



Service Delivery Committee	Tuesday, 10 October 2017	Matter for Information and Decision
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Title: **Greening of the Borough and Operational Services Update**

Author(s): **Avril Lennox MBE (Head of Health & Leisure Services)
Brian Kew (Head of Operational & Street Scene Services)**

1. Introduction

This report provides Members with an update on Brocks Hill Country Park & Centre, Tendring Drive footpath as well as an update from Operational and Street Scene Services.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. That Members consider the information in relation to the deterioration of play equipment at Brocks Hill and provide their approval to remove the multi-activity unit.
- 2.2. That Members note the information provided within the report and endorse and promote the range of opportunities to the wider audience.
- 2.3. That Members note that an extension to the current temporary planning permission for the Tendring Drive, Wigston, footpath may be required.

3. Information

3.1. Natural Discovery Volunteer Project

The following information provides a progress report on plans which have been put in place for the final stage of the Heritage Lottery funded project:

- The Conservation Volunteers Group (TCV) has successfully started delivering the off-site conservation volunteering sessions. They will also be coordinating the South Leicestershire College gardening programme at Brocks Hill, which will recommence following the start of the new term in October 2017.
- The new Admin Officer has been in post since the start of July and has been liaising with TCV, the Park Warden and Volunteers to promote the volunteering opportunities. Administrative tasks include: inputting volunteer details, hours completed and the work carried out, booking training and updating social media. Work has also been carried out on updating the finance spreadsheet for monitoring and evaluation purposes as well as allocating the remaining external budget. The Admin Officer will also assist with the collation of project data for the final report to the funders.
- The Park Warden continues to coordinate the Wednesday Brocks Hill volunteering sessions with a reliable group of regular attendees. This session is now at full capacity, so new volunteers are directed towards the off-site volunteering opportunities.
- A recruitment drive is currently taking place to enlist new Lead Volunteers.
- This has now been advertised locally; suitable candidates will be interviewed and if successful, will receive appropriate training with the aim of sustaining the volunteering activities at the end of the funded project.

The following information provides details of volunteering hours achieved since 2015:

Month	2015	2016	2017
January	269.3	272	229.25
February	275	330.45	447.75
March	292.15	323.05	493.50
April	266	331	238.7
May	388.3	516.2	236.25
June	485	347.3	448.25
July	312.45	280	256.50
August	212	268.5	274.00
September	216.5	232.75	
October	170.05	223	
November	243	323.4	
December	153	121.5	
TOTAL	3282.75	3569.15	

3.2. **Brocks Hill Country Park Update**

Over the summer, East Midlands and Britain in Bloom judges visited Brocks Hill as part of their tour around the Borough. The Park Warden led them on a short walk around the Country Park and introduced them to the volunteers. East Midlands in Bloom is assessed against a number of criteria under three headings: Horticultural; Environmental responsibility; Community participation. In order to achieve the Gold standard each section must gain 85% or over. It is therefore a significant achievement to have been awarded a Gold Medal; indeed this is the 8th consecutive year Oadby and Wigston has achieved this award. Sincere thanks go to all those involved. The results of the Britain in Bloom competition will be announced on 27 October.

Summer work completed at Brocks Hill with the volunteers has included: spreading woodchip onto paths, clearing around young trees, pulling ragwort in the meadows, crown raising trees adjacent to paths and cutting and raking hay in meadows.

In August the former tenant farmer under the direction of the Park Warden carried out the cutting and collection of grass from approximately 6 hectares of meadows at Brocks Hill. This management is essential to ensure the delicate habitats continue to thrive. The work was carried out very quickly and efficiently.

Also during August the Park Warden held a pollinator educational activity session that was attended by 18 adults and children. The children were able to see bees, moths, butterflies and hoverflies up close and learn all about them and their food plants. The session was very well received, with comments by the attendees that they learnt a great deal from this opportunity.

Wildlife surveys have been successful throughout the summer, yielding good results: over 350 bees and 330 butterflies have been recorded in 2 hours during individual

surveys at Brocks Hill. A student wildlife surveyor, has been extremely helpful contributing to the bee, bird and butterfly surveys over summer.

In September, Charnwood Foods returned for another successful Corporate volunteering day. Work was carried out on a path in Winter Woods: the ladies all enjoyed the team building aspect of the day and managed to spread woodchip along 100m of the woodland path.

The Park Warden has also continued to work with TCV to plan the work for volunteer days at Fludes Lane and Pochins Bridge, as well as planning the re-commencement of garden volunteering at Brocks Hill with students from South Leicestershire College.

3.3. Activity Programmes - Education

School Visits to Brocks Hill

There were a number of school visits towards the latter end of the school summer term. With the reduction in staffing there was an increased promotion of self-led school visits alongside staff-led sessions. This has maintained the use of the Country Park for education purposes. Schools are still keen to have input from on-site staff that are able to deliver aspects of outdoor learning that fall outside the teacher's knowledge. The new Education Discovery and Activity Sessions 2017-2018 has now been produced with some notable amendments but with the opportunity to develop in the self-led area.

Summer Holiday Activity Programme

A number of outsourced instructors were recruited to deliver some of the summer activities; this complemented the range of self-led and staff-led activity sessions. The take up was higher than in 2016 by nearly 16%. Outdoor activities included pond dipping, butterfly hunts and spotting pollinators as well as a wide range of activities held indoors including crafts and storytelling. External companies such as Amazing Animals enabled attendees to encounter a whole host of real animals from around the world, in addition (and new this year) was Pottery Painting for all the family, was extremely popular. Self led crafts were available to purchase at reception, many of these prepared by Brocks Hill's volunteers.

Galls in an Urban Leicestershire Environment

A Gall walk was led by Chris Leach a member of the British Plant Gall Society, on 3 September. It was targeted at the uninformed as well as an opportunity to carry out survey work for those that were more familiar with this phenomenon. The British Plant Gall Society was aware of several changes made to the management plan of the site so this survey was to discover the impact on the galls on a site which is known as a hot spot in Leicestershire. Chris will share the information with the Park Warden in due course, which will contribute to the biodiversity information for the country park.

Bat Walk - Friday 15 September

Elaine Carter from the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat group provided a bat talk and walk around Brocks Hill Country Park on 15 September.

A total of 22 people attended the informative evening. The group witnessed a number of sightings of the common pipistrelle and heard male and female tawny owls calling

to each other. All the data collated is important to build up the knowledge of these protected species, which link directly to the Brocks Hill Management Plan.

3.4. **Amphitheatre Performance**

A new strategy for utilising the Amphitheatre has been put in place. The space will be available to groups to use for performances, with OWBC receiving a profit share of tickets sold. This enables the Council to continue to provide an outdoor entertainment/experience, without taking the risk (weather/equipment/performers).

One such organisation, Folksy Theatre, provided a performance of 'The Smartest Giant in Town' on Saturday 19 August 2017. They provided their own stage and generator for electricity supplies as well as staff to run the event. Two performances were given during the day, to audiences of 200 per time.

3.5. **Green Flag Award**

Oadby's Brocks Hill Country Park and Peace Memorial Park in Wigston have both been recognised by the Green Flag Award Scheme. The parks are among a record-breaking 1,797 UK parks and green spaces that received a prestigious Green Flag Award for 2017; the mark of a quality park or green space.

Brocks Hill: Brocks Hill Country Park consists of 67 acres of rich and diverse wildlife habitats and areas of historical interest. These include woodland, meadows, ponds, a ridge and furrow field and a community orchard, all of which are laid out with access friendly paths. There is also a den building area and two children's play areas. Additional elements include sculptures and a permanent orienteering course around the Country Park, a human sundial, an outdoor performance space, a memorial area as well as sponsored benches, tree avenues and plantings.

Peace Memorial Park: Peace Memorial Park is Wigston's War Memorial. Following public subscription after the Great War, the Park was founded in 1921 and since that time has changed and evolved, eventually becoming the welcoming and peaceful green space we have today, much loved and used by the local community. Each Green Flag is a celebration of the many staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to maintain the high standards demanded by the Green Flag Award.

3.6. **Operations and Street Scene Update**

The position with the review of waste, recycling and green waste is the subject of a separate report to this committee. As reported in the budget review for this committee at agenda item 7, the recycling market has dropped off slightly over the last 6 months.

On-going winter grounds maintenance works are continuing, this includes hedge cutting, mowing and tree works. In addition, due to the recruitment of a new Tree Officer, the team will have the opportunities to work with the new officer in the near future.

On street cleansing, despite the recent heavy leave and rain fall the street cleansing work remains at a high standard with a new programme of works and re-routing of rounds.

On public realm, works for replacement litters bins have previously been contracted out, this work will now be provided, where possible, in-house through cross team

working with the Facilities section which will result in savings.

3.7. **Chewing Gum**

The current gum removal kit is in use in hot spot areas across the Borough, along with a new grime buster machine.

Longer term the aim is to gain access the Wrigley's 'Litter Less' campaign, which is a joint initiative between the Wrigley Foundation and the Environmental Education Foundation, which provides education to children and young people on issues of litter and encourages them to make positive choices.

3.8. **Graffiti Removal**

The team is continuing to remove graffiti from key areas across the Borough. The team is working with both Oadby Police and Wigston Police Officers on the range of tags. The police are also visiting various local schools and colleges in order to identify and establish who the culprits are.

3.9. **Tendring Drive Path**

The following information provides an update on the Tendring Drive footpath.

The Head Teacher of Glenmere Primary school (OWLS Trust) Mr Peter Merry, confirmed on 11 September that it will be necessary to gain agreement/sign off from the Secretary of State, in order to handover the path to OWBC. Unfortunately he has just been informed that this process is likely to take between 4 to 5 months to complete. This will impact on the timescales to test the temporary permission which was originally granted in November 2016. Therefore it is being suggested that an application be submitted in due course to Planning Control to request an extension to the current temporary planning permission, which ends on 16 November 2018.

In addition, the legal fees required to enable the school to hand over the path to OWBC will amount to £4,000 - £5,000. This cost will be included in the main investment programme for improvement works to Brocks Hill and Parklands Leisure Centre, as approved by Council on 5 September 2017.

3.10. **Brocks Hill Children's Play Equipment**

Members are advised that the larger wooden play equipment at Brocks Hill is coming to the end of its useful life; most is in need of replacing. The wooden equipment is beginning to rot and the metal work is showing signs of corrosion. The cost to replace the equipment will be confirmed following an independent review.

It is for this reason that we seek Members approval to remove one such piece of equipment, the triangular multi-activity unit (see photograph below).

(Continued overleaf)



Resurfacing works: We are currently awaiting a third quote for the resurfacing works which needs to take place under all pieces of play equipment. The cost will be approximately £20,000 to carry out the necessary works to install safe, shock absorbent surfaces that are compliant with BS EN 1177.

Background Documents:

None.

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Implications Greening of the Borough and Operational Services Update	
Finance Chris Raymakers (Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits)	Major projects need to form part of the approved capital programme.
Legal Anne Court (Director of Services / Monitoring Officer)	No significant legal implications.
Corporate Risk(s) (CR) Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services) Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services and Street Clean)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decreasing Financial Resources (CR1) Some projects are reliant on external funding and volunteer input; therefore if these are reduced it could impact on service delivery.
Corporate Priorities (CP) Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services) Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services and Street Clean)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An Inclusive and Engaged Borough (CP1) Working in partnership to provide access to all. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Service Provision (CP2) Utilising external funding to delivery local projects. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Green & Safe Places (CP4) Utilising and improving our green spaces, protecting habitats. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wellbeing for All (CP5) Increasing the range of opportunities, and providing opportunities for volunteers to engage with projects.
Vision & Values (V) Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services) Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services and Street Clean)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "A Strong Borough Together" (Vision) Continuing the positive working arrangements with new and existing partners to deliver an effective service. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accountability (V1) We are accountable through regular monitoring and evaluation reporting and check and challenge groups. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect (V2) Equality and fairness is at the heart of what we deliver, as is listening to staff and residents to gain valuable insight. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teamwork (V3) Stakeholder teamwork, both internal and external is key to the delivery of projects. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation (V4) The new Brocks Hill service re-design is one of the many key innovations Leisure Services is continually driving

	<p>forwards.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus (V5)</p> <p>Leisure Services continually go above and beyond stakeholder's and customer's expectations, which can be judged by the number of positive comments received.</p>
<p>Equalities & Equality Assessment(s) (EA)</p>	<p>No significant equalities implications.</p>
<p>Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services)</p> <p>Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services and Street Clean)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable (EA)</p>