

Minutes of the meeting of Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board held at Great Notley Country Park, Braintree at 2.00pm on Thursday 1 September 2022

Present:

Councillors:

G Butland (Chairman)	Essex County Council
M Durham	Essex County Council
W Schmitt	Braintree District Council

The following officers and advisors were also present in support:

Samir Pandya	Operations Strategy and Policy Manager, Braintree District Council (BDC)
Cherie Root	Corporate Director, BDC
Mark Rowley	Commercial Operations Manager, Essex County Council (ECC)
Lisa Smart	Country Parks Manager, ECC
Judith Dignum	Democratic Services Officer, ECC

1. Election of Chairman

Upon the motion of Councillor Butland, seconded by Councillor Durham and duly carried, it was

Resolved

That Councillor Wendy Schmitt be elected Chairman of the Joint Venture Partnership Board for the Municipal Year to May 2023.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Upon the motion of Councillor Schmitt, seconded by Councillor Durham and duly carried, it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Graham Butland be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Venture Partnership Board for the Municipal Year to May 2023.

3. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The Board received the report on Membership, Apologies and Declarations and it was noted that:

1. The membership of the Board was as shown in the report.
2. Apologies had been received from Councillor F Ricci (Braintree District Council, Claire Bunn (Park Manager, Essex County Council) and Paul Partridge (Head of Operations, Braintree District Council).

3. Councillor Butland declared an interest in agenda item 9 (Urgent Business), in that he is a member of Great Notley Parish Council. Minute 9 below refers.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board held on 2 December 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Updates on matters arising from that meeting were provided during presentation of the other items on the agenda.

5. Site Report – Great Notley Country Park (GNCP/01/22)

The Board received an update on activity at the Country Park.

The following issues arose from consideration of the report:

- Staff shortages had led to challenges during the year and thanks were expressed to colleagues at Braintree District Council for their help and support during these times. Cover had also been provided by Country Parks team staff drafted in from other sites. Efforts were in hand to increase the level of volunteer activity at Great Notley and all country park sites
- A large-scale project was currently underway to apply for a Countryside Stewardship agreement for all country parks within a five-year timescale.
- Drainage improvements were being considered in order to resolve instances of winter flooding in certain areas of the Park. This was considered preferable to other potential solutions which would incur ongoing maintenance costs. Officers agreed to address the poor condition of the surface at the public footpath entrance to the park from the Pegasus crossing.
- Visitor numbers during the summer appeared to have been lower than in previous years, possibly due to the extremely hot weather. The Sky Ropes attraction (of which management had been transferred to Essex Outdoors) was beginning to recover from its closure during Covid and was now operating on a cost neutral basis.
- An events programme was being built up gradually, with advice being provided from elsewhere in Essex County Council regarding potential areas for success and development.

In response to an issue raised by the Chairman, the Country Parks Manager agreed to investigate the possible replanting of an area where recently planted trees had died due to their unsuitability for the soil. The Chairman

undertook to advise of native species available from a stock held by Braintree District Council.

The report and update were noted.

6. Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area (GNCP/02/22)

The Board received an update on usage and income from the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park for the period to July 2022.

In presenting the report, the Operations Policy and Strategy Manager (BDC) commended the work of the Country Parks Team managed by Lisa Smart and requested that his thanks be conveyed to them.

The following issues were noted during the update:

- Members suggested contacting Councillor Ricci regarding community safety issues, and also concerning the loss of groups using the MUGA following the collapse of Community Iron. It was important to continue the successful work with disabled young people and girls in view of the popularity of women's football.
- There was nothing to report regarding the future of the building formerly used by PARC.

The report and update were noted.

7. Fishing at Great Notley Country Park

The Board received a verbal report on proposals for the future of management of fishing at the country park through the creation of a fishing club. Members expressed their support for the proposal, which they considered a proactive way of addressing issues of illegal fishing,

The Board agreed that work to establish a fishing club at the country park should be progressed, with an update to be given at the next meeting.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold a further meeting of the Board towards the end of 2022/ beginning of 2023, availability to be canvassed by the Democratic Services Officer.

9. Urgent Business

The Chairman agreed to consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that there was a need to update on an issue that could not wait until the next meeting.

Provision of Allotments at Great Notley Country Park

(Councillor Butland declared an interest in this item – minute 3 above refers).

The Operations Policy and Strategy Manager (BDC) updated the Board on the latest position regarding the provision of allotments for the parish of Great Notley on land within the Country Park (as supported by the Board at its previous meeting in December 2020). Although the land originally earmarked for the allotments had proved unsuitable, a new site near the football pitches had now been identified and was being progressed. The result of a soil survey was awaited and would determine whether or not it would be possible to proceed to the pre-planning stage. Legal input would eventually be required from ECC, BDC and the Parish Council to facilitate transfer of the land to the Parish Council.

In response to a question, it was noted that there was a good water supply to the site.

The update was noted.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.10pm.

**Chairman
3 April 2023**