

Newsletter

Haysden Country Park

OCTOBER 2023

ISSUE 8

Welcome to the newsletter for Haysden Country Park.

Top stories in this newsletter



Tonbridge School



Reed bed
planting



Leigh barrier



Road closure



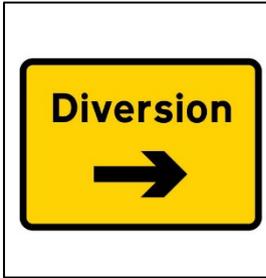
Tonbridge School giving day 28 June - Once again this year we have welcomed volunteers back from Tonbridge School to carry out a project in the park. Under the guidance of Haysden Country Park Volunteers (HCPV) and council staff we have completed the last section of the lake revetment at Barden Lake. 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.



Reed bed planting – As part of the council's commitment to addressing climate change a new reed bed has been planted by our volunteers at Haysden Water. The opportunity to plant a reed bed here was identified in the Management Plan.



Leigh barrier work – The Environment Agency contractors have laid more soil over the barrier.



Road closure – Unfortunately the Council have now been served notice by Kent County Council for a temporary road closure, in Lower Haysden Lane. This work started on the 16th October 2023, and has an estimated completion by 14th February 2024. There will be a road diversion to the country park for the period of the closure. All our concessions have been advised and will continue business as usual. A developer is making junction improvements and doing safety related works. The Council does not have any control over this road closure as Kent County Council are the Highway Authority. For the most up to date information see <https://one.network/?tm=135273172>

Other news

Natural history –

Wildflowers - Alan Heyes, our volunteer botanist has now exceeded 500 plants recorded at the park. We would like to thank him for his dedicated work.

Other surveys - over recent months, Alan Heyes has also continued with additional surveys, discovering many new mosses, lichens, and fungi in the park.

Bat Surveys – Becky a volunteer has taken on the bat surveys in the park, with our Ranger. The survey method used is based on the national recording scheme and focuses on just two species of bat so has its limitations as does the equipment we are using.

Breeding birds survey – Our thanks go to the volunteer Martin Garwood who has once again carried out a Breeding Birds Survey this Spring (this survey is based on the national recording scheme). 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 bird breeding populations.

New caterer – Mike Roots who bought the business ‘Café in the Park’ from Martin Willard is continuing to offer the same level of service and a similar range of food and drinks. They were inspected by the Council’s Food Hygiene team in recent weeks assessed against the national standards. They scored Grade 5, which is the highest grade.

Ash die-back – This disease of ash trees is still spreading in the park, and our expert tree inspection this year has identified more trees that require dead wooding or felling, and this work will be carried out shortly. Ash dieback is a species-specific fungal disease. We do not expect that any replanting will be necessary as these areas already contain large numbers of trees, and this will allow other trees to grow and spread out.

Sponsored seat scheme – The demand for new seats around the park continues.

Green Flag Award judging – We have been awarded the flag again this year and the mystery shopper judging results were very complimentary about the park and our volunteers [More...](#)



Work completed

- Revetment work around Barden Lake the structure is now complete.
- Repaired the paths at the near end of the lake and raised a section of path that has often puddled at the far end of the lake.
- Health and safety inspection of the park completed no major issues.
- Approved access for more contractors wanting to conduct maintenance work on their land.
- Continued to investigate uses for Tile Barn Field and the new licence for Flyball has provision for this.
- Council website updates adding events etc.
- Avian flu risk assessment kept under review.
- Weed treatment and painting of the sleepers in the top car park.
- Replacement of PSPO signs and warning signs
- Paid for bat survey training for one volunteer.
- Arrange pond survey training for another volunteer.
- Purchased men at work signs for our volunteers to use.
- Repairs to signage.

Work in progress

- Management plan rewrite starting this Winter ready for a start date in January 2025

- Our Access Audit will also be reviewed, in preparation for the next management plan.
- Reinstatement around the new path to Sharpes bridge with money from KCC is on order
- Reinstatement around the new revetment at Barden Lake, assess work and budget
- Path repairs for the Spring/ early Summer next year assess work and budget
- The dipping platform is closed as it is unsafe, awaiting replacement – looking into funding options.
- Repair of gate post in dog exercise area on order
- Disabled fishing platform replacements at Barden Lake - looking into funding options.
- Exterior redecoration of the toilet block being arranged via Property Services
- Replacement of the men's urinals with an environmentally friendly waterless system, that should also reduce our water bills.
- Tree planting and hedge laying in the Winter.
- Review of the Bathing Water survey method and approach.

Licensed activities

License assigned for the catering services

New license signed with Flyball extended the days of the week.

New License for Tri Swim.

New License for Nordic walking.

Volunteering update

We are fortunate to have a large group of regular volunteers working at the park. We are grateful to all of them for their outstanding efforts in the park.

Highlights of work completed.

Haysden Country Park Volunteers (HCPV)

- Himalayan balsam pulling
- Cutting back vegetation along paths and cycle track
- Recording of flora and fauna
- New fence installed at the play area entrance using recycled bollards
- Planting new reed bed at Haysden Water for climate change and biodiversity
- Repairs to signs and seats
- Repairing tools and equipment
- Building and installing dormouse boxes
- Raking up mown grass in Barden Lake meadow
- One of our volunteers is learning how to do pond surveys with the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership which can then be applied at the park



- Waymarking project – more of our volunteers Nigel, Anthony and Alan P have been planning circular routes around the park using the free GoJauntly smartphone app. Anyone can now use these walks for free.



Number of volunteer hours (April 2023 to August 2023)

Haysden Country Park Volunteers 2,887 hours

Tonbridge School 130 hours

Cubs 29 hours

Total 3,046

Photo Scavenger Hunt – There is still lots of interest in this competition and you will have seen the photographs on the noticeboards. Look out for the posters with the letter for the monthly competition.

Finance – There have been some minor increases in income due to renegotiation of fees for licences and leases. The £1000 donation made by Tonbridge School for the revetment materials and a workday was most welcome. Car parking income continues to be one of our largest sources of income to support the park, but the Council are still financially supporting the balance of our expenditure.

Events

A number of these have been arranged by us and with our partners. We have also approved other events to use the park with external organisations:

Past events

- Big Garden Bird Watch.
- Bushcraft (one was cancelled because of no interest, two events ran) £.
- Love parks week 'park bingo' self-led activity 40 copies of the leaflet taken.
- Big Butterfly Count self-led 60 copies of the leaflet taken.
- Bat walks were popular this year £.
- Cub pack activity evening.

The £ symbol indicates a charged event.

What's on

- Halloween self-led trail (free)
- Christmas self-led trail (free)
- Easter trail 2024 self-led trail (free)
- More events are still to be arranged for 2024.

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

Field surveys - We are always looking for more volunteers to run field surveys and to help when others are away. The regular surveys that we want to organise are for small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. If this is something you would like to help us with, please contact Chris Fox.

Keep in touch - If you have any ideas for the new management plan, comments, or questions for our team, we would be happy to answer you.

If you know other people who would like to receive this newsletter, please ask them to contact us at leisure.services@tmbc.gov.uk

The next newsletter is due to be published in the Spring of 2024.

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