

# Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee



Date of meeting: 31 July 2020  
 Title of Report: **Park Activity to July 2020**  
 Lead Member: Councillor Peter Smith (Deputy Leader)  
 Lead Strategic Director: Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)  
 Author: Chris Burton (Park Manager)  
 Contact Email: chris.burton@plymouth.gov.uk  
 Your Reference: n/a  
 Key Decision: No  
 Confidentiality: Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

The report provides an update on activities in the park in the 2019/20 financial year to the end of July 2020.

## Recommendations and Reasons

The Joint Committee will be asked to note the update.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

n/a

## Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

In line with the Council's priorities, the Park provides a vibrant cultural offer.

## Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The financial outturn position for Mount Edgcumbe which supports this report have been set out in the Mount Edgcumbe Revenue Outturn 2019/20 and is included elsewhere within this agenda.

## Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

n/a

## Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

*\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

n/a

**Appendices**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (if applicable)							

**Background papers:**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Sign off:**

Fin	pl.20. 21.4 9	Leg	It/350 53/2 207	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Asset s	DD	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Draffan											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Anthony Payne Date agreed: 21/07/2020											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Peter Smith (per email dated 21 July 2020) Date approved: 21 July 2020											

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report informs members of the works and activities carried out since Dec 2019.

## **2.0 Park Matters**

- 2.1 The last six months have seen challenging times for the Park. The Park has remained open throughout the pandemic. Although some services have been limited in line with government guidelines. We are justifiably proud that we have been able to stay open to walkers throughout the last three months. By the time of this meeting the whole Park and its businesses will be open and operating with Covid 19 guidelines in place. The only exception to this is the house, as it sees its majority of income arise from coach parties, of often elderly people. The house would close, as usual, in September.
- 2.2 The holiday let portfolio has been affected greatly by the lockdown, as was the associated income stream. Bookings from 4 July have surged initially and we are cautiously hoping for a late season. Cleaning and associated Covid 19 guidelines pose an additional burden on the operator however.
- 2.3 Work has commenced on Rame Head 'Coast Guard Lookout' and will be completed in November with a view to hitting the New Year/Christmas market.
- 2.4 Cremyll car park has remained open throughout the pandemic although the Parks other carparks were not and were reopened in July. The new car park has been a great success and is able to achieve more income when full. Obviously the pandemic has had an effect on carpark income as well, policing and ticketing services were also not available during lockdown.
- 2.5 Cremyll Lodge and Horseshoe Cottage are our oldest holiday lets and have received a makeover this winter as part of the continuing maintenance regime of the property portfolio.
- 2.6 The Tree House Project has been put forward for initial planning guidance and will be designed with a view to construction next spring for a summer release. Consultation with Cornwall Council planners and Historic England is under way. The working budget for this Treehouse is around £230,000, so it will be an eye catching piece of architecture, but sympathetic to its surroundings.
- 2.7 Costs of repairing the long defunct deer fence are being investigated, a new Group the 'Rame Deer Working Party' has been formed comprising of the Park, land owners and deer specialists. A deer census will take place this winter in order to assess population and inform management. There has been a deer herd at the Park since 1515 and it is an integral part of the landscape.
- 2.8 A general Park (you are here) map and interpretation board is under way and will replace the ageing boards that are in the formal gardens and carparks.
- 2.9 Funds are being sought for the repair of the access road to the Barrow Centre, which has become very uneven and subject to flash flooding and dust storms in the summer (not very pleasant when you are having lunch at the Farriers). The cost of these repairs however is likely to be around £25,000 and beyond the Park's routine maintenance budget, this is unlikely this year as Covid 19 income loss has weighed heavily on the budget.

- 2.10 The Park has had a poor six months for vehicles with a series of break downs for its older fleet.
- 2.11 The Park is hosting a tree training course based around 'Quantifiable Tree Safety Risk Assessment' (QTRA) promoting national best practice and training a number of PCC and CC employees. The Park now has a 'Tree Safety Management Plan' in place, with surveys taking place on a rolling programme.
- 2.12 The Parks Austrian volunteers were repatriated in March and have not been replaced, this is a sad loss for the Park as it had come to rely on these essentially, full time, free staff. It is hoped to start new negotiations with KONA as soon as Covid19 allows, with a view to having them back for the winter season.
- 2.13 The clearing of fallen trees after storms and the number of times the Park is closed due to high winds is on the increase. It is interesting to note that this is a symptom perhaps of the effects of global warming and is likely to have a greater impact on the Park in the future. Certainly all our rangers spend more time than they used to, clearing up and making safe after storms, this continues to put pressure on capacity.
- 2.14 Hedge work has been completed this year in record time as the Gardeners had a free run at the formal gardens in June. This has been a real challenge as the Gardeners normally rely on large numbers of volunteers and these have not been available for the last three months.
- 2.15 The Black Bee Reserve has been managed by staff and volunteers with around a dozen new colonies distributed around the South West. This is a great step forward in terms of supporting the reintroduction of this native species, Mount Edgcumbe is really on the biodiversity map for its ground breaking work with this project. The focus of the reserve is very much on distributing new colonies throughout the South West at the moment.
- 2.16 The Gardeners have created a special NHS flower bed as part of the lower garden display this year, ready for when the Orangery restaurant reopens on the 24 July.

### **3.0 Buildings and Park Infrastructure**

- 3.1 The English Garden House has been regraded to Grade 2\* by Historic England and as such will be eligible for grants to restore it. In the first instance this will involve securing emergency funding to replace the roof and protect the assets from further deterioration due to weather ingress something that has been a problem since the lead was stolen some time ago. The building featured in the launch of Historic England's 'Buildings at Risk Register', on BBC Spotlight, a grant process has been started with Historic England.
- 3.2 The lockdown period has given us a breathing space to do some much needed renovations in the house. The house has not been redecorated for some years and was looking rather tired in places, the maintenance team have been busy decorating, fixing doors that no longer shut, plastering and gilding.
- 3.3 A large hole that appeared in the sea wall at Cremyll was plugged using ten cubic metres of concrete pour before it threatened the road. Cormac are also doing some repointing of the sea wall.

- 3.4 Over one hundred specimen trees have been planted and protected in the amphitheatre, thanks to funding from the 'Friends of Mount Edgcumbe' this area has long been associated with planted specimen trees and will in time return to its former glory. The Trees are all labelled and will add an arboretum like display to the Park.
- 3.5 A memorial plantation has also been created in the Deer Park, in total nearly a thousand trees have been planted over this period, in various places throughout the Park, as 'Ash dieback' marches across the South West then the Park will need to be prepared to lose many of its ash trees. This will also present a further strain on resources.
- 3.6 The entrance to Dry Walk now has a repaired cattle grid and a new gate of a more formal style in keeping with the rest of the Park. The gate was copied from existing old estate gates by the Park's blacksmith.

#### **4.0 Events**

- 4.1 Covid 19 has of course had a huge impact on events with the cancelling of all of our spring and summer events. The situation is being reviewed as part of the Plymouth City Council wide events committee and a view will be taken soon as to what events will be possible. The Park as ever has public safety as its chief concern.

#### **5.0 Business Development**

- 5.1 The Park continues to develop its holiday let portfolio, with Rame Head now under way and the Tree House into the planning system. It has eight holiday lets at the moment and will have 10 by 2022. Those coming on line now are likely to have higher profit margins as they are predominantly higher end properties, service costs for lower grades are more or less the same as higher end ones. A pricing review took place this summer with Classic Cottages.
- 5.2 There is no doubt that there has been a severe loss of income during the spring early summer period in terms of the holiday let portfolio. Time will tell but initial bookings indicate a later season and a current resurgence in "stay at home" bookings. The Park was able to let Lady Emma's Cottage throughout the pandemic to the Kenyan High Commission.
- 5.3 Business Tenants of the Park were given a three month rent holiday during the pandemic. This will be paid back incrementally to the Park. All the Parks businesses have found this a very challenging time.
- 5.4 The Park has seen the opening this July of the 'Farriers' restaurant in the Barrow Centre, It is hoped that this new endeavour will breathe a sense of new life into the Centre and provide a consistently good level of service. The new owners are keen to be involved in all aspects of the Parks offer.
- 5.5 Planning for the 'Blitz 80' exhibition is taking place. Designs have been drawn up and rooms allocated to the display, the Metta Catrina will be decanted this autumn and the display launched on the anniversary of the bombing of the House during the Plymouth blitz on 21 March 1941.

- 5.6 The Park has a Propeller from the Lancaster Bomber that crashed on the Breakwater during the Second World War and hopes to turn it into a memorial to those aircrew that were killed in and around the Park. The propeller is now being restored.
- 5.7 The Park will be entering discussions this year about the Lease agreement at Trenninow Chalets and this will have a significant impact on the Parks financial wellbeing.

## **6.0 Weddings**

- 6.1 Weddings were cancelled due to the Covid 19 regulations and we are currently working towards having a limited offer commensurate with Government guidelines from September onwards. This has of course had an impact on this year's income, some 85% of weddings have been rebooked for next year.

## **7.0 Summary**

- 7.1 The Park continues to grow its revenue streams, holiday lets and car parking continue to provide increasing levels of income. The Park and its workforce continue to meet these new challenges in the way we work, and how we generate income so that the Park can remain a first class Country Park for the people of Plymouth and Cornwall to enjoy free of charge.
- 7.2 The overall picture of expanding income streams and a drive to reduce LA contributions has taken a couple of unforeseen hits this year, chiefly the Covid19 pandemic. A successful negotiation of Trenninow Chalets could see the Park on a more secure fiscal footing from 2021 onwards.
- 7.3 The Park Management has been working on the 10 year development plan which is very much a document that will show what the Park will 'look like' in 10 years' time. Achieving this vision will depend on a collaborative approach and will involve all those involved with the Joint Committee and other user bodies. There will more news on this front at the next Joint Committee. Present times may seem uncertain but the Park will be moving forward as it always has done.