

The year round up.

This year I think so many more people have learned what open spaces like Milton Creek mean to them. Lots of new visitors have found the park in one way or another. People that would normally work in London suddenly had an extra three hours a day to explore their local area.

The first part of the year started well with a couple of small events taking place. Then into the first lock down bringing its own challenges of food bank work, country park visits and working from home.

I know that some of the group had used their exercise time to come and visit the park and litter pick and report anything that was not quite right to me. Along with the dog walkers that litter pick and report to me on a regular basis. We managed to make it through lockdown quite well, maintaining the park to a good standard considering all that was thrown at us.

I had some of my 1 to 1 monthly meetings with Graeme on site, at both Milton and Oare, to make sure things were still going in the right direction. I think he enjoys getting away from his home office desk for a while. It's always good to have an extra set of eyes picking up on tasks that might need doing.

Team meetings fall in the middle of my day (I start at 7 where possible) so for most of them I manage to log in from the park on the phone. It means more time on the ground for me, either sitting in the truck, walking around and I even sat on a log in the sun at one point.

We managed to get some volunteers back on site for a few months and changed the way and size and days of the group coming to the park to fit in with restrictions. Litter picks, tree cutting, painting, container painting (Room still sitting unused, I will see if we can extend the time we have it). Still working with DS Smiths, they paid the cost of install and delivery for ROOM and also made a grant of £1000 for non plastic tree guards.

Lots of small projects that some of the group have been working on from home, including Christmas decorations, fairy doors and preparation works for a different direction we have had to take for events.

This brings me on to the Facebook page and how much its seems to have grown this year with 2900 followers. Most of you will have seen the live videos that we have put out to try and engage people with the park, the most viewed is the Fairy Door work shop having around 4.8k views.

We have secured the funding for T shirts for the guys that come out for practical tasks, after wrecking a few of the non expert painters in the group's personal clothing hahahaha. Not really, we just had a chat with the group, who when on site thought it

might look good for future events. Also when we have people stop and chat they might just look at the badge and not think what is the community payback working on today hahahah. We have gone with just the Friends of Milton Creek logo on the left breast of the shirt and sweat shirts. I hope you all get the colours you asked for.

The ponds are looking rather full at this time with some work taken place on the dog pond. Plants have been moved across from the newt pond together with some tree branches, to try and keep dogs out of the rear of the pond, to help some plants to establish.

Some new interpretation panels have been installed, 600 trees collected ready to go in more on the way from the Woodland Trust. Work on some id sheets has started and we are looking at making some leaflet holders for not only Milton but for other green spaces working with Ali SIB. We now have a full licence for Zoom working in collaboration with SIB to share the costs.

All in all we have had a very successful year as a country park, very limited hours on task days but many additional hours of work behind the scenes, at home and as individuals visiting the park and carrying out tasks.

I have wriien this mid isolating. I am going around the twist, really, really around the twist. This last 6 days has taught me so much about how moving into an office job would finish me off. To think that was my next step at Capstone 5 years ago. I am so glad I didn't take that step.

I want to thanks you all for the last year, it's been different for all of us and like I said above we as a group and a park have become so much more to so many people.

Thanks every one of you that have helped me through the strangest year ever, fingers crossed we can get back to some kind of normality by Easter?