

You will no doubt have seen a lot of information about the proposed changes at Wandlebury. Unfortunately, much of what has been circulated by third parties is inaccurate and unfounded. The team at Cambridge Past, Present & Future (CambridgePPF) offered, in advance, to provide a briefing to the meeting tonight but the organisers declined our offer.

We have therefore developed this information sheet to set out some key facts and hopefully address many of the concerns that we know have been raised.

If you have any further questions, we'd be happy to answer them. Please contact:

[properties@cambridgeppf.org](mailto:properties@cambridgeppf.org) / 01223 243830 x 205 and visit our website for updates, [www.cambridgeppf.org](http://www.cambridgeppf.org)

### **Why is CambridgePPF replacing three full-time ranger posts with a number of warden positions?**

CambridgePPF has cared for Wandlebury Country Park for over 60 years. In that time our work has continually evolved, models for managing such sites have changed dramatically and today's visitors have different expectations. Over that time we've also acquired additional properties, which we also need to care for. To meet all these needs we now need a more flexible team structure, with more staff across our sites at peak times, like weekends and long summer evenings, and fewer mid-week in winter. For a small charity this means adopting a different and more responsive way of working to help visitors get the most from their time at Wandlebury.

Over the last two months we have consulted with staff about how best to achieve this and they have had lots of opportunities to share their views. After much reflection, and having reviewed a variety of proposals, the most practical option was judged by the Trustees to be the creation of a single full-time warden post, supported by a larger team of part-time wardens, working across all our properties, including Wandlebury and Coton Countryside Reserve. Regrettably, this decision does affect three full-time rangers. The outcome of the review was that the posts of three of the seven staff who worked as rangers were made redundant on the 5 January 2015. We are working closely with the individuals affected who have all been consulted about the outcome of the review and invited to apply for the new warden roles we are creating. Contrary to information being circulated CambridgePPF can confirm that applicants for the new warden posts will need to be able to demonstrate excellent customer care skills; the ability to work with children; and carry out basic farm and estate work along with wildlife and countryside knowledge and experience. The new posts will be supported by expertise already held by office-based staff, property committee members, the charity's ecology steering group and part-time rangers and volunteers to ensure appropriate management of the charity's diverse sites.

### **Will all of CambridgePPF's conservation work be outsourced?**

No, the routine, basic estate maintenance tasks will continue to be managed in-house. Like other small organisations that run country parks and sites managed for nature conservation, we have established relationships with local specialists who provide support as and when more significant work is required. This approach enables economies in aspects such as equipment purchase, maintenance and storage. These individuals and companies all specialise in different aspects of wildlife conservation, livestock care, estate maintenance and the care of heritage buildings. In the future we will continue the current practice of working with some of these partners to carry out specific tasks at Wandlebury and our other sites, as is now typical of other country parks.

When it comes to conservation the commitment of the charity is unchanged. Our staff, Board of Trustees and Properties Committee includes experts with extensive experience in ecology, landscape and site management, visitor management and outdoor recreation. Drawing on their skills, and those of a part time ecology project officer (appointed in September 2014, following a successful internship), we are conducting a comprehensive biodiversity study, initially of Wandlebury Country Park. Supported by local conservation experts and a highly respected landscape architect, we are developing an illustrated landscape plan for the whole of the Ring. These two elements will then inform a review of the 2013 draft management plan and the creation of a robust, forward-looking management blueprint based on a sound understanding of the site. This will help us adopt a balanced approach to managing the park's wildlife habitats, archaeology, heritage, landscape, visitor safety and, of course, preserving its natural peace and tranquillity.

### **Are you planning to cut trees down at Wandlebury?**

There are no current plans to fell any more trees unless they pose a specific risk to visitor safety. This includes

removing trees to increase car park capacity. The Wandlebury car park is sometimes full but there are no plans to expand it - instead over recent years we have actively encouraged visitors to visit the park by bus and bike.

The Ring is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, listed by English Heritage (EH). EH have asked us to remove some trees growing on the Ring, which they believe are damaging the underlying Iron Age structure. We've always been reluctant to fell trees growing on the Ring because of their potential to support biodiversity and the likely impact on the landscape. However, EH has placed Wandlebury Ring on its 'Heritage at Risk Register' so this is an issue we cannot ignore. Initially, the slight thinning of trees was proposed and we continue to liaise with EH on this matter. Our ongoing biodiversity survey, the development of an illustrated landscape plan and updating and finalising the management plan for the site will help inform any future decision-making about the trees and ensure that we can strike the right balance between conservation, heritage, archaeology, landscape and visitor safety and wellbeing.

#### **Does the charity employ too many managers and office staff?**

On the contrary, our staffing is very lean especially when you consider the very broad and diverse range of activities we deliver. CambridgePPF does far more than just manage Wandlebury. The whole team also looks after Coton Countryside Reserve, the Leper Chapel, the mills at Bourn and Hinxton along with some other properties and green spaces. In addition the planning role that CambridgePPF fulfils to protect Cambridge area from inappropriate development is significant, as is our environmental education programme. As a membership organisation, we also provide services to our members and engage in a variety of fundraising activities. Almost all the charity's staff work part time and all show huge loyalty and commitment. We have a chief executive and individual managers responsible for the delivery of our key responsibilities: Planning; Properties and Green Spaces (including environmental and historical education); Fundraising and Marketing; Finance and Admin. In addition to the ranger team, we have a part-time ecology project officer and three support staff. All other work is delivered with the invaluable support of our trustees, committee members and many other volunteers – all of whom are unpaid and give their time most generously.

#### **Are you planning to turn Wandlebury into a fun park?**

Absolutely not. We're not changing the purpose of Wandlebury and we won't be adding activities or facilities that would have a detrimental effect on the local landscape and its conservation value. Wandlebury is a very special place that people love to visit because of its peace, amenity and heritage, flora and fauna and the opportunities for quiet recreational pursuits that it offers. We intend to keep it that way, giving people the chance to continue to enjoy access to the best of the great outdoors. Our successful events programme gives schools, groups, individuals and families the chance to learn about nature, the environment and the history of Wandlebury. This is of enormous value to our local community and society as a whole, and as such, remains one of our key focus areas.

#### **Do you intend to become more commercial / introduce new facilities at Wandlebury?**

Wandlebury is very well used by the public and by school groups – more than 3,000 primary school-age children visit every year and many other groups. While adults and children alike enjoy the activities we offer, it is agreed that improving the toilet provision is necessary. We know this from the feedback forms we receive from teachers, as well as visitor feedback. Late last year we began a review of the accommodation we own at Wandlebury. We also have a duty of care to provide adequate working environments for our 'indoor and outdoor staff' and volunteers and are aware that our current facilities require improvement. Work, although at an early stage, is progressing and no decisions have been made but we do want to enhance our facilities. As part of our review we've been speaking to residents at Wandlebury. We've also had some initial conversations with South Cambridgeshire District Council about future possibilities. We are also exploring ideas such as the addition of a small café, something which visitors often suggest would be a nice addition to the park. Initial research into demand for a café was carried out last August, when a pop up café was provided by one of our trustees assisted by a number of volunteers. As these ideas develop we will keep our members informed.

#### **Are you planning to attract thousands more visitors to Wandlebury?**

It is inevitable that visitor numbers at both Wandlebury and Coton Countryside Reserve will increase as Cambridge continues to grow rapidly. Thousands of new homes, including major new developments around the Southern Fringe, have already been built and more are planned, many close to Wandlebury. We therefore anticipate a significant rise in visitors and must be prepared if we are to ensure that this special place continues to be conserved, cherished and carefully managed for the future. Wandlebury is the jewel in the crown of CambridgePPF properties and we intend to continue to protect its unique atmosphere for future generations.

If you have further questions please get in touch using the contact details at the top of the front page. Alternatively, visit our website for updates: [www.cambridgeppf.org](http://www.cambridgeppf.org)