

Report

Committee/Panel:	SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK
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1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to inform members of the Joint Management Committee on performance and activities at Staunton since the meeting on Thursday 21 March 2013.
- 1.2. In addition this is an opportunity to welcome new Members to the Committee and propose options for the structure and themes for future meetings.

2. Contextual Information

2.1. Team Updates

The following are summaries provided by each Team Leader.

2.2. Administration Team (Sarah Hardy)

Financial Audit

Staunton was recently visited by the Internal Auditors for a review on our finances, they covered income and banking, petty cash, procurement, P card and invoicing. New procedures had been put in place for cashing up and the procurement and generally our processes are working well. They will submit their report for us to follow up.

Line management

Following some changes in the Admin team; Sally Gascoigne (Senior Area Admin Officer) now line manages Sarah, with an overall support of the Admin team. Alexandra Hansler will now take shared responsibility cashing up and banking.

2.3. Ranger Team (Adam Maskill)

The Ranger Team have been hard at work preparing Leigh Park Gardens for the forthcoming Green Flag judging on 10 July. This included repairing potholed sections of path around the back of the Lake and on the Avenue.

An Angling Committee has been formed with a view to them being able to carry out minor works independently and also raise funds in other ways to invest back into the lake. The lake will be netted by Sparsholt College in the autumn to find out what fish are actually in there; this will enable us to make decisions on restocking or destocking. This will be combined with habitat improvement works such as building 'floating islands' from gabion cages. These provide shelter for juvenile fish and encourage the growth of aquatic vegetation. These can be constructed by the anglers and placed in agreed locations around the Lake. These works are discussed in further detail in the forthcoming SCP Lake Management Plan 2013-2018. This has been written by Adam Maskill with input from the Committee, regular member meetings and the Environment Agency. It aims to provide a framework to ensure the sustainable management of the lake, so that it encourages current members to renew their membership as well as attracting new members.

2.4. Operations Team (Steve Jenner)

Health and safety Audit

Nick Howell, Senior Risk Advisor for CCBS audited the site on 19 June. Many of the improvement actions from the last audit have been implemented.

Fire Audit and Business Continuity Planning

The Park has recently been audited on these topics. There are the following outstanding actions resulting from the fire audit:

- Develop an action plan following the review of the fire risk assessment.
- Set a deadline for the return of staff training e-learning.
- Identify and train deputies to assist with fire safety system testing.
- Develop Health and Safety information for learning support groups

Fire Extinguisher Training

In March 2013 staff attended training sessions in the correct and safe use of fire extinguishers.

Ladder Training

The caretaker support services team ran a ladder training course at Staunton, but there is still a large number of staff on site that need training so another course will need to be held.

SITA work project

The supported volunteer scheme has been awarded SITA funding to make improvements to some paths around the entrance of the site. The funding will pay

for the improvements to the paths and tools for the work along with training for the volunteers. The work will continue throughout the year.

2.5. Education & Community Team (Gemma Summerfield)

Formal Education

Windows into the Past

Almost 200 children from 6 local schools have attended celebration assemblies at Staunton. An unveiling is scheduled for the summer holidays to which the JMC will be invited.

TPS Animal Care Course

The 2nd Year Course group has completed their City and Guilds Level 1 Animal Care Course - all 8 students are expected to pass, with two hoping to achieve a merit and two more distinctions.

The Petersfield School have confirmed they would like to bring a new group of students in September.

Highbury College

Discussions have taken place between Highbury College and Staunton to see if they are able to deliver their Animal Care course at Staunton. The relocation will be phased from September with students coming on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

STAG (Gifted & Talented programme)

The STAG programme continues for its eighth successful year and has been attended by over 200 children from 6 local schools. Currently we are arranging a review with Gifted and Talented School Coordinators to develop the programme next year.

Portsmouth Water

Gemma Summerfield has been working with designers at Portsmouth Water to create an A4 flyer to promote Water is Life sessions at the Park for school groups. This will help us meet the targets for our Water is Life programme in Partnership with Portsmouth Water. The current partnership agreement ends in August 2013 so discussions are taking place to develop the service for the next three year agreement.

Informal Education

Holiday Activities

The May Half term saw a successful Bug Bonanza. The Education Team are looking to recruit two activity leaders to replace those who have gone off to university or found full time employment.

Volunteers and Community

Volunteer Scheme

The Education Team are working on developing the Volunteer Scheme at Staunton. This includes bringing together the team of volunteers already helping at the Park and looking at tasks and areas they work in. There are approximately 30 active mainstream volunteers who help out in different teams, plus a minimum 15 supported volunteers each day.

Staunton Festival

A Staunton Festival Education Group has been established with teachers, Councillors and interested parties. The theme is to demonstrate what schools do to promote green messages. We are working with local schools to make scarecrows from recycled materials to display at the festival. In addition there will be displays by schools to show how they help save energy, water and recycle.

Project & Partnership Work

Victorian Coach House (VCH)

Caterpillar Craft and Beacon Community Partnership will be occupying the Coach House for 2013. Caterpillar Craft provide a range of pre-school sessions, offer parties (catering and parking to Staunton) and craft fayres.

Beacon Community Partnership

A project co-ordinator 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 development of handmade traditional crafts and more fresh, garden produce.

The Beacon Community Partnership is in the final 6 months of its current agreement. It is suggested that a presentation should be made to the JMC to explain this innovative scheme as well as input into the future direction.

2.6. Farm Team (Adrian McKay)

Following the wettest winter ever known, the spring/summer has been slow to get off the mark.

Sheep

During lambing this year there were no incidences of SBV, but one of the rams proved to be infertile. Our lambing percentage was 1.61 lambs per ewe which seems to be about on a par with most non intensive farms this year. The first lambs hopefully should be ready for the shop/market by the end of the June

Goats

The kidding season started off very well, until a fox decided that our kids would make a tasty snack. We lost 2 kids, 1 lamb, 2 rabbits and 13 ducks before the problem was resolved.

Cows

The cows started calving in May and are still doing so at the moment. 11 heifers and 2 bull calves having been born so far.

The new TB regime has now come into force with Hampshire now on pre-movement testing, which means we have to test our cattle before we can move them onto Portsmouth Water land. Obviously this has a cost to the Park in time and financially will mean an extra vets bill of approx. £560 per group test, so movements will have to be kept to a minimum. We have applied for dispensation on various grounds and will have to wait and see if this is granted.

Equines

Rose our Shire horse mare has had a filly foal. It has been named Chloe by the children of Front Lawn School after a former pupil. Rose has been confirmed in foal again.

Various

We have had chicks and ducklings born, along with rabbits and guinea pigs and we are expecting more for the summer holidays.

2.7. Visitor Centre Team (Jenny Chivers)

A very good May plus half term which gave us 341 new members, not counting renewals. Membership took £16,951.59 plus the takings from d/debit. Retail took a good £14,411.55. Reception staff are looking forward to a good summer.

Jenny Chivers has made the difficult decision to retire at the end of September. After 20 years dedicated to the Park she will be greatly missed, but has left her team and area in a good position moving forward.

2.8. Garden Team (Chris Bailey)

The central track through the Walled Garden has been replanted with drought tolerant herbaceous perennials which will also increase the longevity of season. Following the coldest March since 1962, 50% of the Walled Garden decorative beds have been replanted with low maintenance ground cover shrubs. Rotten timber edging boards in the Walled Garden have been replaced and an observational bee hive has been installed.

In the Tropical Lily Pool, *Victoria cruziana* is established and growing well. Two Vietnamese lilies (*Eurayale ferox*) have been planted and the Sacred Lotus is growing (*Nelumbo nucifera*).

The Garden Teams late evening opening of plant retail sales was held every Wednesday throughout May. There are future plans to specifically market this to Members with a guest "celebrity auctioneer".

There are also plans for talks and tours to pensioners group and strengthen links with the Chinese community through HCC & Gareth Siu, Community Engagement Officer.

There was an initial meeting on 12 June 2013 with business owner Andrew Gadsden (All About Tea) to get a tea event at Staunton to inform on History of Staunton, China, Earl Grey, talks, tours and tea tasting plus production in conjunction with Portsmouth Water. The idea is to make Staunton synonymous with tea! There are also plans to cultivate *Camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis*.

Chris Bailey will be contacting Fyffes bananas in commercial docks Portsmouth to discuss sponsorship for the Tropical Butterfly Zone.

2.9 Events

The Staunton Festival (20th & 21st July) is replacing the Hampshire Water event this year. It remains an external event, organised by committee and coordinated by Lulu Bowerman, but with strong support from Park staff and volunteers. The aim is to provide a Family Fun-day with messages on healthy, outdoor and green lifestyles.

This year the event will also incorporate Staunton Live on the Sunday afternoon in order to minimise expenditure and maximise resources. More information is available on the event website <http://www.stauntonfestival.co.uk/>

3. Finance

- 3.1. The budget for 2013/14 is currently being reviewed, in light of known changes since the budget was set, with the intention of reducing costs further. Maximisation of income generation is also required to ensure a surplus is achieved in 2013/14 to reduce the current reserve deficit.
- 3.2. The original budget for 2013/14 indicates a contribution to reserves of £32,670. Every effort will be made to meet and surpass this figure. To ensure that all areas of the Park contribute to this aim, regular budget monitoring is essential and will need to be completed by all of the team on a monthly basis.

4. Performance

4.1. Visitor Figures

2012/13 saw record number of visits to the Payzone - 140,700. The first quarter of 2013/2014 has seen increased figures and the trend appears to be continuing.

Visitors to the Country Park free area (Leigh Park Gardens) are currently not being recorded but are estimated at 180,000 per year based on previous records. Use of car park as a measurement indicates that £20,071.65 was received from those paying to park but are not entering the payzone. This would not include local users and others not driving to site.

4.2. Membership

Visitor numbers are higher this year to date, but a significantly higher number of these are membership visits. Whilst the weather plays a big part in the success of the Park each year, the annual increases in memberships can be seen to be reducing the Park's income. Memberships increase certainty of income and negate some of the risk of bad weather, but may potentially also limit the scope to benefit from good weather if likely visitors have already taken out membership as well as effecting secondary spend growth.

A full analysis of the 'true cost' of the Membership Scheme is being undertaken over 6 months from June to December.

Staunton Membership Revenue & Numbers 2012/13

Membership

Membership Type	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Revenue
Individual Annual Membership	102	119	87	87	91	97	95	59	17	80	72	149	1055	£20,573
Joint Annual Membership	124	96	56	70	110	60	65	27	43	54	86	124	915	£32,483
Annual Angling Membership	290	246	178	154	238	196	156	102	82	162	272	418	2494	£59,233
Culture All Pass	9	2	5	6	4	6	3	0	2	0	0	8	45	£1,890
Total Members	683	567	428	389	541	413	355	216	172	334	854	803	5755	£165,695

Staunton Membership Revenue & Numbers 2013/14

Membership

Membership Type	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Revenue
Individual Annual Membership	169	150											319	£6,221
Double Individual Annual Membership	52	58											110	£5,831
Joint Annual Membership	186	113											299	£10,615
Annual Angling Membership	508	390											898	£21,328
Culture All Pass	4	7											11	£462
Total Members	1075	920	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1995	£57,880

Education Figures

There were 11,069 schools visitors in the previous financial year, including over a third from member education groups. The current education figures are looking good, with a record 1557 visits in May.

4.3. Volunteer Hours

A total of 8674 volunteer days have been achieved in last financial year. Most of these can be attributed to our Beacon volunteers, all of whom have a learning difficulty or disability.

5. Other key issues

5.1.1 The Park has a new temporary Manager. This arrangement is planned to continue until 1 December 2013 whilst the current structure is reviewed. It is anticipated that following the review an external recruitment process will occur to recruit a new Park Manager.

5.1.2 Marketing

Sam Holly's marketing role has been moved to the Central Marketing team. This was to ensure that Staunton and Queen Elizabeth Country Parks received a greater share of the central personnel and technical resource. All marketing is managed centrally and this means that all key tasks are included in an annual design framework that covers print, design and advertisements. Other tasks such as social media, website and vouchers schemes will be undertaken by site staff in liaison with the Central Marketing team.

6. Future direction

6.1. Business Development Plan

Business Development Plans are being written for all Country Parks. There have been two workshops at Staunton with all staff. The first draft will be completed by early August and this will be put out for consideration by stakeholders.

The Business Development Plan is the first stage of considering the future direction of Staunton, deciding its unique selling point and vision. The principle aim is to connect Leigh Park Garden and the payzone; in recent history two separate entities.

Action points will arise from the Plan and thus enable staff and the partnership to understand the rationale for certain projects being developed.

6.2. As there are new Members to the JMC, alongside the Park staff changes and restructure, it is suggested that the Members consider the format for future meetings.

6.3. Presentations or themes could be agreed and planned for the remainder of the meetings. This could also incorporate an optional tour or behind the scenes, led by relevant staff, to highlight areas for development, recent achievements or issues.

7. Recommendation

7.1. That the JMC approves the report.