

## Case Study Template

<b>Topic</b>
<b>Funding</b>
<b>Name of Initiative</b>
<b>Irchester Country Park Improvements</b>
<b>Name of Local Authority/Organisation</b>
<b>Northamptonshire County Council</b>
<b>Related Topics/Issues</b>
Play & Health

<b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To improve the park’s recreation facilities by providing a large new free access children’s play area (with natural play features), a new commercially operated tree top high ropes adventure business and a new cafe.</b></li> <li>• <b>To maximise the park’s potential, meet public demand/expectations and increase the use and enjoyment of the country park for healthy recreation</b></li> <li>• <b>To create new business opportunities and employment</b></li> <li>• <b>To make the country park more financially sustainable by increasing income from parking and business franchises.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes &amp; Impacts</b>
<p>This project has completely re-vitalised Irchester Country Park. Visitor numbers at the park have increased by 160% since the opening of the play area and high ropes business illustrating the level of demand that exists for high quality play facilities in country park surroundings.</p> <p>Park income generation has trebled</p> <p>Around 2 new full time and 8 new part time jobs will have been created by the high ropes business and cafe (once the cafe opens Dec 09)</p>
<b>Process</b>
<p><b>Consultation</b>– Public demand for improved children’s play was clearly evident from visitor surveys. On site public consultation regarding the high ropes trail met with positive reaction from existing park users.</p> <p><b>Policy</b> - Council Cabinet portfolio holder, local member and Director were all supportive. Confirmation obtained that cabinet/committee approval was not required – the lease arrangements were within normal business and within officer’s delegated powers.</p> <p>Approval to establish a capital project was obtained from corporate capital investment group (officers and member).</p> <p><b>Project development</b> – A feasibility study was commission from council’s Asset</p>

Management Service to establish the practicalities and expected costs of refurbishing an existing park building to a condition suitable to be leased as a cafe- the catering company was required to furnish and equip the cafe.

By working with the private sector company a grant bid was devised using the proposed private sector investment in the high ropes trail along with a small amount of council capital as the 50% match funding required from the Grant body (EMDA).

Heads of terms for lease established with high ropes company (including site conditions and registration with European High Ropes Course Association)

**Planning permission** – Confirmation was obtained that the play area development and the refurbishment of the cafe building did not require change of use planning consent was obtained by NCC from district council. Private sector company was required to conduct an ecological evaluation of their high ropes proposals and to obtain planning permission from district council.

Grant application to East Midlands Development Agency (economic development grant) was successful.

**Procurement** – Tenders invited for building works, play area and lease of cafe. An East Midlands procurement framework was used for play area procurement to save on time and the need for Pre Qualification process.

Asset Management Officer, Procurement and legal support was obtained to help project manage the delivery of the various elements to a tight timescale.

**Project completion** – An opening ceremony was arranged to celebrate new facilities – involving local schools and groups, staff volunteers, press and members.

Floods of people using the facilities right from the outset – mainly through word of mouth.

### **Resources/Funding**

£158,000 East Midlands Development Agency grant fund (economic development funding administered by Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited)  
£100,000 Private Sector investment  
£58,000 Northamptonshire County Council capital investment

### **Timescales**

Expression of interest bid Oct 2008 – full bid Nov 2008  
Grant Award Nov 2008  
Opening of High Ropes and Play area April 2009  
Opening of cafe December 2009

### **Evaluation**

Monitoring visitor numbers  
Visitor feedback

### **Prospects & Opportunities**

**Key Learning/Advice for Others**

Have the feasibility work ready  
Talk with grant administrators about how to creatively use opportunities  
Get the relevant departmental support lined up

**Contact Details**

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Contact agrees that GreenSpace can publish this case study in either printed or digital media	Yes
Contact is happy for their contact details to be published with the case study	Yes

**Other Information Sources**