

Houghton Hall Park

April 2018 Newsletter

The Houghton Hall Park Renaissance and Renewal Project is being managed by Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council and is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund.

New opening times

Is it really April already?! We're pleased to say it is! As of Easter Sunday until November, our summer opening times are:

Weekdays 10am-5:30pm

Weekends 9am-5:30pm

Treasure Hunt

We are proud to be a part of the Houghton Regis Family Treasure Hunt, a community activity put on by Full House Art Town. Collect your map from one of the places listed on the image to the left, find 7 giant letters all around Houghton Regis, all for a chance to win a prize!



A great place to live and work.

Monthly photography themes



We welcome photographers of all abilities from the age of 16 to get creative, use imagination and enter our monthly themes, April's theme is: **Spring within Houghton Hall Park**. Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st and 30th April 2018 and each person can submit up to 5 entries. We will not accept any overly photoshopped images that do not represent the reality of the subject in the photo.

Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around the visitor centre and in our monthly newsletter. Please see our website for the full terms and conditions before submitting your work: www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography.

See below some entries sent in for March's theme: Textures within Houghton Hall Park, thank you all for your creative entries!



Westley Hayes



Michele Foulger:
Emerging Spring



George Wharwood:
Evening Stroll



George Wharwood:
Snowflakes

Need ideas for the Easter holidays?

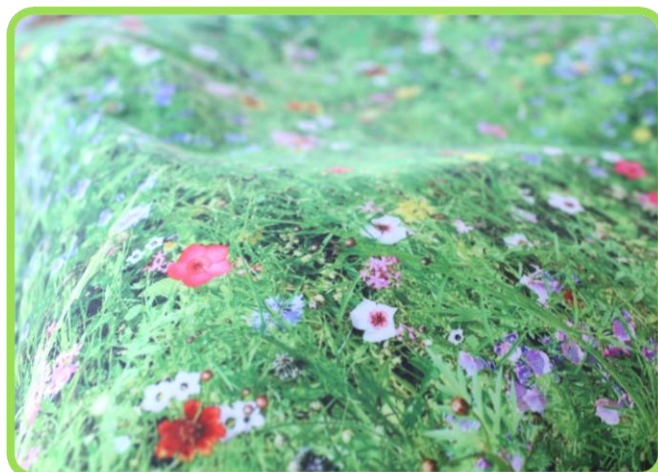


...is back!

Join our fun, family challenge on **Thursday 5th April & Wednesday 11th April** between 11am – 2pm (last entry 1pm). This is a FREE activity for all the family to enjoy. Explore the park, find the markers, complete the challenge and have fun together. The meeting point for the activity is in the foyer at Houghton Hall Park Visitor Centre, Houghton Regis, LU5 5FU. Parking is free for up to 3 hours, but parking spaces are limited so please arrive with plenty of time. For further information about the activity please visit www.xplorer.org.uk.

NEW Activity Sheets & Furniture

We are pleased to tell you we have created a double-sided Houghton Hall Park Nature Activity Sheet to keep children entertained along with our interactive displays hosting plenty of games, information and quizzes to explore while enjoying refreshments from the Café. Our new nature activity sheets are educational, imaginative and have some great brain teasers that are really fun! We have also revamped our autumn bean bags to fresh spring green ones for the spring/summer season!



Spring is upon us - written by Mark Hogan



Now Spring is here and with it... new life begins, the bare trees suddenly burst into bloom forming colourful buds which will soon blossom into vibrant flowers. One of them, Hawthorn, is said to be the flower which heralds the beginning of Spring, it is a small hedgerow tree with round leaves and has a stunning display of blossom.

Lots of birds look for new partners and new life is created; to attract a mate, many sing wonderful songs like the Robin, Blackbird and the Song Thrush. With most of the winter birds leaving for the Summer to Scandinavia and Northern Europe, it means we can welcome our summer visitors like Chiff Chaffs, Sand Martins, House Martins and Swallows zooming around the air trying to catch insects on the wing. Swifts will also appear in late April/early May, they never land and even fly over water to have a drink! You might see a lot of different warblers, pipits and even various types of Terns - which are wonderful birds as they swoop around acrobatically above water such as a lake or reservoir.

Lot of birds will start nesting soon so keep your eyes out for their chicks and if you have a cat, please attach a bell to their collar as it might just save a bird's life. The question many people ask is, should we change what we feed birds this time of year? The answer is some of our food should change, like peanuts, if you put them in a feeder then this is great but try not to throw the peanuts out individually because they might be too big for the chicks to swallow. A lot of Blackbirds, Robins and Thrushes will have an abundance of worms to eat when the ground goes soft but you could still throw out some sultanas or sunflower seeds to supplement their food, they love them!



At the end of April, you may also hear the sound of spring "A Cuckoo Calling" for the first time off in the distance, you might notice masses of jelly-like frog spawn on your pond, you might see toads crossing roads late at night, looking for a pond to breed in. In late April if you go to a woodland, you might see one of my favourite flowers, the Bluebell, they literally cover the ground and look stunning.



It is also a prime time for you to plant your wild flowers, flowers that will encourage birds and insects into your gardens. Buy yourself some lavender plants - bumble bees love it and they look pretty and smell great too. Buy an insect house and put it in your garden for your children, then they can see nature close up and learn too. Create a wild patch of garden, just let the grass and weeds grow and just leave it for small mammals such as wood mice, voles and even shrews to live in, it could also provide

food for caterpillars, not all of them eat cabbages and nettles. Fruit trees are a good idea too, they will attract foxes, badgers and even a muntjac deer, depending on where you live. The long grass will also be great for hedgehogs as they love eating insects, snails and slugs.

Spring is my favourite time of the year, the sun shining on your face and the birds singing... the little chicks sitting on a tree flapping their wings to get their parents attention so they can have some more food to eat. It seems like the whole world is waking up, that is what spring means to me. If you spot a bird or insect that you don't recognise or aren't sure about please send a description to hnp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and even better try to take a picture of it and send it in to us and we will identify it and possibly share it on our pages and notice boards around the visitor centre!

Written by Mark Hogan

Volunteer at the park this month

Take part in valuable conservation work at Houghton Hall Park with the Greensand Trust one Sunday a month! This month on **Sunday 22nd April 10am-3pm**, the activity will be a Park-Wide Litter Pick. Help us by carrying out a thorough and satisfying cleanse of the park, removing any litter as it poses a threat to local wildlife and spoils enjoyment of the park for all. If you would like to come along, please email: hnp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to let us know then simply show up! The meeting spot will be the Visitor Centre car park on Park Road North. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there.

Easter Fun last month!

We'd like to thank all those who attended our Easter activities on Good Friday, we were 'egg-static' to see so many families getting involved and enjoying themselves! We ran an educational egg trail and a bird nesting wreath craft activity to help the birds build their nests at this time of year. Quote of the day: 'This is the bestest trail I have ever been to!!' from one very excited young explorer.



Reasons to visit and use the park

- Walking, exercise & social benefits
- Stop by our café for a nice hot drink or bite to eat
- Volunteering opportunities within your local community
- Take part in our events and make suggestions towards the schedule

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Opening Times

April to October

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 17:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm

November to March

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 15:00pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 15:00pm



Become a friend of Houghton Hall Park

Thinking of joining the Friends of Houghton Hall Park? Then get in touch with us to see what you can do to get involved. Here are some ideas below:

- Observational Surveys
- Community engagement
- Weeding and clearing
- Cleaning
- Watering
- Growing food and encourage healthy eating
- Teach younger generations (if you have a skill or qualification, let us know!)
- Become a community leader
- Support other volunteers
- Contribute to the annual park events calendar
- Volunteering assistant at events running at the park
- Curate local history talks at visitor centre
- Habitat enhancement work in the woodland and meadow

There are many opportunities to take part. If you would like to volunteer and join the Friends of Houghton Hall Park, please email hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



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LOTTERY FUNDED