

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK JMC
Date:	MONDAY 25 FEBRUARY
Title:	PARK MANAGER'S REPORT
Reference:	4745
Report From:	GORDON GARDNER

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1. Introduction

The following report updates members of the Joint Management Committee on developments at the Park since the previous Park Manager's Report presented on 3 December 2012.

Staunton continues to turn around the tough start to the financial year. Up to the end of October visitor numbers were up by 9.1% and 2.5% above budget. Membership grew strongly despite the weather conditions and are up on last year by around 37%.

The 'butterfly zone' is now open and seems to be attracting lots of attention.

1. Business

- 1.1 So far 2012/13 Staunton has had just under 117,991 visitors (108,136) The last 3 months have been ok with standing the poor weather. (See Appendix 1 for more detailed information).
- 1.2 Membership has taken around £109,432 (See Appendix 2 for a break down of figures). We are continuing the trend from the start of the year at just under 37% above last year.
- 1.3 We are working with HC3s to look at ways we can jointly manage operations; such as possibly having the caterers take over the gift shop, therefore, selling our stock and providing better quality catering outside the payzone. One outcome could be a reduction in staff costs.
- 1.4 One of the goals for Countryside Service (HCC) for 2013/14 is to embed great customer service into everything we do. It is being supported by a rollout of Welcome Gold training sessions. Some of these sessions have

been focused on the unique role Staunton and the Countryside Service play in Hampshire.

2. Farm

- 2.1 Although the new lambing shed is now back on track there is a possibility it will not be ready for lambing in April/May 2013.
- 2.2 We can now report that funding has been found to install a new hayshed. This will greatly reduce the fire risk to the main farm buildings.

3. Education & Community

- 3.1 Connected to the stained glass window project almost 200 children from 6 local schools have now completed their 2 days of lottery funded activities. Each child spent the morning learning about Sir George Staunton and his Leigh Park estate, followed by an afternoon working with a local stained glass artist creating their own fused glass to keep. The second day was spent in school working with a local artist to create their self portrait and Staunton Coat of Arms - these will all be transferred onto the Gothic Library windows as well as the creation of four stained glass windows inspired by their work. This is scheduled for opening in April 2013.
- 3.2 Gemma Summerfield has created and circulated two water survey questionnaires, one detailed for schools we work with and the other just key questions, about the delivery of water topics at schools. This will help us ascertain the best approach for meeting targets for our Water is Life programme in Partnership with Portsmouth Water. The current agreement is coming to an end so this information will be important for developing the service for the next three year agreement.
- 3.3 The Park has achieved another successful bid of £6,000 to deliver regular themed family fun days for children with a disability or additional needs and their families. We will be offering additional storytelling and puppet shows to our general visitors on these days and use it as a pilot to measure trends in visitor figures linked to increased activity.
- 3.4 The Park will be working with various partners to provide the 'Breakthrough at the Bar' event on Thursday 16 May 2013. This event will be delivered by adults with a disability and service providers. The aim is to raise the profile of the work we do with this group and would like to invite all members of the JMC to attend.

- 3.5 Caterpillar Craft and Beacon Community Partnership will be occupying the Coach House for 2013. Caterpillar Craft will provide a range of pre-school sessions, offer parties (the catering and parking costs will come to Staunton) and craft fairs. The opening event will be on Saturday 23 February 2013 and all JMC members welcome.
- 3.6 Debbie Lyall from the Beacon Partnership is now developing the scheme and offering more supported volunteer places to people with learning difficulties. This has seen a great increase in the work that is being completed across the Park, as well as the development of handmade traditional crafts.
- 3.7 The Beacon Community Partnership is in the final 6 months of its current agreement. It is suggested that the JMC should have a presentation at a future meeting to get a clear understanding of this innovative scheme as well as provide input into the future direction.

4. Marketing and Events

- 4.1 The new welcome leaflet will not be due until April 2013, partly connected to the new 'butterfly zone' and delays in getting the new map completed for the country park side.
- 4.2 The Park is currently working on a social media campaign to double the number of fans on our Facebook page; this currently stands at 2,530 fans.
- 4.3 It is unlikely that Staunton Live will be taking place this year. We have been unable to find a grant to support this event. It has been suggested to move the event to the pay-zone, thereby removing the need for sponsorship as there is paid entry.

5. Projects

- 5.1 The 'Naturalist Gardens' (Wildlife Zone) has now opened. It has been very well received by the public and local schools.
- 5.2 Our volunteer group, supported by the Beacon Project, have been successful in applying for money from SITA to improve the access links for customers to free-to-use areas.

6. Operations

- 6.1 The other key aim for Countryside Services (HCC) for 2013/14 is to have a more robust approach to Health & Safety. There have already been meetings outlining the teams' responsibilities and actions. Staunton is very committed to getting this right.

7. Gardens & Glasshouses

- 7.1 The gardens team have not only completed the butterfly zone but have also opened the new 'Fruit House'. This of course will take time to reach its full potential but I imagine in a few years we will be picking figs and grapes.
- 7.2 The Tropical Butterfly Houses will be open between the 1 February and 3 March 2013. It has already proved very popular and provides another 'poor weather' attraction at Staunton. With its success Staunton should open it longer next year – January to the end of February.
- 7.3 As part of the development planning for Staunton one idea that has come forward is investigating rainwater harvesting from the tropical glasshouses. There is already a historical underground storage tank ready to be utilised.

8. Staunton Pricing Policy

- 8.1 Compared with other attractions Staunton seems to be too generous in its group prices and gives away too much; for example Hillier's £8.95 adult and groups £6.95. Giving away up to 20-25% is ok; it is recommended that the group price is increased to £5.75.
- 8.2 Comparing prices with other "farm attractions" Staunton is very cheap for a child visit – most were above £6.00. Finkley Down Farm near Andover is charging £6.95 and Longdown Activity Farm at £7.95. Staunton is better or at least comparable to these visitor attractions. Charging £4 (based on last year's numbers) could contribute a further £19,000 to the bottom-line..
- 8.3 Car parking currently has a £2 flat rate. There has been very little resistance to car parking charging. It is recommended that there should be a 25% increase, from £2 per day to £2.50. This would contribute a further £3,750 to Staunton's income. Figures for other HCC country parks
- Manor Farm - £3.00
 - Queen Elizabeth - £3.00
 - Lepe - £4.70
 - Royal Victoria - £3.00
- 8.4 With the changes proposed for children's prices, it is also recommended that the family ticket would rise, from £19 to £21. Overall the price increases could add a further £27,500 to the Park's income. (see Appendix 3: Staunton Country Park Pricing Structure).

9. Recommendation:

- That the JMC approves the content of this report.
- That the JMC approves the suggested price increases.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Equality objectives are not considered to be adversely affected by the proposals in this report.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

The proposals in this report are not considered to have any direct impact on the prevention of crime.

3. Climate Change:

How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

There are no proposals within the report which will impact on our carbon footprint/energy consumption.

How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

There are no proposals within the report which will impact on our need to adapt to climate change.