

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 19 November 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor Shayer Joint Chair, in the Chair.

Councillor Ewert Joint Chair

Councillors Carlyle, Corvid, Daw, Lennox-Boyd, McDonald, Partridge, Pascoe, Penberthy, Salmon, Tivnan and Worth.

Co-opted Representative: Mr G Edgcumbe.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Alvey and Sir Richard Carew Pole and Mr D L Richards.

Also in attendance: Chris Burton (Park Manager), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning), Kate Farmery (Head of Business, The Box), David Marshall (Business Development Manager), Sarah Partridge (Asset Manager), Victoria Pomery (CEO The Box, Observer), Helen Prendergast (Democratic Adviser) and James Watt (Head of Land and Property).

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.45 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.

1. **To Note the Appointment of the Joint Chair (Plymouth City Council) and to Appoint a Joint Chair from Cornwall Council**

The Joint Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Shayer (Plymouth City Council) as Joint Chair for the municipal year 2021/22.

The Joint Committee agreed the appointment of Kate Ewert (Cornwall Council) as Joint Chair for the municipal year 2021/22.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the code of conduct, Kate Ewert declared a private interest in minute 31 as her step brother owned a chalet at Treninnow and Wiggle Cliff.

3. **Minutes**

The Joint Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2020 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 Mr Ged Edgcombe, the Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcombe Country Park is confirmed as a Co-opted Representative for the municipal year 2021/22.

6. **Presentation on the National Marine Park**

Kat Deeney (Plymouth City Council) provided a presentation on the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park which included –

- (a) the Council had been awarded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Horizons Fund £9.6m;
- (b) the funding was split into two phases -
 - a two year development phase, 10% of funding to test, trial and develop projects (July 2021 to June 2023);
 - five year delivery phase (following approval);
 - investment in physical assets, social and engagement programmes and in digital;
 - four physical Gateway sites and digital Gateway;
 - community access improvements;
- (c) there would be four hubs which included -
 - Tinside Pool and Cove – Health and Wellbeing Hub;
 - Mount Edgcombe – Marine Heritage Hub;
 - National Marine Aquarium – Nature and Environment Hub;
 - Mount Batten Peninsula – Recreation Hub;
- (d) Digital Park (linking audiences to the wonders of The Sound) -
 - bringing the National Marine Park to life using cutting edge technology, research and innovation;
 - Digital Gateway, utilising existing assets including Smart Sound, The Box and the Immersive Dome;
 - engaging new audiences, bringing STEM to life, to create immersive experiences of being in, on and under the Park to all and the potential for national and international outreach;
 - sustainable investment, jobs and economy;
- (e) the National Marine Park next steps were as follows -

- mobilise the development phase of the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the National Marine Park project (listening, piloting and developing activities);
- recruit an interim National Marine Park CEO;
- evolve the governance of the National Marine Park;
- accelerate the delivery of the People's Park in the Sea.

The main area of questioning related to –

- (f) how the River Tamar would link to the National Marine Park and whether a map of the Park could be provided in order to identify its boundaries;
- (g) whether the governance arrangements would unite all of the communities;
- (h) the need to involve not only city and unitary councillors but also district and parish councillors (from those areas bordering on the Park) in the governance arrangements and at an early stage;
- (i) sought clarification that councillors and communities in Cornwall (that bordered the Park) would also be engaged in this project;
- (j) emphasised the need to engage with all relevant communities with regard to this project.

The Committee noted the presentation on the National Marine Park.

7. **Mount Edgumbe Revenue Monitoring 2021/22**

Kate Farmery (Head of Business, The Box) presented the Mount Edgumbe revenue monitoring 2021/22 report which detailed the quarter two position of Mount Edgumbe for the financial year 2021/22.

The report highlighted –

- (a) that Covid 19 had an inevitable impact on the Park's ability to meet the 2021/22 income targets; however, proactive interventions from the Park management and effective relationship management with tenants, together with ensuring all income generating opportunities were pursued when the pandemic allowed, had mitigated against this;

- (b) an additional budget forecast requirement was being reported of £34k and in addition there remained a potential risk of £0.40k which was as a result of visitors staying at home and therefore not using the Park, plus a loss of rental income also due to the impact of the pandemic;
- (c) budget setting continued for 2022/23; the joint authority subsidy had been removed and a review of existing and future income streams for Mount Edgcombe continued; this included the new holiday property and the Trenninow chalets and the revenue implications of proposed new capital projects; it was expected that the new budget would be set in the new year;
- (d) the risks that could affect the monitoring position included the rental income (estimated risk of £14k of written off rent income invoices due to the Covid pandemic) and Covid 19 income loss in 2021/22 (this assumed that Plymouth City Council's share of 75% of MCHLG income to cover the losses had been received in full).

The main area of questioning related to whether the joint authorities had applied for (emergency Covid grant funding (from the Government) for Mount Edgcombe, in order to help mitigate against the loss of income, as a result of the pandemic.

The Joint Committee agreed to note -

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

8. **Park Activity Report November 2021**

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 report highlighted that –

- (a) the Park had been fully open since July 2021; the Park had remained open throughout the pandemic, although some services had been limited, in line with Government guidelines; there was a sense of pride in the Park at being able to stay open to walkers, local residents and visitors; this had only been possible by working in partnership with its tenant businesses, who had been under significant stress during the pandemic;

- (b) despite the challenges, most of the businesses had been able to survive; a couple of business had left but had since been replaced; Rebecca Day 360 (provided humanitarian business solutions around the world) now worked at the Barrow Centre and Enigma Solicitors had also taken an office in the main building; this had been made possible by offering rent payment holidays, working with the tenants to offer the best service possible whilst also looking for new ways of delivering the core business;
- (c) the Park would receive just under £1m for the development of the Maritime Heritage Centre at the Garden Battery; fundamentally, this project would deliver one of the five proposed National Marine Park Gateways as a major physical access point and centre for engagement of the public in the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (the Marine Park had been awarded £9.6m from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Heritage Horizon programme);
- (d) the last 12 months had seen a 'boom and bust' scenario with holiday lets; there had been a surge in bookings and almost full occupancy across the portfolio; however, the accommodation had been closed for three quarters of the time it should have been open; the cleaning regime had been adapted which had inevitably increased costs but this impact had been mitigated against through the high levels of occupancy.

The main area of questioning related to –

- (e) whether the use of solar powered parking machines had been investigated and whether there were any plans to install electrical charging points in the Park;
- (f) whether consideration had been given to employing youth offenders to work in the Park on a volunteering basis;
- (g) sought clarification -
 - as to when work on the Maritime Heritage Centre would commence;
 - as to whether events such as Wonder Nights would be taking place;
- (h) whether consideration had been given to using volunteers from the Plymouth Good Neighbours scheme (Plymouth City Council had joined forces with community groups and charities across the City to provide a central place for people register to help).

The Joint Chair (Councillor Shayer) took this opportunity on behalf of the Joint Committee to thank the staff at Mount Edgcumbe for their work to ensure that the Park remained open during the pandemic in a Covid safe way.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

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

Ged Edgumbe, Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgumbe presented the update report from the Friends of Mount Edgumbe which highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the Friends' vision was to work in partnership with the Park management by jointly agreeing funding requirements and projects; to continue to support the Park and to preserve, or assist in the preservation of Mount Edgumbe Country Park for the benefit of the public, as a place of historical, botanical, horticultural, architectural and natural beauty;
- (b) there had been a number of changes to the Committee which included the key posts of the Chair and the Treasurer; at the Special General Meeting held on 5 September 2021, all posts on the Committee had been filled which had been the first time in some years; there had also been a change in policy to remove 'ex-officio' members from the Committee;
- (c) during the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the Friends' membership had reduced and the number of new members being signed up was extremely sporadic; since May 2021 and the easing of some of the lockdown restrictions, membership numbers had slowly risen back to pre-pandemic levels (circa 620); currently there was an encouraging increase in new members; a series of membership drives for 2022 were being considered, not only to increase numbers but also to try and attract families and a broader range of age groups;
- (d) during 2021 the Friends had provided £26,795 of funding for projects in the Park which included a utility vehicle for use by the gardeners (£12,345), fencing material for the deer fence (£5k), a tool to assist in erecting the deer fence (£3,450), bedding plants (£4k) and mannequins for the Blitz Exhibition (£2k); Lambert Lodge, the Friends' second-hand bookshop had re-opened in June 2021 and was attracting new members and also raising some much needed funds; the Lodge was also providing to be an extremely useful information centre for visitors to the Park;
- (e) the Friends supported the future vision of the Park and would continue to work with the Park management to make it a success; however, there were concerns relating to the speed and timing of the zero funding from the local authorities, particularly in the aftermath of Covid 19; the Friends were keen to understand how much support the Park would receive from Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council with regard to the review of the condition of the Park, the buildings, contents, vehicles and plant;

- (f) it had been agreed to investigate an increase in the car parking charges for the Summer Fayre and Car Show for the 2022 event; it was proposed to change the cost from car parking of £10 per car to a charge for all adults over 18 of £5; this would impact primarily those arriving from Plymouth on the Cremyll Ferry who previously would have entered the event free of charge; the rationale behind the change was the greatly increased use of time-consuming card payments which would reduce the rate at which the cars could enter the car parks and the likely impact of this on the highway with queuing and obstruction.

The Joint Chair (Councillor Shayer), on behalf of the Joint Committee thanked the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park for their continued valued support of the Park.

The Committee noted the report.

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. **Treninnow and Wiggle Cliffs Ground Lease Report**

James Watt (Plymouth City Council) presented the update report on renewal of Treninnow and Wiggle Cliff ground leases and the next steps. These properties formed part of the wider Mount Edgcumbe Country Park estate.

Following a robust discussion, the Joint Committee agreed the recommendations (as contained within the confidential report).

The Joint Committee requested that all income generated from the chalet business is ring-fenced for the Park's future sustainability with the assignment fees being used to support the Park's capital programme.