

Newsletter

Haysden Country Park

MAY 2024

ISSUE 9

Welcome to the newsletter for Haysden Country Park.

Top stories in this newsletter



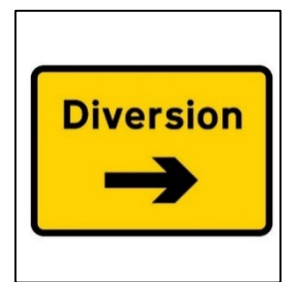
Market survey



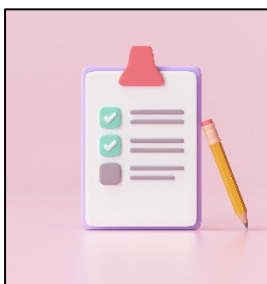
Management plan



Cutting back



Road closure



Market survey – This survey was undertaken over the last summer. The results have now been analyzed and the executive summary is provided after this newsletter. The survey is an important step to inform the next management plan for the park and identify areas of success and for improvement. The results from this survey will be incorporated into the next management plan for the park.

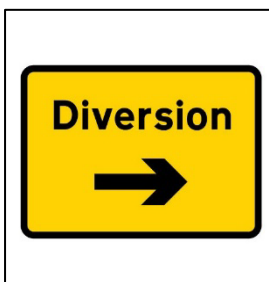


Management plan – The current management plan comes to an end in December this year. As you will be aware among other things this is a key document to identify projects for improvements, to gain the Green Flag Award and draw in external funding. Over the winter we have been reviewing the existing plan and updating this with new information from the market survey for example. As part of this process, we will be

also carrying out another Access Audit of the park using specialist advice. Once the draft documents have been prepared the councils committee will have the opportunity to comment on the draft plan before we put the document out to public consultation.



Cutting back - We often get asked why the volunteers and our contractors are doing certain tasks like cutting back vegetation and isn't this harmful for wildlife? All the work in the park is carefully planned, follows best practice, and is guided by the management plan. We plan work so that certain areas of the park are cut back each year usually in rotation around the park. If we stopped doing this vital work, then paths would soon become blocked, and plants and wildlife would soon decline. Many species of animals and plants rely on the early open land to thrive and the 'edge habitats' along margins to survive. We aim to create a mosaic of different habitats and stages of growth within the park.



Road closure – I am pleased to advise that the road is now been reopened. The Council did not have any control over this road closure as Kent County Council are the Highway Authority. Whilst the road was closed, we took the opportunity to carry out some jobs in the park, ready for the Spring. These works included the re-lining of the car park and the replacement of the urinals in the men's toilets.

Other news

Natural history –

Wildflowers – Dr Alan Heyes, is continuing his surveys of the park this time looking for fungi and ferns.

Bat Surveys – Becky a volunteer has undertaken some training, and surveys will start with the ranger this year.

Breeding birds survey – is being carried out at present by Martin our volunteer.

Pond surveys – training is being undertaken by one of our volunteers.

Ash die-back – Our tree safety survey in 2023 identified a number of trees in the park that had severe ash dieback or had died. We have now taken action to fell the dangerous trees. The cut wood has been left on the ground where it will cause no

harm and act as a natural habitat for wildlife and will rot away over the next few years. We expect these areas will recover by natural regeneration of new seedling trees in the years to come.

Sponsored seat scheme – The demand for new seats continues in the park (as this does elsewhere) with another three new seats installed or on order this year. One of the most popular areas in Borough continues to be at Barden Lake but we are seeing some seats requested at Haysden Water and in other areas of the park.

Green Flag Award – The park has won the international Green Flag Award again in 2023 for the 18th year running. There were only 2030 parks in the whole of the United Kingdom that have won this coveted award in 2023. The mystery shopper judge was clearly impressed from comments and complementary remarks made in the report about the park. (The adjacent Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground has also been winning the award for 3 years running now.) We have entered the award again in 2024 for both parks and expect the judging will take place over the summer months. [More...](#)



Work completed

- Main car park re-marked parking bays, driveway lines and warnings.
- 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 Barden Lake near end
- 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 completed.
- Replacement of the men's urinals with an environmentally friendly waterless system, this should also reduce our water bills.
- Reviewed the Bathing Water survey method and approach.
- Purchased more volunteer uniforms, tools, and equipment.

Licensed activities

New License for Tri Swim.

New License for Nordic walking.

Volunteering update

We are most 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. Their

calendar sales this year raised more funds which will be put towards managing the park.

Highlights of work completed.

Haysden Country Park Volunteers (HCPV)

- Recording of flora and fauna
- New fence installed at the play area entrance using recycled bollards
- Planted a new reed bed at Haysden Water
- Coppiced another compartment at Barden Lake
- Scrub cutting back 1/3 of the scrub area by the River Medway (this is a good habitat for slow worms, ants and nesting birds)
- Dead hedge creation and hedge laying
- Estate maintenance and repairs

Number of volunteer hours (beginning of September 2023 to end of February 2024)

Haysden Country Park Volunteers 2,196 hours in total

Work coming up

- Park Access Audit commissioned.
- Invasive species control of Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed
- Planting along the new revetment at Barden Lake
- Cutting back the wildflowers near the jetty (cutting back in the spring allows seed for winter birds and cover for overwintering insects)
- Field surveys, Breeding birds, bats, wildflowers, and ponds
- Replacing the fence along the Mud Lane boundary (materials purchased by the council for the volunteers)
- Replacing three old picnic tables which have come to the end of their life by The Shallows bridge.
- Removed the old dipping platform.
- Dipping platform replacement options to be considered and priced.
- Replacing boot wiper brushes
- Raptor box cleaning and safety checks
- Two new items of play equipment, purposed made musical instruments for the play area, a xylophone and a percussion instrument to be installed. These we are told are fun for all abilities but particularly suitable for disabled children.
- Replacement litter bins to install - These will match the newer style bins.

Finance – 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. There was a slight downturn in income we suspect because of the road closure.

Events

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

Past events

- Halloween self-led trail (free)
- Christmas self-led trail (free)
- New year plant hunt self-led (free)
- Big garden birdwatch self-led (free)

What's on

- Easter trail 2024 self-led trail (free)
- Big Butterfly hunt self-led (free)
- Love Parks self-led event (free)
- Bat walks TBC £
- Halloween self-led trail (free)
- Christmas trail self-led trail (free)
- New year plant hunt self-led event (free)
- More events are still to be arranged see social media and we will add them to the Councils website events page.

The £ symbol indicates a charged event.

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

Field surveys - We are always looking for volunteers to run field surveys and to help when others are away.

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 Autumn of 2024.



Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Leisure Services
Gibson Building, Gibson Drive
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent ME19 4LZ
Email: Leisure.services@tmbc.gov.uk
Tel 01732 844522



Executive Summary (abridged)

Surveys of visitors to Haysden Country Park took place in July and August 2023.

These surveys were carried out to gain the views of visitors on the Country Park, their levels of satisfaction and areas they would like to see improved.

It also provided information on the profile of visitors and where they come from, along with their visiting patterns.

Similar surveys were carried out in previous years (2013 and 2018) and this enables changes and trends in visitor profile and opinions to be highlighted.

About Visitors to Haysden Country Park Although there are some variations between the surveys, there was not a significant difference between the profile of visitors in 2023 and the previous survey in 2018.

In 2013, 28% of visitors were children, in 2018, 30% were children and in 2023, 37% were children.

- The adult age group with the highest number of people in 2023 was 35 – 44.

In 2018 the adult age group with the highest number of people was 55 - 64.

- Although there is some variation between the surveys, there is not a significant difference in the profile the age of adult visitors between 2018 and 2023.

There does not appear to be a trend of a decrease or increase in any age group, with the exception of under 16 year olds, which has increased with each survey.

- 5% of visitor groups said that someone in their group had a limiting disability or long-standing health problem.

- 93% of visitors were of White ethnicity.

While this remained the highest ethnic group, there was an increase in visitors from ethnic groups other than White.

Visits to Haysden Country Park There were no significant changes in where visitors

to Haysden Country Park come from: • The average distance of visitors from the park was 12.2km (7.5 miles).

- Most groups were very local to Tonbridge, with 43% of groups living within 2 miles of the Country Park.

- A further 28% lived between 2 and 5 miles, meaning that 71% of visitors live within 5 miles of the Country Park.

- There was also no significant change in visitors' drive time to Haysden Country Park.

In 2023, 49% of visitors originated from an area 10 minutes or less drive time from Haysden Country Park compared to 53% in 2018.

- 64% of visitors live within 15 minute

Key findings

Satisfaction levels of 95% or more

Attractiveness

Refreshments

Cleanliness

Balance of recreation and wildlife

Play area

Things you would most like to see.

Wildlife

Exercise trail

Rubbing trail

Visitor center

Adventure zone

More disability access

More enforcement