

## Cobtree Manor Park Update Report March 2017

The report covers the period from January 2017 to March 2017

### **Park**

Maintenance of the park over this period covers Winter and early Spring

Works to the park include:

Continuing renovation to shrubbery areas;

Further removal of accumulated rubble and arisings;

Preparation of areas for the sowing of Pictorial Meadows

Design of planting for planters around the Visitor Centre

An ongoing assessment of the Arboretum trees continues to inform an Arboretum Management Plan, improved curation, documentation, labelling and interpretation. A summary and a tree replacement policy will be available at the meeting.

Two students with additional needs from the Grange School in conjunction with Hadlow College, studying for Level 2 qualifications in Conservation/ Horticulture, are undertaking six week work placements, one day per week, working with the Cobtree Ranger.

### **Incidents**

An insurance claim is progressing to recover losses from the November break-in.

In December, a car struck the park fencing on Forstal Road causing damage to a tree and section of fencing. The Police investigation is still ongoing. Fencing has been repaired by MBS in January.

### **Events**

MVCP run events:

A programme has been devised for 2017 including an Easter Trail, Teddy Bear's picnic, Mini-Beast Safari, Geocaching, Pollinators, and Rustic Christmas Decorations. Two Bush-craft sessions are planned following the popularity of last year's sessions.

'In-house' events

February half-term Natural crafts with Churros and Hot Chocolate refreshment attracted 44 participants.

Planned events include:

- Mother's Day Decorate a Cupcake.
- Easter Egg Hunt.
- Easter Bonnet Photo Competition.
- Making Animal Masks.
- Two Story Trails with picnic.
- Decorate a Molehill Photo Competition.
- Father's Day - Decorate a mug for Dad.
- Themed summer family trails.
- An Autumn Arboretum walk.
- Halloween – Evening Fright Trail.
- A Maidstone Zoo Day is in the planning stage for Autumn 2017.

### **Café**

Staffing: recruitment is ongoing to maintain and augment a pool of at least 10 Casual staff.

In this period the café has delivered catering for 75 at the Town Hall for a DWP function.

The distribution of leaflets to the neighbouring industrial estate has resulted in an increase to telephone orders, particularly for weekend breakfasts.

### **Visitor Centre**

Harpers Construction has completed the majority of Year 1 building rectifications, with one minor rectification to the flooring outstanding.

In order to improve the outside seating area, 5 trees not thriving due to damage and or disease have been felled. Five planters built by the Men in Sheds project will be planted up over the next month.

### **Community**

The Men In Sheds project continues to construct bird and owl boxes. The Elephant House has some condensation problems affecting the project's machinery. They propose to seek funding both to cure this problem and for the installation of a toilet.

SHED's Green Shoots therapeutic Garden Project have started a community garden in the 'secret garden' by Dingly Dell cottage. Five regular volunteers have established the structure, cultivated the plots and planted a native hedgerow on the boundary.

### **Marketing and Publicity**

A website [www.cobtreemanorpark.co.uk](http://www.cobtreemanorpark.co.uk) has been launched in February. This can now be utilised for event promotion and marketing.

### **Cobtree Manor Park Car Park**

As requested at the last meeting an indicative price for surfacing the car park at the park has been sought. This initially is to surface the whole car park and install all of the required drainage and kerbs. Before the work took place we would look at whether the lay out could be improved and how we would soften the look of the car park.

The estimate price to surface the existing car park is £296,000.

### **River Cycle Path Update**

Unfortunately due to the delay in funding confirmation the pathway across Forstal Field and the road crossing have not been progressed as part of the project. Officers are currently talking to the project team and whether the road crossing can be done as a separate project. The road crossing is still seen as very important as families will use the river path to access Cobtree Manor Park.

It is hoped that there will be an update on this and an opinion from Kent Highways regarding the tunnel under Forstal Road at the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017.