

Press Release : 14th October 2014

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Panshanger parkrun launches - with 300 smiles!

At 9am on Saturday 11th October **Friends of Panshanger Park** brought a new, weekly, free, 5km timed run to Panshanger Country Park between Hertford and Welwyn Garden City.

289 runners turned out for the inaugural 5km run through the beautiful landscape at Panshanger Park and 25 volunteers were there to organise proceedings, marshal, time and scan the finishers across the line. The two local organisers that have launched the Panshanger parkrun are Gary O'Leary & Louise Smith, committee members of the Friends of Panshanger Park.

Gary explains how it works "The parkrun concept is simple you register on the parkrun website, print your barcode and turn up to run, for free. Later on that day your times and results are published on the website. You can then have another go the following Saturday and track your own progress over time. The run will happen every Saturday at 9am, with special events at Xmas and New Year"

parkrun celebrated its 10th anniversary this October and there are now 290 events in UK and over 400 around the world. The nearest runs to Hertford were in St Albans and Chelmsford.

Louise continues "We had a great turnout of 289 for the inaugural run, which shows we have filled a gap in the parkrun map. We had 98 local people running who had never taken part in a parkrun before, which bodes well for the future. We had runners from under 10 to over 75 taking part".

Just as important as the runners are the volunteers. Gary continues "The volunteering and community aspects of parkrun are fundamental to its success and its appeal. Without the volunteers it just does not happen. Anyone that volunteers is hugely appreciated and is recognised on the website as well"



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Louise "The atmosphere on Saturday was amazing. Before, during and after the run everyone had a smile on their face. Runners and volunteers were able to enjoy a chat and have a coffee at the finish. We believe we have one of the best parkrun courses in the country and I'm looking forward to how things develop over the next few weeks and to our Halloween special on Saturday 1st November'.

Lafarge Tarmac, the owners of Panshanger Park, have granted permission for the Park to be used and have also provided start up funding. Mike Pendock, Estates Manager, Lafarge Tarmac said. "We were very pleased to fund start-up costs for the new Panshanger parkrun and to be working alongside the Friends of Panshanger Park on this project. I joined in the first run and was delighted to see so many people participating – enjoying and respecting the delights of Panshanger Country Park. We look forward to seeing the high turnout for the Panshanger parkrun continue into the future".

The health benefits of regular exercise and community involvement are undisputed. Herts Sports Partnership and Public Health Hertfordshire have given Panshanger parkrun support and funding. John O'Callaghan, Sports Development Manager, Herts Sports Partnership says "The Herts Sports Partnership and Public Health Hertfordshire are delighted to be able to support the organisers of the Panshanger parkrun in bringing this excellent programme to fruition. We hope that local people will flock to the weekly event at this beautiful setting, and that within a very short time this will be one of the country's leading parkruns. It's local, free and open to everyone regardless of ability ,experience or current fitness levels – so get yourself to Panshanger Park, meet new friends and sign up to one of the UK's fastest growing health and fitness movements."

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