

# NEWSLETTER

## Haysden Country Park

ISSUE 3

DATE 30.4.21

**Welcome** to the third edition of the Haysden Country Park newsletter, which replaces the User Panel meeting that is usually held in the Spring of each year, as we are unable to hold face to face meetings at this time.

### Top stories in this newsletter



Coronavirus



New entrance signs



Wildlife garden



Leigh Barrier

### Coronavirus



The Council has continued to make several changes to services in response to the coronavirus. As you may be aware, the Council have employed TMS security to perform a covid marshalling role throughout the lockdown period and they will continue on into the summer months at the park. They have been in the park every other day helping to maintain social distancing and advising people on current government restrictions.

For the latest details on how TMBC are dealing with Coronavirus, please visit our web page <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/health-and-social-care/health-and-medical-advice/coronavirus-covid-19>

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## New entrance signs



Six new signs with location maps and space for notices have been installed by the main pedestrian entrance points to the park. Our aim in the future is to provide one of these signs at each of the pedestrian entrances.

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## Wildlife Garden



Jane our Ranger, has planted a new wildlife garden near to the catering area. Once the seating is reopened children will be able to see wildflowers and enjoy watching the animals using the mini habitats provided.

The new carved table and wooden seats for the outdoor learning area have now also been installed for educational visits near the dipping platform.

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## Leigh Barrier



Flood defence work – this is being undertaken by the Environment Agency (EA) on the Leigh Barrier embankment and has already started with cutting back of vegetation at Haysden Water along the park boundary, to allow access. The main contract strengthening of the grass embankment barrier is planned to start this year from 4 May 2021 and will continue until November, and then continuing in the Spring of 2022. A Statutory Order is expected to be served on the Council by the EA for the work shortly. Several storage and work compounds will also be set up by the EA around the Haysden Water area. Both car parks and the oversized parking bays will be closed at Haysden Water during the week, so there will be no parking at this end of the park on weekdays and only limited parking at weekends. More traffic than usual should be expected along Lower Haysden Lane as large lorries and materials are moving around. The construction period will inevitably cause inconvenience to users of the park and we ask for your patience whilst the work is underway. The sailing club, Tri Swim and angling society have had the opportunity and I understand been consulting separately on the works.

These works will we understand be followed by the 'Leigh Flood Storage Area Scheme', which is a separate scheme that will increase the storage capacity behind the Leigh Barrier, this scheme is going to public inquiry.

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## Other news

There continues to be a marked increase in visitor numbers to the park over the period of the outbreak and an increase in the number of people walking to the park along Lower Haysden Lane. The park staff have adapted to new ways of working, and in response to the changes we have: prepared and installed additional signage, segregated areas with fencing in the catering area and cut back foliage to widen paths. The impacts on the park itself and the public continue to be monitored. There is additional wear and tear around the play area with little grass now, and wear on paths which has been significant in places. The unmade paths along the River Medway for example are now encroaching on the meadows and uncut area. Most paths became very muddy over the winter mainly due to the increased footfall. Additional car parking has remained opened for the public. The frequency of litter bin emptying has been reviewed again and the frequency increased again from twice weekly to three to four occasions a week depending on the weather. With the covid pandemic continuing to dominate the news and way we live and work, the impact on the park will continue to be monitored.

Carvings - those of you that regularly visit the park will have noticed new toadstools appearing around the park. These attractive and well-made carvings are the work of our Ranger Jane.

Car park charges - have increased from £1.20 for up to 4 hours to £1.40 and over 4 hours is now £4.00. The Annual season ticket has increased from £40 to £50.

Erosion of the riverbanks - this winter has seen three areas along the River Medway inside the park where the bank has been undermined by the flow of the river over the years and has now slipped into the river. The largest area was adjacent to Barden Shaw where an island with a tree on it landed in the river. We have been liaising with the other landowners the Environment Agency Kent Country Council. This is a natural process, and it will not be practical to repair the banks, so instead the land will manage in retreat. The tree has now been removed from the island thanks to the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency have agreed to remove the tree from the river and the stile nearest to the river in Friendship Wood will be moved back onto firm ground.

Sponsor seat scheme – this has been highly successful in the park over the last 10 years, with far more seats now present and seeing a steady stream of enquiries from sponsors at one to two a year. This year has seen a sharp rise in requests for sponsored seats at the park. So far this year we have taken six enquires. We are now nearing capacity for seats around Barden Lake, our aim is not to overcrowd this area with seats. The flat benches are our oldest seats in the park, and these are gradually being phased out. We will continue to monitor the condition of seats (and other park furniture) and remove those seats that have come to the end of their life.

## Green Flag Award judging



We have applied again for this annual award. Judging will take place sometime over the next few months. The scheme manager Keep Britain Tidy, have due to the national lockdown during the first three months of this year, taken the decision to move the announcement of the winners to October 2021. This year marks the 25 anniversary of the Green Flag Award Scheme.

## Work completed

- New entrance signs installed
- Five sponsors have offered seats for Barden Lake, one seat was a replacement for an existing seat
- Work with licensee's contractors to re-start concessions in the park
- Fencing repairs carried out at Haysden Water, and at the entrance to the park
- Work on covid security in the park, keeping people safe
- Mapped the locations of existing seats, after the rise in enquiries
- Negotiated cost of additional litter bin collection with the contractor
- Work with the Haysden Country Park Volunteers leaders to agree and prioritise the work programme
- Working with the Environment Agency consultants on plans for the Leigh Barrier major works
- Surface water drains cleaned on main car park, drive and at Audley Rise car park
- Tesco's bags of Help grant application to fund equipment for children's events and volunteer field surveys was unsuccessful
- Hedges around the drive and car park cut in February by the grounds contractor
- Main car park swept in February by the grounds contractor
- Car park repairs including levelling and rolling the new car park
- Work around the children's play area following our annual inspection
- The Shallows Bridge handrail installed following our inspection

- New fishing swim areas installed around Barden Lake
- Stone Lock structure inspected (no immediate actions needed)
- Fire Risk assessment completed for the building
- Legionella risk assessment completed for the building
- Tree work around the park following our inspections
- A volunteer has nearly completed a survey across the whole the park for wildflowers, comparing these with previous records and recording where they are. This has been a big project, and we thank the volunteer
- Highway Agency A21 bridge works completed
- Finalised the protocols for recording fauna with the LSO working with the assistance of various volunteers from the Kent Bat Group, Kent Amphibian and Reptile Group and British Trust for Ornithology - thank you to everyone involved
- Bollards around the main car park made and installed
- New boot scrappers purchased and installed
- Picnic seats painted in the catering area
- Repair of sink in the disabled toilet after damage
- Repair of the height barrier after damage

### Other work in progress

- Angling Society new fishing swim areas continue installing and removal of old platforms at Barden Lake and Haysden Water
- One new sponsored seat still to be installed at Barden Lake
- Renewal of the Town Sailing Club, TriSwim, Dog Exercise, and Tonbridge and District Angling and Fish Preservation Society agreements will be progressed by the Property and Legal Services teams
- Re-tender of the Public Conveniences and Pest Control contracts will be progressed by the Waste Services team
- Dog Warden services contract extended by the Council and a new Dog Warden has been appointed by the contractor
- Finish and publish the new 'Ranger-Led Activities' booklet when time allows
- Mark new walking trails around the park
- Leigh Barrier major works – there are continued discussions with the Environment Agency along with proposals for mitigation measures in the park
- A mural for the sewage plant gates is to be created to hide the plant
- Council's new website and updating of information being progressed by the Council's Media team
- Fencing repairs around the area of Friendship Wood and railway arch
- Speed bump to be replaced on main drive
- EA to removal of tree from River Medway and move stile after bank slips
- Two vandalised seats to be repaired by the volunteers

## Volunteering update

### Highlights of work completed

- Litter picking
- Cutting back vegetation along paths
- Planting hedges around the park

### Number of volunteer hours (October 2020 to April 2021)

Haysden Country Park Volunteers – 482 hours

Community Payback - 0 hours (not re-started yet)

Total hours 482

### Events

We were ready to run the Christmas trail in December and the Garden Bird Watch in January but unfortunately due to the covid restrictions were unable to run these events.

Due to the ongoing covid pandemic we are still considering if any other activities will be practical this year, given social distancing and face to face contact due consideration.

### Call for recorders

Several new volunteers have come forward to undertake field surveys, sadly owing to the ongoing covid pandemic, so far we have only been able to offer advice and sources of information but we hope to start field surveys this year. The only two survey types which we are now looking for new volunteers are the pond surveys and small mammals.

- Pond surveys in July. For basic information on what is involved from the UK Freshwater Habitats Trust see <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/surveys/psym-method/>
- Small mammal live trapping surveys, monthly between January and April. For basic information about what is involved see <https://blog.nhbs.com/how-to-guides/nhbs-guide-to-small-mammal-survey-equipment/>

The above links will give some idea of what is involved. To assist those who might be interested, we have prepared a risk assessment and information sheets about how to carry out these surveys in the park. One of the outdoor team will always be available if you need any help, or have any questions. If this is something you would like to assist us with, please contact Chris Fox by email at [Leisure.services@tmbs.gov.uk](mailto:Leisure.services@tmbs.gov.uk)

Lastly, we bring you the sad news that former Councillor David Cure passed away recently. The Councillor was a regular member of this panel over the years, and we thank him for his service.

## User Panel

The next update for the Panel will be in the Autumn of 2021. Subject to prevailing circumstances at the time, a face-to-face meeting will be arranged, or a further newsletter will be circulated.

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