

Date of meeting: 14 November 2025
Title of Report: **Park Activity to Nov 2025**
Lead Member: Councillor Jemima Laing
Lead Strategic Director: Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)
Author: Chris Burton (Park Manager)
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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 July 2025 to November 2025

Recommendations and Reasons

For the Joint Committee 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 and supports the Corporate Plan priorities of 'Providing Quality public services', and 'Green investment, jobs, skills and better education'.

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If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant exemption paragraph number.</i>

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Park Report Briefing							

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Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.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If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.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	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Draffan											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes, Glenn Caplin-Grey											
Date agreed: 06/11/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Tom Briars-Delve											
Date Agreed: 06/11/2025											

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report informs members of the major new works and activities conducted since July 25.

2.0 Park Matters

2.1 The Park is working closely with Natural England, English Heritage, and the Forestry Commission to put the Park into a new Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier agreement for the next ten years, running from Spring 2026.

The Parks Woodland Management Plan (WMP) has been accepted by the Forestry Commission; this will enable the Park to obtain both revenue and capital funding for woodland works for the next ten years. The WMP breaks the Parks woodlands up into management parcels with management prescriptions for each parcel. These management prescriptions will involve removal of non-native species, planting, thinning, coppicing along with some capital works on non-roofed structures, within woodlands, such as deer walls. The Forestry Commission manages the woodland component of this Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

The Deer Management Plan, recently completed, will provide the basis of deer management as part of the above WMP and is currently being reviewed by the Forestry Commission. Deer surveys will take place this winter to estimate population numbers and management for the Park. Of particular interest is the use of new technology such as drones for undertaking these surveys and training is being given to staff on the use of these technologies as management tools.

The rest of the Park, The Deer Park, Barrow Field, Penlee, part of Rame, The Menadue and Whitsand Bay will also be part of the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier Application. The Park management has been working on the ground with Natural England, Historic England and Land Use Consultants (LUC) on the various habitat management prescriptions for each individual land block. These land blocks will receive revenue payments for landscape management and capital works payments. This is a not an unsubstantial bit of work but will provide a ten-year revenue and capital funding package, protecting the Grade One Registered Park and Garden for the next generation.

These 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 waxcaps will be highlighted formally for the first time.





- 2.2 The Ranger Team has now completed the fencing of the Deer Park and is undertaking improvement works to the deer leaps so that we can manage population levels when we have the new survey data, this management will be directed by and inform the Deer Management Plan.

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.

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.

- 2.3 The Park has started initial enabling works on the Garden Battery. This is a Heritage Lottery funded (awarded £942,000 as part of the National Marine Park New Horizons) gateway site to the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and will act as a 'Heritage Hub' for the whole Marine Park. The main works to the Battery will start next spring.

The building will be receiving a new roof, new access provision, bat hibernaculum, improved drainage, floor repairs and interpretation within the building.

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 and tell the important story of the Edgcumbe's involvement in the defence of Plymouth.

- 2.4 Consolidation works continue around the English Garden House, working with Chris Miners from Historic England and a Conservation Architect. Phase two of works on the inside of the building is in its early planning stages, with conversations about how this might go forward and be funded, taking place with the relevant officers. The Conservation Management plan will help direct these works and set priorities.
- 2.5 The Park hosted a number of community archaeology events over the summer, culminating in a weeklong 'Big Dig' at Barn Pool. This community dig uncovered some fantastic finds, including what is a sizeable corner of a building. Current indications are that this could be part of the medieval chapel of West Stonehouse but that is speculation at the moment. Various finds including Roman Coins were also recorded. The community stats are very impressive, with 220 members of the public attending the dig over the week and great fun was had by all. This Dig was funded through the National Marine Park and delivered in partnership with the Ships Project.



- 2.6 Work has commenced on the National Camellia Trail with the Head Gardener and Park Manager working with a designer to develop a new trail. The new trail will have a number of new interpretation boards that tell a story of the Camellia and its origins and its use in landscape planting since the 17th century. The new trail will be opened in March.
- 2.7 The maintenance team have been busy as ever with 56 listed buildings and 10 holiday lets. Much of the work is often unspectacular and often urgent in particularly when involving holiday lets. Of particular note this summer have been the restoration of our formal benches, fixing a large garden subsidence hole, replacement of Orangery gutters, Garden Battery drainage works, and repair of the roof on Unit I.

- 2.8 The Garden Team has improved more formal beds by the French Conservatory and have through funding from the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe been able to prepare for a new laurel hedge and planting scheme. Much of the summer months are taken up with cutting over 4km of formal hedges.
- 2.9 The Park hosted another waxcap fungi training day for the National Trust. Our world class assemblage of Waxcap fungi being the star as usual. 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 are 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.
- 2.10 The Park has put its ewes to tup this autumn, which means the return of the popular lambing display and also the Park can use this conservation flock on other sites throughout its land holding, where conservation grazing is desirable. Indeed, this is a key part of the new Stewardship agreement. The lambs, as well as the alpacas, are always a very popular attraction to the Park's visitors, and this is reflected in Trip Advisor reviews.



- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 We have completed 3100 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 continue to work with the Navy recruits of HMS Raleigh and those ex-service personnel on Secure Forests courses. We have also 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 had a full Events schedule this summer 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. This year we have seen some 20,000 visitors to specific events with over 2000 children through organised school visits.

The Classic car show was sadly cancelled this year with Cornwall Hospice Care no longer able to continue with the event. We are looking for another charity to partner with for next year's event. This event has been a fixture at the Park for some years initiated by the late Earl of Mount Edgcumbe.



5.0 Summary

Work on the refurbishment of the fire-damaged Barrow Centre (subject of a separate update) continues to move on with scaffolding likely to be completed by the date of this Joint Committee, with a site handover to Cornwall Council from the term contractor JNE due at the end of November. This is with a view to commencing building works in January with a completion date of March 2027.

This reporting session has 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. This is likely to be made easier next year with the income available from the new Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship agreements and at least one more large-scale event.