

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Report on Park Activity to September 2016
Committee: Mount Edgumbe Joint Committee
Date: 25 November 2016
Cabinet Members: Councillor Jordan (Plymouth City Council)
Councillor Duffin (Cornwall Council)
CMT Members: Anthony Payne, Strategic Director for Place (Plymouth City Council)
Peter Marsh, Head of Commissioning and Asset Management (Cornwall Council)
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Ref: MEP /gen
Key Decision: No
Part: Part I

Purpose of the report:

This report provides an update on activities in the park in the 2015/16 financial year to end of October 2016.

The Corporate Plan 2016 -2019:

Delivering excellent services.

Maintaining service through income generation.

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

None.

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? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

The Joint Committee notes the information.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

N/A

Published work / information:

N/A

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin		Leg		Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the content of the report? Yes / No													

1.0 Introduction

This report informs members of the works and activities carried out since July 2016.

2.0 Park Matters Including High Level Stewardship

- 2.1 Work on the Natural England High Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme for various follies within the Park has been finished. It has been decided to add some appropriate railings to Harbour View Seat to protect it from sheep damage. It is hoped to have the walks and interpretation leaflet completed by Christmas. Money for the capital works will also be claimed by Christmas.
- 2.2 The Elizabethan Knot Garden has been completed next to the house and was opened in November by Robert Earl of Mount Edgcumbe and Lady Megan and Lady Vanessa Edgcumbe. The garden is proving very popular along with the Plymouth Blitz interpretation area. A team of twenty German volunteers helped with its construction, along with the garden team and Head Gardener Lee Stenning. The cost of the Garden (£20,000) was paid in full by the 'Friends'
- 2.3 A purpose built disabled parking area has been put in place adjacent to the new Knot Garden and is proving very popular; however parking is still at a premium in the Park and presents operational difficulties for the Park particularly during events.
- 2.4 Phase one of the signage projects has been completed and installed in the Park. Visitor numbers are reported by the business tenants to be up on previous years so it would seem they are directing people to the Barrow Centre and other areas of the Park, as well as being rather more attractive. The signs were completed in house at minimum cost.
- 2.5 The wall next to the Marquee has been stabilised and its coronets replaced, along with gate repairs.
- 2.6 Dog waste and rubbish bins have been re-located to more strategic areas where existing bins were being over filled at weekends.
- 2.7 General HLS work continues with fence work, scrub clearance and tree management.
- 2.8 The Rangers have been on a 'Quantitative Tree Safety Risk Assessment' (QTRA) course and are now able to follow national best practice in assessing tree safety in the Park. The Park now has a Tree Safety Management Plan in place. A good deal of tree safety work will take place this winter.

3.0 Buildings and Park Infrastructure

- 3.1 Work has been undertaken (and continues) in and around the Barrow Centre to uplift and refresh the general presentation of the built environment. Work to make the doors at the back of the Barrow Centre match those at the front will take place this winter. Work on the Orangery has continued and the huge Georgian windows have been repainted.
- 3.2 A programme of building repairs is now being undertaken. West Lodge has been made habitable and will provide an income for the Park; it will also be protected and available for further development as a holiday let in future years.

- 3.3 The lobby of the House is being redecorated as a Georgian boudoir, this is the main entrance to customer facing operations of the House and is now home to an event organiser as well as our wedding operation. It is hoped to develop the conferencing venue side of the house as well as the filming location businesses. This decorating will help sell the house as a venue.
- 3.4 The filming of a Rosamunde Pilcher novel 'Almost Unmarried' took place in September, and will be shown in the New Year. BBC 'Flogit' also made an appearance in August along with Julie Walters and 'Great Coastal Journeys'. The park is now registered on an international data base for filming, thelocationguide.com .
- 3.5 The House has been open for a trial period this winter at weekends, using a guide based system in order to ascertain the potential for winter opening. The two cafes on site in the Barrow Centre and Orangery are also open every day throughout the winter months.

4.0 **Events**

- 4.1 Between July and November we hosted over 30 walks, talks, and workshops; these comprised of in-house talks, walks and creative workshops including Paintings of the Past, The Great War, crochet workshops, garden tours, dowsing for beginners, bat walks, Halloween hunt, and a garden Tour.
- 4.2 Mount Edgcombe has hosted 'Park Run' every Saturday morning since January. These events have proved very popular with a strong turnout enabling Café traders to open early.
- 4.3 The Classic Car Show was again a great success this year with nearly 19,000 people attending.
- 4.4 The Military Vehicle Trust event event was smiled on by the weather and had over 4000 people in attendance. We also hosted the national body painting championships which was real eye opener.
- 4.5 The Sealed Knot event was not so dry but also received a large number of visitors who were well entertained with lots of bangs and explosions.
- 4.6 Sadly the worst day of weather for the whole year fell on the day of the 'Proms on the Peninsular' and the organisers took the decision to cancel the event. Ticket sales had been good and could have generated a good return for the park. The Park manager is trying to persuade the organisers to have another go.

5.0 **Business Development**

- 5.1 The Park has put in a capital bid to further develop a series of commercial activities. These commercial activities include the development of further holiday Lets, including Captain Blake's Hut at Whitsand Bay, installation of 4G in the house to aid conferencing, a new web site and the development of 'Glamping'.
- 5.2 We have welcomed three new Businesses to the Park Baba Yaga's Circus, 'Miss Ivy Events' and 'Twisted Leather'. There are now a total of 18 small businesses in the Park and we are now a medium employer on this part of the Rame Peninsular. Park manager is in the process renegotiating business on costs such as electricity and waste as these had not been envisaged when tenancies were originally let.

- 5.3 Negotiations over the installation of a high ropes course are currently under way.
- 5.4 Holiday lets have been running since March and marketed through Classic Cottages. They are going very well. This is a reliable income stream that will be developed over future years.
- 5.5 The Park has started recouping the electricity from the restaurant businesses within the Park.
- 5.6 The Park is developing a new web site to complement its very effective Facebook and Twitter accounts. The Facebook account has 6133 followers and Twitter, 212.
- 5.7 The Park currently employs around 40 individuals through its business franchises which along with the 13 staff make the Park a major employer in the Rame peninsular. The Park is now moving towards a place where people come to visit and stay to spend money. At its current level of LA subsidy the park provides access to 850 acres of grade one listed landscape for 58 pence per head per year for the 250,000 visitors per year the Park receives.

6.0 **Weddings**

- 6.1 We currently have 15 weddings and 12 marquee receptions (20% increases marquee early predictions for weddings are good) and 9 Orangery bookings for 2017/18. The Park Manager is now allocating all on costs to the wedding budget so there is a better understanding of profit and loss. The wedding floor had to be replaced this year at a cost of some £20,000 this had to be done in order to keep the business going. It is likely that the drapes will need replacing this year.