

CITY OF PLYMOUTH
MOUNT EDGCUMBE JOINT COMMITTEE

Subject: Mount Edgumbe Progress Report
Committee: Mount Edgumbe Joint Committee
Date: 19 July 2013
Joint Chair: Councillor Peter Smith, Plymouth City Council
(To be confirmed, Cornwall Council)
Cabinet Members: Councillor Peter Smith, Plymouth City Council/
Councillor Mrs Hannaford, Cornwall Council
CMT Member: Anthony Payne, Director for Place

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Ref: ME
Key Decision: No
Part: I

Purpose of the report:

This report updates members on park and property matters and commercial activity at Mount Edgumbe.

Mount Edgumbe Corporate Plan 2012-2015:

Plymouth City Council.

This report links to delivering the priorities within the Councils Corporate Plan particularly with regard to raising aspirations and providing value to communities

Cornwall Council

Business Plan Immediate Priorities: Use of resources and performance management

Environment, Planning and Economy Directorate Plan priorities:

- i) Creating a Green Cornwall
- ii) Creating a better place to live
- iii) Delivering excellent services

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land**

N/A

**Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and
Safety and Risk Management: N/A**

Equality and Diversity:

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?

N/A

Recommendations and Reasons for Recommended Action:

Members note the report.

Alternative Options Considered & Reasons for Recommended Action:

N/A

Published work / information

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

Sign Off

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Cornwall Council									

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report informs members of key events and developments that have taken place since the last meeting of the Joint Committee and of key issues looking forward to December 2013.

2. Park and Property Matters

- 2.1. The unprecedented amount of rainfall that we experienced last summer and winter led to several areas of the coast being eroded and flooding of the lower park and Cremyll Shop.
- 2.2. The worst affected areas of erosion and cliff movement occurred at Sandways, between Kingsand and Picklecombe and in an area known as Happy Valley at Whitsand Bay.
- 2.3. The Sandways slip is immediately above the area used by Sandways Chalet Owners Association who are carrying out remedial work in consultation with ourselves



- 2.4. At Happy Valley, tension cracks have appeared across the coast path which has meant that the Cornwall Council access team have had to close and divert a substantial section. The access team have also had the area surveyed and the

path will remain closed until they are satisfied that the area has stabilized.
There are 7 chalets in this area



- 2.5. The lower park saw extensive flooding over the winter with the Cremyll Lodge Shop kitchen flooded twice. The resulting damage and water ingress prevented it being opened to the public over the winter, although staff managed to save the stock. An insurance claim was pursued and the refit of the kitchen, internal toilet and internal doors has been completed. Following this fit-out a permanent water boiler has been installed and an oven has been provided to allow the direct servicing of hot and cold food and drink.





- 2.6. In January work began to prepare the old Plant Centre to convert it for the Segway operation. This entailed clearing the building, fitting sub-meters, provision of telephone and IT connections (paid for by the licensee), transfer of alarm systems and clearance and preparation of the practice area.
- 2.7. The rangers and gardeners cleared and levelled the area at the rear of the Cremyll Garden in preparation for the Adventure Play Area contractor.
- 2.8. Flat 1, Barrow Park, was cleared, cleaned and made ready for the arrival of three European work placements, provided by Point Europa.
- 2.9. Also in January, work commenced on repairs to the roof of Mount Edgumbe House to address leaks that were damaging the fabric of the east side of the building. Once this was done, work was undertaken to prepare the rooms underneath for the Metta Catharina exhibition.
- 2.10. On 26th February a substantial quantity of lead was stolen from the roofs of the Orangery (Grade II*), The English Garden House (Grade II*) and the French Conservatory (Grade II). The police are still investigating. Temporary repairs have been carried out
- 2.11. Because the status of these buildings, lead substitute cannot be used to carry out repairs. The cost estimate to replace with lead is £18,000.



2.12. Work began on the Higher Level Stewardship scheme with Natural England. This will result in the Park potentially receiving up to £16,000 a year over ten years to manage woodland and coastal areas for their conservation value

2.13. The sale of Picklecombe Cottage was completed on the 20th March 2013

3. Market Research, Marketing and PR Activity

3.1. The third site wide Visitor Survey was undertaken on April 9th (a headline analysis of which is included below)

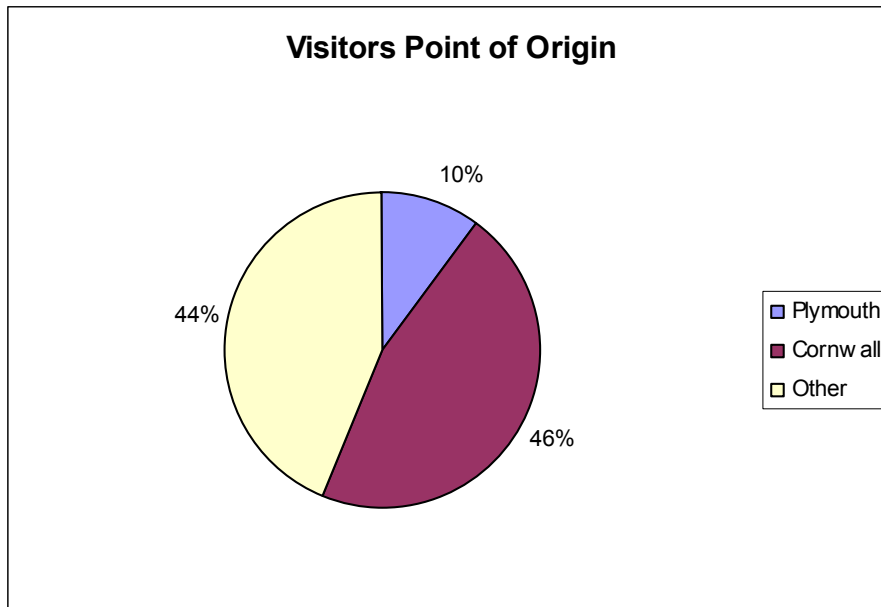
3.1.1. Thirty six volunteers and members of staff took part in the survey. The chosen day was overcast with occasional drizzle (and with a cold northerly wind the temperature remained at around zero degrees throughout the day). It should

be noted that both previous surveys (August and October) were completed on days when the weather was fair

On the day we recorded a total of 660 visitors attending the Park between 10.30am and 3pm.

Of those visitors 477 completed the survey

3.1.2.Point of Origin



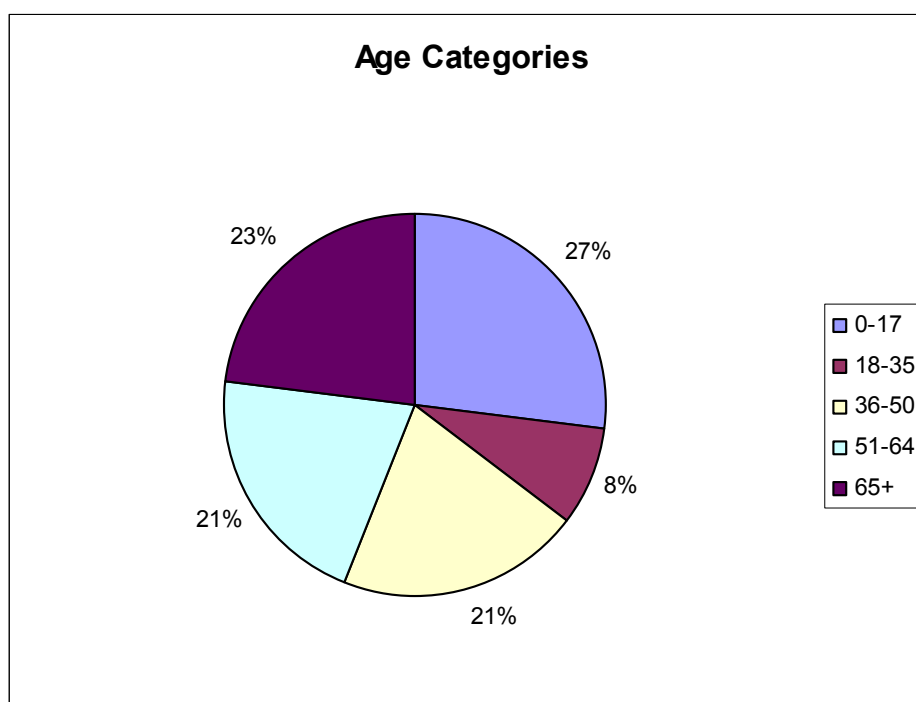
An analysis of the figures clearly shows that the weather has an immediate and profound effect on the visitor profile.

In comparison with the previous two surveys it is evident that the Plymouth market almost entirely disappears when the weather is poor. The percentage attendance of Plymouth visitors on this day reduced from 38.51% of the total (previous surveys) to just 10% of visitors on the day.

Interestingly – with the Plymouth visitors staying away the remaining attendance is almost equally divided between Cornwall (44%) and 'other' (46%) – which almost exactly reflects the underlying split in numbers from the August survey.

NB: 'Other' for the purposes of this report is anyone completing the survey whose postal code was outside SE Cornwall or Plymouth.

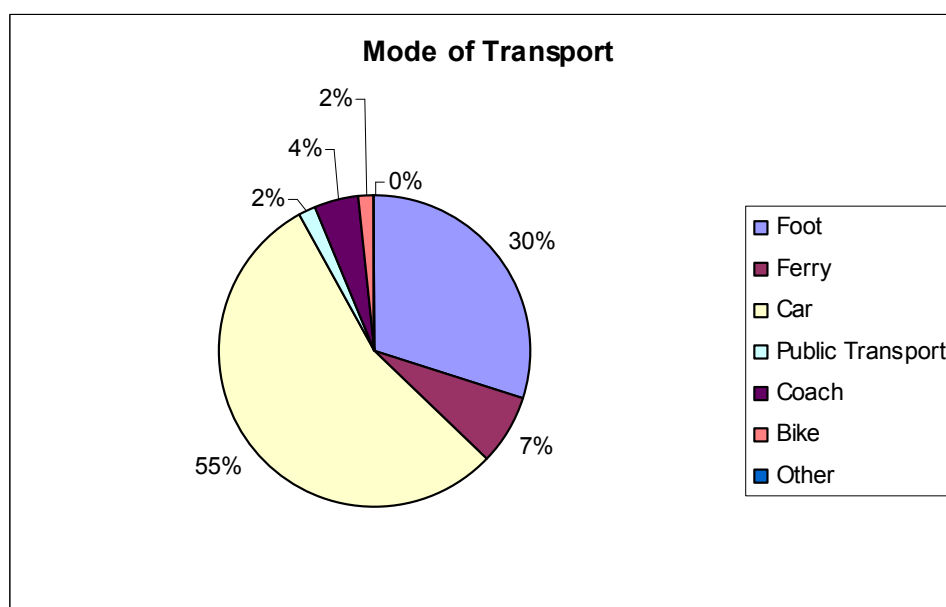
3.1.3.Age Categories



This survey also shows that adverse weather has a varied impact on the decision making of different age groups.

In comparison to our previous surveys (which showed that just over 70% of our visitors were under 50 years old) the recorded age of the visitors in this survey has taken a marked shift toward the more senior end of the scale. The 0 - 17 category shrank from 35.2% of the overall total to 27% of the total (which is a ratio reduction of 23%). The 18 – 35 and 36 – 50 groups showed similar shifts – suggesting that it is predominantly the young family (from Plymouth) that are put off by bad weather.

3.1.4.Mode of Transport



Again this survey showed an incredible and very marked change in the mode of transport used by our visitors (from previous survey days) – a change influenced by the weather – and perhaps a change that one would not expect until you realise that the weather has ‘washed away’ a whole ‘layer’ of visitors to reveal an underlying market below.

The percentage of Park visitors arriving by Ferry reduced from 33% of the overall total to just 4% (this supports the evidence of the decrease in Plymouth visitor numbers – the market that has been ‘washed away’).

Overall the use of car transport increased by just over 4% and coach transport increased by 5%. But by far the biggest change was the total of visitors arriving on foot – this increased from 14.4% previously to 30% in this survey.

In conjunction with the change in the age categories this suggests the older visitor is more likely to be from Cornwall or beyond (not Plymouth) and is also more likely to be using the coastal path to navigate the Park. In reverse this also suggests our Plymouth market is predominantly younger and more likely to congregate in and around the lower park and stay in that area.

- 3.2. May 1st saw the official opening of the Segway operation, with Councillor Penberthy joining Malcolm Bell (Head of VisitCornwall) and Amanda Lumley (Chief Executive of Destination Plymouth) to launch the initiative (unfortunately no representation from Cornwall Council was available because of the timing of local elections). As this report is being written the operator confirms they have ‘carried’ over 600 people and already have repeat visitors on their books



- 3.3. On June 18th, the Metta Catharina Exhibition was officially launched by TV presenter Monty Halls. The event was attended by representatives of the two authorities, trustees from the Metta Catharina Trust, Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Park and volunteers and contractors who had been involved in the launch.
- 3.4. A new generic leaflet has been designed and distributed. The new leaflet contains essential information for visitors that gives more emphasis on commercial activities. 90,000 have been printed

- 3.5. The afternoon of 19th July will see the launch of The Children's Play Area at Cremyll. Representatives of SITA Cornwall Trust and FOMECP as the funders of the project will be present, as will members of the press.
- 3.6. At the beginning of September Toozalii Community Arts (Circular Arts Project) will work with Mount Edgcumbe staff on the installation of 100 flags on the foreshore section of the lower park in front of Thompson's Seat. This will be the culmination of a 6 month project designed to involve service families (especially those with spouses directly engaged in overseas service) in the creation of a parade of colourful flags. The installation will have no permanent impact on the landscape and will have a high profile press launch event hosted at the Park – it will be in situ for ten days.
- 3.7. The weddings advertising schedule previously reported to the Joint Committee has gone live and is ongoing and is creating a steady stream of enquiries. We are currently averaging four wedding viewings per week.
- 3.8. The new wedding website for Mount Edgcumbe is live and in the first three months (March, April and May 2013) has had 13,325 unique visitors

4. Events

- 4.1. The annual Christmas Fayre was held on the second weekend of December. For the first time the visitor numbers reached the 5,000 mark. It was a very successful event and its reputation and profitability are increasing year on year.
- 4.2. The 3rd 'Three Wishes' Faery Festival took place over the weekend of 21st, 22nd and 23rd June.
- 4.3. On the afternoon of Sunday 23rd June, a performance of Sherlock Holmes by Pantaloons Theatre Company took place in the Italian Garden. Numbers were disappointing, but the performance was well received. Open air theatre events will be developed for future years. The weather for the week running up to the event was poor and the day itself was cold with high winds.
- 4.4. Mount Edgcumbe's annual Classic Car Show and Summer Fayre will take place on Sunday August 4th
- 4.5. The 10th annual rally of the Military Vehicle Trust will take place at Mount Edgcumbe on August 24th, 25th & 26th.
- 4.6. 18th October – 27th October the Belvedere is being hired to Drawn to the Valley over the half-term for their membership art exhibition.
- 4.7. The 2013 Mount Edgcumbe Christmas Fayre will be held over the weekend of December 7th and 8th

5. Conferences

- 5.1. On 20th June Cornwall Care held a recruitment day at Mount Edgcumbe in the Belvedere.
- 5.2. On the 12th of July Mount Edgcumbe will host a day long Plymouth University conference with 87 delegates.
- 5.3. 6th August, Cornwall Council Democratic Services Support Team will be attending an away day on site which includes a House tour, lunch at the Orangery and Orienteering in the afternoon.

- 5.4. On the 5th and 6th of September Mount Edgcumbe will host a second Plymouth University conference for 40 delegates.
- 5.5. On the 26th and 27th of September we will host a Plymouth College of Art two-day conference for approx 150 delegates.
- 5.6. On the 11th and 22nd of October; 26th and 27th of November; 10th of December; 28th of January and 11th of February Mount Edgcumbe will host Plymouth City Council Learning and Development day conferences for approximately 21 delegates.
- 5.7. Friday 27th September there will be a Gala Dinner in the Orangery for approx 80 guests from Marjons University

6. Weddings

- 6.1. The wedding business is experiencing a general 'downsizing' in people's aspirational budgets – the average number of guests is reducing year-on-year. There is also an increasing number of competing venues opening up to the wedding business.
- 6.2. However the Office for National Statistics latest figures show that there were 27,133 weddings in the South West region – almost exactly the same number as that for the whole of Greater London. 66.2% of those weddings were Civil Ceremonies. Of that 66.2% - 56.8% of couples chose civil approved premises for their marriage.
- 6.3. Analysis of the 'Insights' report 'Wedding Opportunities for Destinations' shows that transport to a venue and overnight accommodation feature as the two most important practical priorities for wedding planning.
- 6.4. In 2012 Mount Edgcumbe hosted 38 weddings and 27 receptions.
- 6.5. Wedding booking for 2013 currently stand at:
 - 26 x Wedding ceremonies
 - 6 x Gallery bookings
 - 5 x Extended use of Earls Garden
 - 3 x Marquee Receptions
 - 22 x Orangery Receptions
- 6.6. Wedding booking for 2014 currently stand at:
 - 15 x Wedding ceremonies
 - 1 x Gallery bookings
 - 6 x Extended use of Earls Garden
 - 2 x Marquee Receptions
 - 12 x Orangery Receptions

There are a further 12 pencilled enquiries on the books for 2014.
- 6.7. Although enquiries are healthy for 2014 the response to the marquee/House offer is not as strong as expected. This has triggered a second price

benchmarking exercise which will be completed in July along with a review of all supporting marketing and sales information for the marquee/House package

7. Development

- 7.1. Towards the end of February confirmation was received that the FOMECP bid for a SITA Cornwall Trust grant to build the Children's Adventure Play Area had been successful. Work began in liaison with the contractors for delivery of equipment and materials in preparation for construction.
- 7.2. Work began in April on the construction of the play area – immediately following confirmation from SITA Cornwall Trust that the ENTRUST (regulatory) approval had been received for the grant.
- 7.3. The Segway operator began on site (initially a one-man operation) and for the first month Mount Edgcumbe staff were asked to support the set-up by selling tickets and fielding all enquiries for the operator whilst he bedded in.
- 7.4. The Metta Catharina exhibition – in all its various guises – began to arrive on site for assembly under the guidance of Jo Cairns and a small team of volunteers.
- 7.5. May also saw the completion and the 'soft' opening of the Children's Play Area – which was reseeded with grass and planted to allow this to mature before the official launch in July – in time to remind people of the Mount Edgcumbe offer for the summer holidays.



- 7.6. At the end of May the Metta Catharina exhibition also had a 'soft' opening – allowing us to iron out any issues ahead of the press launch on June 18th.
- 7.7. Building staff and gardeners worked closely with officers from Cornwall and Cormac on the preparation of the Cremyll toilets for handover to the Park. These toilets, situated behind the Edgcumbe Arms, will be used strategically as an alternative provision of facilities in the lower park when the Orangery toilets are closed to public access in preparation for wedding receptions and events.

- 7.8. Mount Edgcumbe's new Geocache trail will go live in July. This will provide a large circular walk around the Park – taking 'cachers' past the House with both the start and finish located directly beside a catering outlet.
- 7.9. Tuesday 18th June saw the extremely successful launch of the Metta Catharina exhibition. Well attended by officers from Plymouth and Cornwall plus members of the Metta Catharina Trust, Friends of Mount Edgcumbe, volunteers and suppliers. The launch, officiated by Monty Halls – TV presenter and marine biologist, received a full page coverage in the Plymouth Herald the following day.

8. Commercial

- 8.1. In the Cremyll shop a price review was completed and new ranges of products were introduced (the sales performance will be closely monitored with an eye to further review).
- 8.2. Mount Edgcumbe's new 'Groupon' offer (an online discount deal) for House tickets went live in May. In total Groupon sold 1000 vouchers – however Mount Edgcumbe will only benefit from those vouchers that are redeemed on entry – we have currently welcomed 451 people to the House using the Groupon Vouchers. The offer remains valid until August 14th.
- 8.3. The end of July will see the introduction of a new Cadbury's ice-cream cart to be positioned at the Cremyll entrance for the duration of the summer holidays. This was trialled during the May half-term and has been leased free of charge to the Park (a windfall from a surplus of equipment following the London Olympics). The half-term experiment showed that the different pricing and products did not take away from the Cremyll Shop takings – and the additional capacity created additional income.
- 8.4. Analysis of the May half-term takings in the Cremyll Shop shows a marked improvement. The weather for the period has been better this year – although we did have a sunny/partially cloudy half-term last year. Gross total income for the 9 days of half-term was £4,739.66 (£1,899.75 in 2012). The gross total has improved by £2,839.91 over the 9 day period year-on-year. The net improvement is £2,368.93 and the margins have improved by 2.59% to 59.64%. The average net daily income increased by £263 per day during the peak period.
- 8.5. This extraordinary improvement in income is down to better trained staff (see below), better focus on ranges, better provision of supporting equipment (oven and boiler) and the focus and dwell time created by the play area.
- 8.6. Guidebook sales in the House to July 7th 2013 stood at a total of 167. In the same period last year we sold 133 (when it was a brand new product).

9. Staff

- 9.1. A new comprehensive Mount Edgcumbe Volunteer Handbook was produced prior to the annual induction day in the run-up to the new season.
- 9.2. Site wide stock takes were completed to close down the financial year.
- 9.3. The volunteer induction day for the 2013 season was hosted in the Belvedere with 48 people attending the event.

- 9.4. For the first time a day long induction training session was arranged for all seasonal Pertemps staff (this in the knowledge that Mount Edgcumbe's visitor facing seasonal staff needed more confidence in their knowledge of the Park whilst carrying out their duties for us).

Recommendations and Reasons for Recommended Action:

That members note the report.