

# Results of the public consultation on improvements to the Daventry Country Park Visitor Centre

May 2011



## Summary

The aim of this consultation was to find out general community satisfaction with the Country Park and to gather suggestions from schools and the community as to how to improve the current visitors centre so that it provides a key educational and community resource.

### Objective

To identify:

- How often people have visited the Country Park and their general satisfaction levels
- How often people used the visitor centre
- What would they like the visitor centre to look like or what activities they would like it to contain
- To determine what improvements to the visitors centre have the most support
- To determine what children would like in the centre
- To determine what facilities are required by schools and whether they would visit more often if they were provided
- To determine ideas for future events/facilities for the Country Park

### Methods

- Online and paper survey to general population
- Questionnaire to teachers at local infant/primary schools
- Activity sheet for children eg drawing/writing activity

### Responses

- |                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| • General Survey      | 34  |
| • Teachers Survey     | 4   |
| • Children's activity | 183 |

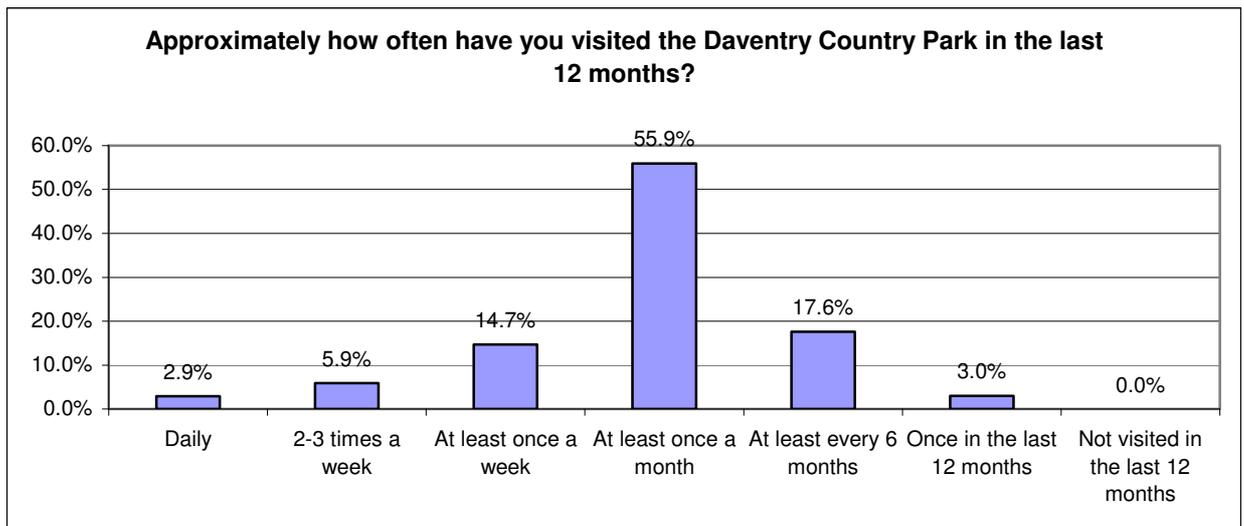
While the responses were lower than anticipated for the general and teacher survey the number of children's activity sheets, which were returned, exceeded expectation. This part of the consultation exercise seemed to work very well and there was a good response rate from the 4 schools that took part.

## General Survey

(Note due to the low response rate responses are not statistically valid)

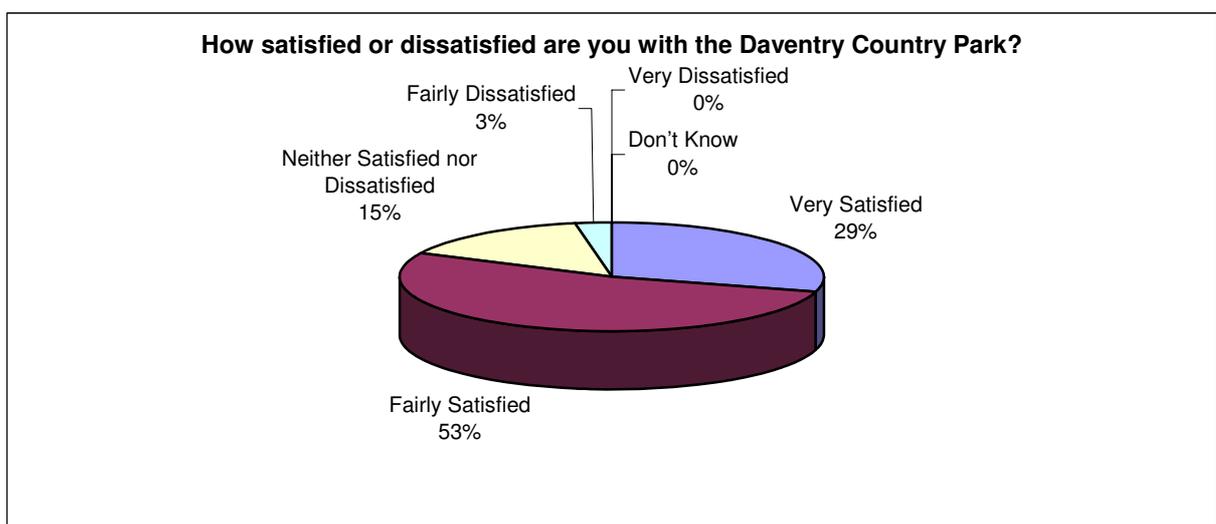
### 1. Approximately how often have you visited the Daventry Country Park in the last 12 months?

Over half of those who responded (55.9%) visited the Daventry Country Park at least once a month. A further 14.7% visited the park on a weekly basis.



### 2. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Daventry Country Park?

Of those who responded, 82.3% were very or fairly satisfied with the Daventry Country Park.



**3. Are there any facilities or events you would like to see at Daventry Country Park which would make it a better place to visit?**

- Rangers leading on educational activities for adults and children – eg bird watching, have a go days eg hedge laying, organised nature trails, treasure hunts, wildlife walks, bug hunts, pond dipping, star gazing, willow weaving etc.
- Improved toilet/baby change/Café/restaurant/ or a new facility developed at the entrance of the park closer to the playground. Toilets open later.
- More events eg Farmers market, Easter egg hunt, summer craft fayre, May Day.
- Improvement to the paths (all weather) and existing features eg bird hides, 'landing stage' and better links to other walks outside the park.
- Interpretative panels around the walks with information about wildlife.
- More interactive play equipment in the play area.
- Improved car parking – free carparking or concessional parking for Daventry residents.
- An open air stage and seating area which could be used for plays or concerts.
- Fixtures to secure bicycles.
- It would be disappointing if it became commercialised in any way.
- More control over cyclists and the speed they travel around the paths.
- Mini zoo or farm.
- Bird watching area.
- A shop selling wildlife things and information about animals you might see.
- More seating, picnic areas and bbq areas.

**4. Have you ever been into the Daventry Country Park Visitor Centre?**

94% of those who responded have been into the visitor centre.

**5. If no, can you tell us why you haven't visited?**

Reasons given included that it was boring and needed to be restructured, always have dogs or grandchildren with me.

6. If yes, how often do you visit the visitor centre?



7. What improvements do you think could be made to the visitor centre that would make it a better educational and community resource? The top five responses were:

- Hands on interactive activities for children.
- Live video feeds (eg camera in bird nest).
- Information about the wildlife and plants in the park.
- Children's art area.
- Audiovisual displays.

Other suggested improvements to the outside of the building include:

- More signage/information.
- Regular maintenance and a more cared for appearance.
- Café area and play area need to be closer together to allow adults to relax whilst children can be seen at play.

Other suggested improvements to the inside of the building include:

- Use not just as a dumping ground – more bright and welcoming and on hand ranger for questions.
- Regular maintenance and cared for appearance
- Hands on learning for children.
- A shop selling souvenirs and crafts, toys, local products etc to generate more income and visitors.
- Information about the origins of the reservoir and the park itself or about its association with the Grand Union Canal and British Waterways. Information about the proposal to build a new arm of the canal to Daventry town.

Other comments received include:

- The material displayed is too static and it's difficult to locate information.
- Suggest using 'crocodile teeth' on the main driveway up to the visitor centre to stop vehicles cutting up the grass on either side of the path.
- Given size of the current centre need to decide what its function is.
- There should be someone based in the visitor centre to help people.
- There needs to be more ability to host groups or events and attract people to use these facilities.
- Empty dog bins on a regular basis, at least once a day.
- Broken/missing slates on roof of café need to be fixed
- The country park is a great asset to the residents of Daventry it needs to retain its natural beauty
- Signs for dog free area in children's play area have disappeared and dogs seem to be allowed in.
- I think its in need of a revamp and more funding to have changing exhibitions and demonstrations
- At the moment it is uninspired. Seems neglected. Needs time more than money.
- Look at other visitor centres in Northamptonshire and surrounding counties for examples and ideas.

## Teachers Survey

A questionnaire was emailed to all infant, junior and primary schools within Daventry District. Responses were received from four local schools. The issues raised include:

1. If your school does not visit the country park – why doesn't it?
  - Long walk for young children
  - Lack of facilities to eat in if wet
  - Only visit if it fits into the curriculum
  
2. If your school does not use the visitor centre – why doesn't it?
  - Use the outside resources mainly – the walks and playground
  - There is little for children to do in the visitor centre
  - Put off by messy interior
  - Doesn't fit in with what we are doing
  
3. Does your school visit other similar venues for environmental education?
  - Cooperative Farm, Ashby St Ledgers (mini-bus costs contributed to by the Co-op)
  - Everdon Field Studies Centre
  - Naseby Battlefield Site
  - Local Farms
  
4. What facilities/equipment could be provided to encourage you to use the visitor centre? The top responses were:
  - Hands on interactive activities for children
  - Audio visual displays
  - Live video feeds (eg camera in bird nest)
  - Children's art area
  - Tables/chairs

Other suggested improvements to the outside of the building include:

- Paint the building so it is more inviting from the outside

Other suggested improvements to the inside of the building include:

- Keep refreshing information posters
- Needs tidying – leaflets everywhere
- Displays are not very child friendly – those that are seem 'tired' and not enough for a class

Other comments received include:

- Free access to park rangers, ranger led trails/hunts and walks
- No fees for schools
- Special days during the school week with specialist speakers or activities so that lots of schools could attend together (eg science days at Wicksteed Park)
- An outdoor classroom
- Puzzle trails, games for children
- More posters and information around the walk
- Events like the 'wassailing' during weekdays in term time
- Create an 'education centre away from the water and separate from the general visitor centre

## Children's Activity

A blank 'activity' sheet was prepared allowing children to write or draw what they would like the visitor centre to look like and what activities they would like inside it. We received 183 responses. The suggestions have been grouped together; starting with those that had the most mentions

- Touchy feely boxes - paint them, put different things in them, more of them
- Bird activities - bird watching/ hunt (with a prize each week), bird bath, making bird boxes, models, feeders, games, feeding, maps, nests, statues, tracing, pictures to learn what birds are at the country park
- TV/mini cinema - with children's nature/animal programmes, dvd
- Computer (nature games and information about the park, birds and animals) mini laptops
- Play equipment - slides and swings, monkey bars, climbing frame, climbing wall
- Information - displays, boards more child friendly, history, maps (to take with you), information sheets, dangers in park, info for schools, leaflet stand, more AV information - displays at child eye level
- Activity sheets and fact sheets, quiz, brain teaser, word sheets, word search, spot the difference, seasonal displays linked to scavenger hunts/trails to do while going around the park, 'spotter' posters eg for minibeasts/birds etc for people to take out with them to spot things
- Animal petting, hold a bunny, animal corner, community pet (rodent), feeding lambs, zoo, person to look after animals
- Craft table/art activities - nature theme, decorations, models, colouring, painting, drawing
- Somewhere to sit and read (bean bags, heart cushions, benches, stools, table and chairs), vibration chair
- Nature hunts - plant, worm, bird, bug
- Grow your own veg and fruit, flowers
- Posters/pictures/paintings - animals, trees, birds at the country park, butterflies
- Books - about birds, nature (book shelf, book box)
- Toilets
- Jigsaws, games, board games
- Bird whistles
- Refreshments - food, drink, ice cream, ice cream truck, jelly bean machine, water machine
- Fish Tank
- Shop - selling bug clothes, animal cakes, nature things, birds and flowers, hats
- Butterfly activities - cakes, hunt, farm, models

- Paint walls eg brighter, like a bird, green with a blue pond, butterfly, rainbow, animals in the park, yellow
- Play pit, soft play area, ball pit
- Play station or DS, Wii, Xbox
- Wormary, insects, ant nests, mini beasts, snake tank, spiders
- Bug activities - bug making, spot the difference, plastic bug hunt, models, bug garden
- Butterflies/birds flying around (remote control), solar powered flying frog
- People to talk to you about nature, animals, the park, tour guides, park ranger station
- Tree house (for play and for bird watching) visitors centre at the top of a tree
- Lucky dips
- Boat/ship, boat rides, sailboats
- Leaflets, leaflet rack
- Music, musical instruments, music lessons
- Play area/activity upstairs or on roof
- Arcade games
- Bikes - racks, hire bikes
- Caterpillar activities - houses
- Community board, comments board
- Frogs - frog pond/tadpole tank
- More flowers
- Pond/pool
- Suggestion box
- Charity collection box
- Clean and tidy
- Divide in 1/2 - adults and children's
- Fish and seahorses - fish game, fishing nets
- Interactive/virtual map of country park
- Kitchen, sinks
- Ladybird activities
- Making cakes
- Nature tent/cave
- Security camera
- Telescope
- Toys
- Wallpaper with animals/trees
- Web cam - filming animals, trees and nature, different seasons in the park
- Binoculars
- Dress Ups (ladybird, butterfly)
- Events - boxing day duck race, Easter and Christmas Party
- Films

- Flag with visitors centre on it
- Football
- Inside - gym/exercise, punch bags, pool table (used for parties, dance lessons)
- Interactive whiteboard for nature activities
- Interactive/touch and learn things so people can have close ups of minibeasts, trees and flowers in the park, questions
- Lego, leaf lego
- Lights - replace the lights, better lighting
- Mini golf/crazy golf
- Nature corner
- Nature walks/trails
- Outside of building - tidied up, brightened up, hanging baskets, more flowers
- Picnic area
- Recycling bin
- Reduce reuse recycle game
- Train, train track
- Voting box
- Washing machine
- Water - experiments, water station
- A bigger visitor centre
- A clock
- Bouncy castle
- Carpet
- Chocolate bird making
- Ferris wheel
- First aid room
- Flower activities
- Football table
- Gallery
- Glass floor between two floors
- Go karts
- Ice cream maker
- Indoor play area
- Insect show
- Juggling balls
- Kite flying
- Little boats to play with
- Magnifying glasses and pots with mini beasts
- Make a plant diary
- Make an office
- Make the door wider
- Meeting room
- Monkeys

- Nature clips
- Open roof
- Photos of staff who work at the park
- Pictures around the walk
- Pond crawling
- Put a fake tree in a hole with butterflies
- Rare eggs
- Room for prams
- Rubbish bins
- Sandpit
- Spiders
- Sports activities
- Swimming pool
- Tough cams (to make videos around the park)
- Trampoline
- Welcome mat at the door
- Wild room

## What Happens Now?

We will assess all the comments that have been made and develop an action plan based on those ideas that we have the resources to implement. Improvements should start happening at the visitor centre from the summer holidays onwards.

## Recommendations & Action Plan

There were a number of comments made that were outside the scope of this project. These included:

- Suggestions to build new toilet/café/shop/visitor centre facilities or relocating to the park entrance and building an outdoor theatre. Unfortunately these ideas were outside of the scope of the current project. However, as the economy improves and other funding opportunities arise these may be ideas that the council can look at considering in the future.
- Events – the council holds a number of events at the country park including ‘wassailing’, Easter egg hunt and bonnet competition, countryside day and the big lunch and are always open to proposals for other activities to held at the country park through out the year. Additional events held in 2011 include a monthly car boot and a circus.
- Improvement to the paths and other infrastructure (eg bird watching hides, the ‘landing’ and interpretative panels around the walks. It is hoped that these issues can be addressed as part of the ongoing maintenance and development of the infrastructure of the park.
- Car parking – Unfortunately the car park can become quite busy at peak times due to the limited space available. The council encourages alternative means of travel to the park including walking or cycling for those who live close enough.

## Visitor Centre Improvements – Action Plan 2011/12

	Project	By When?
Outside of the Building	A general clean, tidy, repairs to the outside of the building. Ideas to include: Painting of shutters (incl sanding down) Green Flag/Country Park Flag Welcome Mat	End July
Inside of the Building	A general clean, tidy, repair of the inside of the building. To include: painting in brighter colours, a mural, remove leaflets and unnecessary display boxes etc.	End July
	Touchy-Feely boxes – more of them, changing items seasonally	End July & Ongoing
	Review existing posters displays. They should reflect information about the park – consider ones that are more child friendly information at eye height	End of July
Technology	Review possibility of TV/DVD for nature programmes, video feeds from nest boxes and around the park – look at viewing arrangements for the TV to make this easier and more comfortable for younger children	End August
	Review possibility of computer or 'touch screen 'kiosk for nature activities, games and short films about the park	End September
Activities	Create an activity area – change items regularly eg seasonally – eg arts and craft activities, activity sheets, magnifying glasses with pots of things to look at, maps and treasure trails refer list created by local school children for activity ideas	End July and ongoing to update
Staffing	Explore potential for volunteers to be located in the visitor centre on weekends and school holidays	End July
	Review potential for officer led activities on weekends/school holidays – pond dipping, mini beasts, den building	End July