



PRESS RELEASE

New bird hide provides ‘ring-side seat’ to newly developed stretch of the River Wensum

Areas of the Wensum Valley, which have never been accessible to the public, will now be on display thanks to the opening of a new bird hide at Pensthorpe Natural Park, near Fakenham.

The hide, which officially opens to the public on Friday 6th April 2018, overlooks newly opened wetland areas and marks the first time in over a decade that Pensthorpe has revealed new parts of its 700-acre estate to the public.

This stretch of the River Wensum and its surrounding wetlands is home to species such as Bitterns, Reed Warblers, Marsh Harriers, Reed Buntings, Otters and Cranes. The area is specifically managed to encourage waders to breed, yet sightings of Garganey and Great Egrets have already been reported.

The bird hide is the result of a £53,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to open a window on the wonders of the Wensum, and includes extra-large, expansive viewing panels, plenty of seating and room enough to accommodate an entire classroom of pupils.

Richard Spowage, Reserve Manager at Pensthorpe Natural Park, comments: “The educational possibilities opened up by the new hide will enable us to excite the next generation about both the fragility and prosperity of the natural world and teach them the characteristics that make the Wensum Valley so special.”

This new river-learning facility is the final phase of work by the Pensthorpe Conservation Trust* to restore a 3km stretch of the River Wensum running through the reserve. The restoration work has returned the river to its natural splendour, worthy of the highest international protection status the river now enjoys.

Bill Jordan, owner of Pensthorpe Natural Park comments: “Much of our attention has been focused on ways to enhance the Wensum, which we are fortunate to have running through the heart of The Estate. Our river restoration project has enabled us to install important

watercourse features and reed beds, install a sustainable drainage system plus reinstate meanders which were previously removed to aid getting water off farmland. Water voles and kingfishers are just some of the native species thriving thanks to the work.

“With the river restoration now complete and the habitat flourishing, it is with great excitement that we can now open the windows of the new hide to give visitors a ring-side seat to the real wonders this stretch of the Wensum has to offer. This new hide is on the opposite side of the reserve to our popular Wader Scrape and we hope it will encourage our visitors to explore the site even more”

The hide has been adorned with interpretation panels, which carry illustrations by the acclaimed artist and illustrator Tim Wootton, a former winner of Young European Bird Artist of the Year and BBC Wildlife Magazine Wildlife Artist of the Year. The panels focus on four habitats, wetlands, woodlands, farmland and grassland, which paint the picture of the diverse habitats visitors can see at Pensthorpe.

There is also a second new hide, the smaller farmland hide, which overlooks the estate’s arable fields promising views of Kestrels, Yellowhammers, Red-legged Partridges and Lapwings.

This brings the total number of hides at Pensthorpe to eight and, as a result, has created volunteering and employment opportunities at the reserve.

For more information about Pensthorpe visit pensthorpe.com or call 01328 851465.

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Editors Notes

*** The Pensthorpe Conservation Trust (PCT)**

The Pensthorpe Conservation Trust was formed in January 2003 with its founding trustees being Professor David Bellamy, George Archibald, Bill Jordan, Deb Jordan and Tim Nevard and its Patron HRH the Duke of Edinburgh to carry forward the work of the Pensthorpe Waterfowl Trust, with its key aims being to create a centre of excellence in ecological restoration, promote sustainable farming and to research, breed and protect threatened species.

Pensthorpe Natural Park is on the A1067, one mile from Fakenham and just over 20 miles from the city of Norwich. Open all year, 1st January – 28th February 10am – 4pm, and 1st

March – 31st December 10am to 5pm. Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Entry prices: Adults £11.95, Seniors £10.95, Children £10.95, Under 3's free. Annual Members are free. Parking is free.

Online booking discount of £1 per person applies to tickets booked in advance (except during winter pricing).

For more information, images or press passes please contact Rachael Shakespeare on rachael@rs-pr.co.uk or 07833 940 000.