

# Houghton Hall Park

## July 2021 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.



We are now into July and the park is looking fantastic, all the wildflowers are blooming in the meadow and the kitchen garden has a daily abundance of produce, find out more in Jenny and Eleanor's updates.

We are gearing up for a very busy summer, starting with Vintage Open Air Cinema showing Grease and Dirty Dancing in the park on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July, tickets are still available on their website [www.voacinema.co.uk](http://www.voacinema.co.uk)

There will also be another free Forest Bathing session on the 17<sup>th</sup> and our first ever outside 'Tasty Creative' market on the 18<sup>th</sup>, with over fifteen stalls there will be something for everyone, please come and support our local crafters and artisans.

The summer holidays will be here before we know it and there will be lots of activities that the children can enjoy, Eleanor our Community Ranger will be holding workshops including making your own willow wand! We will also have two outdoor shows, Treasure Island and Arbor the Tree, a 17ft high puppet! See our 'What's On' pages for further information, all of the activities are bookable on the Houghton Hall Park website.



**A great place to live and work.**

## What's On

### Forest Bathing

**When:** Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> July

**Time:** 9am to 10.30am

Following the success of our first forest bathing session we're delighted to offer another one in July, forest bathing involves a gentle guided walk that can support our mental health and wellbeing by helping us to slow down and relax by awakening our senses to the natural world.

We only have 8 spaces, please email us at [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) to reserve yours.



### Tasty Creative Market

**When:** Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July

**Time:** 10am to 3pm

We have over fifteen stalls booked for our first Tasty Creative market on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July, come along and support our local crafters and artisans.

### Vintage Open Air Cinema

**When:** Friday 16<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> July

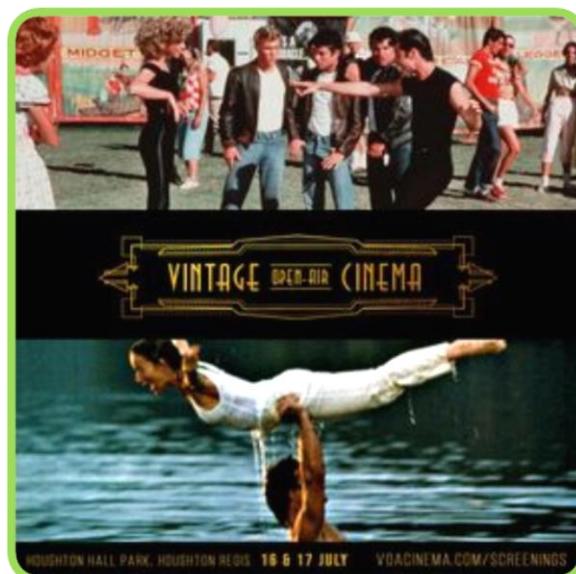
**Time:** 7pm

**Cost:** Prices start at £13.50

Vintage Open Air Cinema are bringing the ambience and nostalgic theatre setting to Houghton Hall Park's beautiful grounds, along with comfy seating and friendly table service so that you can fully relax and enjoy your summer screenings.

They will be showing two of the best musicals of all time, Grease and Dirty Dancing!

For more information and to book tickets go to: <https://www.voacinema.co.uk/>





## Buggy Exercise

**When:** Every Wednesday 10am

**Cost:** £2

**Where:** Meet outside the Visitors Centre

A fun fitness session where we enjoy a warm-up around the park and then a circuit session, a great way to meet other local parents/carers and get fit along the way! Book and pay on our website:- <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/buggy-exercise>

## Junior Parkrun

**When:** Every Sunday

**Time:** 9am

**Cost:** FREE!

Junior Parkrun is a free, weekly, timed 2km parkrun for 4-10 year olds every Sunday at 9am. Open to all, safe and easy to take part in, for more information go to:

<http://www.parkrun.org.uk/houghtonhall-juniors/>



## Circle Yoga



**When:** Monday 12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> July

**Time:** 12.15pm to 12.45pm & 1pm to 1.30pm

**Cost:** £5 per session

Debbie from Circle Yoga will be trialling some sessions in the park on a Monday for more information and to book visit:

[www.circle-yoga.co.uk](http://www.circle-yoga.co.uk)



**Houghton Hall Park**

# Summer Holiday Activities

For more info and to book visit  
our website:  
[www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

Nature  
**Event**

Central  
Bedfordshire  
**great**  
lifestyles

## Kitchen Garden Monster Trail

Bring your paper and pens to  
create your own produce  
monster by following the  
boards around the kitchen  
garden!



Event date: 26th to 30th July  
Event time: 10am to 1pm  
Cost: Free!

Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

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Family  
**Event**

Central  
Bedfordshire

**great**  
lifestyles

## Treasure Island Panto

Join young Jim Hawkins on his  
quest for treasure, great adventure  
awaits, an outside performance  
of a classic!

Every child attending gets FREE  
entry into our 'Treasure Trail' on  
Wednesday 4th August!

Cost: £4

Event date: Wednesday 4th August

Event time: 11am



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

LOTTERY FUNDED

Nature  
**Event**

Central  
Bedfordshire

**great**  
lifestyles

## Treasure Island Trail

Pirates have visited the park,  
use your map to find what  
they've left behind.

Draw each object on your sheet  
then come and collect your  
treasure from the Visitors  
Centre!

Event date: Wednesday 4th & Thursday 5th August

Event time: 10am to 2.30pm

Cost: £2 per child must be booked in advance on our website



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

LOTTERY FUNDED

## Nature Event

Central Bedfordshire  
**great**  
lifestyles

### Mini Beast Hunting

Come and collect a mini beast hunting kit and have two hours to see what you can find!

One kit is suitable for three children, all children must be accompanied by an adult, this is a self led activity and the kits must be returned at the end of the session.

Booking essential

**Event date: 2nd, 12th & 18th August**  
**Event time: 10am to**  
**Cost: £3**



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)



## Family Event

Central Bedfordshire  
**great**  
lifestyles

### Make and Launch a Rocket

Join Eleanor our Community Ranger who will guide you through making your own rocket from a pop bottle, once complete she will show you how to launch it into the park!

Aimed at age 3 and over

Children must be accompanied by an adult for this activity and supervision will be required.

Booking essential

**Event Date: 6th, 11th & 17th August**  
**Cost: £4.50**



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)



## Nature Event

Central Bedfordshire  
**great**  
lifestyles

### Magical Nature Adventure

Join Eleanor our Community Ranger on a nature walk to find things to add to your willow wand, then back to the visitors centre to decorate your wand with the things you have found and some additional charms and sparkle!

Once you have finished your wand take it out on our self led trail to see what you can find!

**Event date: 3rd, 10th & 19th August**  
**Event time: 10am to 11am**  
**Cost: £3.75**



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)



## Family Event

Central Bedfordshire  
**great**  
lifestyles

### KIDZONE

Schools out and it's time for the children to have some fun!

Book your space at Kidzone and enjoy:-

- Crazy golf
  - Nerf Wars
  - Interactive play table
  - Circus Skills
  - Giant connect 4 & Jenga
  - Fete games
  - Cookie decorating
  - Deckchairs for the adults to relax!
- Sit back and relax for an hour while our fun experts entertain!

**Cost: £5 per hr booking essential**

**Event date: Sunday 15th August & Thursday 19th August**  
**Event time: 10am to 5pm**



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)



**Nature Event**

Central Bedfordshire  
**great lifestyles**

## Arbor the Tree Show

**Plus make your own bird feeder workshop!**  
Part Man. Part Tree.  
17 feet tall. Meet Arbor.

Arbor tells the story of a tree pushed from his home and his fight to preserve his future. A free sapling to plant at home with every booking.

Prebooking essential

All children's tickets include entry into our new nature rubbing trail and badge making workshop

**Event date: Friday 27th August**  
**Show time: 11.30am & 1pm**  
**Cost: £5 per person**  
**Workshop time: 1.45pm**  
**Cost: £3 per child**



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

LOTTERY FUNDED

**Family Event**

Central Bedfordshire  
**great lifestyles**

## Bepuzzled Treasure Trail

Join us for a super family day out this summer!

Take part in a globe-trotting voyage, solve a mystery and find the lost treasure.

Hidden around these parts are 10 steamtabulous vehicles to find.

Simply scan the QR codes to collect digital stamps, learn the story and take selfies.

Includes a free ebook!

**Event date: 26th July to 26th August**  
**Cost: Free!**



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

LOTTERY FUNDED

**Art & Culture Event**

Central Bedfordshire  
**great lifestyles**

## July's Photography Theme

'Mini Beasts' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in July
- Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around the visitor centre and in our monthly newsletter
- Send them to us at:  
[hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)
- Deadline 31st July
- Full terms & conditions at our website



Find out more online at [www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

LOTTERY FUNDED

## Monthly Photography Themes

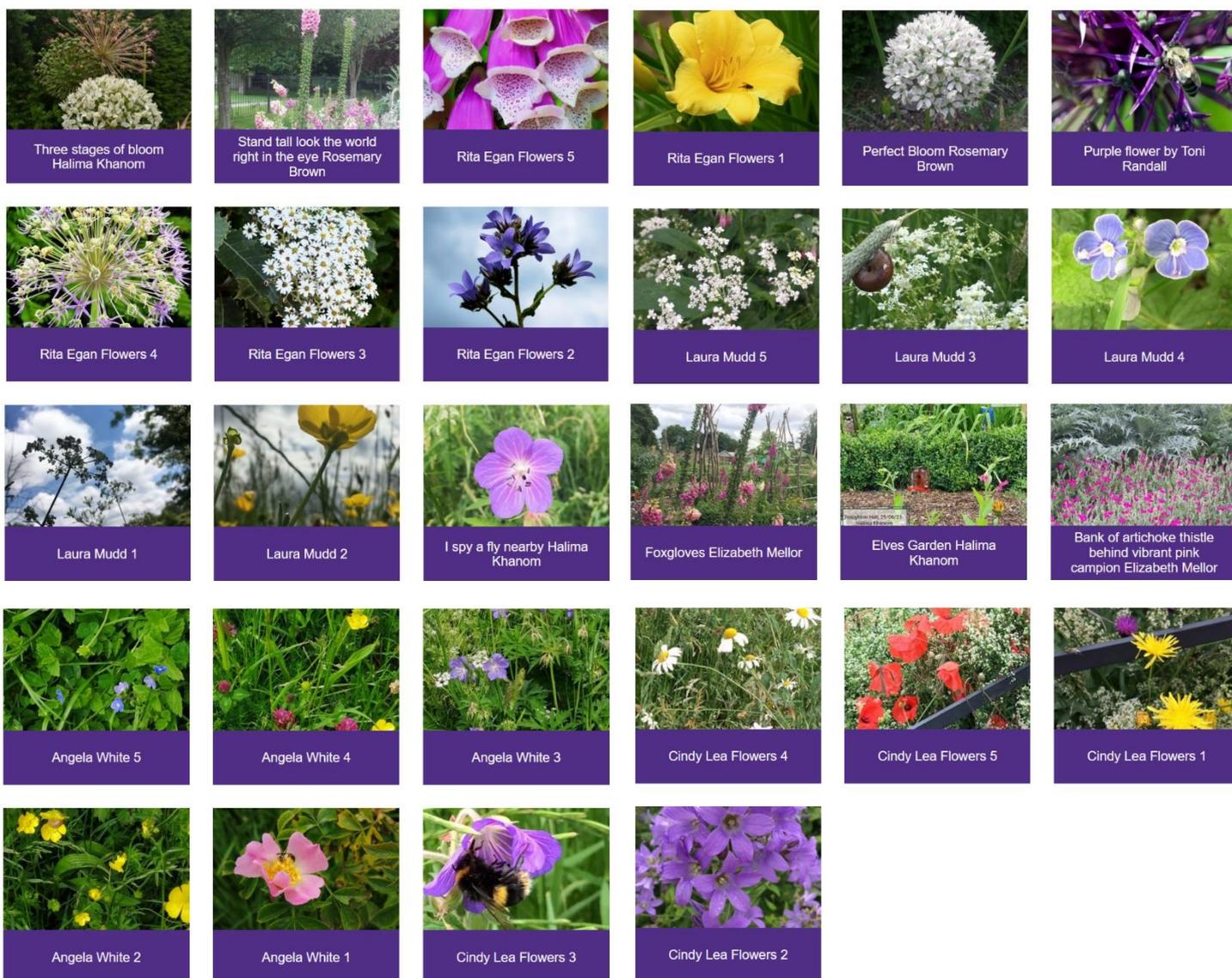
We welcome photographers of all abilities to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly theme. July's theme is: 'Mini Beasts at Houghton Hall Park'. There's a whole other tiny world going on in the park, let's see if you can capture it!

Please send your submissions to [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

The images must be taken between 1<sup>st</sup> – 31st July 2021 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 & conditions before you submit your work:  
[www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography)

We received some amazing photographs for this month's photography theme 'Flowers', thank you to everyone who sent them in.



## Community Ranger Update

*Words and photographs by Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger.*

Here we are again for another monthly update, it feels like the year is zooming past!

This month we got the other half of the carpark back meaning that there is now more parking which will really help as we head towards the summer. On closer inspection, however, we noticed a large amount of weeds making the car park look messy, with the help of Bill, Zayb and Katie we managed to make a difference and it is looking so much better!



Bill and Zayb helped do some litter picking around site which really helped make the park look a lot neater and better for everyone including the wildlife to use. As always we did more clearance work as we are trying to push the brambles back slightly to let other things grow.



Zayb has now completed his college course so he and Bill will unfortunately be leaving us, they have been a fantastic help over the year and I couldn't have made as much progress as I have in the park without their help and the help of the other volunteers, good luck to both of you in your future endeavours.

This month's monthly volunteer session fell on father's day so we had a short half day session where we plotted part of the woodland showing things such as the types of trees, space for future planting and also where clearance work will need to be done in the winter months, this prep work really makes it a lot easier when creating the winter work programme!

If you would like to get involved and volunteer at Houghton Hall Park feel free to email me at: [Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Stay safe

Many thanks

Eleanor

## Nature Notes

*Words and photographs by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.*

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

For me June has been a terrific month in terms of spotting and photographing a wide variety of nature subjects so this month I'll let the pictures do the talking.

In my pond which I started building in May last year, nymphs have been climbing up the vegetation ready to emerge as damsel and dragon flies. Hopefully all these new hatchings will mate and lay eggs for the next generation. I managed to get a picture of a female Southern Darter removing the last of its nymph casing, as if it was a flying helmet. New sightings this year have been Broad Bodied Chasers and Four Spotted Damselflies. I also found a newly emerged Drone fly crawling in the grass near the pond. The larvae of these are known as rat tails maggots. They get this nickname as they have maggot like, sausage shaped bodies and a tail from which they can extend a long breathing tube. Although not fully planted there has also been activity at the pond in the kitchen garden. Earlier in the month several blue tailed damsel flies could be seen flitting across the water in search of a resting place. These were followed by the arrival of Broad bodied chasers and an Emperor dragonfly I spotted laying its eggs.



*This reed proved popular as nymphs emerged*



*A Four Spotted Chaser warms in the sunshine*



*Large Red and Azure Damselflies*



*A Blue Tailed Damselfly*



*A Southern Darter removes last of its nymph casing*



*A Wide-Bodied Chaser*



*A Drone Fly struggles to safety in the grass*



Aerial acrobatics



A Swallow twists its tail to make a turn



Showing the beautiful tail of a Swallow



A Rosemary Beetle like a jewel on lavender flowers

On a short break, staying at a working farm, I spent several hours photographing swallows doing aerial acrobatics, as they chased down flying insects in a field of cattle. It's isn't until you try to photograph them that you realise just how fast and agile they are. At fifteen wing beats per second and flying an average of around eleven meters in that time, with a twist of their tail they change direction effortlessly. It was difficult panning to follow their flight path whilst keeping them in focus, as they silently darted a few feet above the grass. As a result I did ditch a lot of images. For those interested in photography all the shots were hand held using a Sony Alpha camera with a 100mm-400mm zoom lens. Flicking back through the images you can see that they casually turn their heads looking for insects, as if they are on some sort of supersonic sightseeing trip.

Around 750,000 pairs of these birds arrive from Africa each year to breed. They are mostly seen in rural locations making their cup shaped nests from mud. The best place to spot them is around farmyards where apart from nesting under eaves, they may build a nest in a barn or out building. They start to arrive here in April and leave during September. Averaging about 200 miles a day the journey back to South Africa takes them roughly six weeks, quite a feat of endurance for the adults let alone the fledglings. Whilst whiling away the hours leaning on the fence at the farm I also managed a shot of a Buzzard grabbing a mouse and a Kite lazily cruising the sky looking for an opportune meal.



A Buzzard with a mouse snack

Recently in the formal gardens I took a few pictures of Rosemary beetles, *Chrysolina americana*. Despite their name they can be found on other plants as well. Sage, thyme and lavender are favourites and it was on lavender that I saw them. These are small insects with a beautiful metallic green and purple stripes on their wing casing. These beetles and their larvae do not kill the plants but are non-native having arrived in the UK in 1994. As a relatively new involuntary introduction, the RHS are monitoring their progress as they move northward. So if you do find them in your own garden, they would like you to report your findings by filling in a form on their website. The beetles in the park gardens have already been recorded and added to the list. Although this is only a monitoring exercise,

please don't report sightings on other people's property without the express permission of the land owners.

Let's hope July brings as many opportunities to get out and about seeing what nature has to offer.

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

## What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Jenny Osborne, Community Gardener

### *Half way through the year*

*Weeding, tending, harvesting, painting, weighing, planting, all part of being a Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park.*

It is incredible to think that we are halfway through 2021, all the plans and sowing ideas are now in full abundance, and we are now turning our attention to ideas for the second half of the year.

The harvest is coming in thick and fast now and spare produce is being put out at the front gates. It is not yet on a regular basis but as we have produce to share we certainly will. There are a lot more volunteers here to take first pick now!!

You may start to see some new faces around the gardens as we welcome our latest volunteers. The diverse group of skills, abilities and personalities makes for some very enjoyable days indeed.



### Harvesting New potatoes

We can report back the new potatoes are incredibly tasty. This year we grew Maris bard and they have been bountiful and beautiful. Hardly need scrubbing, this Scottish first early variety is a must for next year.



### Beans

It won't be long before the runner beans will be ready for picking, the dwarf french beans are ahead by a few weeks and both types are laden with flowers.

There is nothing like home grown beans for flavour. I imagine by next month we will be well on our way to munching through a few kilos!



### Cut flower patch

The cut flower patch is beginning to produce some bunches now, especially the sweet peas. I have introduced some different varieties to the bed. One of which is called craspedia, similar looking to a little drum stick in bright yellow. They can also be dried so are very versatile in their use.

You wouldn't think to look at it, but they are actually part of the daisy family and are often referred to as billy buttons. They are native to Australia and New Zealand and grow from sea level to the Alps.

These were sown back in March and are just about to produce their first flower. It is always exciting growing something different. Here is the link if you fancy giving them a go for next year.

[https://www.chilternseeds.co.uk/item\\_406B\\_craspedia\\_globosa](https://www.chilternseeds.co.uk/item_406B_craspedia_globosa)



The volunteers have been incredibly busy painting glass jars to display the flower bunches in, so look out for them on tables at the front of the kitchen garden



### How is our interactive children's bed coming along?

ery well indeed! The Elves have well and truly arrived for work and the flowering plants are establishing nicely. This bed is for children to come and explore and we welcome you and your families down to have a wander. You will find elves and butterflies at every!



What is this great structure we are building on bed 4? It is a way of growing squashes in a more creative manner. Lots of them this year are suitable for climbing up structures which allow their decorative fruit to be more visual rather than hidden under a mass of green leaves. I will make sure you see the regular progress of this bed.

### Hello and goodbye.....

For those of you that are regular visitors to the park you may have seen Sam and Linda about. He was from a scheme called Develop which supported young people in work experience and a whole host of other life skills. Unfortunately, due to funding this valuable resource for our young people in the community is now lost. Sam is an incredible young man and we have seen him flourish and grow in confidence in the past two years. It is with great sadness and pride that he now moves on to the next stage of his life, We all wish you both

visit us from time to time.

That leaves a new place in our group and so we warmly welcome Dean. I hope you enjoy your time with us too!

Until next month, thank you for all your positive comments, chats and for smiling at us whilst we work.

*Happy Gardening, stay safe*

*Jenny and all the volunteers*





## Keep in touch

### Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

### Instagram

HoughtonHallPark

### Twitter

@BedsCountryside

### Website

[www.houghtonhallpark.org](http://www.houghtonhallpark.org)

### Email

[hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Current Opening Times

Mon – Sat 9am to 5pm

## Become a volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

Thinking of giving something back to your local community? 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 Volunteers of Houghton Hall Park, please email [hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



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