

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 10 November 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor Ewert, in the Chair.

Councillor Briars-Delve, Vice Chair.

Councillors Alvey, Tivnan, Worth, Blight, Gilmour, Penrose, Stoneman, Harrison (Substitute for Councillor Salmon), and Luggar (Substitute for Councillor Carlyle).

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Salmon, Carlyle, Daw, Lennox-Boyd and Pascoe. Mr Ged Edgcumbe, and Mr D L Richards.

Also in attendance:

Alan Drummond (Chair, FOMECP), Richard Pyshorn (Secure Forests CIC), Jozef Lewis (Technical Accounting Officer), Chris Burton (Park Manager), David Marshall (Business Development Manager), Dan Cooke (Protected and Historic Landscapes Manager), Victoria Pomery (CEO, the Box), Rosie Bookshaw-Williams (Democratic Advisor), and Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 10.05 am and finished at 12.20 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.

45. **Declarations of Interest**

There was one Declaration of Interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct:

Councillor	Item	Interest	Description
Tivnan	10 – Car Parking Review	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Was a member of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe

46. **Minutes**

The Joint Committee agreed the minutes of 14 July 2023 as a correct record.

(Councillors Worth and Alvey abstained from this vote, as they were not present at the previous meeting. All other votes were unanimously 'For')

47. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

Questions from Members of the Public

There were four Questions from members of the public:

Question	Will the Joint Committee please confirm the location of the Mount Edgcumbe Archive, its condition and how it can be accessed for research?
Response	Thank you for your question: There is no single public archive in existence at Mount Edgcumbe. Any historic documents that survived the bombing would be held by the Edgcumbe family. The main historic archives of the Edgcumbe family and estate of Mount Edgcumbe and Cotehele are held at Kresen Kernow, the Cornish county archive service. Their catalogue is available here: https://kresenkernow.org/our-collections/search-the-catalogues/ . Some artefact and succession records are held at The Box in Plymouth however, the majority of items in The Box collection are copies of items in Kresen Kernow or hotographs/prints/publications or records relating to PCC's involvement. See: Archives Catalogue Search (plymouth.gov.uk)

Question	In the best interests of democracy and open debate, I ask that citizens (many of whom, on the subject of the conservation of MECP, are knowledgeable, experienced, and offering to help) are encouraged to speak at JC meetings so that they and the JC members engage in meaningful discussions.
Response	Thank you for your question: The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee is bound by the regulations of the 1972 and 1985 Local Government Acts, as amended by Localism Act 2011. As such, every committee meeting is open to the public, except when the public is excluded because of confidential business. Only Committee members and supporting officers may contribute during the course of a meeting. Public participation at the Joint Committee is enabled through the submission of public questions. The Joint Committee recognise the value of public participation, skills and experience. Should members of the public wish to contribute knowledge/ideas, they can submit them to the Joint Chairs (Councillor Kate Ewert & Tom Briars-Delve) or alternatively, to Council Officers.

Question	In relation to the proposed plan for Mount Edgcumbe, can you say who will be the specialist in conservation, who will be consulted and whether or not what is envisaged is a Business Plan or a Conservation Management Plan, which are entirely different (all HLF stipulations)?
Response	Thank you for your question: The Development Plan will be an overarching strategic document that collates management plans, business plans and conservation plans that are currently in existence, along with several new documents. In terms of the historic buildings and landscape, consultation will be undertaken with expert partners including the statutory body Historic England,

	along with Cornwall Councils Historic Environment Team and Historic Environment Planning Team.
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Question	To my amazement, in July 2023 I was informed that the responsibilities of the Joint Committee, as laid down in its Constitution document, are not mandatory?? So, given that the Joint Committee apparently has no responsibilities whatsoever, can you explain what the function of the Joint Committee actually is?
Response	Thank you for your question: The Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee is a Committee of Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council, first formed in 1973, and comprised of 7 members from each authority. The Councils formed the Joint Committee “for the purposes of the management of the Country Park” within the budgets approved by the Councils on an annual basis and in line with agreed terms of reference about the general ethos of management of the Country Park and House. The Joint Committee is responsible for monitoring performance, management, finance, and compliance, as well as undertaking inspections of the Mount Edgcumbe Country Park. As a Joint Committee of the Cabinet of each Council, the Committee considers annual reports on the Parks performance, and recommends actions to the relevant Cabinet Members within Plymouth and Cornwall Council’s.

49. **Co-opted member update** (Verbal Report)

The Committee thanked Mr Ged Edgcumbe for his hard work and support while Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe, and welcomed Mr Alan Drummond, who had recently taken over the Chair role.

The Committee agreed to:

1. Remove Mr Ged Edgcumbe as a Co-opted member of this Committee;
2. Co-opt Mr Alan Drummond to this Committee;
3. Note that Mr Pete Smith had regrettably declined the offer of Co-option for personal reasons.

(Councillor Tivnan abstained from this vote. All other votes were unanimously ‘For’).

50. **Finance Report 23/24**

Jozef Lewis (Technical Accounting Officer) delivered the Mount Edgcumbe Finance Report 2023/24 to the Joint Committee, and discussed:

- a) As of Quarter 2, there was an adverse variation of £32,000 in the budget. This would be funded equally by Plymouth and Cornwall Councils;

- b) This pressure was primarily the result of unavoidable one of cost pressures of repairs and maintenance;
- c) Additional costs had included:
 - i. A revenue contribution to the costs of play equipment due to health and safety concerns;
 - ii. Increased staff costs due to the 2023/24 pay award salary uplift, and recruitment of temporary staff due to long-term sickness.
- d) Initial budget planning was underway for 2024/25. The Joint Authority Subsidy was removed in 2022/23, and a net zero budget target would be ongoing. This would require the maximisation of existing and future income streams;
- e) A review of the Capital Plans for Mt Edgcumbe was being undertaken by the PCC finance team. The plan included refurbishment of the Orangery toilets, and a marquee development plan;
- f) The predominant risks for the 2023/24 revenue budget were repairs and maintenance, as revenue budgets had already been exhausted due to storm damage and adverse weather conditions.

The Joint Committee agreed to:

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

51. **Guest Speaker - Richard Pyshorn, Director of Secure Forests CIC** (Verbal Report)

Richard Pyshorn (Director of Secure Forests CIC) delivered a presentation to the Joint Committee and discussed:

- a) The non-profit organisation, Secure Forests CIC, had been established at Mount Edgcumbe Country Park to enable armed forces and blue light veterans to utilise their skills in the natural environment. While providing a skilled workforce, this was also highly beneficial for veterans mental and physical wellbeing;
- b) Richard had undertaken over 10 years of voluntary work in rainforests around the world, training rangers, particularly in central and south America;
- c) Secure Forests had trained 10 veterans in forestry skills, and three had secured full time employment in the local community;
- d) 24 Veterans were scheduled to go through skills training courses next year, with 36 scheduled for the year after;

- e) A business plan was being developed to work with corporate economic and social governance (ESG), to fund veterans training and wildlife conservation projects around the world. This ensured that training places were fully funded;
- f) Recruitment to Secure Forests was predominantly through referrals from charities, and potential recruits were encouraged to undertake voluntary work at Mount Edgcumbe before enrolling;
- g) Courses lasted seven weeks and could train up to eight people at a time. This could be completed in stages for those with work/ other commitments, or in seven consecutive weeks;
- h) The course helped attain meaningful qualifications, with accredited training provided by Duchy College, Secure Forests CIC, and the Institute of Training and Occupational Learning (ITOL), resulting in a level 4 qualification;
- i) Training modules included health and safety, first aid, risk management level 4, chainsaw, brush-cutter, tractor driving, drone piloting, and others, providing a diverse set of transferrable skills. One of the projects underway at Mount Edgcumbe was a Cornish hedging programme, which was a 'red listed' skill;
- j) A workshop and teaching facility had been established at the Park to facilitate the courses, and members were invited to view the facilities;
- k) An open day was being held in one week's time, with 8 possible candidates expected to be in attendance. This included a former Afghan interpreter.

In response to questions, the Joint Committee discussed:

- l) Referrals to the programme were open to self-referral, and the Joint Committee were encouraged to suggest any suitable candidates for the course that they knew of;
- m) Secure Forests were working with Natural England to compile a central database of qualified workers, so that other employers could view and draw upon the skillsets as required. This helped maximise employment opportunities for veterans who had completed the course;
- n) The Oak Foundation had provided initial funding for the foundation of Secure Forests, through grants. It was crucial to attain corporate ESG investment to ensure the project was enduring, encouraging corporations to invest in carbon security, as well as traditional carbon offset programmes;
- o) Secure forests were working with Exeter University and the University of Leister Space Lab to develop LIDAR carbon models of forests, to monitor vegetation density and thus measure the impact of carbon security provided by the rangers.

The Joint Committee agreed:

1. To request to be provided with further information on how to refer someone to the Secure Forests programme;
2. To ensure that relevant contacts within Cornwall Council were passed to Secure Forests, to facilitate ongoing support and signposting;
3. To thank Richard Pyshorn (Director of Secure Forests CIC) for the presentation.

52. **Park Manager's Report**

Chris Burton (Park Manager) delivered the Park Manager's Report to the Joint Committee, and discussed:

- a) An overview of the Mount Edgcumbe Country Park, including its listing as a grade I listed landscape, 17km of coastal strip, 865 acres of land, and 7.5 acres of formal gardens. The park also had 56 listed buildings, 5 ancient monuments, 36km of footpaths and received around 250,000 visitors per year, although these figures were old and would be reviewed under funding from the National Marine Park project. Mount Edgcumbe was the largest country park in England/Cornwall;
- b) Operational costs of the Park were around £1MM, annually. The Park had historically relied on around £450,000 of financing per year, funded by Plymouth and Cornwall Councils however, the park was now largely self-sufficient due to a variety of innovations and efficiencies;
- c) Over the past 10 years, the Park had recruited 4 new staff, purchased 5 new vehicles, renovated 9 new holiday-homes, and attained £4MM in grant-aid since 2010. There were around 24 businesses operating across the park, with approximately 70 staff employed;
- d) 24 events had been held at the park this year, in partnership with Miss Ivy Events. It was important to consider the scale of events and their suitability for the Park, with car parking being one of the biggest limiting factors;
- e) The Park had won TripAdvisor's 'Travellers Choice Award' for the past two consecutive years, placing them in the top 10% of venues in the world;
- f) The Park had strong ecological benefits, featuring 27 different types of Waxcaps; this was above the 22 varieties required to be 'internationally important';
- g) The Park relied heavily on volunteering and the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe group, with 7.5 acres of garden to maintain, across three full-time gardeners. Over 600 voluntary days had been held in the past year, including a partnership with Royal Navy recruits from HMS Raleigh. While volunteer numbers had declined during the Covid-19 Pandemic, levels had now relatively recovered;
- h) Mount Edgcumbe had held a Deer Park since 1515 however, much of the fencing had deteriorated. Three quarters of the fencing had now been completed, with 4.6km of deer fencing in total. Deer surveys were being conducted to assess numbers, and

gates and access points were being installed. A Deer management plan would be complete by the end of Winter;

- i) A priority for the Park, was improving climate resilience. This included replacing/re-connecting old water tanks and pipe infrastructure across the Park. The National Camellia collection would be revisited this year, and the Cornish Black Bee project was performing well;
- j) The Garden Battery development was subject to HLF funding, which was expected to be determined by Christmas. Planning permission had been attained and would soon move on to a consultation phase, engaging communities on the nature of stories/history included in displays, before building work began in around Summer 2024. This would then be opened to the public, for free, to engage in local history;
- k) A tour system was in place at the house which had been highly successful. Every school within 20 miles of the Park had been written to, inviting them to visit the park. Transport remained a barrier for many schools, and Park management funded transport, where possible, to enable engagement. (*A list of these schools was circulated to the committee as part of a previous tracking decision*);
- l) A new playground had been installed following demolition of the existing facilities due to safety concerns. This had been funded in partnership with the Friends of Mount Edgumbe;
- m) For the first time, Mount Edgumbe Country Park had hosted a race of the National Triathlon Series, including a children's triathlon. Feedback had been positive and it was planned to repeat this event next year;
- n) Over 1,000 children had attended the Park this year as part of the Plymouth Schools Partnership, enabling schools with a lack of green space to enjoy outdoor activities;
- o) The predominant pressures this year had been winter storms and Ash Die-back. In the last storm, 15 trees had fallen, including a 300 year old Oak. All trees were surveyed and monitored throughout the year and a new digital asset management system had been introduced. As part of SOPs, the Park was closed for safety reasons when wind speeds reached over 50mph;
- p) Utility bill cost increases were a significant challenge for the Park, which regrettably had to be passed back to tenants. There had also been an increase in the cost of Pertemps agency staff due to national/living wage increases. While not initially noticeable, there were now indications that the recession had started to impact public spending, with various park income streams seeing a reduction in demand;
- q) It was a challenge to juggle the various priorities and interests of various public groups/individuals, within the park. While some people prioritised cycling accessibility, others prioritised horse riding, coastal path walking, sea access, green spaces, or historic building conservation. The Park was therefore diverse, and catered to many different individuals and groups.

In response to questions, the Joint Committee discussed:

- r) The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee would shortly consider a report detailing opportunities to expand its services, which included transport up and down the Tamar, rather than just across. There was potential that these proposals could serve the Park, thus benefiting ease of access and visitor numbers;
- s) Historically, Plymouth City Council had subsidised the Cremyll Ferry. The Joint Committee were aware of rising operation costs, and thus fares, due to fuel and wage inflation. As a vital access route between Plymouth and Cornwall, there was potential for subsidisation to be reconsidered at a future date;
- t) The use of Pertemps staff, while contributing to cost pressures, provided operational flexibility to increase capacity during events and ceremonies;
- u) Rangers had inspected Rame Head two weeks ago and confirmed the ponies were still being grazed.

The Joint Committee agreed:

1. To note the update from the Park Manager;
2. To recommend that the Cabinets of Plymouth and Cornwall Councils instruct officers to produce a strategic management and development plan for the Mount Edgcumbe Country Park. To be renewed every five years;
3. To recommend that the Cabinets of Plymouth and Cornwall Councils approve the Strategic Management and Development Plan by the end of 2024, and that an interim update on the progress is brought to the next Joint Committee Meeting in July 2024;
4. To recommend that the Cabinets of Plymouth and Cornwall Councils review the Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee's Terms of Reference, and update accordingly to reflect pertinent changes;
5. To add the Strategic Management and Development Plan as a standing item on this Joint Committee's agenda, to monitor performance and progress against these plans.

(These recommendations were proposed by the Chair, Councillor Ewert, seconded by Councillor Gilmour, and agreed unanimously).

53. **Car Parking Review** (To Follow)

David Marshall (Business Development Manager) delivered the Car Parking Review report, and discussed:

- a) Mount Edgcumbe Country Park undertook a quinquennial review of its parking fees, due to the expense and length of the process;

- b) Following endorsement by this Joint Committee, the report would be opened to public consultation, before consideration at a Cornwall Cabinet meeting. Legal proceedings would then be required to formally amend the of-street parking order;
- c) Mount Edgumbe Country Park had four carparks, which would all require updated signage;
- d) The process took between 8 months-1 year to complete;
- e) The target date for competition was 01 April 2024 although this would depend on the completion of the consultation and approval process, as well as court backlogs.

In response to questions, the Joint Committee discussed:

- f) The car parking review was a regular process undertaken every 5 years in order to re-align prices with CPI. It was not feasible to amend the charges yearly in line with inflation, due to the extensive process and costs involved;
- g) For the past two years, inflationary rates had been over 9%. Year or year, this represented a loss of potential funding, which the Car Park review aimed to address;
- h) Local users and communities were able to benefit from reduced parking rates;
- i) While it was regrettable to have to raise prices, and the Joint Committee were sympathetic with other Cost of Living pressures, reviewing charges in line with inflation was a necessary and responsible measure to ensure the Parks financial sustainability and resilience.

The Joint Committee agreed:

1. To support the principle and proposed terms for a new Off Street Parking Order, as set out in the report;
2. To recommend to the appropriate Cornwall Council Cabinet Member, that Cornwall Council revokes the 'Cornwall Council Off-street Parking Places at Mount Edgumbe Country Park Order 2018', and introduces a new 'Off-street Parking Places at Mount Edgumbe Country Park Order 2024', on the terms set out in the report.

(Councillor Tivnan abstained from this vote due to a pecuniary interest, as a member of the Friends of Mount Edgumbe Country Park. All other votes were 'for'.)

54. **Friends of Mt Edgumbe Report**

Alan Drummond (Chair, Friends of Mount Edgumbe) delivered the Friends of Mount Edgumbe report to the Joint Committee, and discussed:

- a) The Friends enjoyed a strong relationship with the Mount Edgumbe Park management team, and worked together in joint projects, for the benefit of the public;

- b) Membership of the Friends continued to increase, and now stood at over 800 people. This was the highest number since the formation of the Friends in 1985;
- c) Unfortunately the increase in membership was not reflected by an increase in volunteer numbers and it remained a challenge to recruit to the Committee structure of the Friends, which was at half strength;
- d) The annual Car Show and Summer Fair was held on the first weekend of August, with over 700 classic cars on display. The Friends had parked approximately 1,800 visitor cars, with total visitor numbers estimated at 8,000 people.

In response to questions, the Joint Committee discussed:

- e) Volunteer numbers were essential to ensure a safe level of staffing, in accordance with the risk assessment. It remained a challenge to recruit sufficient volunteer numbers;
- f) The traffic management plan for the Classic Car Show event was complex, and a significant undertaking.

The Joint Committee agreed to note the report.

55. **Tracking Decision Log**

Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor) delivered an update on the Tracking Decision Log and discussed:

- a) Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) had advised that all relevant Cornwall Councillors would receive a briefing on the National Marine Park, if/when the next submission round was successful;
- b) A card had been sourced for the Friends of Mount Edgumbe Committee members who had recently stood down, to thank them for their service, and would be circulated for signing at the end of this meeting;
- c) The list of schools accessing the park, including those struggling with transport had also been compiled, and would be circulated to members.

The Joint Committee agreed to note the update.

56. **Exempt Business**

The Joint 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 involves 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.

(Councillor Tivnan left the meeting at this time.)

57. **Part II Minutes**

The Joint Committee agreed the private minutes from the meeting of 14 July 2023 as a correct record.

(Councillors Worth and Alvey Abstained as they were not present at the previous meeting. All other votes were 'For'.)

58. **Mount Edgcumbe Tenancy and Land Holding Update**

Chris Burton (Park Manager) delivered an update on Mount Edgcumbe Tenancies and Land Holdings.

The Joint Committee agreed to note the update, and receive a further update at a future meeting.

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