

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK
Date:	6 February 2014
Title:	Park Manager's Report
Reference:	5547
Report From:	Kerry Bailey

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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 previous meeting on 12th December 2013.

2. Contextual Information

2.1. Team Updates

The following are summaries provided by each Team Leader.

2.2. Administration Team (Sarah Hardy)

An advert has been placed for the one year fixed term Senior Administration Assistant, a role supporting the office, visitor centre and management staff.

See appendix 1 for social media reviews, received over the Festive period, compiled by the administration team.

2.3. Ranger Team (Steve Peach)

The main focus for the Ranger Team over the last few months has been undertaking woodland management work as directed by our HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) and EWGS (English Woodland Grant Scheme) agreements. This has involved the Team clearing scrub and trees from Thicket Lawn as well as starting some thinning work in other areas of the woodland estate. The Team has been supported in this by Volunteers and also some of the Ranger Team from QE Country Park.

The weather has had a major influence on the work programme with some areas of the Park being too wet to undertake the planned work. The Team have had to deal with a number of small trees that have succumbed to the wind, but the main burden on their time is the safety checking and tidying up that has to be carried out, after each bout of extreme weather.

The key focus for manual work over the coming months will be the continuation of 'Agreements' woodland management work as well as keeping up to date with the on going maintenance and general improvements.

One of the major issues for the Team has been the condition of the Staunton Lake. There have been particular concerns over water levels. The Ranger Team will be meeting with HCC Engineers to discuss possible solutions and the Rangers will also be implementing a system of regular monitoring of water levels.

There are also plans for Sparsholt College to carry out an assessment of fish in the Lake using the electro-fishing catch and release method; the Rangers have also been tasked with carrying out more research into the historic water catchment of the Lake. This should help us to put together an action plan that will allow us to better maintain the Lake and facilitate all needs of all those who currently enjoy it.

Other key tasks for the coming months include creating more opportunities for Volunteers to become involved in Ranger work, setting up wildlife monitoring programmes, developing ideas to increase visitor numbers and income and improving the overall efficiency of the Ranger Team through the implementation and use of the CMSi (Conservation Management System).

2.4. Operations Team (Steve Jenner)

Health & Safety

The priority 1 deadline for actions has passed and all actions have been signed off. The team must now move on to priority 2 deadlines which are set for completion in the middle of February. There are only 19 priority 2 actions compared with over 60 in the first stage.

Hampshire County Council have recently reviewed their policy surrounding Legionella for all premises; the business park manager and operations officer recently attended a training session on the new policy. The new procedure will allow members of staff without technical knowledge of water systems to follow the risk assessment process and determine if further checks are required dependant on the type of system in a building and also the person that uses the area and whether they are vulnerable to the risk posed by legionella. CCBS's health, safety and risk management team have acknowledged that the need to assess each and every building on site is an arduous task for a complex facility such as Staunton and have offered additional support. A member of the team will be spending the day at Staunton in January and offering support. It is envisaged that all teams take part in the process and hold certain responsibilities for their own areas.

Accident & Incident Statistics

As expected at this time of year the number of accidents reported at Staunton during October, November and December is low. 6 reports were made of which 4 were slips trips and falls and 2 were injuries from animals (barn owl - student and rabbit – member of public). Online investigations were completed for all accidents and one of them required reporting to the HSE.

Policies & Procedures

The new staff handbook has been signed off by the Management team and circulated, with a view to all staff receiving a copy by 11 February via their next scheduled one to one. A new induction form has also been designed to support the handbook; which staff have to sign to say they have received a copy of the handbook and are aware of certain

other important issues such as fire and accident procedures. This form also will be completed by 11th February by all staff.

Maintenance Projects

Unfortunately the improvements to the ramp and stairs on the farm undertaken by the access team from Hampshire were not up to standard. The original design was not thorough enough and left too much interpretation for the contractor. There was also some question surrounding the quality of the finish of the work. Staunton, HCC access team and Dorelbury Ltd are working together to ensure the re-design is both in keeping with the park and fit for purpose. The repair work will take place in January.

Grubb and Banks have begun work to repair Storey Gardens and, despite having some horrid weather conditions to contend with have made great progress. The job is likely to see them into late spring/early summer.

Capital investment has been secured to re-develop the catering areas provided by the Park. The plan is to re-decorate all rooms including the dairy, the granary, Harrison and Stone rooms, whilst fitting out with new furniture and changing lighting and flooring. The project will give a much needed boost to the area whilst providing customers with both more and improved places to eat whilst at Staunton. A working group made up of Staunton and HC3S are currently securing quotes for the work with a completion timescale of Easter 2014.

Maintenance - General

As predicated the site is awash with contractors at the moment, some jobs have been saved for winter to limit the disturbance to customers such as repairs to drain covers, and heating systems and other jobs have arose due to the recent adverse weather. Several gutters have been repaired and a small roof leak. Other jobs completed under the term contractor agreement include security lighting repairs and improvements outside of the visitor centre, blocked drains and catchment pits, broken taps and high level lighting repairs.

2.5. Education & Community Team (Gemma Summerfield)

Formal Education

Education Visits

Education visits are slightly up from last year, with 1,844 education visitors since September, compared to 1,838 visits from September to December in 2012. Bookings are starting to come in for the summer term. Education membership renewals are coming in as schools book their visits, with 20 members so far.

As we approach our peak season the Education team are reviewing the staffing structure with the hope of recruiting a seasonal assistant to help with the additional visits.

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. Portsmouth Water is interested in sponsoring a stained glass window for the Gothic Library.

Animal Care Course

Just before Christmas the 2nd Year Animal Care group from The Petersfield School enjoyed a trip to an equine centre in the New Forest to find out more about horses and handling them. This was joint funded by the students and school.

Highbury College

Following a meeting with Highbury College and County architects, plans are being drawn up to renovate the 'animal hospital' area on the farm to accommodate the animal care students. 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. This would look to start in September 2014. Long term we hope to build on the partnership and invest in a separate Education building on site.

Informal Education

Christmas

Despite the wet weather the Christmas event was a huge success with 766 children visiting Santa over the 7 days, plus an additional 60 children from Front Lawn Primary Academy School. This totalled over £7,000 in profit for the Park. A big thank you to all the staff for their help.

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

Short Breaks Funding

A successful application of £4,980 has been secured to continue the family themed days for children with disabilities for 2014. The events link in with the school holiday themes and include crafts and activities, plus a story teller that all visitors can enjoy.

Volunteer Scheme

As the busy season approaches we will look at recruiting Meet and Greet volunteers to act as information points for visitors around the Park.

2.6. Farm Team (Adrian McKay)

The farm team have created Guides to Good Practice and additional policies to ensure that we are demonstrating the highest levels of animal care associated with our farm and leisure attraction industry. This guidance enables staff to create daily task lists and checks for all animals within the collection and should ensure improvements with regards to time management and planning. This in turn will allow for an increase in encounters and engaging with our visitors.

Rose, the Shire horse, has been undergoing treatment for an abscess. As a result of this she has contracted an infection in the bone and therefore will undergo an operation under local anaesthetic. She will require aftercare for approximately 6 months. This will take an hour per day and will be incorporated into a demonstration and talk for visitors and students. Rose will be kept on hard-standing with deep bedding, either in the new barn or courtyard. She is still in foal, due in April.

The new barn is scheduled to be opened by February half-term but the launch event will take place in April when the majority of lambs are due.

2.7. Garden Team (Chris Bailey)

The preparation of and ordering pupae for the Butterfly House within the Glasshouses is underway. The exhibit will be open for one month plus natural life cycles, from beginning of February to early March. Potential funding streams for sponsorship initiatives such as butterflies and proposed tea related activities continue to be sought.

Throughout January the vegetation and waste debris from the historic Lean-to Glasshouse within the gardens' yard will be removed.

The team have created a design and are currently ordering ready to plant the new Chinese Medicinal Herb beds within the Walled Garden.

The Head Horticulturalist is contacting botanical centres of excellence to source Victoria amazonica, Victoria cruziana or Victoria `Longwood Hybrid` seeds.

Two original Staunton era urns, that were stolen several years ago, have been found and will be returned to the Park.

3. Staff

There has been one addition to the team, a Visitor Services Assistant, Naomi Whelan, who will be working at both Staunton and Queen Elizabeth Country Parks.

All staff must have had their Individual Performance Plan final review completed by February. The team have been selected to participate in the corporate Competency Based Appraisal Pilot, running between April and September 2014. This is a great opportunity to influence how performance management is measured, with clear targets and outcomes that will enable team development.

4. Finance

Separate report attached.

4.1. Visitor Figures

See Appendix 2. Visitor numbers were slightly up for December 2013 at 4,885 total, compared with 4,534 in December 2012.

4.2. Membership

See Appendix 3 for membership figures.

4.3. Performance Quarter 2

See Appendix 4 for performance, including visitor feedback and volunteer participation for 3rd Quarter. Appendix 5 shows comparison figures for Parks and Sites across the Countryside Service. Appendix 1 provides a summary of recent social media feedback.

5. Development

5.1. The first Stakeholders meeting in over a year was held on 15th January 2014. Over 20 individuals and organisations were invited and representatives from Forestry Commission, Highbury College, Havant Day Services, Park Community School, Portsmouth Water and JMC attended; with apologies from several others wishing to participate in the future.

Ian Limb, Portsmouth Water, is the Chairman for this forum and, following a short presentation from the Park's Business Manager, he led an enthusiastic discussion on the role of the group and future format. Actions include producing Terms of

Reference and provision of an additional meeting to inform attendees of the development plans.

- 5.2. A special meeting will be booked in March 2014 for JMC and Stakeholders to receive an update on the Transforming Parks programme from Countryside Service senior management.
- 5.3. Funding has been obtained, by Adam Owen, from the Service's 'Cost of Change' pot to renovate the tearooms. Several of the Staunton team are working with HC3S to select new furniture, themed redecoration, which will include exhibit pieces from the Museum Service, and a children's play corner. In addition, two new areas will be opened as Regency style rooms for a more traditional tearoom dining experience, allowing coach groups and those without children to be targeted. This is scheduled to be opened for Easter 2014.

6. Other Key Matters

- 6.1. Applications for the Green Flag Award have to be submitted by 31st January 2014. Staunton will receive a secret shopper visit as part of this year's assessment following a successful visit by a judge in 2013.
- 6.2. Beacon Community Partnership was selected as a case study for the County's Innovation Station, which aims to foster a culture of innovation, share best practice and continue the momentum already established. A member of the Staunton team, Right to Work and two supported volunteers attended the Innovation Conference and Exhibition on 14th January 2014 to showcase the excellent work being achieved. Their stall was voted as the second best present.

See Appendix 6 for the case study summary that will be added to the Innovation Station website <http://intranet.hants.gov.uk/ccbs/ccbs-ld-innovation.htm#section406555-1>

7. Recommendation(s)

That the Committee approves the content of the report.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

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

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

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>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.)</p>	
<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?