



An Update from Hallowtree

Hi Folks,

It has been a rather odd year so far; filled with sadness, uncertainty, cancelled plans and a few-too-many online meetings. So, take a break for a moment and have a read through some positive updates from Hallowtree Scout Activity Centre.



Reopening

We are pleased to announce that following the latest government advice, **we have now fully reopened** Hallowtree. At the time of writing, this only includes day sessions for scouting groups, but we are all hoping that changes soon. Activities can be booked as normal, provided that they can be carried out with all appropriate safety measures as required by your risk assessment. We will not be providing any Hallowtree instructors at this time, but you can use your own with prior agreement.

For the next few months, before residential Scouting experiences are permitted, we are accepting bookings from Scout leader families who may wish to get away from home for a weekend and dust off the camping gear. We have enough toilet and shower blocks to assign each group their own dedicated set of facilities for their sole use. Plus, there is plenty of space around site to spread-out and ensure safe and easy social distancing for everybody visiting. We have specific Covid-19 guidance which is issued at the time of booking.

If you would like to make a booking, please follow the normal booking process on our website (hallowtree.org.uk) or call 01473 714440.

During Lockdown

After learning that we would have to close the site entirely due to Covid-19, there was an initial period where nobody was allowed on site. Sad times indeed. After further guidance from the government and the Scout Association, we were permitted to carry out maintenance – as long as it was conducted according to social distancing rules. A small, core team then got busy carrying out repairs and renovations – taking advantage of the lack of bookings to do some tasks which have been, in some cases, a little bit overdue. This was all done in strict compliance with regulations on social distancing and use of PPE where appropriate.





Before lockdown began, we had arranged to have all of the external wood-framed windows and doors in the main building replaced with new UPVC units. This was completed in April by a third-party contractor.



As well as being much tidier than the tired, old windows and doors, the new ones provide additional security, and insulate to a much higher standard; meaning we will save money on heating and reduce our environmental impact. An additional set of French doors fitted to the small hall will also allow for an in-and-out system which is useful for feeding time at larger camps and events.



We are also making improvements to disabled access in all of our buildings. Ramps are currently being built for the primary entrances to the main building, and adaptations to the Raven Hut are in the planning stages. In addition, the concrete steps outside the washing-up area have been re-finished and smoothed-out as they were becoming a trip hazard. We have also added disabled parking spaces in both car parks.

One of the larger projects undertaken has been uplifting the internal facilities in the main building. Woodwork and doors have been re-finished, old storage heaters removed, walls cleared of blu-tack, lighting upgraded to energy-efficient LEDs, and the meeting room has been completely refurbished.

The 'before' picture is to the right, and the 'after' pictures are below.





This new meeting room is now in a much better state than before; and has been designed to offer maximum flexibility. It can be used for conventional meetings, video conferences, training sessions and for adult accommodation. With many meetings and training courses now reliant on PowerPoint slides, the addition of a 4K video screen on the wall means that groups will no-longer need to worry about bringing a projector and screen and can instead easily share content with the assistance of our high-speed Wi-Fi. There is also a large whiteboard. We hope that this modernisation will enable leadership teams to work together in a more pleasant and exciting environment, ultimately leading to a better experience for our young people.



Moving outdoors, we have built a new notice board at the entrance to the main car park. This is currently being used to display our Covid-19 welcome guidance.

Next to that is our new recycling point. This is a much-needed expansion to the existing bin 'shed' and now accommodates all of our large recycling bins. This project was planned and costed (before lockdown) by a team of three young leaders from the Ipswich area, who are all working towards their activity centre service badge.



If you are interested in leading or taking part in the activity centre service badge, please get in touch.



Moving further across the site, improvements have been made to outdoor LED lighting and the CCTV network. This helps us keep Hallowtree as safe and secure as we can.

A huge amount of work has been done to help us keep-up with mother nature. It is remarkable how quickly the flora and fauna take over when there are no Scouts about!





There have been hundreds of rabbits roaming the grass fields (digging plenty of holes which we continue to fill-in) as well as several families of deer, and the occasional badger.

Campsites have quickly become overgrown and so there has been plenty of strimming and mowing completed to regain control. It's amazing how much extra space there is when the ferns are cut back. These spaces are all now up to standard, and ready for groups to enjoy them.

The climbing and abseiling walls were both given a coat of paint, which will have put a few more years on their life.

All the buildings in the southern part of the site have also received a fresh coat of paint. They are all looking very smart now.

The old toilet block has had the broken windows replaced, and rusty metal brackets removed, making the whole area much tidier.



Normally, site improvements such as these would be funded by booking fees. However, because the site has been closed we have relied on the generous government retail, sport and leisure grant, which has been a valuable lifeline for the site.

Looking to the Future

We have not been able to do everything we had hoped to do this year. There's a number of other projects which are in the pipeline and are currently 'on-pause' awaiting the end of the Covid-19 restrictions. An outline of our plans is below:

Shooting range – The air-rifle range needs an uplift. It was built a while ago and has seen better days. It was also damaged in the storms earlier this year and a temporary repair put in place. Our uplift plans include replacement of the targets, refurbishment of the back stop, improved lighting, repairs to the shooting bench, and improved disabled access.

Activity container – We are planning to install another container on the activity field, to allow for equipment to be stored closer to the activities. This will prevent instructors from having to interrupt groups using the main building to collect activity equipment. It will also ensure that equipment is kept more secure.

Axe throwing – We are planning to introduce axe-throwing as one of our activities later in the year or early next year. This will involve the building of a special enclosed area, a few targets (example pictured on the right), and purchase of equipment. We will likely have a team of trained instructors 'on the books' so that visiting groups can take part safely.





Catapult range – Another activity we are planning to introduce is catapults/slingshots. This will be a self-led activity in its own safe enclosure, using low-mass projectiles and rubber slingshots aimed at a fun, scored target. We would then hire-out the shooting range, slingshots and safety equipment as a package for a small fee.

In addition, we hope to introduce ‘giant catapults’ which would be used on the activity field to aim water balloons or similar at large portable targets.

Covered archery area – An idea which is still in the early planning stages is to build a shelter over the front of the archery range. This would allow archery to take place during wet weather as well as providing a bit of relief from the hot sun on long summer days for instructors and participants. The structure would also likely include flood-lighting, enabling the range to be used later into the evenings – useful during the winter months. This project is still in early stages and any feedback is welcomed. One potential design is shown here.



Raven Hut Improvements – We are looking at ways to improve the existing facilities in the Raven Hut. One of the key ideas we are investigating is to replace both entrance doors with double-doors, and incorporate disabled access ramps into both. This will make it easier to have an in-and-out system for feeding, introduce more natural light into the room, and improve security and insulation.

Original toilet facilities in Main Building – One of the larger projects we are progressing is the much-needed refurbishment of the toilet and shower facilities in the main building. These are still in their original state from when the building was constructed. We are currently looking at different options for the layout of the new facilities and taking into consideration things such as disabled access to toilets and showers, baby changing facilities, unisex toilets, and ratios of toilets/sinks/urinals/showers. We will likely gather feedback from the local Scout districts before a final decision is made.

There's plenty more which is also in the pipeline but not mentioned here. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions for Hallowtree, please get in touch: will.dowe@hallowtree.org.uk.

That's all for now, take care and we hope to see you soon!

With thanks,

The Hallowtree Team

27th August 2020

