

# Friends of Mount Edgumbe Country Park



Update  
November 2020

## INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an update on activities, priorities and future plans for the FOMECP.

## COMMITTEE

- Chairman – Nicola Cull.
- Gill Bunnell remains as Treasurer. Ged Edgcumbe remains as Membership Secretary.
- Committee members: Ann Creese, Steve Creese (Vice Chair), Neil Rugg, Carol Drummond (Secretary) and Alan Drummond.
- Tony Hutchings and Nigel Bruce-Robertson have resigned from the committee, but remain supportive members and volunteers.
- There are four+ vacancies on the committee.
- Members are currently at 584
- The next AGM is due in March 2021. The full annual accounts can be viewed on at [fomecp.org.uk](http://fomecp.org.uk).

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

We have made progress in defining our future vision:

- To have a stronger and more diverse membership base, with active members, volunteers and supporters.
- To work in partnership with the Park management by jointly agreeing funding requirements and projects.
- To have a sufficient funds to grow the charity deliver on our purpose, as set out in our constitution.

## PROGRESS THIS YEAR

As reported in July, the cancellation of events has impacted our funding stream, however we have been fortunate to receive legacy donations and have maintained our membership numbers.

Since our last report the committee has been improving its ways of working (systems, policies, processes) so that the charity is ready for the future so it can continue to deliver on its purpose: 'to preserve, or assist in the preservation (for the benefit of the public) Mount Edgcumbe Country Park as a place of historical, botanical, horticultural, architectural and natural beauty'.

As previously reported, a total of around £100,000 has set aside for projects but this funding will be carried forward to 2021 due lockdown restrictions. We are happy to reconsider priorities with the Park if necessary. Our funds currently stand at circa £135,000.

- Our policies have been updated to facilitate improved decision-making and provide more flexibility (whilst still adhering to the Charity Commission guidelines).
- We have approved a donation to the Park of £5,000 for the deer park fencing.
- We are working with the Park to identify priority projects for 2021.

- Funds remain allocated to the plans for new/updated toilets and a children’s shelter, urgent statue restoration and funding for the gardens. These projects will be restarted once the current lockdown is ended.
- The opening of Lambert Lodge in August, September and October was very successful.
- At the same time, we completed our visitor survey.
- The Lodge is now closed until 2021.

### SUMMER 2020 SURVEY RESULTS

Over 100 surveys were completed, on paper and online; below are the key themes emerging from the feedback:

- Local people and visitors love the Park and want to see it kept as it is – a beautiful natural space. The top reasons for visiting were:
  - To enjoy the gardens, woodlands and nature for exercise, such as a walk or a stroll
  - The gardens in particular are highly valued by all visitors.
- Over 50% of the visitors surveyed were local to the area (Plymouth and Cornwall side) and of those over 43% visit more than once a month, some as many as a few times a week. 45% of people arrive by car, around 30% by ferry and a few, 20% are lucky enough to be able to walk. Those arriving by ferry from Stonehouse have asked for the council to consider providing an ‘all day’ charge for the car park to facilitate days in the Park.
- Although the Park is much loved, visitors are keen to see improvements made to areas which are deteriorating. For example:

Closed and derelict buildings should be restored/opened	64.76% 68	31.43% 33	3.81% 4	105
I would like the statues restored	50.49% 52	45.63% 47	3.88% 4	103
I would like to see the follies/focal points restored	43.27% 45	52.88% 55	3.85% 4	104
I would like the toilets improved and/or more toilets	54.81% 57	38.46% 40	6.73% 7	104

- 2/3 of visitors surveyed would be happy to pay a nominal amount to have more/better toilets.
- Only half of the visitors know how the Park is funded and many just assume that there is sufficient funding to manage its upkeep.
- We saw little interest in visiting the house, however this might have been due to Covid restrictions as the house was closed to the public.

## EXTRACT FROM VERBATIM RESPONSES

Below are interesting verbatim responses which reflect much of the feedback received.

**Ideas** I would like to attend (via Zoom) some talks on the estate (follies, buildings etc), history of the estate, the flora and fauna, history of the area, wrecks, any archeology etc  
9/10/2020 4:58 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**Covid** In these unprecedented times - I guess it is the matter of keeping on top of what we already have.  
9/10/2020 4:51 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**Important** I would not want many changes as it is a beautiful natural area  
9/4/2020 10:38 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Showing 50 responses

**Dog** Guidance on dog waste: some owners put waste into a bag and then leave it by the edge of a path or trunk of a tree where it will stay for many weeks and produce an unsightly, anaerobic mess. If folk are not prepared to take the waste away, they are better off leaving it for nature to clear up aerobically (slugs, snails, magpies etc. Some guidelines on waste would be useful, e.g. displayed at The Stables, from someone with environmental knowledge and authority (Cornwall CC? Natural England?) to educate dog owners as the problem seems to be getting worse.  
9/10/2020 6:17 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**Ideas** I would like to see a kitchen garden and/or allotments  
9/10/2020 5:50 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**Ideas** More information about the history and flora and fauna of the park and the house and local area  
9/10/2020 5:08 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Showing 50 responses

**Love** I grew up in Mt Edgcumbe during the war and have many memories of childhood fun in the Park  
9/10/2020 8:11 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**Important** Holiday accommodation used as local housing. Plenty of holiday accommodation and second homes in the area already.  
9/10/2020 6:48 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**Ideas** The Park is a tremendous asset to Plymouth. I'd like to see a park and ride in summer weekends from Stonehouse Creek to Admiral's Hard to make it easier for people living further away to make use of the ferry. I'm sure that Plymouth Boat Trips and Princess Yachts would do what they could to make this possible, with a minibus doing a loop from the Princess Yachts car park to Admiral's Hard.  
9/10/2020 6:23 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

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Showing 50 responses

**Important** The park is a wonderful area of managed semi-wildness. We appreciate that the park is managed by a dedicated team who are doing their best despite an inadequate budget. It is critical that the area is managed to maximise support of its ecology particularly the diverse range of flora and fauna. We greatly appreciate the National Collection of Camelias - a particular joy in the winter months.

9/13/2020 8:57 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

**Important** We are second home owners with a flat at Picklecombe Fort. The survey doesn't seem to cover this. We often take our visitors to the park and they are surprised there is no entry fee. Has the management considered having a suggested donation amount at entry point. Like with the National Trust, we are all conditioned to pay to see lovely gardens.

9/12/2020 9:33 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

**Ideas** As a Life Membership `Friend` I think more could be done to encourage Plymouth people to attend events. e.g late transport after evening events-and Plymouth pick up points when you organise `outings`

9/11/2020 8:07 AM

[View respondent's answers](#)

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Showing 50 responses

**Cycline Love** I love the Park which is a huge asset to the area. It offers a wide range of possibilities to suit various tastes and needs. I appreciate the semi wild natural environment with so many trees and shrubs to enjoy in all seasons. My preference would be to keep the narrow footpaths for pedestrians rather than sharing with cyclists.

9/18/2020 6:52 PM

[View respondent's answers](#) A

**Love Volunteer** We love visiting the Park when ever we are staying at our home. If we came more often we would happily volunteer.

9/18/2020 9:09 AM

[View respondent's answers](#) A

**Cars** Car access should be restricted with much less space given to car parking

9/15/2020 9:06 PM

[View respondent's answers](#) A

**Covid** I like the park but as a shielded person and a carer I cannot return until all covid dangers are over

9/13/2020 6:16 PM

[View respondent's answers](#) A

I never have coins for car parking, especially now as retailers don't want cash. Please make car parks with card payment or Just Park App.

10/12/2020 4:14 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

**Dog Love** The park is very important to us and we love living nearby. Would it be possible to have dog litter bins ? Have encountered bags left on gates on occasions.

9/29/2020 8:22 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

**Cycline Ideas** I would like to see a far more green approach to recycling. More links with Plymouth and local schools. Greater use of the natural amphitheatre especially in this Covid time.

9/29/2020 6:07 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

**Table tennis** It's lovely Table tennis table dirty and not necessary outside gate shop

## FUNDING ISSUES AND DETERIORATION OF THE PARK AND ITS ASSETS

The survey and the feedback received this year (during such difficult times) has highlighted to the Friends that any further reduction in funding from local government could cause further deterioration of the assets of the Park.

The team managing the park are under immense pressure to keep 865 acres safe and open for all to enjoy. During the year there have been no events, very few weddings and no volunteers to help with the grounds.

We believe that funding is critical at this time, without it the Park assets could suffer further deterioration which might be impossible to recover from. The Park team do an amazing job with only a 'skeleton' staff and an unrealistic annual funding budget.

The Friends can support some areas with funding, but the Charity's funds cannot make up for the shortfalls of past years. We will fund on a year by year basis, based on funds built over the previous year.

We fully support the future vision for the Park and will continue to work with the Park management to make it a success; but we believe a stable and improved funding situation for the two to three years is critical. We respectfully ask that the Joint Committee consider this feedback when agreeing funding.

Below we have highlighted our particular areas of concern. This is not an exhaustive list, merely a quick 'brainstorm' via email with people that are passionate about the Park and understand its importance to the people of Plymouth and Cornwall. Undoubtedly, there will be many other areas of need across the region and within the Park, but it would be remiss not to make this plea on behalf of the Park.

Our areas of concern:

1. Woodland canopy management, planting new trees and removing unsafe fallen trees which render paths unsafe and closed to the public
2. Repairing the road around the Barrow Centre which is disintegrating and unsafe
3. The toilets (in general are in a poor state)
4. The formal garden buildings - English and French garden houses need urgent care to prevent further decay
5. Orangery lodge has a constant damp problem
6. The gardeners' lodge does not reflect the hard work and passion which the team exhibit
7. Woodwork in the Stables buildings (windows mostly)
8. The wall at Cremyll end has weeds growing out of one of the pillars
9. Closed walk ways and focal points which are unsafe and as closed will become 'lost' over time and irreparable
10. Fallen trees which cannot be removed without specialist equipment or people
11. There are many pathways and steps which are rotting: the zig zag paths, the steps down to Sand Ways are examples
12. Many of the Statues need urgent and expensive restoration work.
13. Restoring the rotten steps in the Camelia garden
14. Many assets in the house are also deteriorating rapidly now following years with insufficient funds.

## 2021 PLANS

We have the following planned to raise funds:

1. Membership campaigns through to Summer 2021
2. Campaigning for donations and legacies (to replace lost event income)
3. Encouraging our local visitors to become active volunteers and join the Friends
4. Online payment facility for donations and membership (to be launched in 2021)
5. A 'friends' trail guide highlighting funded projects funded by the charity.
  - o Working with the university to develop an app version of the trail (anticipated launch Q3 2021)
6. At the end of the current lock down we will proactively launch our campaign to promote the discounts of membership and the traders.
7. We will continue to update Facebook and our group is slowly gaining members.
8. We will continue to reposition our marketing material to reach our target audience(s).
9. We will be looking at (eco-friendly) merchandise to promote the charity and raise funds.

We anticipate that events will be possible during 2021; we will add this back into our plans when it is possible to do so.

Prepared 8 November 2020

Nicola Cull

Chairman