

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 28 November 2014

PRESENT:

Councillor Hannaford, Co-Chair, in the Chair.
Councillors Austin, Candy, Damarell, Ellison, Fry (substitute for Councillor Churchill), Hobbs, Mrs Pengelly, John Smith (substitute for Councillor Peter Smith), Sparling and Stark.

Co-opted Representatives: Cdr Crocker and Mr D L Richards.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Churchill, Peter Smith, Trubody and Vincent and Sir Richard Carew Pole Bt and Mr T Savery.

Also in attendance: Simon Arthurs (Lead Accountant PCC), Nick Butcher (Head Gardener/Ranger PCC), Jon James (Natural Environment Manager CC), David Marshall (Business Development Manager PCC), Nicola Moyle (City Curator Museum and Archives PCC), Leigh Parker (Accountant CC), Steve Pickering (Consultant) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer PCC).

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.30 am.

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.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed two members of the public who were attending the Joint Committee meeting.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct relating to items on the agenda.

13. MINUTES

The Joint Committee agreed that the minutes of meeting held on 18 July 2014 are confirmed as a correct record.

14. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

15. **INTERIM MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted an interim management report providing an overview of the work being undertaken in 2014/15. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) this had been a challenging year with the introduction of several changes in the way the Park operated; this included developing the overall visitor attraction by expanding the programme of events and introducing a variety of commercial tenants in the Barrow Centre and across the Park;
- (b) new operators for both the Stables Café and Orangery Restaurant had brought an element of commercial stability and consumer confidence to the Park;
- (c) the efforts of the staff and volunteers in assisting the delivery of a wide package of initiatives needed to be acknowledged together with the enthusiasm and experience of staff;
- (d) a larger programme of events had been established which included -
 - Green Man;
 - Smugglers Market;
- (e) other events which had taken place included -
 - Kings Troop;
 - celebration of 25 years of Landrover;
 - Holiday of My Lifetime (BBC episode);
- (f) future events would include -
 - Home and Garden;
 - National Scouts Camp;
 - international conference hosted by Plymouth College of Art and Design;
- (g) new lettings included -
 - the Cremyll Shop had been let to an external commercial operator;
 - a Blacksmith was currently occupying unit 2 of the Barrow Centre whilst works progressed to accommodate him within the Blacksmith unit;
 - the use of the old barn and poly tunnel for a garden centre;
 - the use of vacant office space within the House for use as the head office for the Silvanus Trust;

- (h) the Friends of Mount Edgumbe had focussed on providing major projects for the benefit of the Park, which included proposals for -
- the creation of a 'Friends Garden Area' adjacent to the fire station with the possibility of a new sculpture to commemorate 500 years of Mount Edgumbe;
 - the renovation of historic statues around the Park;
 - expansion of the play area;
 - provision of lighting to light up the Folly structure;
- (i) current initiatives being reviewed included -
- vehicles;
 - waste;
 - staff resources;
 - purchase of land train;
 - Cremyll Lodge holiday let;
- (j) in order to comply with the Small Bodies Audit Report a risk assessment for the operation of the Park would be required; several management reviews were currently taking place to evaluate risks; a final report would be drafted once the individual assessments had been completed.

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

- (k) consideration would be given to providing residents of the Rame Peninsula with 'concession' parking as an acknowledgement of the inconvenience caused with the major events being held at the Park;
- (l) no permanent members of staff had been effected with the recent letting of the Cremyll Shop to an external operator; Pertemps staff had been employed to work within the shop on a temporary/seasonal basis in line with Plymouth City Council's pay structure;
- (m) a brief was being developed for the proposal to create a Friends Garden Area which linked the Friends of Mount Edgumbe with the Cultural Board;
- (n) it would not be possible to use the land train on the highway; the intention was to use it to take visitors from the bottom of the Park to the Barrow Centre, etc; future sites would be considered such as the Deer Park;
- (o) TV campaigns would run to promote all major events including the 500 anniversary of Mount Edgumbe;
- (p) water transport links on the Tamar estuary would be explored including connectivity to the Royal William Yard;

- (q) Cornwall Council were currently assessing the storm damage which had affected the Cremyll Quay, slip way, entrance to the lower lodge and the sea walls; engineers were currently costing a scheme in conjunction with South West Water; work would be undertaken to look at funding streams for the scheme; an undertaking was given to provide an update report to the next Joint Committee meeting.

The Chair took the opportunity on behalf of the Joint Committee to thank the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe, Steve Pickering and the staff for their achievements to date.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

16. **MOUNT EDGCUMBE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a report on Mount Edgcumbe environmental stewardship agreement which provided an update on the 10 year agreement that the Park had entered into. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the Park had entered into an environmental stewardship agreement with Natural England for a 10 year period (1 October 2013); the aim of the agreement was to maintain and improve the landscape and woodlands for the benefit of wildlife and to help protect landscape features and structures;
- (b) part of the agreement was to carry out capital works across the site including -
- 4260m of replacement fencing;
 - 125 bird/bat boxes to be erected;
 - 265 cubic metres of tree removal in Penlee Woods
- (c) all the works carried a capital works payment grant which would cover the cost of the materials, these works included -
- erected 1685m of fencing;
 - placed around the site 125 bird and bat boxes;
 - cleared five hectares of scrub;
- (d) the scheme had recently funded (£39,500) the commissioning of a comprehensive survey which would -
- inform and guide the day to day maintenance and management;
 - inform and manage a programme of restoration and repair;
 - Inform future interpretation and use of the Park;
- (e) the aims of the plan included -

- assessment of the previous archaeological reports undertaken at Mount Edgcumbe and consideration of the historical development, design and landscape features of land that had not been previously assessed and update previous surveys undertaken;
 - carry out structural surveys of the critical non domestic structures within the HLA agreement land, using existing surveys where appropriate to avoid duplication of work;
- (f) as part of the scheme the Park would be able to claim an annual payment of £26,000 per year for the next 10 years for undertaking land management around the site, such as -
- grazing of grassland areas by cattle for Dartmoor ponies;
 - control of invasive species;
 - Restoration of woodland, species rich, semi natural grassland.

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

- (g) the works had to be completed by 2016 as the existing funding would finish (there would be no capital funding after 2016);
- (h) the claim for the funding of the works was submitted following the completion of the works.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

17. **TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT EVENT PLANNING AND CONSULTATION UPDATE**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a report on traffic management event planning and consultation update which highlighted the traffic management issues in relation to major events being held at Mount Edgcumbe and the work being undertaken to address these issues. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) following an increase in the number of successful promotional events at Mount Edgcumbe Country Park, concerns had been raised by local residents relating to the number of vehicles passing through the local villages and potentially causing congestion problems in the future as the events increased in popularity;
- (b) the 2014 Classic Car Rally had been an extremely popular event and attracted between 12,000 and 14,000 visitors; the road traffic travelling to and from the event created a sustained impact on especially in the villages of Crafhole and Millbrook;
- (c) the ‘red letter’ day events drove footfall to the Park, helped to raise Mount Edgcumbe’s media profile and generated direct income;

- (d) there were now several main events hosted at Mount Edgcombe which included -
- Christmas and Wedding Fayres;
 - Military Vehicle Trust;
 - Faery Festival;
 - Green Man;
 - Smugglers Market;
- (e) a working group (comprising of representatives from Friends of Mount Edgcombe, staff, road traffic specialists and parish councillors) had been identified to work together to look at the detail of possible alternative traffic management strategies for major events;
- (f) the existing traffic management plan had been adapted to alleviate pressure on key points of the peninsula road network and this would be implemented for major events at Mount Edgcombe; a new strategy has been drafted and had been submitted to Cornwall Council's Highways for comments;
- (g) events hosted at Mount Edgcombe would be classified in three categories, major, minor and incidental with all events being included in Cornwall Council's event notification process which would receive comments from the Local Safety Advisory Group;
- (h) preparation for major events would include providing the traffic management plan with supporting documentation (event plan, Chapter 8, signage schedules, timings etc);
- (j) it was encouraging to note that local stakeholders were in favour of these events and had engaged with the Park management to explore ways to alleviate any potential future traffic problems.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

18. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted the revenue budget monitoring 2014/15 report which provided an update of the financial position for the Joint Committee for 2014/15. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) an adverse variation was reported of just under £40,000 which was due largely to reductions in the number of weddings and other income streams;
- (b) the main variations were -

- a reduction in staffing costs due in part to the Park Manager's post being vacant for part of the year which was offset by the cost of an external advisor;
 - an increase in premises and utility costs which were largely offset by recharges for the use of facilities;
 - increased costs of supplies and services which were offset by a reduction in conservation costs and increased donations;
 - reductions in income compared to that budgeted (approximately £29,000); there were various fluctuations within the income lines but the variation was mainly due to income from weddings which was £19,000 less than budgeted; meetings and conferences had reduced expenditure and reduced income which resulted in a net £10,000 pressure;
 - lower than budgeted income on rents and lettings and pressure on car park repair costs, were being offset by reductions in repair costs and hire of equipment together with donations from the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe towards particular items of expenditure;
 - net pressure of approximately £3,000 relating to the main shop and a small variation on the Cremyll Shop which should be mitigated by the new letting arrangement;
 - higher than anticipated spend on equipment and hire in relation to the special events of £11,000;
- (c) mitigating actions being taken included the regular review of outstanding orders, the review of all expenditure and the maximisation of income through lettings and other opportunities; the Christmas Fayre was due to be held in December 2014.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

19. **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a report on business development which outlined the progress to date in respect of the transformational change project at Mount Edgcumbe. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the Mount Edgcumbe Means business initiative introduced in July 2013 provided proposals for implementing an investment initiative in two phases;

- (b) the first phase aimed to create a buzz about Mount Edgumbe Country Park, with phase two requiring larger investment to implement a number of property renovations;
- (c) the majority of the initiatives outlined in phase I investment had been implemented which included -
 - populating units around Barrow Centre with commercial tenants;
 - purchase of a land train;
 - converting Cremyll Lodge into holiday accommodation;
- (d) feasibility studies were currently being undertaken to establish renovation costs of three properties identified as holiday accommodation (West Lodge, Flat 1 Barrow Centre and part of the Rame Head look-out station);
- (e) other properties earmarked for renovation were -
 - English Garden House
 - Friends Lodge
 - Gardeners' Lodge
 - purchase of three eco huts/or Safari Tents (subject to planning consent)
- (d) plans to introduce a visitor information centre service within the main house foyer (currently used for gift shop and ticket sales) were progressing with a view to operating as a commercially viable facility promoting a wide range of visitor services available on the Rame Peninsula, Cornwall and Plymouth.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

20. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

Agreed that under Section 100(A) 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 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

21. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 (E3)**

Further to minute 18, the Strategic Director for Place submitted a confidential report on the revenue budget monitoring 2014/15.

The Joint Committee noted the report.