

Newsletter

Haysden Country Park

ISSUE 6

SEPTEMBER 2022

Welcome to the newsletter for Haysden Country Park.

Top stories in this newsletter



Tonbridge School



Orienteering

Public Space Protection Orders

Public Space
Protection Orders



Leigh Barrier



Tonbridge School giving day 29 June - Once again this year we have welcomed volunteers back from Tonbridge School to carry out a project in the park. Under the guidance of Haysden Country Park Volunteers (HCPV) and council staff we have started the final section of the lake revetment at Barden Lake with the help of pupils and teachers. A donation of £1000 was given by the school for materials and tools which enabled this project. A big thank you to all those involved.



Orienteering – The creation of an orienteering course at the park is a project within the site management plan. We are excited to announce that the park has been selected as a location for virtual orienteering under a national project called ‘Find my way’. British Orienteering have been awarded grant funding for this project. The focus of the project is to get people more active with focus on children and young people. The

courses will have no physical structures on the ground and instead use the free 'MapRun6' a smartphone app the app displays a map and has control points that 'bleep' when you arrive at the virtual checkpoint. At a local level we will be working in partnership the west Kent based, Saxons Orienteering Club to deliver this project. Find out more here www.findyourwayvo.org.uk The launch date for this will be during Autumn/ Winter of this year, so watch out for that announcement.

Public Space Protection Orders

Public Space Protection Orders review – These are the powers that the Council has in place for anti – social behavior and every 3 years the Council reviews these orders. They include the control of dogs (maximum number, dog fouling and exclusion areas), no barbeques, unauthorised swimming, camping, alcohol control, urination, and defecation, flying of drones, and control of boating. The orders will be advertised, and the public will have the opportunity to comment before the end of April 2023.



Flood defence work –The Environment Agency's (EA) contractors have continued their work on the Leigh Barrier embankment this year.

In the summer a new statutory order was served by the EA on the Council for the next section of work, from Mud Lane to the water meadow. The public rights of way in this area were officially closed.

There is some good news, we are advised that the work will now be completed this year and so has been completed one year ahead of schedule.

Mitigation work which has been negotiated with the EA will be carried out including 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 also still being discussed with the Environment Agency.

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

Other news

Natural history – Growth of the marginal vegetation, planted by our volunteers a few years ago at Barden Lake, has been impressive. Thank you to the volunteers for their continued work on these areas.

Breeding Birds Survey – Our thanks go to the volunteer Martin Garwood who has once again carried out a Breeding Birds Survey this Spring. Highlights of the survey are that 41 species of breeding birds were recorded in this year's survey of the park. There is a slight downward trend since we began these surveys in 2020 (from 50 birds) but this standard sampling method has its limitations, and is unlikely to record every bird, and weather conditions for example can play a big part in breeding populations.

Flora in the park – We are grateful to the dedicated volunteer Alan Heyes who has now created the first flora of Haysden Country Park. He has spent many hours surveying the botany in the park and checking the identities of plants, and then preparing this flora. So far, Alan has identified some 460 plants and trees for the Flora. All the new plants will be added into the next site management plan.

Plant of the month – Over the last year Alan Heyes has also been providing information for the Rangers to create a poster for plant of the month. We hope that you like these.

Ash die-back – A basic tree inspection was undertaken this year and has noted an increasing number of Ash trees suffering from this disease. This is a species-specific fungal disease. We have been expecting this, as the disease is spreading across the country, and we have been monitoring the spread and decline of some ash trees in the park for the last few years. The Forestry Commission state that 'it is likely that the majority of our native ash trees will exhibit symptoms of ash dieback, but not all that do will die'. We will continue to follow the Forestry Commission advice to cut back trees where trees die back and only fell them when they are dead.

Unfortunately, once this disease takes hold there is no cure and there appears no stopping it. This may reduce the population of mature Ash trees in the UK and the park, over time other trees will naturally regenerate in the woodlands and fill the gaps. The natural cycle of dying trees and regeneration also allows light to reach the floor of the woodland, which will allow other animals and plants less tolerant of shade to thrive. Due to national restrictions to stop the spread of this disease we are unable to plant Ash trees at present.

Staffing – We appointed a temporary Ranger, Stephen Henderson to cover Jane Braziers paternity leave. Some of you will have met him or taken part in activities that he has prepared. Jane plans to return to work in the Spring.

Sponsored seat scheme – We continue to see a rise in enquiries and demand for seats and several more have been installed around the park.

Green Flag Award judging – The park has been awarded the flag again for 2022./23. Some helpful feedback was received about the park and the judge was impressed with the overall standard of the park. To find out more about the award see

www.greenflagaward.org



Work completed

- Car park resurfacing at Haysden Water and repairs at the main car park carried out in August
- Barden Lake revetment work see above
- A new leaflet rack was purchased with funding from Waitrose and installed by the HCPV
- An annual wildflower planting at Barden Lake was completed for the first time this year by the HCPV
- Basic tree inspection report carried out by staff see comments on Ash Dieback above
- In Barden Lake the hazardous types of blue green alga were identified again this year in July. Warning signs have since that time been on display all around the car park and lake.
- Cutting back of overhanging trees around Barden Lake by the Angling Society
- Investigated a proposal to use the site for Segway events – declined as unsuitable
- Revetment work started with Tonbridge School see above
- Murals created by the ranger (Jane) and volunteers installed these on the sewage plant car park gates
- Nature area by catering area improved with a fairy house built and installed by the HCPV
- Approved several commercial companies for a fee to film in the park via the Kent Film Office
- Granted permission for several companies working for Network Rail to use our land to access to the railway line
- A new dog bin was installed in the dog exercise area (the old bin had rotted out)

Other work in progress

- Sharps Bridge by the boat landing stage - KCC (who own this asset) have recently advised us that the contract they had in place has fallen through and

they have now ordered another bridge. This project on public right of way path MU92. The project is now estimated to be completed in January 2023. We are being consulted on these plans, and will try to minimize disruption to park users

- The dipping platform is unsafe and currently closed, awaiting repair or replacement – budget prices obtain - there is no funding for this project at present
- Two new litter bins are on order– these bins had all come to the end of their life
- Waymarking project – work has started on planning circular routes within the park – but no funding has been identified to complete this project
- Orienteering project started see above
- Disabled fishing platform replacements at Barden Lake – we are working on a grant proposal with the Angling Society
- Exterior redecoration of the toilet block being arranged via Property Services

Licensed activities

Tonbridge Town Sail Club lease – a new lease has been agreed between the club and the Council. The fees payable under the new sailing club lease have also been renegotiated. A wider range of activities will be allowed under the new lease including club supervised paddleboarding and remote-controlled yachts*. (Please note that this an exemption* to the Public Space Protection Order - no boat, for club member use only.)

Its all-dog fun - has terminated their agreement for personal reasons and have therefore stopped operating at the park from the end of July. We would like to thank Laura Wynn for her work with dog owners.

Positive Paws – This new operator has now started a new agreement, they run similar activities for dogs as Its all-dog fun.

Swimming in the lakes – The Council with RoSPA some years ago produced both a boroughwide Water Safety Policy and a Water Safety Strategy for the park. A few people have unwisely been ignoring our water safety warning signs and swimming in the lakes over the summer. We have been patrolling and warning people and posting messages on social media about the dangers of open water swimming. Old gravel pits like our lakes and the river in the park can be dangerous places with hidden dangers including submerged debris, reeds, and unexpected cold-water shock can cause drowning. (Each year there are several fatalities in the UK.) Under the Public Open Space Protection Orders we do not allow unauthorised swimming in the lakes and there are fines in place.

Volunteering update

We are fortunate to have a large group of regular volunteers working at the park. Ours thanks to all of them for helping in the park.

Highlights of work completed

Haysden Country Park Volunteers (HCPV)

- Hedge cutting at Barden Lake, the Shallows, Kissing gate meadow and Tile Barn field
- Hedge laying at Barden Lake and Kissing gate meadow
- Dead hedging at various locations
- Checking owl boxes
- Checking reptile survey refugias and keeping clear of vegetation
- Removing willow from gabions at Barden Lake
- Repairs to signs and seats
- Repairing tools and equipment
- Revetment work at Barden Lake
- Making bird and bat boxes and locating them
- Cutting up small fallen trees
- Balsam pulling and cutting back vegetation at many locations
- Cutting back along the Straight mile and Barden Lake
- Raking up the mown grass on Barden Lake new meadow
- Preparing a sowing the annual wildflower strip by Barden Lake
- Bee Walk event

Number of volunteer hours (April 2022 to Aug 2022)

Haysden Country Park Volunteers –1,867 hours

Community Payback – 0

Tonbridge School 132 hours

Total 1999 hours

Photo Scavenger Hunt – There has been a monthly photography competition in the park this year, which has been a great success with lots of entries with a wide range of subjects. Well done to everyone that has taken part. Octobers letter is H, which should be easy.

Community payback – This group have not been working at the park over the summer months. With our now much larger HCPV it is not always possible to find enough work for this group as well as our own volunteers.

Income - From fees and charges in the park such as car parking, concessions and ad-hoc fees, all continues to support the park and offset some of our expenditure. Car parking income has returned this year to pre-pandemic levels.

Events

The Council has a duty of care to ensure that anyone using its land for an event does so in a competent and safe manner. Organisers wishing to stage an event on Council-owned land must provide us with advance notice by applying to the Council, providing supporting information and pay agreed fees where applicable. The Events on public open spaces application form, (which has been used for many years) will continue to be used. [Apply to host a public event – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council \(tmbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.tmbc.gov.uk)

All of the below events were approved and run without a fee if indicated as free. In some cases, we charge a fee and the £ sign indicates this, this may apply to either to the event organiser, the public, or both.

Past events

- 27 May Bat walk (£) MVCP led this event – 17 people fully booked
- 9 June Kent Botanical Recording Group tour (free) (assisted Alan Heyes with the survey of the park for the park flora)
- 3 July Bee walk (free) - Friends of the Earth/ HCPV – 15 fully booked
- 9 July Sailing club 50th anniversary event, free by invitation, 90 guests and the Mayor attended
- 18 July – 29 July The Big Butterfly Count (Butterfly Conservation) (free leaflet) - prove popular with over 50 forms used
- 23 July Orienteering event Saxons Orienteering Club (£) – 37+ people
- 29 July – 5 Aug Love Parks Week self-led Riddle Trail (free) - 50 forms used
- Bushcraft session (£) 5 children, not fully booked but ran anyway
- 16 August Beginners bird identification and birdsong (£) - MVCP led this event cancelled as too few bookings
- 2 September Boys brigade canoe training - at Haysden Water (£) in association with the Town Sailing Club
- 18 September Sailing club taster day (free) – cancelled due to national mourning period

Forthcoming events

- 30 Oct Sponsored walk for Parkinsons
- Launch event for Find my way virtual orienteering
- October - Halloween self-led trail (free)
- December - Christmas self-led trail (free)
- Easter trail 2023 self-led trail (free)

For details on all the latest events see our website Events – [Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council \(tmbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.tonbridgeandmalling.gov.uk)

Field surveys - We are still 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. If this is something you would like to assist us with, please contact 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

The next newsletter is due to be published in the Spring of 2023.

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