

## Emberton Country Park PLUG Minutes 15 June 2023

### Attendees:

Chair & Olney Ward Councillor

Emberton Parish Council

Emberton Parish Council

Park user

MKCC, Projects and Development Manager Country Parks

Park Ranger

Grounds Café

Friends of Emberton Country Park

Olney Town Council

Emberton Park Sailing Club

MKAA

MKAA

### Apologies:

Portfolio Holder – Public Realm

Olney Ward Councillor

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at the Sailing Club. Introductions were made.
2. Notes and actions from previous meetings were discussed:

MKAA noted mention of the Freedom of Information request made by Emberton Parish Council last year and requested a copy and The Chair requested it be sent to everyone.

**Action: Project and Development to forward the response to all PLUG members.**

It was confirmed that the water-logged area identified by the lower gate has been filled and the problem resolved.

There have been no issues with river bank parking of late.

The black poplar enthusiast has not been in contact with ECP but is welcome to make himself known to discuss planting, if he wishes. In the meantime, plans are in hand to plant new trees with MK Community Trees.

The open day held at the Sailing Club was successful.

### 3. Development Update

The Project and Development Manager confirmed that there is agreement across MKCC and the ward and parish councils to have the funding for Changing Places be diverted to ECP (these are bathroom facilities for severely disabled individuals that include a hoist, adult sized changing table, plus shower) and this is now with the Dept of Levelling Up to confirm. Work is in hand, such as surveys, to ensure that when consent is granted, we can proceed. The Section 106 funds to support this grant have been applied for.

Once the Changing Places project costs are fully known, it will be possible to spend money on play equipment, which is the next priority.

The road works in the park have concluded, however, the green paint is not satisfactory and that will be remedied next week.

A PV Panels company has done a survey of the building that houses the café and public toilets. This exercise was begun by someone who has now left, so the Project and Development Manager has gone to Facilities to look into this further, as keen to improve the sustainability of the park where possible.

Currently looking at whether a cabin in use at Synergy Park could be re-purposed for the Rangers as office accommodation. The current arrangement is not suitable and makes for an inappropriate work space, certainly where there is sensitive information. The feasibility of this is being worked out currently and it would require the Navy Hut to be demolished.

**Action: The Project and Development Manager to pursue all of the above and update at the next meeting.**

### 4. Gate Closure

This was discussed at length and the issues it presents to those wishing to access the riverbank and the river angling season will begin 16 June.

Friends of Emberton made the point that mobility scooter users find it much better to use the gated area as no longer have to move out of the way of cars. This is something that we could promote. Also, we know that families using Adventure Cycles are finding this area good to use, as well as others.

The concern remains that when the park is really busy, it may be necessary to open the gates in the afternoons, such as weekends in the summer holidays.

**Action: Rangers to keep records of feedback and this will be reviewed at the end of the season.**

### 5. Operational Update

Adam explained recent works completed by volunteers: bug hotels, re-planting sensory area, wildlife shelters etc.

24 June there will be a dragonfly walk with Alan Nelson and looking to do another one for children in August. Plus doing a 'thank you' dragonfly walk for the volunteers only on 12 August, that they will not be charged for to show appreciation for all the work that they do. There is also a bat walk on 27 August and there has been a dawn chorus event.

There is some corporate volunteering coming up with Santander and the prospect of planting 'fungi-henge' on the tree stumps behind the café is being explored.

The recent theft of a vehicle from the touring field was discussed and how it left the park through the ascot railing near the bridge to Olney. The Chair commented on the need for everyone to be vigilant.

**Action: the damaged ascot railing needs to be resolved so that it cannot be used this way again.**

## 6. Updates from park stakeholders

The static caravan representative highlighted that the lower half of the statics now has good CCTV coverage via owner's personal systems, which include recording.

Grounds Café raised the need for better recycling as all waste is put in the bin outside of the café. It was suggested a second bin and signs could be made at the gatehouse to indicate what waste goes in what bin. It was suggested that keeping a tally of recycled cups etc could add an incentive and potentially local children do a 're-cycle here' poster.

**Action: Grounds to secure a second bin and arrange with the gatehouse for signs to be made.**

Emberton Park Sailing Club passed on thanks for all the good work the volunteers have done that have improved conditions on Heron Water. They also acknowledged Olney Town Council for their fantastic response to carrying out chipping the wood at short notice in time for the open day.

The open day at the Sailing Club was very successful and resulted in more members and another day is planned for August or September.

Currently the island is not being used as there are oyster catchers nesting there.

A Ranger raised the issue with the sea cadet drop offs parking on double yellow lines near the gatehouse restricting access for other park users. The gatehouse will allow entrance for dropping off.

**Action: dates will be shared with the gatehouse so they know when to expect the sea cadets.**

MKAA said that their new membership books are pink, so not to admit people with orange ones now.

They also requested that it be known that if fish are seen coming up gulping for air there is an Environment Agency phone number (0800 807060) to report this to and they have ways of quickly releasing oxygen in the water.

**Action: This will be passed onto Comms and also message this on the Emberton Facebook page – the Park Manager has stated since he would prefer park users to report this at the gatehouse so they can contact the EA and know where the areas of concern are in the park.**

Emberton Parish Council read part of an email from an unhappy cyclist about the locked gates in the park as this is to stop vehicles and bicycles are vehicles. It was pointed out that we have not stopped cyclists, in fact this is to make a better environment for those on bikes or on foot.

**Action: Emberton Parish Council to share this complaint email with the Project and Development Manager for Emberton Country Park and Highways.**

A park user observed the marked improvement in the species now in the park that have not been there for some years: tree creepers and colts' foot on the edge of the lakes. The work we are doing is bearing positive results.

**Action;: Park user to forward images that can be uploaded to Facebook to share.**

**Future meetings:**

Thursday 17 August 2023

Thursday 19 October 2023