

Emberton Country Park PLUG Minutes 18 January 2024

Via: Teams

Attendees:

Chair & Olney Ward Councillor

Portfolio Holder – Public Realm (partial)

MKCC, Projects and Development Manager Country Parks

Emberton Country Park Manager

Sea Cadets

Emberton Café, Meadow Brown Restaurants

Friends of Emberton Country Park

Emberton Parish Council

Emberton Park Sailing Club

Emberton Parish Council (partial)

Apologies:

Olney Town Council

Static Caravan representative

Emberton Park Sailing Club

Park user

Olney Town Council

Emberton Café, Meadow Brown Restaurants

MKAA

Olney Ward Councillor

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting on Teams. Introductions were made.
2. Notes and actions from previous meetings were taken as received.
3. Development Update

It was confirmed order placed for the Changing Places unit. It is expected to be complete by end of March and just awaiting updates for dates on Site. It is not expected to cause much disruption and any power outage will be notified in advance.

Update: Work on site due to commence w/c 5 February.

National Grid are coming on Wednesday 7 February to change over the unit power comes into. This will require the power to be off for most of the day. Emberton Park Café are aware and Emberton Park Sailing Club are now aware. National Grid will write to everyone affected by this work. It was agreed that there should be notices put up in the park and advance warning given. Also, a discussion regarding keeping the toilets open. There will not be hot water or lighting, but paper towels or hand sanitiser could be made available.

Action: The Park Manager to get posters up in the park to warn of the power going off on this date and message one week in advance on Facebook, the weekend before and day before.

There was discussion about the wind farm fund and whether it may be possible to get solar panels for the gate house to reduce costs.

Action: Project and Development Manager to liaise with Emberton Parish Council, Olney Town Council and research further the terms of the fund and how it is administered.

The Environment Agency has funds from fishing licences that it can award for improving angling, provided the authority contributes £2 to every £1 they provide.

Action: Project and Development Manager and Park Manager to research reasonable costs for accessible fishing swims and find out if MKCC can contribute.

4. Operation Update

The Park Manager confirmed that the 100+ black poplars were successfully planted yesterday. Community Trees:MK sourced these trees from Linden Gate Nursery in south Buckinghamshire and they were paid via the legacy of the former MKCC ecologist, Alan Holmes. There are less than 7,000 of these trees surviving in the UK so it is a tremendous boost for biodiversity that these have been planted at Emberton.

The North Bucks Bat Group worked with the Park Manager and the Rangers to instal 15 bat boxes, which they will return to survey in the summer.

There will be more nature walks and talks this summer such as bat walks, dawn chorus and now ECP has a moth trap, will include moths also.

The next tree planting events are Saturday 10 February and Saturday 17 February with link to book to attend on the Facebook page via Eventbrite.

It was confirmed that last summer's temporary Ranger will return this year.

The mink traps were explained as an addition in November. The scheme is run by the Water Life Recovery Trust. There has been tremendous success in Norfolk in eradicating minks. The traps are remotely monitored, when activated they prompt an email and text and someone comes from Stanwick Lakes to humanely despatch the mink and they are taken for analysis.

The extensive litter in the rally fields was mentioned, in particular beer cans. The Park Manager explained the flood has brought more rubbish onto the land. Also, along the A509 there is a lot of litter in the hedgerows. The Chair confirmed he has already reported this to the Head of Environment and Waste.

The Chair queried Dickens of a Christmas and how many visitors – approximately 200 – and whether we will charge for the car park this year.

Update: The following day it was agreed with the Clerk of Olney Town Council in future those using the park and ride will pay to come into Emberton Country Park.

Damage to the fence of field 13 when the poplars had their crown lift in the autumn was reported.

Action: This is on the repairs list.

The Chair thanked Emberton Country Park for taking in the Christmas trees for Willen Hospice for chipping this year and as it was so successful, expects it will be requested again in 2025.

5. Stakeholders' Update

The Sailing Club did not flood and thanked the Rangers for their help in providing sandbags during the flooding. The water reached the patio but did not reach the building.

Coppicing is ongoing on the island and the spit.

There are meetings coming up to discuss events for 2024 and training programme.

A new hot water system has been installed.

The café is going well, getting to know customers, will extend the menu further and have invested in more equipment for the kitchen and will have more staff in preparation for the Easter holidays.

The Sea Cadets said that this is not boating season for their members although they are keen to get out on the water, which will be in March. They have found a solicitor so will be firming up the details for leasing the compound. Also, they are happy to promote the tree planting events to their members in support of Emberton Country Park and always keen to support community events.

The static caravan representative had sent apologies and was not there to represent the statics, but it is their closed season. The news is that there is a new static joining, plus the rules have been updated slightly to protect MKCC from debt so new static licensees will need to pay a £1,000 deposit and agree to a credit check if they wish to pay by direct debit. The Park Manager explained the need to remove and destroy abandoned static caravans and the time and cost to MKCC.

Future meetings:

Thursday 11 April 2024

Thursday 13 June 2024

Thursday 15 August 2024

Thursday 17 October 2024