

World Pooh Sticks Championships finds new home in Witney

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The search is over to find a new venue for one of Oxfordshire's most popular past-times.

After 31 years at Day's Lock in Little Wittenham, the World Pooh Sticks Championships will move west across the county to Witney.

Organisers the Rotary Club of Oxford Spires were forced to find a new location because the event, which coincides with the Earth Trust's lambing weekends, was becoming too big for the village.

On Monday, it was revealed that Langel Common on the River Windrush will be the new venue and this year's event will take place on Sunday, June 7.

The championships, based on the game in A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh tales, will be run in partnership with heritage centre Cogges Manor Farm.

Lesley Adams, spokesperson for the rotary club, said Witney ticked all the right boxes.

She continued: "We're really thrilled.

"It is easy access for people with bus transport which is one of the problems at Little Wittenham.

"It has a river and a bridge which is always useful.

"It also has space for people to wait around during heats and we try and keep them entertained for as long as possible."

The pooh sticks event attracts about 1,000 people with more than 600 competing.

At Little Wittenham the Environment Agency only allows the competition to be held between October and the end of March because of high levels of boat traffic from April.

However, Ms Adams said that will now not be a problem.

She continued: "It does not have river traffic which means we can run it during the summer months and we are not at the mercy of the river."

Colin Shone, a director at Cogges, added: "We're really delighted to be supporting it.

"These simple pleasures in life where you get out in the countryside and make your own fun is absolutely what Cogges is about.

"It is a wonderful thing to be supporting. We're really pleased to do it."

Cllr Richard Langridge, cabinet member for Communities and Culture on West Oxfordshire District Council, said: "We are thrilled that Witney has been chosen as the new venue and we can assure them that they will be given a very good welcome."

Ms Adams said news of the event's new venue has travelled as far as Wisconsin, America, where Winnie the Pooh fanatic Deb Hoffman lives.

She added: "She holds the record for having the biggest Winnie the Pooh memorabilia and wants to come and play."



(From left) Richard Langridge, Lesley Adams, rotary club member Karen Eveleigh and Colin Shone at Langel Common