

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK
JOINT VENTURE BOARD HELD AT THE DISCOVERY CENTRE, GREAT
NOTLEY ON 12 MARCH 2014**

Attendance:

Councillors:

John Jowers	- Essex County Council (ECC)
Simon Walsh	- Essex County Council (ECC)
Graham Butland	- Braintree District Council (BDC)
Mrs Wendy Schmitt	- Braintree District Council (BDC)

Officers in attendance:

Teresa Ash	- Essex County Council/Senior Project Manager
Nick Day	- Braintree District Council/Parks and Open Spaces Manager
Julie Nash	- Essex County Council/Operations Manager
Paul Partridge	- Braintree District Council/Head of Operations
Sophie Champion	- Committee Officer (ECC)

1. Apologies and Substitution Notices

There were no apologies reported from Members of the Board.

There were two apologies from officers noted, Tim Dixon, Head of Country Parks, ECC and Steve Bunn, Head Ranger.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Proposal regarding a new adventure course at Great Notley Country Park

The Board received report (GTP/01/14) from Julie Nash, Operations Manager, Essex County Council. Teresa Ash, Senior Project Manager, Essex County Council was also in attendance for this item.

It was explained to the Board that this proposal came out of the County Council's work to move the country parks service to a cost neutral position, whilst increasing the offer to customers. There were a number of opportunities to do

this and each consideration was being given to what options would be suitable for each of the Country Parks.

Great Notley County Park had been identified as a suitable potential site for an 'Adventure Ropes Course' attraction which visitors would pay to use. The reasons why this site had been identified as the most suitable option were set out in the report.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- There were no similar attractions in the Essex area.
- The projected surplus income had been based on a cautious projection of the number of visitors, particularly as it would be largely reliant on word of mouth marketing rather than a large marketing campaign.
- Options to go into partnership with an industry provider had been looked at but discounted due to a significant reduction in potential income. However this proposal offered a real opportunity for joint working between the County Council and Braintree District Council and early informal discussions indicated an enthusiasm to pursue a more detailed business case.
- It was noted that this type of attraction would not be suitable for every Country Park and consideration was being given to the function of each Park and what options may be suitable at each site from a wide range of potential offer.
- It was suggested that car parking would need to be looked at as part of the business case, to ensure there was sufficient parking for visitors.
- Members generally considered this to be an exciting opportunity for the Park particularly as it built on the existing offer at the Park of play equipment for up to age 13 and being a destination place.
- Members noted the projected surplus income figures based on a model for a good value price per head.
- With regard to timescales, it was reported that the aim would be to have the equipment in place for April 2015 if the proposal went ahead. The next stage would be to put together a detailed full business case for consideration by the Board.

Paul Partridge, Braintree District Council, suggested that this was an opportune time to review the working arrangements of the Joint Working Agreement and financial operating model which had been in place in since 2008. Councillor Jowers agreed that it would be appropriate to review it at this stage.

The Board agreed that subject to consideration of a full Business Case, there was overall agreement in principle to pursuing the proposal.

5. Sports Update

The Board received report (GTP/02/14) providing an update on the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park. Paul Partridge, Head of Operations, BDC and Nick Day, Parks and Open Spaces Manager, BDC were in attendance for this item.

Progress

Following the formal agreement of a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Braintree District Council (BDC) and Braintree Town Football Club (BTFC) Youth Academy, the Agreement had now been in place for six months and there had been a number of key achievements to date set out in the report.

The progress made towards the Football Development Plan had been noted by the Football Foundation and Football Association with positive feedback.

BTFC had provided an appendix to the report setting out the achievements to date and the aims for the next six months.

Budget Update

The income from the period April 2013 – January 2014 was £42k compared to £30k for the same period in the previous year. The projected income for 2013/14 was £46.5k compared to operating costs of £49k, so there was a small short-fall but showed a significant improvement on previous years as reported to the Board.

Conclusion

Following discussions between BTFC and the Great Notley Football Club (GNFC) both clubs were now fully engaged and have agreed on a number of areas of partnership working.

It was considered that overall the partnership with BTFC had been very successful and led to excellent progress and further opportunities for the future.

Following a question raised regarding whether there were many girls involved in the activities, it was reported that whilst it was mostly boys at the current time, part of the plan was to encourage greater participation by girls, disabled young people and ethnic minority groups.

The Board welcomed the report.

6. Stakeholder Feedback

No issues have been raised by the Stakeholder Groups.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was **Agreed** that the next meeting of the Board would be provisionally arranged for July 2014. However if the Business Case referred to under item 4 was ready sooner than that, a meeting of the Board would be convened at an earlier date.

8. Urgent Business

The Chairman agreed to take an item of urgent business relating to the wind turbine at the Discovery Centre.

Representatives from Braintree District Council expressed their concern regarding a request to remove the wind turbine due to on-going maintenance costs. There was particular concern that the District Council had been unaware that the turbine had not been in working order for the past couple of years.

It was suggested that options for the future needed to be considered and presented to the Board.

It was **Agreed** that:

The status of the wind turbine would be reviewed and the options for the future be considered.

The meeting closed at 10.55am.

Chairman