

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Report on Park Activity to July 2017
Committee: Mount Edgumbe Joint Committee
Date: 28 July 2017
Cabinet Members: Councillor Jordan (PCC) and Councillor James(CC)
CMT Members: Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place) and Peter Marsh (Service Director – Environment)
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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 2016/17 financial year to end of June 2017.

The Corporate Plan 2016 -19:

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:

That 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

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

2.0 Park Matters

2.1 On 25 May 2017 Mount Edgcumbe Country Park became the site of the first Black Bee Reserve in England. This represents the first native honey bee reserve in England and will provide a template that can be followed across the country for the reintroduction and protection of our native honey bee.

Partnered from B4, Tesco and Plymouth University the project was entirely grant aided. Sir Tim Smit officially opened the reserve saying: "This is a landmark opportunity to promote the advances in the care and promotion of the endangered native black bees. The work done here can be used as a template that we hope to use as we roll out the programme at future sites. It is imperative that we work together to preserve the local bee populations and their unique genetics across Europe".

2.2 The new website is now up and running and is proving very popular. A survey to ascertain impact will be carried out this summer, initial feedback from business units is very positive. Staff have received training in web site management and a maintenance package is in place with Crunch Creative.

2.3 An interpretation board telling the story of D-DAY and the 115th Infantry Division, US Army, has been put in place at Barn Pool. The launch was well attended by members of the public, Royal Marines and re-enactors and ITV News. Lieutenant Colonel Neil Wraith R.M, and Father Brown dedicated the plaque accompanied by a rather loud howitzer.

2.4 Higher Level stewardship Scheme is completed and the claim sent to Natural England.

2.5 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 took place this winter.

2.6 The Park has been granted a sum of £10,000 from the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe in order to draw up an Heritage Lottery (HLF) bid for the English Garden House, under the Enterprise Heritage Scheme. A consultant will be appointed in the summer.

2.7 Over 22,000 bedding plants have been planted in the formal garden thanks to a donation from the 'Friends'.

2.8 Two new cedar benches, repair of the wall and a new pergola in the Rose Garden have been funded by a generous donation from a member of the public. Work was completed in June.

2.9 The Elizabeth II Knot Garden is now maturing into a very beautiful garden indeed.

2.10 There is now a Model Railway in the Park at Artists Platt. It is hoped to develop this over the years. The railway is managed by the Mount Edgcumbe Railway Volunteers (MERV's) and runs on Sundays and during school holidays.

3.0 Buildings and Park Infrastructure

- 3.1 Work has been undertaken on the pond at French Garden which will hopefully see it retaining water and acting as a water feature by the summer.
- 3.2 The Park is now opened and shut at nightfall which has helped greatly with security and parking issues. This has been enabled by having a resident gate keeper in West lodge. West Lodge itself has been made habitable and is lived in by our new handyman/gatekeeper role.
- 3.3 There is now an honesty box at Maker Church it will have taken well over £2000 this year. The money will be ring-fenced and used for the Church road repairs that will take place this summer in partnership with the Parish Council, The Earl and the Church.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 The 'A Seat with a View' leaflet is proving very popular and has needed a reprint. The Tree Trail leaflet has also been reprinted.

4.0 Events

- 4.1 Between November and June we hosted over 25 walks, talks, and workshops; these comprised of in-house talks, walks and creative workshops including Camellia walks, The Metta Catarina, crochet workshops, garden tours, dowsing for beginners, bat walks, Easter egg hunt, and garden tours.
- 4.2 The Easter egg hunt was incredibly successful this Easter and we ran out of Easter eggs
- 4.3 The Green Man was again a great success this year with 7211 people attending.
- 4.4 May also saw the introduction of 'South West Paddle Fest' which showed the potential interest in this third party event which we will grow over the years.
- 4.5 'Faery Fest' was again a great success and saw our first customers for the Glamping Huts we were able to add this income to the £5000 we also make from the festival so income totalled nearly £6000 and no faeries were harmed!
- 4.6 Miss Ivy Events have held several small scale events at weekends since the spring including Farmers Markets and a Pet Market. They will hold a bigger event in July, The Great British Festival that will champion everything good about a great British Summer!
- 4.7 The Christmas Fayre was a great success and very well attended. Feedback from the event means we need to make sure that there is some new elements to offer next year. Income from the event was up at around £13500.

5.0 Business Development

- 5.1 The Park was successful 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 The Parks Shepherds Huts are now in place and earning their keep. They will be marketed with 'Quality Unearthed' and 'Cool Camping' along with our own website. Guests will be able to book and pay online.
- 5.3 We have welcomed three new businesses to the Park, Whites Farm Shop, Edge Cycle Hire and Rame Visions Gallery.
- 5.4 Negotiations over the installation of a high ropes course are still under way.
- 5.5 Holiday lets are going very well with higher than expected levels of occupancy. This is a reliable income stream that will be developed over future years. Yew Tree cottage will come online 6 months early this Christmas.
- 5.6 The Park has started recouping the electricity from the restaurant businesses within the Park. This will provide around £1500 extra income a month.
- 5.7 The Park is will have WIFI coverage to all its top buildings by the time of writing this. This will enable conferencing to take place and the Park to market this better. The park is now a member of Conference Plymouth. The conferencing market will be actively targeted this winter season.
- 5.8 The House has now reached capacity in terms of letting out empty or redundant rooms. We now have a recording studio, ceramics storage area and a health care practitioner all renting office space.
- 5.9 Captain Blake's hut work will commence this summer with the aim of having its first guests by the Christmas season. The Park is working with PWH and Classic Cottages to make sure we have a 'Boutique Retreat' style property that should bring in some £30000 a year income to the Park.
- 5.10 The cleaning contract for the Park has now been awarded to Kernow Maid; this will represent a £15000 saving a year for the Park and allow a more flexible operation focusing cleaning time on a seasonal basis.

6.0 Weddings

- 6.1 We currently have 18 weddings and 15 marquee receptions (25% increase) and 12 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.

Summary

Through good housekeeping measures the Park has been able to generate a surplus this year. This will be further enhanced as the income generating components of the commercial capital works begin to kick in this financial year.

The Park continues to have a better offer to the public with new dynamic activities such as cycle hire and glamping, these and other commercial activities are now marketed by a customer friendly modern website. All this is pushing the Park towards a 'staycation' with customers will spending a day or more at the Park and its visitor attractions.

Tree safety works and an aging fleet of vehicles will however place an increasing burden on the finances of the Park over coming years, staff will need to work more flexibly to be able to cope with commercial activities that are customer focused such as holiday lets and glamping.

The Park has a wealth of infrastructure that could be developed into commercial enterprises however and where appropriate new revenue streams can be achieved if capital funding is made available.