunity for the area with the caveat of ensuring that the current operation of the Park was protected, including consideration of car park income and catering facilities. Joint working had so far been very positive.

During consideration of this item, the following points were made:

- Negotiations and finances had been based on Local Authority models.
- Concern was raised regarding whether the proposed car parking for the adventure park would be enough. In response it was confirmed that the concept was looking to use a cashless plan of advance booking which would assist with managing the cars on site. Additionally visitors who turned up on the day and were unable to access the adventure park may use the country park facilities instead, increasing the visitor numbers at the country park.
- Members were keen to ensure that any future developments at the park were complementary to the current offer and not in competition with it. However they were in favour of continuing with discussions and moving forward with the timeline of next steps.
- It was **Agreed** that further information regarding potential employment opportunities would be circulated to the Board following the meeting.

Resolved:

That Members agreed that discussions continue with David Lloyd on this proposal, following the timeline of next steps as set out above.

[Post Meeting Note: In response to the question raised regarding potential employment opportunities within this proposal, it was clarified with David Lloyd after the meeting, that this would be on average 85 full time equivalent posts]

6

Site Report

The Board received the Site Report (GTP/04/17) from Claire Bunn, Senior Ranger.

The Board was updated on the staffing changes at the Country Park. Claire Bunn had returned from maternity leave as Site Manager on a part-time basis. The back filling of staff is covered by the roaming ranger team providing flexibility across the parks.

The following issues were highlighted to the Board:

- The 15 miles of Flitch Way is part of the Country Park management responsibility. There were some on-going issues which the Country Parks team were aware of along the Flitch Way particularly with dogs related to the Traveller Site. There were also issues with regard to developments along the Flitch Way creating new access points or encroaching on Essex County Council land. However in maintaining the Flitch Way, the team wished to express their appreciation of the volunteer work undertaken by the 'Friends of the Flitch Way'.
- The new cable way play equipment had been vandalised due to arson shortly after it had been installed but had been fixed and would be back in use shortly.
- The car parking system was reported as working efficiently and

there had been a 32% increase in parking income. Visitor numbers were also up 20% on last year. Sky Ropes were also over their target figures.

- The Zip Line plans were continuing to progress with plans being finalised to submit for planning permission. It was hoped that the Zip Line would be in place shortly after Easter following a 12 week planning process.
- There had been no complaints recently regarding issues with horse-riders in the park.

The Board noted the report and update.

7 Artificial Grass Pitches and Multi-Use Games Area

The Board received report (GTP/05/17) and Football Development Plan from Paul Partridge, Head of Operations, Braintree District Council.

The main focus of the plan continued to be on adequate usage, particularly in the off-peak periods. Use of the facilities included the Further Education College Programme and a 6-a-side football competition.

It was anticipated that the cost of maintaining the facility would reach break-even point by the end of March 2018.

In response to comments and questions it was confirmed that:

- The partnership with the Football Foundation was a 25 year term which had started in 2006.
- The Council worked well with Community Iron (Braintree Town Football Club) to deliver the plan and relied on their support for off-peak usage.

The Board noted the report and update.

8 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be arranged in line with the progression of the David Lloyd proposal.

9 Urgent Business

The Chairman agreed to accept an urgent item of business regarding car park charges.

10 Car Park Charges

The Head of Country Parks advised the Board that an increase in car parking charges was being considered for April 2018.

The proposals for an increase in car parking charges were being considered by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste and were subject to scrutiny at the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee in November 2017. The proposals would then be brought to the Board for consideration. It was recommended that the proposals be subject to a 6 week consultation period across the country parks. It was likely that the proposals would be ready for consideration by

the Board in similar timescales to that of the David Lloyd proposal.

The Board noted the update.

Chairman