

Evolving Our Country Parks



Operational Subsidy

- As visitor sites they operate at a net cost



Future Sustainability

- Addressing neglect, establishing sustainable investment
- Attracting Tourism



Volunteering

- Maintaining strong volunteer groups
- Community operations



Green Assets

- Healthy open spaces
- Protecting our valued wildlife
- Long term security for Huntingdonshire

Hinchingbrooke Country Park



Operational and Financial Context



Site and Lease

180 acres including wildlife lakes

County Council Owned

Long Lease 1996 for a period of 30 years to 2026

HDC aim to gain tenure of site, needs development plan.

Finance

HDC bears liability and cost – average annual subsidy £100,000

Cost controls exhausted, no further practical measures possible

Non-sustainable commuted sums (payment in lieu for affordable housing)

Café income up but restricted by existing building and car park capacity



Facilities

Approximately 160,000 - 170,000 visitors a year

Car Park of 60 spaces, charges go to general fund (£45,000)

Car Park inadequate for large events causing parking problems

Café/toilets - struggle at peak visitor times and for events



Key Market Opportunities



Potential Visitors

- Within 30 minute drive - potential market is over 100,000 households = $\frac{1}{4}$ million potential visitors
- Within 1 hour drive – potential market 800,000 households = 2 million potential visitors
- Affluent households with disposable income



Parking

- Parking currently £2 for 6 hours
- Parking capacity very limited for visitor numbers at 60 spaces



Café Spend

- Current offer has reached constraints, limited and average spend per head estimated at £1.00 per visitor
- Potential uplift beyond £1.50 per head anticipated with enhanced offer
- Capacity limited currently adversely impacting spend at peak and during events

Key SWOT



Strengths

Natural habitat, flat, accessible, great reputation, strong volunteer base, accredited park, Green Flag.



Weaknesses

Parking, Hidden Site, Poor Catering Offer and Seating, Disjointed and poor capacity facilities, flood plain in winter



Opportunities

Car park, combined facilities, large affluent market, events, play facilities, health activities, hub for outdoor access cycling and walking



Threats

Ownership, lease terms, current dilapidation, need to maintain natural focus, growing visitors - housing

Options



Do Nothing

- Subsidy £100,000
- No ownership/tenure – hand back
- Retain existing car park and separate visitor



Combine and Expand

- 800,000 – 1,000,000 capital investment
- £40,000 subsidy to £10,000 surplus (conservative)
- Long term tenure/ownership
- Extend Countryside Centre, remove existing café/toilets, expand car parking



New Custom Built Visitor Centre

- 3,000,000 – 4,000,000 capital investment
- High risk, return on capital limited by site size, visitor numbers, wildlife goals
- Long term ownership critical
- Remove all existing facilities and replace with one new building, expand car parking

Recommended Option for Detailed Business Case

Development linked to Option Two, most likely to deliver return on investment:

- Hub for outdoor/sustainable travel options e.g. cycle route hub/walking hub
- Play based and activities
- Play trail and natural play
- Enhance existing play offer : sand and water play
- Bushcraft and other outdoor area
- Boulders
- External infrastructure
- Wildlife hut
- Outdoor shelter
- Viewing tower
- Interpretation
- External deck and tensile structure

Enhanced cafe and small indoor play are incorporated within the building estimates

Potential Return

Investment - £800,000 - £1m Capital

| | Pessimistic Returns | Potential Returns |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| Visitors | 170,000 to 200,000 | 170,000 to 220,000 |
| Parking Additional Income through capacity | £25,000 | £40,000 |
| Parking Additional Income through charges | £10,000 | £20,000 |
| Café Spend up from £1.00/head | £25,000 | £50,000 |
| Total potential return | £60,000 | £110,000 |

Excludes: soft play facility, events income enabled by new infrastructure