

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Report on Park Activity to September 2015
Committee: Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee
Date: 24 November 2017
Cabinet Members: Councillor Jordan (PCC) and Councillor James (CC)
CMT Members: Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place) and Peter Marsh (Service Director – Environment)
Author: Chris Burton - Park Manager
Contact details: Tel: 01752 822236
E-mail: chris.burton@plymouth.gov.uk
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 2017/18 financial year to the end of September 2017.

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 report.

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 July 2017.

2.0 Park Matters

- 2.1 The Black Bee Reserve has received a lot of very positive publicity including visits from BBC Countryfile, ITV News, BBC Radio Devon and Cornwall and Sheryll Murray MP. The site now has 7 active colonies and the breeding programme for queens will start next year. A further Grant of £1000 was received from Tesco and £450 from the Local Community Fund. It is hoped that the 'Mount Edgcumbe Cornish Bee Group' will receive charitable status next year also enabling to source more funds.
- 2.2 The website is now up and running and is having a positive impact on visitor numbers, which have been up by 20% in the House. An in house marketing video has also been produced and is on the home page. Staff have received positive feedback from the various businesses on site.
- 2.3 An interpretation board is under way telling the story of Lawrence of Arabia and his connections to the Park and his role in air sea rescue at RAF Mountbatten. This along with a new gardens board will be installed over the winter months.
- 2.4 The Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) is completed and the claim sent to Natural England.
- 2.5 The Rangers are continuing to carry out the work involved with the 'Quantifiable Tree Safety Risk Assessment' (QTRA) 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 year and more will take place over 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, this has gone out to tender at the time of writing with proposals in by the 30th November.
- 2.7 The 'Garden Team' has had four groups of international students helping with the garden work as well as the normal weekly volunteers groups. This year we had students from Portugal, Austria and Poland. The house has also had a series of foreign students from various countries through the Europa training programme.
- 2.8 The final bit of work on the rose garden wall has also been completed thanks to a generous donation. Repairs to the French garden pond have been completed thanks to a donation from the 'Friends'.
- 2.9 The Elizabeth II Knot Garden is now maturing into a very beautiful garden indeed.
- 2.10 There is now a Model Railway layout in the lower sawmill an area which saw very few visitors, it is hoped a railway layout that helps tell the story (at least in part) of timber production and will draw people into this under used asset.

3. Buildings and Park Infrastructure

- 2.11 Work has had to be undertaken in order to repair our lifts so that they meet present health and safety standards and along with ongoing legionnaires compliance this has seen budget implications for the Park.
- 2.12 The Park has continued to be 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.
- 2.13 There is now an honesty box at Rame Head car park, the one at Maker Church will have taken well over £2500 this year. The money from Maker was ring-fenced and used for the Church road repairs which took place this summer, in partnership with the Parish Council, the Earl and the Church.
- 2.14 The House saw a 20% increase in visitors in the summer months, hopefully as a result of the new web site. The House will be open on Sundays this winter, using a guide based system. The two cafes on site in the Barrow Centre and Orangery are also open every day throughout the winter months.
- 2.15 A new generic Mount Edgcumbe Leaflet is under construction and will be available for the spring. 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. Events

- 4.1 Between July and November we hosted over 8 events and 14 walks, talks, and workshops; these comprised of in-house talks, walks and creative workshops including Paintings of the Past, The Metta Catarina, Fragrance Workshops, garden tours, Dowsing for Beginners, Bat walks, Halloween Walk, and Garden Tours.
- 4.2 The Car show was incredibly successful this summer with over 12,000 visitors.
- 4.3 The Pet Fest was a great success this year with an estimated 1000 visitors a day. This is a new event in partnership with Miss Ivy Events.
- 4.4 September also saw the best 'Mount Edgcumbe at War' event yet, with a wide range of re-enactors and an attendance of over 3500 people on the Saturday unfortunately it rained heavily on the Sunday.
- 4.5 The Halloween event led by the 'friends' also had over 1000 visitors all of which had a 'thrilling' time.
- 4.6 Plymouth College of Art and Design held their conference here in the September and saw an international artist and potter Kanghyo-Lee hold a piece of performance Art.
- 4.7 The Park saw a familiarisation event for a group of Chinese travel agents who are marketing the English stately home and gardens in China, this new and exciting customer group could be very lucrative for Mount Edgcumbe. The group pretty much bought out 'Kate' the weaver's supply of cuddly animals!

5. Business Development

- 5.1 The Park now has a new Holiday let 'Yew Tree Cottage' it is rather glamorous and a step up in pricing from the other two existing lets Cremyll Lodge and Horseshoe Cottage. The Orangery Lodge will be the next to come on line in 2018/19.
- 5.2 The Parks Shepherds Huts are now in place and earning their keep. They will be marketed with 'Quality Unearthed' and with our own website. Guests will be able to book and pay online.
- 5.3 The Park has hosted several Hostile Environment training courses by Survival Wisdom one of which resulted in a grant of some £7,000 to the Park. It is hoped to expand this partnership in the future.
- 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. Horseshoe and Cremyll receiving 23 weeks and 30 weeks respectively.
- 5.6 The Park has started recouping the electricity savings as a result of the switch over to LED initially the savings offset the loan for the installation works.
- 5.7 The Park has WIFI coverage to all its top buildings done in house at a saving of £14,000.
- 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 the Lyhner River Barge CIC, all renting office space.
- 5.9 The Park has applied for historic building consent for the conversion of the Orangery Lodge into a holiday let. Works are aimed at starting in the Spring. Alternative accommodation is being sought for the 'Friends' bookshop. Work is still going on to reduce the tendered cost of Capt Blakes holiday let.
- 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 seasonal demand.
- 5.11 Some £6,000 worth of income has been generated for the Park from filming over the last year, and it is hoped that this will continue to be a regular, if unpredictable, income stream for the Park.
- 5.12 The Park hosted the PCAD conference this year with a star performance by Kanghyo Lee and internationally renowned Korean artist, who built a giant pot and then demolished it a musical accompaniment. He and his potters also spent the morning working with Furlanesend primary school.

6. Weddings

- 6.1 We currently have 14 weddings and 5 marquee receptions and 12 Orangery bookings for 2018/19. This is down on last year. The Park Manager is now allocating all on-costs to the wedding budget so there is a better understanding of profit and loss.

7. Summary

- 7.1 Through good housekeeping the Park will 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 spending a day or more at the Park and its visitor attractions.

Health and safety updates, tree safety works and an aging fleet of vehicles will however place an increasing burden on the finances of the Park over coming years.