



WARWICKSHIRE  
**Country Parks**

**Our Year**  
2022-2023

There are **around a million** visits to our green spaces each year.

**The Warwickshire Country Parks Service operates five country parks, three greenways and two nature reserves, covering over 1,300 acres of the county's finest and most varied countryside.**

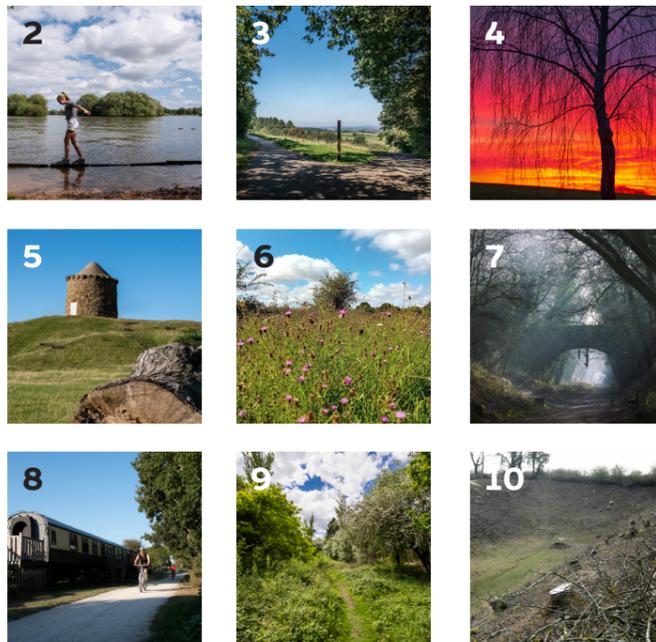
We welcome around a million visits to our well-managed green spaces each year, which include areas of woodland, wetland, grassland, recreation areas, footpaths and built facilities. During 2022-2023 we have been rebuilding our events and activities programmes, which were stalled during the COVID-19 Pandemic, as well as developing an increasingly commercial approach to service delivery, with some exciting new ventures on the horizon.



## Our GREEN SPACES

**Our green spaces provide a haven for Warwickshire's residents, businesses, and visitors, as well as for the abundant wildlife that they attract and nurture.**

Covering over **600 acres**, Kingsbury Water Park is our largest and most popular site and provides the widest range of concessionary offers and clubs. Our staff headquarters is based at Kingsbury, with offices for our southern sites at Ryton Pools, our second most popular site.



1. Pooley Country Park
2. Kingsbury Water Park
3. Hartshill Hayes Country Park
4. Ryton Pools Country Park
5. Burton Dassett Hills Country Park
6. Offchurch Greenway
7. Kenilworth Greenway
8. Stratford Greenway
9. Ufton Fields Nature Reserve
10. Stockton Cutting

# Our PRIORITIES

The Warwickshire Country Parks Service is ideally positioned to help deliver Warwickshire County Council's Council Plan 2022-2027 priorities.

This review highlights and celebrates some of our achievements, and outlines our intentions for continuing and improving our service offer and successes.

The priorities we contribute to most include:



Create vibrant places with **SAFE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES**



Deliver our Child Friendly Warwickshire strategy - **HAPPY, HEALTHY, SAFE CHILDREN**



Tackle climate change, promote biodiversity and deliver on our **COMMITMENT TO NET ZERO**



Through education, **IMPROVE LIFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN**, young people and those with special educational needs and disabilities



**SUPPORT PEOPLE TO LIVE HEALTHY, HAPPY AND INDEPENDENT LIVES** and work with partners to reduce health inequalities

# Our PEOPLE

We have a **40-strong team** which includes:

**Senior Rangers, Countryside Rangers & Assistant Rangers** – the friendly faces of our Country Parks, the ranger teams (you'll spot them in green!) work hard to welcome visitors and to manage and maintain our sites.

**Specialist Habitat Rangers – Woodlands, Wetlands and Grasslands** – these experts focus on our unique habitats, ensuring we create and carefully manage biodiverse grasslands, hedgerows, trees, lakes, ponds, and rivers, whilst also generating income to support the running of the service.

**Education, Communities & Health Rangers and Assistant ECH Ranger** – this team develops and delivers our outdoor education sessions for school groups and focuses on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of visitors to our green spaces.

**All the above are supported by:**

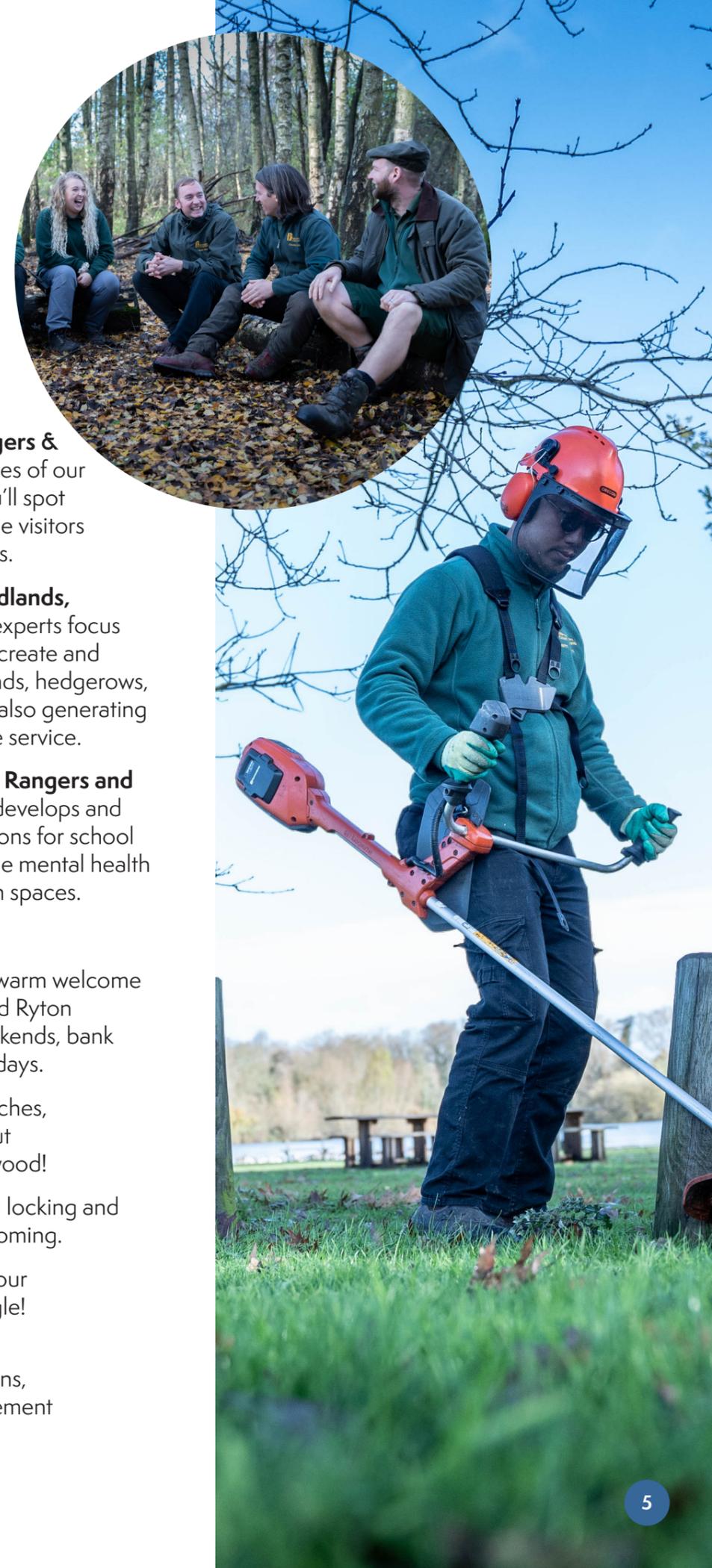
**Visitor Assistants** – they provide a warm welcome at our visitor centres at Kingsbury and Ryton which are open to the public on weekends, bank holidays and throughout school holidays.

**Woodworkers** – they make the benches, picnic tables and signs, and just about anything else the team needs from wood!

**Caretakers** – help with opening and locking and keeping our facilities clean and welcoming.

**Volunteers** – they help us maintain our sites, without whom we would struggle!

The team also includes officers who deliver marketing and communications, commercial and operational management and back-of-house support.





## Our VOLUNTEERS

**Volunteers play a vital role in maintaining our green spaces. On both an individual and corporate basis, they carry out a multitude of tasks across the sites, from habitat management to equipment installation.**

Volunteering brings Warwickshire residents a myriad of benefits, including the opportunity to build skills, improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing, and provides a chance for people to make a personal contribution to the development and enhancement of highly valued community assets.



### What's NEXT?

Review and expand our volunteering opportunities to help deliver our communities and health objectives.

Celebrate our volunteers and the work that they do through our marketing programme, highlighting the vital role that they play and encouraging others to reap the benefits of volunteering.

## Our VISITORS



**During 2022-2023 we welcomed over 960,000 visitors. People came from Warwickshire, the West Midlands and beyond to enjoy the rich opportunities for leisure, fitness, education and so much more. Our parks make a valuable contribution to the local visitor economy, and we are proud of their history and heritage, both of which help to tell the Warwickshire story to the many tourists that visit these green spaces.**

Our visitors include people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds who use the parks in many ways: dog walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, runners, wheelchair users, school children, toddlers, families, corporate groups, volunteers, eventgoers, anglers, nature enthusiasts and individuals who just want some peace and quiet in the beautiful surroundings of a country park!

Income generated from parking charges is vital to managing and maintaining the parks and service.

### What's NEXT?

During 2023-2024, we will continue to develop and expand our offer for visitors to ensure that our sites are as accessible as possible to a range of different people and groups with varying needs and requirements. This includes expanding the on-site water-based activities at Kingsbury Water Park, to enable visitors to hire pedalos, for example.



  
**100**  
 VOLUNTEERS  
**> 9,800**  
 HOURS OF  
 VOLUNTEER  
 WORK! 

## Outdoor Education

Country Parks are excellent educational spaces and can provide critical support to achieving the objectives laid out in Warwickshire County Council's Outdoor Education and Learning Strategy.

Country Parks have a programme of 'hands on' outdoor activities encouraging children in Pre-School, Reception and Key Stages 1 and 2 to discover the natural world. School groups come to explore a variety of habitats including meadows, woodland and ponds. Our purpose-built education centres at Kingsbury Water Park and Ryton Pools Country Park provide excellent bases for these outdoor sessions. We also offer educational activities at Hartshill Hayes Country Park.

During 2022-2023, **1,787 primary-aged school children** participated in our engaging outdoor learning sessions.

Three of our parks - Kingsbury Water Park, Hartshill Hayes and Ryton Pools – have been **awarded Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) quality badges**, categorised as **"top of the class"** for educational visits. The awards recognise both the quality of the learning and the safety of the setting.

## Other Events & Activities for Children

**Children's Birthday Parties** – during 2022-2023 we welcomed 1,300 children to our popular weekend birthday parties, which include activities based on Forest Schools principles, such as wild woods, as well as making dens, discovering pond-life and searching for minibeasts.

**School Holiday Events** – 1,408 children came to enjoy a ranger-led holiday activity, including seasonal and festive events, arts and crafts, treasure hunts and campfire activities.



## What's NEXT?

During 2023-2024 we will review our education package and explore the potential to expand and develop our offer for other age groups.

We will work with Education colleagues to help deliver the newly adopted Outdoor Education and Learning Strategy.

We will streamline our booking process to make it simpler for users.



## Health and Wellbeing

As part of our events and activities programme, we have been working to develop our offer to specifically help support the mental health and wellbeing of visitors. The COVID-19 Pandemic highlighted the need for well-managed, safe and accessible green spaces. The global crisis increased awareness of the physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits that are found through spending time in the great outdoors. Some of the activities we delivered in 2022/2023 in this area include:

### Wellbeing Wednesday Walks and Sunday Strolls

– introduced in 2022, these free-to-join ranger-guided walks provide visitors with an opportunity to immerse themselves in nature and leave behind the pressures of day-to-day life. We have welcomed people of all ages to enjoy a relaxing stroll with company and the opportunity to meet new people.

**Reindeer and Wreath-making** – during the Christmas period we brought back the much-loved reindeer and wreath making sessions, welcoming adults and children alike.

**Toddler Trundle** – re-introduced in February 2023, the weekly Wednesday morning sessions at Ryton Pools welcomed pre-schoolers with parents and carers, focusing on different educational and engaging themes each week. These sessions often provide a welcome respite for grown-ups trying to keep their little ones entertained.

**Fishing for Wellbeing** – fishing is known to support mental health and wellbeing and our work in this area supports both beginners and experienced anglers.

**Active Travel** – whilst we are reliant on income from car parking charges, we welcome and encourage people to walk and cycle to our sites. Most of our extensive network of paths is suitable for cycling, running, walking, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and buggies. We have bike hire concessions at several sites and also host weekly Park Runs at Kingsbury.

## What's NEXT?

We will work with our colleagues in Public Health and others to further explore the opportunities that our sites offer in supporting the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors.

During 2022/2023 we:

SOLD  
**1,970** DAY FISHING TICKETS

and  
**175** DAY ANNUAL PERMITS AT KINGSBURY WATER PARK

.....

INTRODUCED  
**60** CARP FISH AGED 3-4 YEARS, WEIGHING APPROX.

**14-16LB** EACH

TO HELP RESTOCK MULTIPLE LAKES

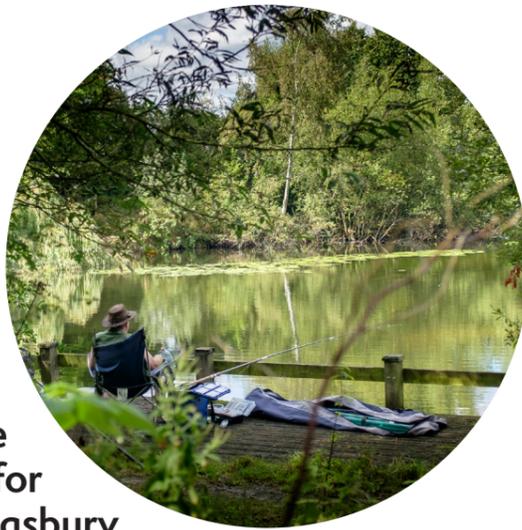
.....

WELCOMED OVER  
**400** PARTICIPANTS TO BREAM FISHING COMPETITIONS ON BODYMOOR HEATH LAKE AT KINGSBURY WATER PARK

.....

HELPED ADMINISTER  
**'GET FISHING' AWARDS**

THESE POPULAR COACHING SESSIONS GAVE  
**81** PARTICIPANTS NEW SKILLS AND BUILT THEIR CONFIDENCE TO BECOME INDEPENDENT ANGLERS



## Fishing

Our waters provide rich opportunities for angling at both Kingsbury Water Park, which we run in-house, and Ryton Pools, organised in partnership with the Leam Angling Association. We offer day tickets and annual fishing permits, as well as the chance for families to fish for the first time via our partnership work with the Angling Trust's 'Get Fishing' award.

We are working to create a balanced, natural, and sustainable fishery at Kingsbury Water Park, which brings huge benefits to native biodiversity, as well as to the wellbeing of anglers of all ages who take the opportunity to be socially and physically active outdoors, to learn new skills, or simply to unwind in blue-green spaces. The biggest fish caught in 2022/23 was a **38lb (17kg) Carp** from Canal pool, caught by one of our night fishing permit holders – about the size of a very large beagle!

### What's NEXT?

Water-quality monitoring, bolstered by ongoing research, will ensure a thriving ecosystem.

We plan to develop flourishing fisheries which offer exceptional angling experiences, all whilst enhancing climate resilience and improving biodiversity.

During 2023/2024 we will also invest in new fishing pegs on one of our night fishing lakes, and in doing so improve our offer to permit holders.

## Our ENVIRONMENT

Warwickshire's country parks and greenways provide a natural habitat for thousands of species of plants, animals and fungi. Through educational activities and communications, the Warwickshire Country Parks Service plays a key role in promoting climate and biodiversity awareness. Key highlights include:

Ryton Pools is now one species away from being classed as a site of national importance for bumblebees.

Over **2,200** different species of plants, animals and fungi have been recorded at Ryton Pools, with **565 recorded for the first time** at the site. This includes Britain's thirteenth recorded occurrence of the beetle, *Thalycra fervida*, as well as a new species of bee and spider for Warwickshire.

Ryton Pools boasts over **800 recorded moth species**, making it one of the top three sites in the County for moths.

**One acre of species-rich grassland** has been created, alongside a further **twelve acres placed into Biodiversity Offsetting**. The offsetting scheme is designed to improve habitats and biodiversity and comes with a management plan and financial benefits.

An additional **75 metres of marginal planting** created at Ryton Pools. These shoreline plants help improve water quality and enhance biodiversity.

**Secured £31,000 over three years** for habitat improvement/creation projects at Ryton Pools.

**15 bird boxes and 6 bat boxes** have been installed in the woodlands of Kingsbury.

We have refreshed our **Tree Risk Strategy** to be more proactive in how we manage tree risks across our sites.

Two of our Specialist Habitat Rangers featured as guests in the first edition of the **'Sustainable Warwickshire' podcast**, leading a discussion which focused on biodiversity in the County.



### What's NEXT?

Our three Specialist Habitat Rangers are focusing their efforts on ensuring the ecological value of our parks is preserved and improved.

As part of this they will review our site management plans during 2023/2024 and explore opportunities to expand our biodiversity offsetting work.

**80 acres of woodland** at Kingsbury Water Park will be managed under grant funding.

We are looking to develop a new approach to green spaces, focusing on improving access to green spaces in Warwickshire.

# Our COMMUNICATIONS

We are delighted to have launched new branding for the Warwickshire Country Parks Service and each of our parks and greenways. A rejuvenated website and fresh visual identity have helped to create a modern, consistent and coherent offer.

The Country Parks website received over 370,000 unique page views in 2022/2023. The service operates some of WCC's most followed social media channels, providing the perfect medium for sharing messages relating to health and wellbeing, climate change, biodiversity, and education and skills, all whilst keeping visitors and residents up to date with activities, events and news from each of the sites.

Recognising that each country park has its own target audience, they each have a dedicated Facebook page, as does Kingsbury Water Park Fishery. Across all the social media accounts, Warwickshire's Country Parks have increased follower numbers by 10% in 2022-2023, now standing at over 46,000.

In 2022/2023 we gained coverage on regional television (BBC Midlands and ITV Central) and radio (BBC Radio WM and BBC CWR), news websites (such as Warwickshire World and Warwick Nub News), as well as local and countywide press (Observer Series, Tamworth Herald, Leamington Courier, and more). We issued

**19 media releases** covering a variety of subjects including wildlife discoveries, volunteering case studies, event information, and public safety messaging.



45,961

FACEBOOK PAGE FANS



2.6m

FACEBOOK POST IMPRESSIONS

8.9m

PAGE & PROFILE IMPRESSIONS



12.57%

POST ENGAGEMENT RATE

# Our EVENTS

During 2022-2023 we have enjoyed welcoming back visitors to some of the popular events and activities that were suspended during the Pandemic. We have also been developing our events programme to offer a wider range of experiences to people of all ages. Events and activities we have delivered this year include:

**Queen's Baton Relay** – in July, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Queen's Baton Relay began its voyage across Warwickshire at Kingsbury Water Park. The baton journeyed along the Echills Wood miniature railway before taking to the water to cross Bodymoor Heath Lake, after which it was given a guard of honour by Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. Local school children joined the celebrations which were followed with a variety of educational activities.

**Digbeth Dining Club** – we welcomed over 3,000 visitors to the first Kingsbury Dining Club in September. The multi award-winning events and venue operator has turned unique venues across the Midlands into vibrant street-food destinations.

In October, a **milled timber open day** in the woodyard at Kingsbury generated almost £2,000 from sustainably sourced timbers. Working in partnership with the forestry team, it has provided country parks with timbers to sell and use for signs/buildings and features.

What's NEXT?

We plan to improve our range of events, both small and large, to appeal to more diverse audiences.



# Our PARTNERS

## External Partnerships

The Warwickshire Country Parks Service has strong links with a wide range of partner organisations, from district, borough, town and parish councils to wildlife organisations, community groups and hobby and interest bodies. During 2022/2023:

We worked with the **Angling Trust** as part of their 'Get Fishing for Wellbeing' initiative at Kingsbury Water Park and Ryton Pools and **secured £2,500** from the Trust to support Ryton Young Anglers.

The **Friends of Kingsbury Water Park** sold **£10,000 of duck food**, with the proceeds going towards the installation of a wheelchair accessible swing.

A good working relationship with **Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire** has meant access to **£31,000 of funding** over three years via the Dunsmore Living Landscape scheme at Ryton, with both organisations providing high levels of volunteer support on-site.

Regular work parties run in collaboration with **North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College** which assist young adults with learning difficulties to find a potential pathway into paid employment.

Beehive demonstrations run in partnership with the **Warwickshire Beekeepers Association** at Ryton Pools.

## What's NEXT?

Build and develop our existing partnerships and identify new partner opportunities to help us deliver our priorities around communities, education, health and climate change.

## Internal Partnerships

We work closely with colleagues across **Warwickshire County Council** to maintain, develop and deliver our sites and services.

We have been strengthening some of these important relationships throughout 2022/2023 and will continue to build on them to ensure that our parks deliver the Council's key objectives in a coordinated and efficient manner. Some of the teams we have been working with include Ecology, Historic Environment and Landscape, Forestry, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health, Education, Adult Social Care, Libraries and Heritage, Transport Planning, Finance, Legal, Property (including Warwickshire Property and Development Group), Health & Safety, Economy & Skills, County Highways and Trading Standards, amongst others.

## Leases & Concessions

**Warwickshire's country parks and greenways host a wide range of concessionary businesses that enhance the visitor experience.**

These include various food and drinks caterers, ice-cream vans, bicycle hire, and bouncy castle and trampoline hire. We have several leases including: café businesses at Ryton Pools, Kingsbury Water Park and the Stratford Greenway; The Camping and Caravanning Club, Tamworth Sailing Club and Echills Wood Railway at Kingsbury; as well as several livestock graziers alongside other clubs and societies across the sites.

These businesses bring in vital revenue to help sustain and develop the Country Parks service, as well as contributing to supporting the local economy and our objectives around health and wellbeing and climate change. Our income from our leases and concessions goes directly towards funding the service.





# 2023-2024 SO FAR

## The Coronation

**A range of activities took place at parks and greenways throughout the County to mark the Coronation of King Charles III, with free parking on offer for all visitors.**

On Sunday 7 May, as part of the national Big Lunch event, Kingsbury Water Park hosted circus-style entertainment, including face painting, circus skills workshops, and magicians. Market stalls sold locally produced goods and artisan products, as well as a variety of food including burgers and ice-cream. Ryton Pools Country Park also offered activities including a brass band, face painting and a barbecue.

On Monday 8 May, Ryton Pools and Kingsbury Water Park invited visitors to get involved with voluntary conservation work as part of the Big Help Out.

Our sites also offered self-led coronation trails throughout the weekend in which children searched for pebbles featuring royal-themed designs.

The King's representative in Warwickshire, Lord Lieutenant Tim Cox, alongside Chair of the County Council, Councillor Dave Humphreys, marked the occasion by unveiling trees planted to mark the coronation at each of Warwickshire's Country Parks.

## Communications

**In June 2023, we recorded and published an edition of WCC's 'Let's Talk Warwickshire' podcast, titled "Health, Wellbeing and the Great Outdoors", which featured a discussion between an Education, Communities and Health Ranger and Warwickshire's Director for Public Health.**

In July 2023 we published the first issue of the Warwickshire Country Parks Update. This monthly newsletter brings subscribers the latest news, updates, and useful information from across the parks and greenways.

## Events

**Demand for our half-term events remained high in Q1 2023-24, with most Easter events sold out and 80% of our May half-term events reaching maximum capacity.**

Kingsbury Water Park has welcomed a monthly artisan market, managed by CJs Events, helping improve our offer for visitors looking for quality, locally produced goods including clothes, candles, jewellery and dog treats.

Heartbreak Productions were back treading the boards and wowing the crowds that braved the poor July weather at both Ryton Pools and Kingsbury Water Park to watch David Walliams' "Bad Dad".

## Commercial Activity

**We have developed a commercial action plan to improve some of the activities available on our sites, and to ensure that all our leases and concessions are contributing to our objectives around health and wellbeing and the environment. Plans will also see improvements to fishing, parking, and events, generating additional income to help pay for the service.**

We have closed our refreshments kiosk at Hartshill Hayes Country Park, which was proving financially unviable, and instead welcomed a coffee van with an improved selection of drinks and snacks for our visitors.

We have taken back the management of the Ufton Fields and Stockton Cutting nature reserves and are making enhancements for visitors, with environmental improvements also underway

We are making changes to our commemorative programme so it's more mindful of the environmental impacts on our sites, whilst still being able to offer fitting ways for bereaved families and friends to remember a loved one.



## Contacts



### Find us on Facebook

Warwickshire Country Parks

[www.facebook.com/CountryParks](https://www.facebook.com/CountryParks)

Burton Dassett Hills

[www.facebook.com/BurtonDassettHills](https://www.facebook.com/BurtonDassettHills)

Hartshill Hayes Country Park

[www.facebook.com/HartshillHayes](https://www.facebook.com/HartshillHayes)

Kingsbury Water Park

[www.facebook.com/KingsburyWaterPark](https://www.facebook.com/KingsburyWaterPark)

Pooley Country Park

[www.facebook.com/PooleyCountryPark](https://www.facebook.com/PooleyCountryPark)

Ryton Pools Country Park

[www.facebook.com/RytonPools](https://www.facebook.com/RytonPools)

The Kenilworth Greenway

[www.facebook.com/KenilworthGreenway](https://www.facebook.com/KenilworthGreenway)

The Stratford Greenway

[www.facebook.com/StratfordGreenway](https://www.facebook.com/StratfordGreenway)

Kingsbury Water Park Fisheries

[www.facebook.com/KingsburyWaterParkFishery](https://www.facebook.com/KingsburyWaterParkFishery)



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Warwickshire Country Parks on Instagram:

[www.instagram.com/Warwickshire\\_Country\\_Parks](https://www.instagram.com/Warwickshire_Country_Parks)



### Find us on Twitter/X

Warwickshire Country Parks

[twitter.com/CountryParks](https://twitter.com/CountryParks)

## Website

Warwickshire Country Parks

[countryparks.warwickshire.gov.uk](https://countryparks.warwickshire.gov.uk)

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