

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 14 July 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor Briars-Delve, in the Chair.

Councillor Ewert, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Salmon, Pascoe, Tivnan, Daw, Blight, Gilmour, Penrose and Stoneman.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Carlyle, Alvey, Lennox-Boyd and Worth.

Also in attendance: Chris Burton (Manager, Mount Edgcumbe), David Marshall (Business Development Manager), Dan Cooke (Protected & Historic Landscapes Manager), Jozef Lewis (Technical Accounting Officer, PCC), Alan Drummond (Chair, Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Committee), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) and Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 10.02 am and finished at 12.10 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

Appointment of Co-Chairs for the Municipal Year 2023-24

The Joint Committee agreed to note the appointment of Councillor Briars-Delve as Plymouth's Co-Chair, and to appoint Councillor Ewert as Cornwall's Co-Chair, for the municipal year 2023-24.

33. Declarations of Interest

There were 2 declarations of interest:

Member	Interest	Description
Councillor Briars-Delve	Other registerable Interest	Held a position on the Horizon Board for the National Marine Park
Councillor Tivnan	Personal Interest	Was a member of the Friends of Mt Edgcumbe.

34. Minutes

Subject to the correction of a grammatical error under item 26, the Joint Committee agreed the minutes of 18 November 2022 as a correct record.

Councillor Pascoe arrived at this time.

35. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chairs Urgent Business.

36. **Questions from the Public**

There were 5 questions received in accordance with the constitution.

Question	Amanda Speedie	Would you please maintain the parkland and trails, and restore the neglected buildings in the garden area, and please create a space, within one of these buildings within the Park that tells the history of Mount Edgcumbe House, gardens and parkland, and the families that cared for it?
Response	Councillor Briars-Delve	The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee is passionate about keeping parkland, trails and buildings well maintained, though there can be challenges do so within budget constraints. If you have a specific inquiry regarding a specific part of the site, please let the park management or staff know and they will try to assist. The Park has recently employed a new maintenance technician for 3 days per week, who spends the vast majority of his time working on listed building. Regarding the second part of the question, the new Garden Battery development will feature displays which detail the history of the Mount Edgcumbe House, gardens and parkland, and the families that cared for it.

Question	Andrew Martin	Will the MEJC, representing Cornish and Plymothian interests, support the proposed business case for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation for the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, (Quote: “for the benefit of the people of Plymouth...”) which includes ceding to PCC a significant Cornish asset and a scheduled monument, the MECP Garden Battery?
Response	Councillor Briars-Delve	The Charitable Incorporated Organisation for the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park will in no way impact the current ownership of Mount Edgcumbe and therefore the Joint Committee. The Garden Battery forms part of a NMP National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid to secure funding for the site. I am pleased to confirm that Mt Edgcumbe being a partner of the NLHF bid will also not change the ownership of the Mount Edgcumbe Country Park, or Garden Battery.

Question	Mrs Lyn Reid	Given the national importance of the Mount Edgcumbe Country Park (Grade I Listing), and the recent planning application for the Garden Battery (Listed Building), when will the Joint Committee provide a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) - specifically, a high-quality CMP against which the JC can provide regular reports?
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Response	Councillor Briars-Delve	The Park has several management plans ranging from woodland management, grassland management, stewardship, and access. A Conservation Management plan will form part of the overall Development Plan for Mount Edgcumbe Country Park. This is currently being compiled in partnership with Historic England, and Cornwall Council. We hope to have this completed in 2024.
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Question	Malcolm Cross	Given the planning applications for the re-use of the Garden Battery (PA23/03915 and PA23/03916), can the Joint Committee confirm that the purpose and cost of these proposed changes are agreed to and shared equally between the two councils?
Response	Councillor Briars-Delve	Funding for the proposed capital refurbishment of the Garden Battery has been sourced through a wider Heritage Lotteries Fund Bid. This overall Lottery award will require PCC match funding, with the cost of this borrowing already included within the PCC 2024-25 medium term financial plan. Any works not part of these capital proposals, and ongoing maintenance of on the Garden Battery, if required and approved, would be shared equally between the two Councils, as is the standard practise for funding of the Park.

Question	Mr Steenhagen	Is it a 'dereliction of duty' of the Joint Committee - or somebody else - that Mount Edgcumbe has been operating with no Business Plan for the last 5+? years, has no Conservation Management Plan and the Rame farmer tenancy has not been revisited for 50+ years, possible loss: £250.000+?
Response	Councillor Briars-Delve	As per the constitution, "the Joint Committee has delegated authority from each of the constituent Councils" which includes authority "to propose an annual business plan to both Cabinets." Whilst the committee has the ability to do so if required, it is not a mandatory requirement and, as such, there has been no dereliction of duty by the Joint Committee. The Park has approved business cases for each of its individual business streams that are signed off by the appropriate officers within PCC. The Park has several management plans ranging from woodland management, grassland management, stewardship, and access. It is hoped that these will be collated into an overall development plan in 2024, which will include a buildings conservation management plan. The Park manager has also asked Land and Property to review the rent for the Rame Head Tenancy.

37. **Co-opted Member Update**

The Joint Committee agreed to defer the co-option of Mr Pete Smith to the next meeting.

38. **Mount Edgumbe Revenue Outturn Report 2022/23**

Jozef Lewis (Technical Accounting Officer) introduced the Mount Edgumbe Revenue Outturn Report 2022/23 and highlighted the following points-

- a) There had been a £72,000 adverse variation at the conclusion of 2022/23, which had been equally funded by Plymouth and Cornwall Councils;
- b) The main cost pressure on the 2022/23 Mount Edgumbe Country Park budget had been volatile energy markets. Electricity costs for the park had increased 35% in the last year, and 110% in the last 2 years. It had not been possible to contain these cost pressures within the budget;
- c) There had also been several one off cost pressures due to required repairs, maintenance, and health and safety, such as the instillation of new fire alarms and extinguishers;
- d) So far in quarter one of 2023/24, there was a nil variation to the budget. It was therefore anticipated that the £1 million estimated gross costs to the Mount Edgumbe Country Park, would be offset by £1 million of gross income. Further updates regarding the financial position of the Park would be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee in November 2023;
- e) Staff at Mount Edgumbe Country Park and Plymouth City Council were currently undertaking an in-depth review of the capital plans for the Park.

In response to questions from the Joint Committee, it was reported that –

- f) The budget for 2022/23 was seen as ambitious, but achievable. Energy pressures experienced in the previous year had been budgeted for, and income targets for the park had been increased. It was a long-term ambition to establish a repairs and maintenance budget to allow for one off cost pressures, such as those experienced in 2022/23.
- g) There had been an unavoidable time lag between the rise of utility costs, and the implementation of proportionate cost increases for tenants and holiday lets across the park. This was an industry wide issue;
- h) The Park's income revenue streams were primarily land holdings and rent, along with parking charges, weddings, holiday lets, and events.

The Joint Committee agreed to:

1. Note the financial position contained within the report, along with the risks, issues and mitigating actions;
2. Note the capital programme.

Park Manager's Report

- a) The Mount Edgumbe Country Park (MECP) was a Grade I listed landscape of 865 acres, stretching in a narrow coastal strip towards Whitsand Bay. The park contained 17km of coastal strip, 7.5 acres of formal gardens, and 5 ancient monuments, attracting around 250,000 visitors per year, including 8,000 school children. Funding through the National Marine Park Horizons project would allow an updated survey of visitor numbers to be conducted, offering a valuable insight into public engagement with the park;
- b) There had been a Deer Park at Mt Edgumbe since 1515 however, this had fallen into disrepair over the years. Three quarters of the new deer fencing had now been installed, as well as gates to control deer movements in and out of the park. The fencing was on track to be completed ahead of schedule, due to the assistance of Naval recruits from HMS Raleigh. A deer management plan would be included in the overall Mount Edgumbe County Park Development Plan, due for finalisation in 2024;
- c) The MECP had maintained a partnership with the Arts University of Plymouth for a number of years, enabling year 2 students to design and install their artwork in a public space. This year, the park had received 15 works of art, each depicting individual interpretations of Mount Edgumbe and its history;
- d) The MECP employed 3 full time gardeners to maintain 7.5 acres of formal gardens, supplemented by volunteers. While it had been a struggle to recruit and maintain volunteer numbers over the pandemic, this now showed signs of recovery;
- e) Heritage Lottery Funding had been secured for beekeeping at the park, with the ambition of reintroducing the native Cornish 'Black Bee' as the dominant species on the peninsula. The Beekeeping volunteer group was expanding, and showed promising signs, as well as enabling the park to benefit from local honey sales;
- f) While a fire at the park last year had caused significant damage to the meadow near the house, it had now been replanted with wildflowers, offering significant benefits for biodiversity enhancement as well as the 'Black Bee' project. The work of MECP staff during the emergency to both protect the public and control the fire was commended. Options were being evaluated for future fire precautions, which included reinitialising the 19th century watering system across the park to improve resistance to climate change;
- g) Approximately £1 million had been secured through the National Marine Park Horizons project to restore the MECP Garden Battery. This funding would enable renovation works so that the battery could be reopened to the public, and incorporate a space that told the historic story of Mount Edgumbe;
- h) 2022-23 marked the third year of the new house tour system, which had demonstrated significant benefits for visitor satisfaction, as well as viability. It was also the 3rd year of the Blitz display, and options were being explored for its replacement in 2 years time. A new display on Ginger Beer had been installed in the house, which the Committee would later view as part of the Annual Inspection;

- i) The 4 day archaeology camp would be returning this year, in one week, and the shop had recently undergone a re-design, incorporating many new products;
- j) There had been more school tours than usual this year however, it was recognised that transport to the park remained a significant barrier for many schools. The MECP management had contributed and assisted towards transport for schools where appropriate, as it was recognised that the park was an invaluable learning and adventure opportunity for many young people.
- k) The existing wooden children's play park feature had regrettably rotten however, with financial assistance from the Friends of Mount Edgcombe, a new play park feature would be installed by 31st July 2023. The new design would be made from a more durable and maintainable material;
- l) The MECP had received positive feedback, having hosted Triathlon 23, as part of the Tour of British Triathlon Association. Over 288 competitors had attended this year, including a separate children's and adults race. There were ambitions to grow this event in future, with many remarking on the challenging nature of the course the park offered;
- m) The parks Alpacas had a successful year, despite working at half capacity to allow the animals to integrate into the park. This project provided local employment, as well as an income source, and enjoyment by the public;
- n) The 2022-23 year had been a bumper year for events at MECP, with the ambition of continuing this next year. While the park aimed to grow events each year, boosting community engagement, it was recognised that events scheduling was now almost at capacity;
- o) The Turret Rooms within the house had been recently renovated to ensure their water integrity, and were now rented as a photography studio, and author's studio;
- p) The park had, and expected to encounter continuing pressures from Ash Die Back, and storms. It was recognised that the wedding marquee was at the end of its operational life, and options were being explored for its replacement. Aging staff and recruitment challenges had also increased reliance on Pertemps staff, however efforts were being undertaken to boost volunteer and ranger training opportunities.

In response to questions from the committee, it was reported that-

- q) While historically, gardener and ranger employments were fiercely competitive, it was now challenging to attract suitable candidates. This had been compounded by the restrictions on employment / travel instigated after Brexit. The park was exploring voluntary experiences and alternative labour sources, including work experience, work placements, armed forces rehabilitation, and inspiring future generations through various experience days and programmes;
- r) The park had installed a new led lighting system as part as its transition towards Net 0, which had relived significant pressures during the energy crisis, and remained committed to the Net 0 policies of both Plymouth and Cornwall councils. A zero tolerance policy had been introduced for single use plastics across the park, and

options were being investigated to explore the replacement of the existing boiler heating system;

- s) Regrettably, the Cliff Path had been closed to the public due to considerable subsidence, and health and safety concerns however, the Chamelia trail would be repaired next year;
- t) While the park had been lucky to escape Ash Die back for several years, it was estimated to cost the park between £8-10 thousand per year. Only 2-3% of trees were immune, and this pressure was recorded on Plymouth's Risk Register.

The Joint Committee agreed-

- 1. To request to be provided with a list of Schools that engaged with the park, and those restricted by transport barriers;
- 2. To note the report.

40. **Friend's of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park Update**

Friend of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park Update-

The Chair, Councillor Briars-Delve, thanked Mr Ged Edgcumbe for his hard work and support during his time as Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe, and welcomed Alan Drummond to this meeting, as the new Chair of the Friends group.

Alan Drummond then highlighted the following points-

- a) The Friends of Mount Edgcumbe worked closely with the Management of the MECP, assisting with activities, events and funding to improve the park for the enjoyment of the public. The Friends had been a charity since 1985, and had now risen to nearly 800 members; the highest level to date. This demonstrated a significant rebound in voluntary capacity since its dramatic fall during the Covid-19 Pandemic;
- b) The Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Committee had undergone significant membership change at their AGM, and all former members were thanked for their hard work. While many had stepped down, they remained in strong support of the Friends, and the MECP. While the Friends Committee was now operating at about half capacity, recruitment efforts were ongoing;
- c) This year, the Friends had earmarked approximately £90,000 of funds for various projects within the MECP. This included funding plant beds, statue repairs and maintenance, the new children's play module, as well as park fencing and other refurbishments;
- d) The Friends would be assisting as marshals for the Classic Car show event, as well as during the British Fireworks Championships in August;

The Joint Committee thanked Alan Drummond and members of the Friends of Mount Edgumbe for their valuable dedication to the park, and public, and agreed-

1. To recommend that a card be sent on behalf of this Joint Committee, to thank Mr Ged Edgumbe and all members of the Friends of Mount Edgumbe Committee, who had recently stood down;
2. To note the report.

41. **National Marine Park Update**

The Chair, Councillor Briars Delve, left the meeting at this time due to his declaration of an 'other registerable interest', as he sat on the Non-Executive Board of the National Marine Park.

Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) presented an update on the National Marine Park Horizons Project to the Joint Committee, and highlighted the following points-

- a) The Mount Edgumbe Country Park would benefit from funding under the National Marine Park Horizons Project funding bid, to the Heritage Lottery Fund;
- b) 10% of the total Heritage Lottery Funding had so far been received, enabling the 2 year development phase to be undertaken. The remaining 90% (£8.6 Billion) would be provided in the 'delivery phase' following successful demonstration of a deliverable and effective project plan;
- c) During the 2 year development phase, the NMP Horizons team had worked with communities, stakeholders and partners to collate ideas, visions and feedback for the later delivery of the project. The Heritage Lottery Fund sought demonstration of community engagement and testing of these ideas, with the ambition of encouraging a diverse group of people to engage with local heritage;
- d) The 2 year development phase had provided key lesson learning and understanding to be attained, so that the later development project could be efficiently and appropriately targeted. This had included encouraging people into the water to try new activities, swimming lessons, archaeology camps, walking programmes, and arts;
- e) Barriers to peoples engagement had been identified, which included finance, transport and water confidence. The project would therefore focus on working with communities to overcome these barriers, enabling maximum engagement with the National Marine Park;
- f) The NMP Horizons project focussed of 3 major sites: Mount Batten, Tinside, and Mount Edgumbe. At Mount Edgumbe, the project would be largely focussed on restoring and reopening the Garden Battery to the public.
- g) An Activity Plan was being designed for the delivery phase of the project, which sought to retain the ranger service which had been established, and capitalise on the significant volunteering interest that had been identified during the development phase. A schools programme was proposed to support 30 schools who had barriers to engagement, over a 5 year Period. There would also be a city wide schools

programme, including the creation of a digital platform with all the materials to deliver an ocean related curriculum, as well as a teacher training programme;

- h) A young people's programme would also be created to deliver internship, work experience and job opportunities, allowing people to capitalise on their interests that the National Marine Park aimed to inspire and develop;
- i) A Swim Safe programme would be initialised to develop water confidence and safety, which would be supplement with a programme of opportunities including snorkelling, diving and coastering, to enable people to engage with the heritage that they usually would not experience;
- j) There would also be a programme focussed on nature restoration of habitats and species, with individual enhancement projects funded by Community Grants, and the corporate Nature Credit Boost scheme;
- k) There had been significant changes to financial markets and global costs since the bid was submitted in 2019. As a result, there were now budget lines for inflation and contingency funds;
- l) The Garden Battery designs were currently undergoing the planning process through Cornwall Council to improve accessibility and provide restoration, and would eventually be opened to the public alongside a digital package to 'bring the building to life'.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was reported that-

- m) The Horizons Project was just one project that would be undertaken in the National Marine Park, and the National Marine Park itself was a much larger project. Greater engagement with communities in Saltash and other areas of Cornwall would be incorporated in the wider National Marine Park project, rather than the Heritage Horizons project, which had a more specific focus on alleviating barriers to engagement with heritage. Many areas in Plymouth had been identified as not engaging with the water, hence their targeting in the Horizons project;
- n) Members of Cornwall Council recorded their concerns that the Horizons project did not seem to engage communities within Cornwall, which had numerous facilities to enable engagement with the water, and that consultation/ information regarding the National Marine Park was not present in Cornish libraries. It was however noted, that Cornwall Councillors had been provided a separate briefing regarding the National Marine Park;
- o) The 2 year development programme had been a test and trial phase to assess what measures were effective, and how communities responded, and did not reflect the whole scope of the full Park programme which would be expanded in the delivery phase. Furthermore, there was no requirement yet to specify where the individual programmes of engagement would be undertaken.
- p) The next stage bid would need to be submitted by the 15th September, with a decision expected by Christmas 2023, for commencement in January 2024;

- q) The specific schools to be included in the Schools Engagement programme had not yet been decided, and there would be a process to identify schools most in need, and how best to engage with them. Similarly, the Community archaeology dig would be open to those in Plymouth, and Cornwall.

The Committee agreed-

1. To note the project progress through the development stage;
(Abstentions – 2 – Councillors Tivnan and Pascoe)
2. To request that the project team return at regular intervals during the delivery stage to update on the progress of the project
(Unanimous)
3. To request that any future briefings include Cornwall Councillors who's wards border the National Marine Park
(Proposed by Councillor Ewert, Seconded by Councillor Pascoe, and agreed unanimously)

(Following the conclusion of this item, Councillor Briars-Delve returned to the room)

42. **Tracking Log**

The Committee agreed-

1. To note that all existing tracking decisions had been actioned;
2. To note that there had been 2 actions added to the action log following this meeting:
 - i) To send a 'Thank You' card to the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe committee members;
 - ii) To be provided with a list of schools who regularly engaged with the MECP, and those who faced barriers due to transportation.

43. **Exempt Business**

The Committee agreed to pass a resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1/2/3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

44. **Private Meeting**

The Joint Committee discussed-

- a) The MECP was now primarily self-funding, and had been set the target of being cost neutral. This was only possible with careful and innovative management to maximise the parks potential revenue, thus increasing commercial sensitivity. All of the MECP's business plans, new projects and purchases, where qualifying, were approved via the

executive decision process within Plymouth City Council, and received approval from relevant officers, departments and cabinet members. A full development plan for the park was being compiled, and would hopefully be completed by 2024;

- b) The Committee then discussed: Potential future projects and revenue sources for the park, tenancies, and stewardship programmes.

The Committee agreed to-

- I. Request that a part II update is brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee in November.

(Please note, there is a confidential part to this minute)