



ROTHER VALLEY  
COUNTRY PARK

## Progress Report

January 2011



2007/08/09/10

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## **Introduction**

Rother Valley Country Park Ltd (RVCP) has now been operating the park for 22 months. This has coincided with the most challenging economic times in a generation.

The programme of investment in the park has been considerable but impacted by the circumstances inherited. The priority has been to bring the fundamental facilities up to standard before embarking on more ambitious programmes.

The end of year one review formally reported and accepted that all KPI's were exceeded.

## **Overview**

The initiatives and programmes introduced since taking over the park have been particularly well received and set out in detail later in the report.

Trading in the park met with some challenging circumstances. The summer of 2009 was particularly poor with the annual Party in the Park rained off. 2010 commenced and ended with severe weather conditions which substantially impacted on revenue and visitor numbers. Total visits were down by approximately 30,000. This coupled with the economic situation and escalating fuel prices were material.

Despite this the trading overall has improved and diversification of activities is proving very popular.

A Master-plan was commissioned and produced by the Architects, Holder Mathias. This enables all future development and investment to be undertaken as part of an overall vision.

## **Real Estate**

### **Watersports Centre**

The condition of the Watersports building upon handover was far more dilapidated than anticipated. This was the subject of specific discussion prior to handover. The refurbishment of this key facility was deemed top priority.

Accordingly the following works have been completed:

- New Windows
- New external cladding

- Refurbishment of all external elements including roof
- New retaining wall at rear to move safety and access
- New Signage
- Refurbished reception / office area
- New energy efficient lighting in changing rooms
- Redecoration of changing rooms
- Refurbished and replanned changing benches
- New Mangers office formed
- Refurbishment programme ongoing but dovetailed around operational business.



### **Courtyard Cottage**

The condition of the courtyard cottage was dilapidated and unusable. This has been completely refurbished and new floors installed. The building has been brought back into full economic use.

### **Management Building**

The condition of the farmhouse which is used as the main management offices was poor, suffering from lack of investment for a considerable number of years –The lecture room, which was unusable, has now been refurbished into the board room.

- Tanking
- Replastering
- Removing fitted furniture
- New energy efficient lighting

- New heating
- New display boards

This has brought the room into far more productive and beneficial use.

Further refurbishment work has been suspended due to the incidence of significant movement which is currently being investigated.

## **Cafe**

The condition of the café installation is very poor, and essential repairs and essential equipment replacement has been undertaken. Expenditure though, has been carefully targeted in view of the plans to provide a new café brassiere facility.

The former 'visitor centre' adjacent to the café has been converted into a peak season fast sales for take away products. This has proved a welcome addition to the facilities.

## **Courtyard**

The condition of the external woodwork in the courtyard was in an advanced state of disrepair. All external woodwork has been completely refurbished with extensive high quality repairs. The authentic detailing has been retained and the woodwork now decorated twice.

The scope of work undertaken to bring the existing properties up to a decent standard has been far more extensive than originally envisaged. Considerable resources have been applied to this exercise, and preserving the integrity of the fabric.

## **Equipment**

### **Plant & Machinery**

The existing equipment was not taken over due to a combination of age, condition and lease terms. The following investment in equipment has been made:

- Mitsubishi Shogun purchased from original supplier.
- New Holland T4030 heavy duty tractor
- New TC 24 compact tractor
- 2 E-Z-GO MPT1000 electric utility vehicles-E-GN £14800
- Williams CT 166 Trailer - specialist equipment
- Williams P6E Trailer - specialist equipment

The new equipment is far more efficient and the deployment of electric vehicle has not only improved the carbon footprint but proving extremely versatile and popular.

## **IT**

- Complete new IT installation and server.
- Complete new digital telephone installation
- New 2 way radios replacing inherited units.

## **ID**

- New branding and image
- New web site and community engagement
- Twitter and facebook presence
- Improved awareness campaign

## **Operational**

- Complete new uniform range for all staff
- Replace outboard engine for safety boat
- Replaced defective water sports equipment
- Invested in event equipment progressively with each event
- New vending machines purchased to improve offer in water sports centre
- Extensive replacement on items cause by lack of maintenance. This is considerably beyond what could have been reasonably expected.

## **Employment**

- FOUR new members of staff employed – at a gross cost of circa £90,000 per annum.

## **Investment Initiatives**

### **Miniature Railway**

A new miniature gauge railway extending to nearly 1 Km in total has been installed. This involved accommodation works such drainage, extensive landscaping, and health & safety measure.

Two stations have been provided with the main engine shed incorporating a station façade. The main entrance has incorporated enhanced landscaping and new log cabin reception.



This has proved an extremely popular attraction and further enhancements are planned for this year.

### **Zorbs**

The introduction of zorbs have proved extremely popular. Both water and land zorbs have been introduced. The jetty area has been remodelled to create a dedicated zone.

Land based courses are provided according to the event being promoted. Three different types of Zorbs have been purchased.

### **Playdales**

Playdales gave notice to terminate their Lease at the first opportunity. The reason stated is lack of delivery on promises by RMBC. RVCP has taken over operation of the facility directly. RVCP waived contractual entitlement to costs to purchase the play equipment.

The entry price was reduced and car park fee refunded to improve appeal. Opening hours have been adapted to demand and extended. The offer has been adapted to improve overall attraction. This has proved very popular and further investment is planned.

## **Events**

The first evening event in the Park, a Halloween based themed experience and fireworks proved a resounding success. Numbers were over double that anticipated. This presented both opportunity and challenge. All revenue has been reinvested into equipment.

The second event was bigger and different format but equally a resounding success and now destined to be an annual event. Again revenue has been reinvested into equipment. This will now become a firm fixture in the regional diary.

## **15 new events generated for 2010**

- Bruswick Gardens Nursing Home
- HSBC Corporate Day
- Mosborough Hall Hotel Team Building Promotion for Best Western Group
- MS Therapy Centre Event to be enlarged
- Santa Dash December 2010 postponed and held January 2011 – retained for 2011
- Battle of the Hotels Team Building Event
- Wilkinson's Event September
- Horse Riding Event October
- Neurocare Running event
- Bluebell Wood fun activities
- Walk Leader Workshop
- Everyman Male Cancer campaign
- Wedding Blessing
- Big Ball Dash
- New caravan and camping groups

## **Retained events:**

- Triathlon training sessions organised in 2010 are to continue in 2011 – novice
- Triathlon Training Sessions by Sheffield Triathlon
- Hovercraft championship
- Sheffield City Athletic Club
- Neurocare Running
- Bluebell Wood

- Newfoundland Dogs Events
- NSPCC event
- Weston Park Hospital Dragon Boat
- Scouts Splash Down
- Steel City Cruisers Car Rally
- Camping Rally bookings encouraged to book activities as well as camping
- Dwarf Athletic Association - retained

### **New Events 2011**

- UK Bungee Club Corporate Team Building – February 40 – 60 people half day
  - Horse Riding Event March 2011
  - Chicken Run for Mencap at Easter
  - Bike Events – Orchid Cycle Event
  - African Celebrations Event May
  - Zip slides for charities
  - Hope City Hearts
  - Brighton Magpies Family Event
  - Scout 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration event
  - Morris Minor Club will attend with MS Therapy Event in August
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- ASA Open Water Swim retained and booked for 2011 and 2012
  - Triathlon intend to increase entry numbers to 800 in 2011 working with 5 national charities and promotion to 1,000 school children
  - Triathlon Event – 2011 European and world qualifier events, camping gained in 2010
  - New Holiday Programme for children H2O through Watersports
  - Holiday Programme Sparkles introduced in 2010

### **Planned Events**

- Easter Eggventure event for the holiday period
- Car Rally & Themed Event linked to possibly the Morris Minor Club Rally in August
- Water Fight Event
- Kite Flying Event
- East Midlands Balloon event
- Music event
- Family activity weekend
- Christmas Event
- Continue with Halloween and Fireworks Event October
- Zip Slide



## **Show case and Links Formed**

- Undertaken various show rounds of the park and development area
- Fred Hall PA systems – links to horse trials events,
- Chesterfield Tourism, Sheffield Tourism, Yorkshire South, Welcome to Yorkshire,
- Corporate Promotions work with hotels, Holiday Inn Sheffield, Holiday Inn Rotherham, Crown Hotel Bawtry, Mosborough Hall Hotel, Aston Hall Hotel, Aston Hotel
- Networking – Event Management Hub, Sheffield Events Unit,
- Sheffield Hallam University Events Students using the venue for their BA Honours final year units
- Event organisers / promoters have been given conducted tours
- Open Water Swim Salford were to use our venue if Salford was unavailable – show cased the venue to Nova Sports
- Yellow Bus Events Company

## **Environment**

Upon takeover the park suffered with an increasing undesirable element both during events, weekend and out of hours. New enhanced and stricter security arrangements, has transformed the image of the park.

Extensive training investment in staff has continued. There is an active and ongoing staff improvement programme. There has been a management restructure to allow personal development and encourage initiatives

- A new picnic area and improved landscaping adjacent to 'railway station'.
- Improved and additional benches provided around park.
- Path around eastern end of lake renewed, with additional hard standing areas.

## **Future Plans**

Viability studies have been approved for a new caravan park and lakeside café/meeting facility. Funding for this has been approved in principle and the projects should be commenced/operational in 2011 subject to legals and planning requirements

## Education

Considerable effort has been applied to the educational elements with specialist education section established under a senior ranger. Majority of visits have historically been targeted at Key Stage 1. The education offer has been considerable extended and now also include tourism management, event management, landscape design and environmental courses.

The education department has established a 'roadshow approach' taking the expertise and experience directly into schools in the area. This has proved most popular with both students and teachers.

The aim is to continue to increase the number of educational visits by 2% each year over the next 5 years. This will be undertaken by continuous improvement and expansion of Education Packs through various media. Taking the education facility to the school will also continue to grow.

Existing customers will be targeted offering enhance targets to add to their programme, attract new customers by offering an attractive package; presenting this information to the decision makers in the schools we wish to target.

The performance is set out in the following chart.

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009 Base Line</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% increase 2009&gt;2010</b>	<b>% increase from 2008</b>
<b>KS1</b>	333	208	226	<b>+ 8,65%</b>	<b>-32.13%</b>
<b>KS2</b>	515	462	685	<b>+ 48.27%</b>	<b>+ 33.01%</b>
<b>KS3</b>	38	41	461	<b>+ 1,024.39%</b>	<b>+1,13.16 %</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>1372</b>	<b>+ 92.76%</b>	<b>+54.85%</b>

This is in a period year where to total visits NATIONALLY have dropped.

## **PR and Communication**

Green Flag Award retained with merit

Considerable effort has been applied to the educational elements with specialist  
Excellent relationships being built up with local and regional media. This is despite the fact that the only adverts in 2010 were placed in Image Magazine.

- BBC Filming Hull Group that trained / learned to sail at the park
- Yorkshire Air Ambulance incident
- Sheffield Star articles about Zorbing, Santa Dash
- Yorkshire Gold to be taken advantage of in 2011 re the sporting events – Triathlon, Hovercraft
- Web Banner on Yorkshire Gold website
- This is Y magazine Rother Valley included by Welcome to Yorkshire
- 118 Directory updated
- Chesterfield Canal Leaflet includes Rother Valley Country Park
- Trans Pennine Trail leaflet includes Rother Valley Country Park
- News letter articles organised through Peter Collins

## **Web Site**

The new website is up and running and is updated on a weekly basis  
[www.rvcp.co.uk](http://www.rvcp.co.uk)

**Corporate Packs** to 25 businesses issued in December 2010

Information packs on the park and events has been distributed to organisations who have agreed to promote the facilities free of charge in 2011.

Off limits hen and stag parties interested in working with us meeting to be set up

Marketing Plan being revised with diverse targets for expanding promotion of the park.

- Complimentary articles have appeared on
- Zorbing : Sheffield Star and Image Magazine
- Corporate Activities: Local Government Magazines
- Canoe Focus Dwarf Athletic Association
- Leisure Opportunities – New Projects
- Welcome to Yorkshire this is Y: Rother Valley included

## **Summary**

The foregoing represents not only significant financial investment but considerable progress in diversifying and improving the offer and awareness of the faculties of the park. The achievements and investment has been significant although much is not readily apparent until set in in a report such as now.

The restructured management have risen to the challenge, with latent talent being utilised to the full. The additional jobs and increased patronage are indicators of the initiatives paying off. A significant amount of resources have been reinvested in the park for the benefit of future years.

- **4 New Jobs**
- **Over £250,000 already invested in existing property and facilities**
- **25 New Events**
- **20 New activities**
- **Improved profile**
- **Future investment programme**
- **Exceeded all contracted KPI's consistently**