

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee



Date of meeting: 08 August 2025

Title of Report: **Park Activity to June 2025**

Lead Member: Councillor Jemima Laing

Lead Strategic Director: Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)

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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 Nov 2024 to June 2025

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:

n/a

Appendices

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If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.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	Park Report Briefing							

Background papers:

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.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)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	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 Glenn Caplin-Grey Date agreed: 31/07/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Jemima Laing (Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) Date approved: 31/07/2025											

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report informs members of the major new works and activities conducted since Nov 24.

2.0 Park Matters

- 2.1 Work on the English Garden House (a grade two * Georgian 'Pleasure House') has been completed. Thanks to funding from DEFRA £280,000 Historic England £50,000 and the Friends of Mount Edgcombe country Park (FOMECP) £20,000.

The Park worked closely with Historic England's Conservation Officer and a Conservation Architect.

In order to safely work on the site and protect its historically significant interior a large and imposing scaffold structure was installed, that was really something to behold!

Initially the works focused on roof repairs as the roof had had its lead stolen some time ago and the Delabole slates were in poor repair. The roof was stripped and repaired as were the soffits and gutters and down pipes. The original pitch pine woodwork in many areas was found to be in good condition and where it could it underwent restoration/conservation work. The existing roof lights were removed and new ones approved by Historic England added.

New drainage was installed in the form of a large soakaway which will draw water away from the building. This drainage area has now been regraded and will be seeded with a wildflower mix that will provide a nectar source for our nearby Black Bee Hives.

The West facing wall was repaired and then plastered using a traditional lime plaster mix as it had become quite damaged over the years. The Front façade has had a face lift and is now resplendent in a close approximation to the colours we believe the building was originally painted. We were able to find some traces of what could have well been the original wall colour during investigations with the conservation architect and Historic England.

The building is now protected from the elements and over time funding will be sought to restore its interior to its original grandeur. The restoring and listing of this building after many years of disuse is a major step forward in protecting the Park's built historic heritage.

This project, entirely grant aided, was completed on time and within budget.



- 2.2 The Park has appointed a consultant which is funded through Natural England to produce an application for Higher Level Stewardship (now known as the Environmental Stewardship Scheme) that will go forward for consideration this summer. This was slightly delayed by the seasonal nature of surveys. Most of those surveys have now taken place. This will provide both revenue and capital funding delivered through a ten-year plan for the historic grade one listed landscape.

Surveys of both the natural and built heritage of the site will provide a register of the Park's importance in terms of its landscape, nature conservation and built heritage. The Park's international importance for species such as the wax caps will be highlighted formally for the first time.

The Stewardship agreement will address both nature conservation and the importance of the historic structures in the Parkland and providing funding on an annual basis for the management of those assets. The consultants LUC (Land Use Consultants) will be presenting the initial application at the time of writing to the Park Management and Stewardship Working Group.

It is hoped to have in place a ten-year Stewardship programme that will fund both revenue conservation activities and capital works to historic features, by this Autumn. The Park will be working closely with Natural England officers to achieve this.

- 2.3 The Ranger Team has now completed the fencing of the Deer Park.

This has included the building of several new gates and deer leaps. With over 7km of fencing to repair this has taken over four years and was a long-term project first brought to the Joint Committee some six years ago. In addition, it has involved over two thousand volunteer hours for which we are very grateful.

This work has been boosted by help from Royal Navy recruits through a partnership with Secure Forests and HMS Raleigh.

A Deer Management Plan has been completed with the help of nationally recognised deer experts. A deer census took place in the winter of 2023 and 2024 in order to assess population levels and inform management.

New technology in the form of drones and remote monitoring techniques developed with our partners on site Secure Forests will help us monitor and manage the deer herd. The deer herd itself will form part of the stewardship agreement that will be delivered through Natural England Stewardship Scheme over the next ten years.

There has been a deer herd at the Park since 1515 and it is an integral part of the Park's landscape. This practical work, stewardship funding and the Deer Management Plan will see this Tudor legacy continue well into the future, with this historic herd bringing enjoyment free of charge to the Park's visitors and local users.



- 2.4 The Garden Battery is a Heritage Lottery funded (awarded £942,000 as part of the National Marine Park New Horizons) gateway site to Plymouth's National Marine Park and will act as a 'Heritage Hub' for the whole Marine Park. Initial works to the Battery will start this summer and will be in a phased approach with the larger works taking place next summer.

The building will be receiving a new roof, new access provision, bat hibernaculum, improved drainage, floor repairs and interpretation within the building. We have on loan from the dockyard museum some of the original ordinance that would have been in place in the Battery.

This new 'exploration space' will tell the story of Mount Edgcumbe and its role in the development and protection of the Plymouth Sound. It will be a public facing free to enter building that helps connect up the heritage of the area and Rame Peninsula.



The Park will be hosting a number of community archaeology events over the summer culminating in a large community dig at Barn Pool. This is in partnership with the Ships' Project and Plymouth National Marine Park. This is building on the successful schools' archaeology camps that have been held over the last couple of years at Mount Edgumbe.

- 2.5 The Park will be submitting a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund this Autumn to fund a Conservation Management Plan. This will guide the management of this important grade one listed landscape for the next decade and will help set priorities for both the built and natural landscape. The CMP will consider the historic significance and provide an integrated approach, including other land management objectives such as the interests of wildlife, habitats, environmental gain and opportunities for people to enjoy the Park. We will undertake a programme of public consultation to inform a 10-year plan for the whole of MECF to guide day-to-day management, maintenance, conservation and restoration, visitor access and facilities, business planning and longer-term vision.

As an interim measure while funding is sought for the Conservation Management Plan, a draft Business Development Plan covering the next two years will be presented to the Joint Committee for review at this meeting.

- 2.6 The Garden Team has improved more formal beds on the east lawn, these will be both drought and deer resistant. The new beds reflect the sea with silver and blues and will be fully established over the next couple of seasons. They have been planted to also extend the blooming season and provide some colour all year round. Generous funding has been provided by the Friends of Mount Edgumbe Country Park (FOMECP).
- 2.7 The Rangers continued with the Ash Die Back and tree surveys this winter with a good deal of the Park-wide survey now complete. The survey data is entered onto our new ALLOY monitoring system, the same system used by PCC. This asset management system enables us to log individual trees, record works and programme future works as well as recording the health status of all trees.

The winter months contain a good deal of forestry work with this year being no exception. We had three full weeks of MUPE (high lift apparatus) work as well as over 30 trees being either felled or large-scale remedial works needed.

Ash Die Back continues to be a big issue for the Park and takes up a lot of resources both in terms of surveying and also in terms of tree works.

- 2.8 The Park has been recording our world class assemblage of Wax Cap fungi. To put this into context to be internationally important a site has to have 22 species we have 28 so far identified in the Park. We have a species which is on the IUCN red list and another that is threatened with global extinction. A species-specific management plan is underway to help the Park manage this very important habitat.
- 2.9 The Park has 10 new Jacobs lambs born this spring and will be using these as a conservation grazing flock throughout the Park. This means that the Park can use this conservation flock on other sites throughout its land holding where conservation grazing is desirable. Lambing in the lambing tent has now become a 'Thing' at the Park with lots of very positive social media responses. The Park now has pigs, alpacas and horses all performing services to and for the Park. They are always a very popular attraction to the Park's visitors, and this is reflected in Trip Advisor reviews.



Louise E

Dibden, United Kingdom • 14 contributions



This is the best small stately home and large park I have ever visited! National Trust take note! Beautiful landscaped gardens running down to pebble beaches with an interesting WW2 history, deer park, reasonably priced cafe with huge portions of everything from ice cream to paninis,...

[Read more](#) ✓

[Review of: Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park](#)



TheCutforths

Marlborough, UK • 5 contributions



An enchanting, atmospheric house. Full of interest, history and beauty.

May 2025 • Friends

This is a small but spectacular house, originally built in 1547, notable for its design to admit light and much admired in its time. Our guide was superb — he spoke fluently with no faltering and could answer any question. The family history was fascinating, illustrated by portraits, while towers and turrets created intriguing little rooms. Walk down the garden paths, visit the shell seat and perhaps end up reading your books and glancing up at the view from the summer house, as we did. Thoroughly worthwhile, even had there been a charge to visit!

[Read more](#) ✓

Written 18 May 2025

- 2.10 Another section of Drystone wall or 'Cornish Hedge' has been completed in partnership with Secure Forests by the Artists Platz this is part of the old wall line that framed the lower gardens, this has been a great partnership and an opportunity for local ex-servicemen and Park Rangers to learn new skills. This is one of a number of small-scale projects in which the Park has been able to utilise people power from Secure Forest training courses and students.
- 2.11 We have completed 2900 volunteer hours over the last reporting period. This demonstrates the huge value of volunteers to the Park as well as the importance the Park has for peoples'

wellbeing whether they are part of a city business on an away day, and individual volunteering or a group undertaking an arranged activity. We have had particular success with local businesses having team building and away days such as EE, DWP, Babcock and the Land Registry.

3.0 Events

- 3.1 The Park has a full Events schedule this year with nearly every available space taken. It continues its partnership with Miss Ivy events and the Armchair Adventure festival and is busy creating new events for the next season.

The popular 'Green Man' took place this year despite a rainy Saturday the attendance on the Sunday was very good. There was a particularly good selection of bands this year and this free event that the Park delivers itself proved to still draw the crowds. The work of the garden team and volunteers produced a particularly resplendent Green Man this year who had many admirers from both near and far.



- 3.2 Arts University Plymouth has for many years now delivered a series of outdoor arts installations in the form of a trail in the lower gardens. Involving the artwork and an artist's statement designed to reflect a theme each year. This gives the year two students experience in selecting materials and subject matter that is suitable and robust enough for public display, and the Park something new to look at each year to look at in the formal gardens.

This year's contributions are particularly striking and of high quality. The Park usually chooses one installation to remain in the Park each year. This year it will be a tough choice.



4.0 Fire

As you may be aware we had a major fire at Mount Edgumbe located in the Barrow Centre on 4th February, no one was hurt but two staff lost their homes and two holiday lets were destroyed in the blaze. The blaze effectively gutted the top floors of the Southern wing and made the rest uninhabitable. At one time over 40 firefighters were in attendance with numerous appliances. The fire that started in a member of staff's residence sadly moved through the roof space of the adjacent properties but due to the amazing efforts of the fire brigade was prevented from spreading to the rest of the Barrow Centre.

The fire has had an obvious impact on the staff that lost their homes and belongings and the businesses that have been forced to close while we carry out essential making safe works. Those businesses are now up and running again and have been since the February half term week albeit with a less attractive environment. We have also lost two holiday lets.

We are now at the stage where, for the last couple of weeks, we have been clearing the upper floors of the debris from the fire and the remains of the fixtures, fittings and personal belongings. Shoring up and preparation work needed to make entry into these parts of the building and making safe, such as the removal of slates as salvage and the trimming and removal of rafters and ceiling joists, has now been completed.

Once the debris has been cleared, we will need to assess the triangular shaped brick walls in the loft space that divided the separate parts of this area of the building. We think they may need to be carefully dismantled down to wall plate level. This may need to be done from a MEWP.

In the meantime, JNE are arranging for further scaffolding quotes, as per the loss adjusters request. We are hoping these will be forwarded quite soon. This is not holding up the making safe works, which are currently proceeding as planned. The covering of the building to prevent further water damage will be achieved as soon as possible through the provision of a protective scaffold.

Cornwall Council have offered to lead on the rebuilding of the south wing, and this will form the next step of the works once the building has been cleared. The time scale is envisaged to be some 18 months.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the sterling efforts of the Firefighters, Mount Edgumbe Staff and Business staff on the day of the fire and subsequently. I would also like to thank the response from all my colleagues in PCC and CC which has meant we secured and made safe the site with 24 hours of hand over from the Fire Brigade. Counselling was made available to all staff, and the local Rame community responded with kindness and practical help.

5.0 Summary

The Park has seen completion of some big long-term projects over the last six months, focusing on that balance between the built and natural heritage of this unique asset, with the completion of the deer park fencing and the English Garden House.

It has also seen us concentrating on planning for the future with Stewardship applications and Business Development Plans. It has also been a challenging year with the fire, and the continued cost of living crisis but we expect to be able to deliver a Park free of charge with minimum taxpayer burden into the next decade.