

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Committee:</b>	SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK
<b>Date:</b>	12 December 2013
<b>Title:</b>	Park Manager's Report
<b>Reference:</b>	5391
<b>Report From:</b>	Kerry Bailey

**Contact name:** Kerry Bailey

**Tel:** 023 9245 3405

**Email:** kerry.bailey@hants.gov.uk

#### 1. Summary

The purpose of this paper is to inform members of the Joint Management Committee on performance and activities at Staunton since the previous meeting on 23 September 2013.

#### 2. Contextual Information

##### 2.1. Team Updates

The following are unedited summaries provided by each Team Leader.

##### 2.2. Administration Team (Sarah Hardy)

Authority to recruit has been agreed for a Senior Administration Assistant role, to replace Alexandra Hansler who left in October. This is a one year contract.

##### 2.3. Ranger Team (Steve Peach)

The Ranger Team is now being managed as part of a larger Queen Elizabeth /Staunton Country Parks Ranger Team led by a Senior Ranger. This Senior Ranger role is currently being undertaken by Steve Peach, an experienced Ranger from QE Country Park.

This change will create the capacity to target resources more efficiently in terms of equipment and staffing. As well as a more collaborative approach to the work, rangers will be given specific areas of responsibility and encouraged to develop new projects.

There is a challenging programme of work this autumn/winter. The emphasis will be on completing essential maintenance and repairs, undertaking the management required under our Higher Level Stewardship and English Woodland Grant Schemes and looking for ways to improve the overall visitor experience. The Ranger Team has been busy inspecting and making safe trees blown over during the recent stormy weather; they have also started on tree management in a number of places.

The Team have started a programme of vegetation clearance off fence lines, around the lake, paths and tracks. The Rangers also contributed to the Halloween activities.

The Park is still awaiting a visit from a County Council expert who will advise on the remedial works required to address the falling water levels at the lake.

The Rangers have been involved in a number of meetings with user groups, including the angling clubs and access group and continue to work with a variety of volunteers. The team are keen to increase the opportunities for people to become involved in the work of the Rangers.

Key targets for the next few months will be to complete the winter work programme, improve the overall planning process through the implementation of CMSi (Countryside Management System) and to develop a more coherent approach to surveying and monitoring.

#### **2.4. Operations Team (Steve Jenner)**

##### **Health & Safety Audit**

The priority 1 deadline for actions was 12 November 2013. The team worked hard to complete the actions on various subjects ranging from first aid, fire, manual handling and working at height to PPE, electricity and asbestos. Once signed off the team will move to Priority 2 actions which are due in February 2014.

##### **Accident & Incident Statistics**

Staunton Country Park returned over 30% of the countryside service accident reports for the period July – September 2013. This does not mean that the Park is particularly unsafe, just that the Park has been very busy with visitors and has a good reporting regime. The occurrences were made up of 8 injuries, 2 pre-existing medical conditions and 1 road traffic accident. They were for 11 members of the public and 3 members of staff.

##### **Policies & Procedures**

The new staff handbook has been circulated to team leaders for review and is now being edited ready to be given to all staff at their next 1:1 meeting. It is envisaged that by Christmas all staff will have received a copy in time to implement any changes to procedures in the New Year. The handbook will also be coupled with an induction form to be signed by staff.

### **Maintenance Projects**

HCC access team are currently completing improvements to the ramp and steps on the farm from the top level to the courtyard. The work will take one week to re-instate the steps, handrails and improve the gradient of the ramp.

Grubb and Banks have been awarded the contract to repair the wall in Storey Gardens and install extra piers around the exterior wall. They will be replacing the previous company who went out of business. This is a large job that will continue throughout the winter.

### **Maintenance general**

The period from half term to Christmas has been used to get lots of little jobs completed whilst the Park has fewer visitors. The team will be working with HCC and Emcor to complete winter jobs such as drainage and guttering and any additional repairs required.

## **2.5. Education & Community Team (Gemma Summerfield)**

### **Formal Education**

#### Education Visits

Education visits are on track with the number of bookings from last year. Education membership renewals are coming in as schools book their visits. A promotion will go out to Portsmouth Schools to join in the Education Membership.

#### Portsmouth Water Partnership

The final copy of a new Portsmouth Water Partnership Agreement which outlines objectives for both Partners over the next three years has been drawn up and is waiting to be approved by HCC legal team and Portsmouth Water Board members. Recent projects have included a new Toddler Trail to be launched in the New Year, the redesigning and printing of the Water Activity Pack with a promotional poster, plus a new A5 activity booklet promoting the water efficiency message.

#### Windows into the Past – the next stage

The final report and funding will be complete by Christmas. The next stage will be to obtain funding to replace all remaining windows with stained glass ones. Ideas have been put forward for corporate sponsorship, memorials and another school project. Portsmouth Water is interested in sponsoring a window in the Gothic Library.

#### Animal Care Course

The new academic year is going well with two groups of ten students from The Petersfield School coming to the Park every Tuesday and Thursday. A new Teaching Assistant has started who will support the students and Staunton tutor, Jo Edney.

### Highbury College

Discussions are taking place with Highbury College to relocate their Animal Care courses to the Park. This would mean approximately 20 students helping on the farm each day and include rehousing their small animals and the use of the conference room three days a week.

### **Informal Education**

#### Halloween

Halloween went well despite the inclement weather with the crafts and face painting being popular.

Education is set to make a small profit on holiday activities for 2013.

Gemma is currently in the process of recruiting an activity leader to replace recent leavers – the new post to start at Christmas.

#### Christmas

With Sam Holly on maternity leave and a change of role, Gemma Summerfield has organised the Christmas event this year.

The format will be a craft in the Elves Workshop, followed by the Toy Testing Area and meeting Santa in the back area of the Tearooms.

Tickets went on sale just before half term, priced at £8.50 for under 3's and £9.50 for over 3's. Pre-booked adult tickets also include a voucher for a free cup of tea or filter coffee from the Tearooms. Bookings are going well and the event is being promoted throughout the Park and the community.

#### 'Short Breaks' Funding

An application for £5,500 has been submitted to continue the family themed days for children with disabilities for 2014. The bid also included funding for an evacuation chair, plus associated training, to enable access to the Garrett Room.

### **Volunteers and Community**

#### Volunteer Scheme

Three new education volunteers have been recruited, who are keen to assist the Education Team with school visits, prepping for the holidays and taking on the maintenance of the Naturalist Garden. The Education Team are looking to recruit volunteers for other areas of the Park.

#### **2.6. Farm Team (Adrian McKay)**

The purchase of another Suffolk ram was arranged with Peter Rycroft of Farnham, a well respected breeder, and this enables us to improve the quality of lambs.

The young alpacas and llama have been sold or swapped with Dunreith alpacas a local alpaca walking company.

The sale of the shire filly and longhorn bull calves will take place at the beginning of December after TB testing of the calves.

Sales of beef and lamb have gone well, with pork being arranged for December.

The new lambing building will be open from mid December.

A large amount of fencing work is being carried out on the water company land to prevent animals escaping.

## **2.7. Visitor Services (Tim Speller)**

### **Chinese Project**

The project group had a visit to the Hampshire Record Office in October and saw a wide range of interesting items relevant to the Park's Chinese links including volumes one and three of Staunton's original visit to China. This document is in a library store in Eastleigh and has a current value of £18K.

Contact has been made with Ms Susan Tam the manager of the Hong Kong Botanical and Zoological Gardens with a view to sharing information and subsequent twinning. The site is located at the end of 'Staunton Street in Hong Kong.

A provisional date for a Tea Festival has been set for June 2014 subject to some start up funds being sourced. Initial contact has been made with the Heritage Lottery and the next stage is to submit an 'expression of interest' form to see if the project is suitable.

### **Access Group**

The group has continued to grow and to focus on access in and around Leigh Park Gardens (LPPG). A £10K funding bid has been submitted to the County under the Olympic Legacy initiative. If successful it would allow existing plans to be put in place for a printed hard copy map of LPG together with map-boards at key entrance points. Additionally, the three walking trails would be re-vamped and an additional circular cycling route added.

Separately, the option for a new access path from Bitterne Park to LPG was progressing well. Meetings have been held involving Councillors Weeks and Cousins, the Leigh Park Residents' Representative and the Groundwork Trust. The Hermitage Stream Heritage Lottery Project, which is run by Groundwork, may be able to help with funding and a total cost of approximately £25K is projected. Last year the Group ran a £13K project to upgrade the Staunton Way where it passes through Havant Thicket and LPG. Minor improvements to surfacing and signage have continued along this route.

### **Angling Group**

The two clubs continue to develop their working relationship. The fishing has improved markedly with the rain and a rise in the water levels. The volunteers have been growing water weed of various varieties and this will be used to replant areas around the lake. The new 5 year Management Plan has been circulated to all members for comments and winter work projects are about to start. The bailiffs have all signed up to a Code of Conduct and are making an impact on anti-social behaviour (both to visitors and fish stocks) and on income.

Ticket sales this year are up with total income at £3,800 against an annual target of £3,500.

### **Reception/Retail Team**

Following the retirement of long term shop manager, Jenny Chivers, the reception team has been restructured, with Jacqui Hammond taking over as Team Leader for a 6 month period. Jacqui has been at Staunton for a year and has previously worked at the Havant and Petersfield Museums. Carol Stephens is also acting up as team supervisor. There is much to be done with the new team and projects currently being worked on include linking the retail side of Staunton's business with the catering through the EPOS software on the tills.

### **2.8. Garden Team (Chris Bailey)**

The first plant auction was a good success with Brian Kiss as Guest Auctioneer. Although only 20 people attended £450 was raised during the 2 ½ hours. This was a really positive pilot and there are plans for future seasonal auctions with more emphasis on the expertise of the team as part of the lots.

Jobs for the team at this time of year include the annual maintenance of the Lily Pool, planting to enhance the new barn, planning and ordering for 2014, re-planting central strip of the Walled Garden with sweet briar rose hedge, re-planting the Bow Wall and transplanting the cut flower bed collection.

Access improvements to the Walled Garden are now in place. These are push-button automated doors to the Tropical Stove House and slopes from the Walled Garden to the West Garden.

Changes within the Walled Garden will include replanting existing herb beds, creating a traditional Chinese herbal plant area with associated interpretation and establishing a Regency Rose Garden. To demonstrate the significant and historical Chinese connection between Staunton and the Orient this feature will aim to cultivate roses to an introduction date up to, and including, 1833. This is the year Sir George Staunton's rose garden was improved from Calvert in Northern France.

Staunton has subscribed to The Historic Roses Group and it is intended to invite Members to the Park to outlay the plans and tap into a wealth of knowledge to enable an accurate representation of a historical Regency Rose Garden.

### **3. Staff**

Steve Peach has joined us as Acting Senior Ranger, a 6 month role that, for the first time, enables the Park to work with a team structure that fully incorporates the changes of the restructure that took place in July 2012.

### **4. Finance**

4.1. Separate report attached. The figures are positive but some accuracy maybe being lost if the revised budget has not been set by budget holders effectively. To monitor this, the Administration Officer will meet with Team Leaders every month to review spending and projected income. It is hoped

that through this process all will become more adept at budget management and produce better forecasts from the new financial year.

## **5. Performance**

### **5.1. Visitor Figures**

See Appendix 1. Visitor figures have continued to increase on last year's record numbers for the same period.

### **5.2. Membership**

See Appendix 2.

Wedderburn, who maintain the EPOS till system, are currently helping us look into improving the way that the Membership scheme can be managed.

### **5.3. Performance Quarter 2**

See Appendix 3 for performance, including visitor feedback and volunteer participation for 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter. Appendix 4 shows comparison figures for Parks and Sites across the Countryside Service.

## **6. Development**

6.1. The Staff Handbook will be given to every member of the team and a full induction completed in groups by January 2014. All new staff will receive this induction and it will be reviewed and developed as required. This will enable Team Leaders to provide a consistent message on behaviour, customer service and health and safety to all members of the team.

6.2. Ian Limb, HR Manager for Portsmouth Water, has agreed to continue as Chairman for the Stakeholders group. The next meeting will take place mid January 2014. Each stakeholder organisation written in the constitution will be invited and reminded that they are signed up to this agreement. They will also be asked to propose relevant others to include. The agenda for the meeting will be to define the purpose and role of the group, frequency of meetings and how to encourage a wider input.

## **7. Other Key Matters**

7.1. Beacon Community Partnership are currently staffing the cabin every weekday morning to relieve pressure on the Visitor Centre team. They have agreed to manage the plant sales area and grow the majority of vegetable produce to supply the cabin and tearooms in 2014.

7.2. The Park Manager had met with the police and the family of the girl who passed away in the car accident in May 2013 to discuss the removal of the roadside tributes. The suggestion that the Park would provide a bench overlooking the lake that the family can add a plaque to has been accepted gratefully as it would provide a much nicer and safer location than the

roadside. It has been agreed that the family may leave a small floral tribute, if desired, on a very few special occasions but that items such as bird-boxes could be added, in liaison with Park staff.

7.3. The following update has been provided by Portsmouth Water regarding the Winter Storage Reservoir:

*Many of you will already be aware that we published our Statement of Response and draft final Water Resource Management Plan earlier this week, following on from the public consultation. The following news update will shortly be added to the Havant Thicket Reservoir website.*

*“The Portsmouth Water draft final Water Resource Management Plan, was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 6 November 2013, following the public consultation process which took place earlier this year. The updated plan indicates that Portsmouth Water will not have a supply deficit in the next 25 years and as a result the Havant Thicket Reservoir is not included in the draft final plan. Portsmouth Water remains confident that the reservoir could still be part of a regional solution to water shortages in the South East. Unfortunately the adjacent water companies have only requested that Portsmouth Water provide the following amounts of water and these volumes can be met by the Company from existing resources. As a result the need for the Havant Thicket Reservoir has not been triggered.*

*Southern Water – 10 Ml/day from 2017 rising to 15 Ml/day in 2021  
South East Water – 10 Ml/day from 2039*

*The Water Resource Management Plan is reviewed every 5 years. Portsmouth Water will continue to work with the Water Resources in the South East Group (which comprises the Environment Agency and all water companies in the SE) to promote the benefits of the Havant Thicket Reservoir as a potential new regional water resource. As a result the timescales for the reservoir remain uncertain.*

*You can find more information on the Statement of Response and updated WRMP at:  
<http://www.portsmouthwater.co.uk/news/default2.aspx?id=10490>*

## **8. Recommendation**

That the Committee approves the content of the report.

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

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

*NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.*

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

**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.)**

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

1.1.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

2.1.

### **3. Climate Change:**

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
  
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?