

Emberton Country Park PLUG Minutes 17 August 2023

Attendees:

Cllr Keith McLean	-	Chair & Olney Ward Councillor
Sheila Keene	-	Park user
Laura Clancy	-	MKCC, Projects and Development Manager Country Parks
Steve Clark	-	Friends of Emberton Country Park
Dierdre Bethune	-	Olney Town Council
Jane Brushwood	-	Olney Town Council
Serena Stewardson	-	Emberton Park Sailing Club
Stuart Ball	-	Sea Cadets
Samuel Flowers	-	Emberton Country Park Manager
Kevin Osborne	-	MKAA
Viv Lewis	-	Static Caravan representative

Apologies:

Cllr Lauren Townsend	-	Portfolio Holder – Public Realm
Cllr Debbie Whitworth	-	Olney Ward Councillor
Angela Laval	-	Emberton Parish Council
Harry White	-	Emberton Parish Council
David Barton	-	Emberton Park Sailing Club

1. Cllr McLean welcomed everyone to the meeting outside the café. Introductions were made.
2. Notes and actions from previous meetings were discussed:

Confirmed Freedom of Information request response was forwarded to everyone.

3. Matters Arising

Laura announced that the incoming café lease will be taken by Meadow Brown, who have other cafes in parks such as Delamere Forest in Cheshire and Nene Park in Peterborough. They have a strong environmental approach (moved away from single use plastics 7 years ago) and will also be supplying the ice cream facility, which will be a tricycle rather than a van.

Concern was raised regarding the current offering at Grounds as there is no food available and Cllr McLean was of the view that we need to raise this matter with Grounds to ensure this provision is maintained until the end of the contract.

Steve Clark raised how in Olney there has been much miscommunication over another business that went through a change and there is a need to communicate that there is a new café operator coming in and that the business is not being run down to close.

Action: Laura to discuss with Penny and Comms

Changing Places funding has been agreed for Emberton Country Park. However, the feasibility surveys to locate this in the static caravan area have shown that it is not a suitable location and it has been decided to position behind C block toilets and the café.

Action: Laura to make static caravan owners aware

It was confirmed the road works have been completed.

PV Panels were discussed, and it was explained that a survey of the roof of the café and toilet block would be required to see if it is in good enough condition/how long it will last, before we can decide if this is suitable or not. Also, there is the issue about the age of the building and the 2030 and 2050 aspirations.

It was agreed we will discuss this at the Steering Group meeting in September and let PLUG know the outcome in October.

Action: Laura to find out cost of survey/implications of PV panels.

The gate closure was discussed, and Sam confirmed that there has been more positive than negative feedback with some MKAA anglers not realising that they had the code in their book. Cllr McLean requested that there are figures regarding number of responses both positive and negative for the next meeting.

Action: Sam to collate information and bring to the next meeting.

It was noted that the replacement for the broken ascot railing (from the car theft) was more sturdy.

Grounds Café did receive a second bin, gifted to them, to enhance the recycling. Not currently in use, so taken back.

It was decided to have the stakeholder comments in advance of the walk around the park.

4. Stakeholder Comments

Cllr McLean asked about dates when the Sea Cadets need access. Stuart Ball explained that they thought they could not fob in parents, but it was agreed that they can do so when it is outside of the gatehouse hours.

Action: Stuart to inform the gatehouse of dates when Sea Cadets will have activities at ECP.

Serena said there was not another open day planned for Emberton Park Sailing Club at present.

The number for the Environment Agency was shared in accordance with MKAA's suggestion at the June meeting, for fish showing signs of distress. Kevin Osborne also said that the storms have brought toxic materials into rivers, so this season has had many challenges for anglers.

Cllr McLean queries whether Angela Laval of Emberton Parish Council had shared the cyclist's complaint. Laura said that she had done so and the response was sent to Emberton Parish Council rather than the complainant (due to GDPR) and apologies made for any misunderstanding as we do welcome cyclists on the section of the park closed to motorised vehicles.

Viv Lewis had nothing to report for the static caravans and there is a meeting with the static caravan owners this Saturday 19 August.

Stuart Ball introduced the work of the Sea Cadets – some 80 co-ed 9-18 year olds do water and land based activities and they are a very diverse community compared to other youth organisations in Milton Keynes. Their rowers qualify at Emberton Country Park and take part in activities in Portsmouth, Weymouth and other areas. The Junior Girls team (under 15's) came third in the country. The Sea Cadets will take on the compound vacated by Results Base/Cow man so that they can store more boats. They are looking to have activities all year now that the Sailing Club has a shower. They need a new venue as MK Community Fund are evicting them from a warehouse they use.

Serena confirmed the works at the Sailing Club are mostly completed, although the hot water system will move to the loft.

5. Walk Around the Park

A walk of the park was conducted to see improvements: bird hide, sensory area, protection of Great Goat in the touring field, the duck feeder, new gate and walked back through the conservation area. These improvements were well received.

The next meeting is 19 October and the venue is yet to be determined as the new café owners will be on site by that time. We will need to agree dates for 2024 starting in February.

Future meetings:

Thursday 19 October 2023

