

# Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee



Date of meeting:	18 November 2022
Title of Report:	<b>Park Activity to Nov 2022</b>
Lead Member:	Councillor Pat Patel
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 from August 2022 to Nov 2022

## **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 implications are set out in the revenue monitoring report which is included as a separate agenda item.

## **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If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.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Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.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If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.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:**

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Draffan											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Anthony Payne Date agreed: 10/11/2022											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Pat Patel (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure & Sport) <i>Approved by Email</i>  Date approved: 09/11/2022											

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This report informs members of the works and activities carried out since August 2022.

## **2.0 Park Matters**

- 2.1 The Park has had a very busy summer season with events on most weekends along with a bumper year of weddings and receptions.
- 2.2 The Park today is very different to how it was a few years ago, we now have a thriving holiday let portfolio and we are home to some 23 different businesses, employing well over 60 people making us a medium employer on the Rame Peninsula. We have perhaps just as importantly reduced the tax payer burden through our various commercial activities to zero this year, a major undertaking that I and my staff are very proud of. I believe the Park looks better, feels more welcoming and is well on the way to developing its full potential.
- 2.3 Initial design work has started on the Garden Battery along with a wealth of survey work. Designs are being drawn up to RIBA stage 1 for planning consent purposes. As you will know from previous meetings, this project is part of the National Marine Park Heritage Lottery funding for which there is around 1 million pounds allocated to the Garden Battery
- 2.4 Sadly the Park has experienced a lot of storm damage this year. Losing some of its veteran landscape trees, including one of the main cedar trees in the Earls Garden and a number of large impressive trees in the lower Park. The number of times we have had to close for public safety has risen as the number of storms has too. Resilience against these more frequent storm events is part of the development plan of the Park.
- 2.5 The Park Maintenance Team has doubled with the addition of another post (albeit part time), and we have already started work on the backlog of maintenance issues both in the wider park (they completed the wonderful renovation of Thompson Seat in the formal gardens this summer) and also our holiday-let portfolio. A good very visual example of this will be the new decking area just south of the Barrow Centre, this will also incorporate a natural play area based around a boulder climbing apparatus in time for the summer.
- 2.6 As well as the Alpacas, which have proved very popular this summer, we have introduced some Jacobs sheep; a hardy and colourful sheep that also help to explain the process of conservation grazing. The Park Manager is still developing the Wild Breeds Centre concept based in Barrow Field. Initial planning enquiries have been favourable about this and it could provide both something to do for our younger family visitors and a potential income generator for the Park. The Park Manager is drawing up a business case for this, for future exploration with the Committee and other stakeholders.
- 2.7 Deer fencing of two thirds of the Deer Park is now complete and the whole should be completed by the end of next summer, a major undertaking by the Ranger Team. This has included the building of several new gates and deer leaps. 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. The existing deer fence was in a very poor state.

- 2.8 The Park will negotiate a new Stewardship agreement as land-owner at Rame Head with Natural England this year as the old one ends. At the time of writing however there is some confusion as to the future of the scheme and what (if any) extensions will be given.
- 2.9 A replacement decking area has been installed in the Barrow Centre, and this will have extra seating that can be used by the public or café goers. This is part of a phased improvement of the area which will include the moving of the Cornish hay wagon to a better, less hidden, display area and the replacement of the now defunct play area. The FOMCP have donated money towards the refurbishment of the hay wagon.
- 2.10 The Park continues to replace its aging vehicle fleet, it is planned to phase in vehicle replacement over the next three years as we are now in a situation where we spend more on 20 year old vehicles than they are worth.
- 2.11 The Park continues with its 'Tree Safety Management Plan' to which is now added the spectre of Ash Dieback, with surveys taking place on a rolling programme and removal as necessary this may represent a pressure on existing budgets as this national issue is dealt with. There is no doubt that this will have implications for the work stream and funding of the Park. The Park Rangers will be looking at adopting the PCC Alloy system to augment the QTRA system in the Park.
- 2.12 The Park has two new Austrian volunteers that have returned on a six month placement, this has been a great help and we hope to continue with this arrangement in the foreseeable future. The scheme is run through European funding through a partner CUBIC and essentially supplies two people one gardener and one ranger for the Park.
- 2.13 A new Education Centre is completed and is proving very popular giving us versatile covered space for environmental education and also as an overspill for the Farriers restaurant. This was made possible with funding from with the FOMCP (Friends of Mount Edgcumbe) in a partnership project with the local schools and Awenek Studio CIC.
- 2.14 The Black Bee Reserve has been managed by staff and volunteers with around a dozen new colonies being distributed around the Peninsula. This is a great step forward in terms of supporting the reintroduction of this native species, Mount Edgcumbe is on the biodiversity map for its ground breaking work with this project.
- 2.15 Earlier in the year, the Park Manager attended the rededication ceremony in Esquelbeq Military Cemetery, of 2nd Lt Piers Edgcumbe 11<sup>th</sup> Lancers, who after many years is no longer listed as a missing soldier, sufficient proof having been found to name the grave of a hereto unknown Officer. This was a deeply moving event attended by the family, representatives of Eton College, The Army and Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
- 2.16 Secure Forests CIC Ltd with funding from the Oak Foundation will be delivering a Veterans and Blue Light Services Land Management and Wildlife Conservation Course starting in the spring

of 2023 based at Mount Edgcumbe. In partnership with Duchy College this will help provide the Park with added capacity in terms of workforce, as well as recognising us as a training location.

### **3.1 Buildings and Park Infrastructure**

- 3.1 Designs for wrapping the English Garden House, are being considered. This will prevent water ingress and stabilise and make good this important building, the building was re designated to Grade 2\* and put on the risk register by Historic England and as such will be eligible for grants to restore it, and we have received a small grant from Historic England to help with this wrapping process.
- 3.2 Thompsons Seat and Milton's Temple have received an overhaul, Thompsons Seat in particular now has a particularly fine set of woodwork rose motifs, these have been uncovered and restored.
- 3.3 The Main House has had remedial works to the roofs of two turret rooms and has had an improved roof drainage system installed that allows for sudden downpours. These weather events are all the more likely in the future and were not envisaged when the house was built, so far they have been tested a couple of times and worked well.
- 3.4 The Main House is being run on a guided tour system and this worked well, reducing staff overheads with visitor numbers remaining much the same since the Blitz display was installed. The Blitz display, now in its second full year, continues to have favourable reports. Each year we will tweak the story to highlight a particular year of the war.
- 3.5 Students from the Arts University of Plymouth, Formerly Plymouth College of Arts, displayed several art installations throughout the Park as part of their 2022 season and these generated a lot of interest with the Park negotiating the purchase of a couple of these.
- 3.6 Cremyll play area has now been renovated and is open to the public. It is hoped that Barrow Centre play area will be completed in the next budget and before the summer.
- 3.7 Work on the Orangery building continues after storm damage to the glass and doors, but the restaurant has managed to stay open throughout this work. We as everyone else are experiencing more and more storm damage, the Orangery is particularly susceptible being a largely glass building.
- 3.8 The Park has had a major overhauling of its signs in order to bring some uniformity to its plethora of signs and remove where possible old and dated ones. Initial designs for the overall main park sign are being considered at the moment and will, it is hoped, be in place by the next summer season. The main carpark signs have had the Perspex covers replaced and signage updated.

#### 4.1 Events

- 4.1 We have seen a full summer programme of events and the return of our core events such as Christmas Fayre, The Green man, Armchair Adventure Festival and Classic Car Show. This year saw the thriving partnership with Miss Ivy Events continue with events such as Caribbean Family Fun Day, Ice Cream Festival and Summer Fete. We had 15 major events with the Classic Car show attracting around 13,000 visitors on a very hot and dusty weekend.
- 4.2 The Armchair Adventure Festival (AAF2) has doubled in terms of numbers attending this year. With some inspirational guest speakers from the world of adventure travel. It is hoped that this will continue to be one of our core events in years to come, dates for next year (AAF3) are already booked.
- 4.3 The Park hosted a week long 'Archaeology Camp' with children from Plymouth and Cornwall Schools in partnerships with the Ships Project and the National Marine Park Rangers. The children attending were pupil premium children, all of who had a fantastic time digging, exploring the foreshore and interacting with the 'Blue and Green' environment.
- 4.4 The BBC filmed a Remembrance Sunday special (that will be aired this Remembrance Sunday) at Mount Edgumbe.

#### 5.0 Business Development

- 5.1 The Park continues to develop its holiday let portfolio, with Rame Head now completed. We now have nine holiday lets and hope to add more perhaps developing current Gardeners' accommodation and relocating them. Currently building costs are prohibitive and supply chain is at best creaking so no further builds are planned in the next year or so. A pricing review took place this summer with Classic Cottages, which resulted in small income increases and some re-banding.
- 5.2 The holiday let portfolio saw the introduction of Rame Head Lookout <https://www.classic.co.uk/holiday-cottage/desc-4634.html> in May. The Holiday lets continue to perform with high levels of occupancy, post COVID19. The impact that the cost of living crisis will have has yet to be seen, but the market for holiday lets at least for the moment seems buoyant.
- 5.3 A new parking machine will be installed at Cremyll that takes cards and coins. All our carparks now use a 'RingGo' system that enables telephone (none cash) parking payments. Cremyll car park will receive a chip and pin machine this winter and will be the first of a phased replacement of the old machines that are now some 20 years old, in most cases and reaching the end of their operational life.
- 5.4 Alpaca trekking is now in place and is proving to be very popular. This initiative in itself has provided two new local part time jobs. Some of our best Trip Advisor reviews centre on this activity. We also used the Alpaca Experience as the basis for a team building event for the whole staff at Mount Edgumbe which worked very well.
- 5.5 The development of the Heritage Centre will allow some funding for business development that will include a new survey to ascertain up to date visitor figures, demographics and usage

identifying current trends and (perhaps more importantly) any gaps in who is not coming to the Park. This will enable us to target the hard to reach groups highlighted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and develop a marketing strategy.

- 5.6 The Park received an award 'Traveller's Choice' from Trip Advisor for being in the top 10% of attractions in the world! By scoring consistently high visitor satisfaction survey results. This is a landmark result for the Park and is greatly helped by the restaurant offer now in place in the Barrow Centre.

## **6.0 Weddings**

- 6.1 This year we have had 36 weddings and 9 marquee receptions making it another good year. There is an issue with the marquee which was installed around a decade ago and it is doubtful that this will last another year, a replacement structure is currently being considered but this will have a tight time frame and must be completed before the wedding season of 2024. The new structure will need to be part of a capital business case.

## **7.0 Summary**

- 7.1 The Park has reached the end of a financial firefighting era and is now in a planning for the future stage. This will involve the creation of a 10 year development plan that will help shape the future direction and work programme.
- 7.2 The Park is many things to many people, it's a place full of designations and historic buildings but also a place to kick a ball around and relax on a summers evening. Balancing the various needs and interests of its community and ensuring its continuation as an area of free greenspace, is key to future development. Having achieved zero budget, and financial security, we will be developing a costed 10 year plan to address the infrastructure needs over the next 18 months.
- 7.3 The Park has seen a gradual return of its volunteer work force, it will however sadly loose its two Austrian placements from next year as European funding dries up.
- 7.4 We look forward to working with the Committee and other stakeholders on the next phase of the Park's development.