

# Newsletter

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## Haysden Country Park

ISSUE 5

APRIL 2022

**Welcome** to the fifth newsletter for Haysden Country Park.

### Top stories in this newsletter



User Panel



Coronavirus



New play  
equipment



Leigh Barrier



**User Panel** - in the last newsletter we asked you for your views on how we should engage with the public. Most popular were the regular newsletters which will continue, but the face-to-face meetings were less popular and will no longer take place. We would like to increase the number of people we reach with these newsletters, so please share with friends and neighbours so that they can also subscribe. We will continue with occasional market surveys, social media posts, website updates and posters on site.



**Coronavirus** - with the removal of the national restrictions, the Council has removed measures put in place to keep the public safe during the pandemic, including restrictions around the catering area and play areas.



**New play equipment** - in November 2021, the playground company Kompan Ltd were working in our children's play area. They dismantled and removed our old junior multi-play unit and installed a replacement with a new impact absorbing surface. The surface under the swings was also replaced as this had worn out.

It was amazing to watch the skilled workers assemble the new equipment and an expert conducted a thorough inspection before we re-opened these areas to the public. The new unit is a modern design with many new play opportunities, with steps to allow access for less able children.



**Flood defence work** –The Environment Agency's (EA) contractors continue their work on the Leigh Barrier embankment this year on the next section, having completed work on the first section last year. Once the work is complete, the embankments will be returned to looking much as they did before the work started. The works will ensure the Leigh FSA continues to safely reduce flood risk to Tonbridge, Hildenborough and downstream communities.

A new statutory order has now been served by EA on the council for the next section of works, from Mud Lane to the water meadow. The public rights of way in this area are officially. Work has already begun and all access across the Leigh Barrier embankment has been fenced off on both sides and closed to the public, and is not expected to be open again until the autumn. Parking to visit this end of the park is now at Haysden Water.

These works will be followed next year by the Leigh Flood Storage Area Scheme, a separate scheme which will increase the storage capacity behind the Leigh Barrier and needed Parliament approval to commence.

Mitigation measures in the park relating to the works will include clearance of vegetation at Botany Pond and replanting of trees and shrubs around the bat cave area. A

new line for the fence along the back of the Leigh Barrier is currently being discussed with the Environment Agency.

Further details and updates at [Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankment-scheme)  
([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

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## Other news

**Natural history** - the park continues to grow and change, and the growth of the marginal vegetation, planted by our volunteers a few years ago at Barden Lake, has been impressive.

The planting around the near end is becoming well established, potentially adding to the number of species of animals using the lake and further interest for visitors.

The leaves on the trees last autumn took a long time to blow away but gave good autumn colour. Plants with berries throughout the park were resplendent and plentiful for the wildlife to eat and the spindle bushes also provided an attractive display this year.

Our botanists recorded 75 fungi species in the park this year, a record for us. As spring approaches, look out for the wood anemones, wild garlic and celandines around the park, and the bright fresh green leaves on the trees. Queen bumblebees are already flying around, as are the butterflies.

**Staffing** – our ranger Jane is due to start her parental leave from June and we have appointed a new ranger to cover her absence.

**Sponsored seat scheme** – we continue to see a rise in demand for seats and several more have been installed, as has a new sponsored picnic table.

**Green Flag Award judging - we have applied for the award again this year which will be judged during the coming month.**

<https://www.greenflagaward.org/>



## Work completed

- Installation of a new drain at the top end of the main car park to stop flooding of the car park
- New fishing swim areas were installed around the lakes by the Angling Society

- Three speed bumps were replaced on the main driveway
- Litter bins with lids were replaced in two locations
- A new rabbit totem has been sponsored and installed at Barden Lake
- The cycle route signage has been replaced on the off-road sections
- The Environment Agency (EA) have removed a tree from the River Medway
- In Barden Lake we identified blue green alga. Warning signs have been on display from late summer until spring 2022.

## Other work in progress

- Cutting back of overhanging trees around Barden Lake by the Angling Society
- Reviewing, updating and printing of leaflets
- Revetment work around Barden Lake work completed with current funding, backfilling in progress.
- Revetment work awaiting funding to complete the work (the 'beach' area)
- We are creating a mural for the sewage plant area gates
- Sharps Bridge by the boat landing stage - KCC are arranging the supply and replacement of the bridge by the summer as this is on a public right of way path MU92.
- The Environment Agency have been asked to consider the council's approach to rabbit control around the Leigh Barrier
- Drainage on public footpath MU51A under the railway arch from The Shallows to Stone Lock. The land is a public right of way, and the issue has been reported to KCC.
- The dipping platform is unsafe and currently closed, awaiting repair or replacement - we will investigate funding opportunities for this project
- We will shortly be replacing the safety signage for the main access under the railway path
- Disabled fishing platforms seeking budget prices for replacement as they are reaching the end of their life – there is no funding for this project at present

**Licensed activities** - our property and legal services teams are reviewing agreements with various concessions.

The council have licensed a new Nordic Walking concession around the park and are considering an agreement with the sailing club for model yacht sailing at certain times on Haysden Water lake.

## Volunteering update

### Highlights of work completed

The volunteers have been busy cutting back vegetation from paths and scrub from

the uncut meadow and, in the new year, coppicing at Haysden Water and in the willow nursery. The volunteers have completed an extensive list of tasks since the last newsletter: creating the meadow; planting and laying hedges, cornfield meadow created, and making, repairing, and installing bird and bat boxes.

The council has funded some new volunteer workwear.

Waitrose have kindly funded two volunteer projects, new signs for the bridges and the leaflet rack replacement under their 'give a little love' – health and wellbeing funding.

### **Number of volunteer hours (October 2021 to March 2022)**

Haysden Country Park Volunteers – 1,983 hours

Community Payback – 960 hours

Other volunteers – Scout group 21/11/21 75 hours

Total hours 3,018

**Photography** - in February we launched a new monthly photography competition in the park, which is proving popular. Photographs must be taken in the park, but they must begin with the letter shown on the poster, as the letter will change each month. A winning photograph will be selected by the parks team and displayed around the park, and on social media, during the following month. Posters are on display in the park.

**Community payback** - the group have finished cutting back vegetation in Friendship Wood to help encourage the bluebells and other woodland plants that were planted by the HCPV group. They are currently cutting back scrub and other vegetation along the paths at Haysden Water.

## **Events**

- The Big Garden Bird watch (free) took place in January
- National litter pick in March, which the HCPV took part in
- Our bushcraft session during the Easter break proved popular and was fully booked
- The Easter trail self-led trail (free) in the park was also very popular

### **Forthcoming events**

- Bat Walk – 27 May £10 each, run by our partner MVCP booking via Eventbrite
- Big butterfly count (free) – July
- Bushcraft session - summer
- Halloween self-led trail (free) - October
- Christmas self-led trail (free) - December

We are currently considering more events for the summer with our partner MVCP. For all the latest events see our website Events – [Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council \(tmbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/events)

**Field surveys** - we are looking for more volunteers to run field surveys and to assist when others are away. The surveys that we want to organise are for ponds, small mammals, bats, reptiles, and amphibians.

We have further information for anyone interested. During the survey period, one of the outdoor team will always be available to provide support. If this is something you would like to assist us with, please talk to Jane Brazier or Chris Fox.

**Keep in touch - If you have any comments or questions for our team, we would be happy to answer them.**

If you know other people who would like to receive these newsletters, please ask them to contact us at [leisure.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:leisure.services@tmbc.gov.uk)

The next newsletter is due to be published in the autumn of 2022.

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