



Friends of Gedling Country Park

Registered Charity Number 1167205

Chairman's Report – December 2017

In March 2018 we will be three years old and 2017 has seen some great changes and developments on the park.

The children's play area continues to be as popular as expected and is always busy.

This year saw the opening of Cafe1899 and it has proved to be a very welcome addition to the park. They have allowed us to host evening events there and agreed to give members a 10% discount (on production of a valid membership card) and the staff are friendly and obliging. The only adverse comments are with respect to the toilets which are linked to the opening hours and with the removal of the existing block it can prove inconvenient for some people when the cafe is closed.

The extra car parking is in place and there are now 6 disabled spaces (3 at the west and 3 at the east end of the car park). There are still lots of times when the car park is extremely busy, and all spaces are taken so we would ask people to be patient, park carefully and with thought for other users.

Green Flag status was awarded again, and we are still awaiting final confirmation of the park being designated a Local Nature Reserve. Equally we, the Friends, continue with our policy of supporting the fact that no non-native species of plants are used on the park.

We have missed the cows for most of the year, sadly this has been due to ensuring that water is available in the areas for them. However, agreement has been reached with Gedling Borough Council and Nottinghamshire County Council to provide scrapes to act as water catchment areas and these will be developed soon (in fact may already have been done at the time of the AGM). So once complete we will get the cattle back – not only providing some welcome sights but helping to manage the grasslands.

The park now has a Ranger present on every day and Adam Hales has brought some much needed help and support to the Park users and the Friends.

Community work days had L'Oréal, Ikea, Boots and the Co-op all bringing parties to work and help which allowed us to make significant inroads into some areas we were working on. So, a huge thank you goes out to them and hopefully next year we will see even more such community involvement from local businesses.

Equally we have had visits from local Womens Institutes and we will see them again next year. We have also given talks to local societies and groups and are always happy to be asked and will do our best to attend.

For safety reasons we have taken down the bird hide by the central lagoon and the roof of the roundhouse but have plans to replace these next year.

Our estimate, which will be covered in more details in the Environment Report, is that we have had several thousand hours of volunteer work during the year and this has enabled us to have work sessions almost every weekend and during the week.

In 2017 we were awarded a grant from Nottinghamshire County Council (Supporting Local Communities) which has allowed us to commission an artist to develop and install a piece of artwork on the Memorial Garden. We have also received further help and funding during the year and this has allowed us to commission some specially designed benches for the Memorial Garden and also the Friends are working on some raised beds for the area. The trees we have planted together with more still to come will complement the area and 2018 will see the full flowering of what we know is a fitting Memorial to all those who gave their lives in Gedling Colliery.

On land to the north of the park we have seen the continued development of new homes by Bloor Homes, which should be completed by 2019. Keepmoat has started building on the old colliery site and Chase Farm fields and we all await work on the Gedling Access Road with baited breath!!

We held our first ever photo competition, well supported and sponsored by local companies. The standard of the entries was excellent and allowed us to have our own calendar to help promote the park. We are running the competition again this year and there is still time up until March 2018 to submit entries.

Fundraising is a necessary fact if we are to be able to continue our work and activities on the park and, so I make a plea to everyone – if you know of any local companies, groups or teams who want to help in the development of this fantastic park – please let us know. This year we have seen significant contributions from:

- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Gedling Borough Councillors
- Mapperley Co-Ops
- Netherfield WI
- Rotary Clubs
- Magpie Brewery
- Castle Rock Brewery & the Willowbrook

We also continued work on raising funds to support our activities and for future developments. As you will see from the Treasurer's report I feel that we have been extremely successful in this – but this is just the start of our efforts in raising funds to allow the development of the park. At this point I should like to express the thanks of the Trustees and Friends to all those organisations and businesses who have helped us both financially and materially.

VOLUNTEERS - YES PLEASE - We need people to help even more in 2018 and we will have a presence by the Cafe to talk to people about our work. So, if you think you can help out for a few hours, especially at weekends, please let us know.

Our team of Volunteers, have worked with the Council and on our own organised events. The continuing work is in developing areas for future use. Removing rubbish, removing tree guards, planting new trees and bushes and starting areas such as the butterfly walk.

But we do have still a MAJOR issue, as do many users also, and this is inconsiderate dog owners who do not clear up after their pets. Dog fouling is increasingly becoming a problem. So, if you see offenders please report it to the Council.

We have made good use of social media to help promote and publicise the park and our website and face book pages are regularly used by the public and members seeking information. Our activities are also supported by the Gedling Borough Council website.

However, I must make an appeal to all members, your membership helps provide us with a solid financial base for our activities, insurance, general items such as protective gloves, all these have to be renewed and are an annual ongoing cost. The cost of a family membership is £10 and an individual one is £5, very little by today's standards, but a vital source of funds for us. It also allows us to reach a wider audience with updates on our activities. So why not try and encourage your friends, neighbours and others to help support us by joining?

So, to bring this report to a close I should like to offer my personal thanks to all our members, our hard-working volunteers, my fellow Trustees and most importantly of all the staff and councillors of Gedling Borough Council.

Oh yes – still need lots more volunteers please.....

Terry Lock, Chairman, Friends of Gedling Country Park

ENVIRONMENT REPORT FOR 2017

This is the second yearly report by The Friends Group of the progress of environmental projects and the health of wildlife within Gedling Country Park (The Park). 2017 has been a very mixed year with some really encouraging results and some disappointing failures.

One of the greatest disappointments was the inability to complete all the butterfly surveys this year. This was mainly due to time constraints and lack of volunteer help. Hopefully we can raise some assistance for 2018 as these surveys are critical to the future assessments of the park acting as indicators of the health of the environment. Also, this year, despite objections by the Friends Group, Gedling Borough Council have decided to renege on their agreement to retain The Park as a native only flora this is to protect our wildlife and prevent invasive and exotics spreading throughout The Park. We, The Trustees, provided a list of native species as alternatives to Gedling Borough Council's chosen foreign species in their plans for the Café planting. No formal reply to this planning objection has been received by the Friends Group and our objections and alternative planting suggestions have been rejected. Currently we are awaiting a reply to our request for an explanation of the Councils decision. Also, the Council planted areas around the Café prior to any planning decisions. We will be also requesting a list of the Council Members of the planning Group involved under Gedling Borough Council's Freedom of Information Policy. Early this year Bloor Homes illegally removed a section of hedgerow on our northern boundary. Due to the efforts by The Friends Group and Gedling Borough Council this has been replaced and negotiations are in place to plant a number of trees alongside this boundary.

On a brighter note many successful recordings and volunteer operations were completed throughout 2017. Reverting to the 2017 format reports from the various groups follows:-

MAMMALS

The reports for this year are as for 2016 but with the addition of a carcass of a Polecat discovered on the park's northern boundary alongside Spring Lane. This species has previously been recorded in the county but in very small numbers (0.5% of the 1 Kilometer squares). Also, a dead Hedgehog was reported found on the park. More bat species records have been recorded but have not yet been collated.

BUTTERFLIES

Two transects were decided for 2017, one as per 2016 and a new transect covering the central and southern areas. We have some recordings (approx 45% of intended) and the data will be presented asap. Though some interesting and promising observations are noted as follows. Species were flying both earlier and later this year. A new site for the Dingy Skipper was recorded and this butterfly was also recorded flying as late as August for the first time. A considerable hatch of Brimstones was noted in mid-summer and generally more butterflies were present than 2016. Many Green Hairstreaks were recorded in central and southern areas. It is far too early to draw any conclusions from this data but at least the Park is holding the butterfly population. Work commenced in September to mitigate the disturbance of the Dingy Skipper due to the construction of the Gedling Access Road (GAR). This consisted of scrub removal and scrapings of the mosaic habitat from outside the park being spread across agreed areas within the park. Successful completion of this work was completed in October and we pass on our thanks to Nancy Ashridge of Via for organising this.

BIRDS

Thanks to Mark Tyler we have received regular updates on the bird population and insect sightings within the park. Mark's reports will be published asap and the information made publicly available. Mark's example vividly illustrates the importance of keen observers reporting on all the wildlife within the park – Many thanks it is much appreciated.

TREES

Tree planting and maintenance has been carried out throughout the year with particular emphasis on a tree barrier along the northern boundary. More mature trees are being planted along this boundary during the winter to assist in obscuring the new buildings. Also, this winter a swathe of trees at the north-eastern corner of the park will be coppiced. This group of trees have grown up and are obscuring the views of Lincoln Cathedral.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

Grass Snakes have been recorded swimming in the lower lagoons during 2017. We had previously been informed of recordings a few years ago but it is pleasing that they are now present again within the park. To date no other reptiles have been observed within the park. The Common Frog, Common Toad and Common Newt bred in numbers throughout the park during this year with newts present in even the smallest water bodies.

LAGOONS AND WATERWAYS

Much work is in progress in these areas, including the partial clearing of the central lagoon. This lagoon has to have reed and rushes removed to re-create some open water habitat for

resident and migrant wildfowl also by raising the water level it hopefully will prevent any re-emergence of these species. This is a joint operation between Gedling Borough Council and The Friends Group Volunteers. The idea is to test a cost-efficient method of maintenance for the park's lagoons thereby saving council funds. A survey of the macro invertebrate fauna of the park's waterways has been carried out during 2017. This is part of a student from Nottingham Trent University project and some interesting information and questions have surfaced - data will be made available during next year. This winter the scrapes on the tops of the eastern area of the park, around the solar farm, will be partially cleared of invading reeds to enable access for winter migrant waders. Some small ponds will also be created, as cattle watering areas, within some of the fenced areas of the park this will enable stock to be re-introduced to graze the grassland. The bird hide at the central lagoon has been cleared temporarily this is to improve safety and drainage. It will be re-constructed, with seating, during 2018

THE WORKING WOODLAND

More fenced pathways were created during the year and the installation of drainage to improve winter usage is now under construction. More hazel coppicing will be planted during 2018 with the hope that we may be able to introduce the Hazel Woodmouse in future years. Due to the drainage works the Celtic Round House has been dismantled, this will hopefully be replaced during 2018.

BEEES

We are pleased to report a more successful year for our bees and we managed to extract a quantity of honey. I must confess that over the sixty years I have been involved with beekeeping this is without doubt the best honey I have tasted! The honey will be for sale and Members have been given first choice to purchase. Permission to erect a hut within the Solar Farm has been agreed, and if we can raise the funds to purchase one, will be installed in 2018. The hut will considerably assist in the maintenance of our bees as all materials can be stored on site.

Many more volunteers are required for survey work during 2018! We will provide training if necessary. Come and join, you will spend time in the wonderful park countryside, learn a great deal about our native wildlife, meet many like-minded friends and help contribute to the management and improvement of Gedling Country Park for future generations.

Projects for this next year include Bryophyte surveys - Mosses, Lichens etc. (winter 2017/18), Dragonfly exuvia (shed larvae skins) identification as this allows us to identify breeding species and we are producing our first park guide on the 26 species of butterflies. Any photographs or data of butterflies, day flying moths or caterpillars in the park will be gratefully received and full acknowledgement will be given if used.