

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 31 July 2020

PRESENT:

Councillor Vincent, Co-Chair in the Chair.

Councillors Allen (substitute for Councillor Peter Smith), Mrs Beer, Burden, Corvid, Foot, Michael Leaves, Lennox-Boyd, Nolan, Mrs Pengelly and Pugh.

Co-opted Representatives: Nicola Cull.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Rennie, Peter Smith, Trubody and Sir Richard Carew Pole (Co-opted Representative) and Mr D L Richards (Co-opted Representatives).

Also in attendance: Chris Burton (Plymouth City Council), Beverly Gardiner (Plymouth City Council), David Marshall (Plymouth City Council), Peter Marsh (Cornwall Council), Nicola Moyle (Plymouth City Council), Helen Prendergast (Democratic Adviser), James Watt (Plymouth City Council) and John Weale.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.35 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.

1. **To Note the Appointment of the Joint Chairs for Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council**

The Joint Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Vincent (Plymouth City Council) and Councillor Trubody (Cornwall Council) as Joint Chairs for the forthcoming municipal year 2020/21.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the code of conduct, Councillor Mrs Pengelly declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to minute 11 (Renewal of Trenninow and Wiggle Cliffe Ground Leases).

3. **Minutes**

The Joint Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2019 are confirmed as a correct record.

4. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

5. **Appointment of Co-opted Representative**

The Joint Committee agreed that Nicola Cull, the Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Park is confirmed as a Co-opted Representative (non-voting) for a four year term (with an annual review).

6. **Presentation on the Mount Edgcumbe Deer Herd**

John Weale provided a presentation to the Joint Committee on the Mount Edgcumbe deer herd which highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) he had undertaken a census of the deer on the peninsula (which included a count of the deer and the type of deer in the area); there were two types of deer on the peninsula the Roe Deer (which were not present in large numbers) and Fallow Deer (the Fallow Deer had been introduced in the Roman times);
- (b) in 1515 Sir Piers Edgcumbe was given permission by King Henry VIII to empark deer;
- (c) he had approached the Park Manager and a small group had been formed to scope what would need to be done to properly manage the deer herd;
- (d) work undertaken on the scoping of the proposal to rejuvenate the deer within the Park included -
 - identifying the proposed area which covered 200 acres;
 - engagement with the British Deer Society, Natural England and Forestry England to look at the feasibility of re-opening the deer park;
 - investigating whether there would be any grants available for fencing the area;
 - looking at the area that would need to be fenced (it was not proposed to fence the coastal boundary, in order to allow the deer to enter and leave the area);
 - there was a holding capacity within the Park of 400 animals; however it was proposed to have a herd of approximately 150 – 200;
 - engagement with farmers;
 - opportunities for both employment and tourism;
 - this would be a five year project;

- the majority of funding would be for the fencing, although there would be funding needed for larder arrangements and culling; however, it was anticipated that income could be generated through deer events.

(John Weale was a former Naval Officer who had trained to become a professional deer manager. He was the current Chair of the UK Defence Deer Management Organisation which managed deer on all of the defence land in the UK and had a workforce of approximately 350 people).

The main area of questioning from Members related to –

- (e) the need for proper deer management with appropriate fencing/gates in place, in order to ensure the safety of the animals;
- (f) whether the culling of the deer would be done in a sensitive way; the possibility of selling Mount Edgcumbe venison and whether a butchery could be established in the Barrow Centre;
- (g) the risk that the herd could become habituated with tourists/vehicles and being feed;
- (h) the availability of a local slaughterhouse that could process any venison from the Park.

The Joint Committee agreed to support the development of a deer plan for the Park.

7. **Mount Edgcumbe Revenue Outturn Report 2019/20**

Nicola Moyle (Head of Heritage, Art and Film) presented the Mount Edgcumbe Revenue Outturn Report 2019/20 which detailed the final outturn position for the Park for the financial year 2019/20 and confirmed the 2020/21 budget.

The report highlighted –

- (a) staffing and operation: the amalgamated outstanding principal on capital borrowing terms had been extended to 25 years which provided an in-year saving;
- (b) house: additional costs for the lift repairs, removal of asbestos and fire extinguisher testing;
- (c) gardens: savings on supplies and services;
- (d) rents; shortfall due to vacant properties and electricity costs;

- (e) holiday lets: new lets for 2019/20.

The main area of questioning related to whether –

- (f) consideration had been given to extending the opening season for the Park, in order recover some of the lost income;
- (g) the weddings that had been postponed during the pandemic had been re-booked for 2021;
- (h) consideration had been given to marketing Mount Edgumbe as a staycation venue;
- (i) consideration had been given to holding outside events such as concerts.

Nicola Cull, Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgumbe Country Park, advised that any support that the Park needed, the Friends would be happy to help and sought clarification as to whether consideration had been given to holding an outside cinema event. The Friends of Mount Edgumbe Country Park would be conducting a survey in August and September 2020, seeking the views of visitors as to what they would like to see at the Park; it was hoped that this exercise would provide some useful feedback.

The Joint Committee noted the –

- (1) financial position contained in the report along with the risks, issues and any mitigating actions;
- (2) capital programme and proposals to be presented to Plymouth City Council's Investment Board (subject to a detailed business case).

8. **Mount Edgumbe Park Activity Report to July 2020**

Chris Burton, Park Manager, presented the Park activity report that highlighted the works and activities carried out in the Park which included the following –

- Park matters;
- buildings and Park infrastructure;
- events;
- business development;
- weddings.

The key areas highlighted that –

- (a) whilst over the last six months the Park had faced challenging times, it had remained open throughout the pandemic, although some services had been limited in line with Government guidelines; currently the whole Park and its businesses were open and operating under the Covid-19 guidelines; the House remained closed as it derived the majority of its income through coach parties;
- (b) the holiday let portfolio had been affected greatly by the lockdown, although bookings from 4 July 2020 had initially surged; cleaning and associated Covid-19 guidelines posed an additional burden on the operator;
- (c) work had commenced on Rame Head Coastal Guard Lookout which would be completed in November 2020 with the aim of hitting the Christmas/New Year market;
- (d) the Cremyll Lodge and Horseshoe Cottage were the oldest holiday lets and had received a makeover this winter, as part of the continuing maintenance regime of the property portfolio;
- (e) the Tree House project had been put forward for initial planning guidance and would be designed with a view to construction next spring for a summer release; consultations with both Cornwall Council planners and Historic England were underway; the budget for the treehouse was approximately £230,000; this development would be an 'eye catching' piece of architecture whilst being sympathetic to its surroundings;
- (f) weddings had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 regulation; work was currently being undertaken to be able to provide a limited offer, as per the guidelines; this situation had impacted the Park's income stream for this year; although 85% of weddings had been re-booked for 2021;
- (g) the Park's management had been working on a 10 year development plan which would detail what the Park would look like in 10 years' time; achieving this vision would depend on a collaborative approach and would include all those involved with the Joint Committee and other bodies; further information would be available at the next Joint Committee; whilst these current times seem uncertain, the Park would be moving forward.

The key area of questioning from Members related to whether the honey produced by the Black Bees could be marketed and sold at Mount Edgcumbe.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

9. **Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park Update**

Nicola Cull, Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe presented the update report from the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe which highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the Annual General Meeting had been held on 15 March 2020 at which a new Chairman had been elected (Nicola Cull); she had joined the Committee in 2019;
- (b) the Committee members included Gill Bunnell (Treasurer), Ann Creese, Steve Creese, Tony Hutchins, Neil Rugg, Carole Drummond, Alan Drummond and Nigel Bruce-Robertson (there were currently two vacancies on the Committee);
- (c) the cancellation of all events, due to the pandemic, had impacted the Friends' current main funding stream (the car show and the Christmas fayre being the key income streams);
- (d) during this period the Committee had been able to re-focus on what it could do to ensure the future of the charity and its objective of helping to preserve the Park for the benefit of the public;
- (e) the Committee had been actively engaging with Park management and had reconnected with each trader on site, as lockdown was eased, in order to offer its support;
- (f) the Committee had updated its priorities for 2020/21 in order to reflect lockdown and anticipate a 'new normal' which included -
 - development of a stronger and more diverse membership base;
 - increasing funds without events;
 - involving more people;

to achieve this the Committee would -

- run a membership campaign through to summer 2021;
- highlight to visitors that donations, however small, made a difference;
- encourage local visitors to become active volunteers;

it was anticipated that it would be possible to hold events during 2021 (this would be added back into the priorities when it was possible to do so);

- (g) the new marketing plan supported the priorities for 2020/21 which included -
 - the re-opening of Lambert Lodge during August 2020;
 - running a 'hello' campaign during August and September 2020;
 - holding a meet and greet for visitors;
 - undertaking a 10 question survey to obtain an insight into how to preserve and enhance the Park;

- promoting the benefits and discounts available in the Park and the traders to encourage visitors to join the Friends;
- launching a Facebook group (and running Facebook campaigns) and refreshing the website and repositioning the marketing material to reach target audiences;

(h) highlights from 2019/20 included -

- a total of £100,000 had been allocated to projects for 2020; the majority of the funding would be carried forward to 2021 due to the projects being on hold;
- income from the book sales in the new Lambert Lodge had been significant prior to lockdown;
- funds had been set aside for projects such as new toilets and a children's area.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- (i) sought clarification as to the children's project that the legacy fund would be allocated to;
- (j) whether there was a demand for the books.

Councillor Mrs Pengelly advised that the Plymouth Rotary Club would be able to help with events and fund raising.

The Joint Committee agreed to send a letter to Mr Neil Rugg, thanking him for his work and support as the former Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park.

The Joint Committee took the opportunity to thank the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe for their continued support for the Country Park

10. **Exempt Business**

Agreed that 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 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

11. **Renewal of Treninnow and Wiggle Cliffe Ground Leases**

Nicola Moyle (Plymouth City Council), Peter Marsh (Cornwall Council) and James Watt (Plymouth City Council) presented the report on the renewal of Treninnow and Wiggle Cliffe ground leases. Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council were joint freeholders of the ground leases on which the chalets at Treninnow and Wiggle Cliffe stood. These properties formed part of the wider Mount Edgcumbe Country Park estate.

Following a lengthy discussion the Joint Committee agreed to the recommendations contained within the confidential report.

(Councillor Pengelly was not present for this item)