

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Report**

Committee/Panel:	SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK
Date:	25 April 2014
Title:	Park Manager's Report
Reference:	5796
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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 6 February 2014.

2. Contextual Information

2.1. Team Updates

The following are unedited summaries provided by each Team Leader.

2.2. Administration Team (Sarah Hardy)

The new administration assistant, Martha Dombey, commences work early May. She is from Rowland's Castle, keen to walk in every day, and comes to the Park from the County's Hants direct team.

2.3. Ranger Team (Steve Peach)

The poor weather has continued to dominate the work of the Ranger Team. The Team has had to deal with very wet conditions and a number of fallen trees. They have also had to increase the number of inspections carried out on trees in an effort pre-empt at issues and ensure visitor safety.

The Ranger Team has been carrying out woodland management, clearing a series of coups and generally trying keep up the required woodland management tasks. These clearances tasks are important in terms of maintaining the health of the woodland and increasing the overall biodiversity.

The improvement in the weather has resulted in an increase in the numbers of visitors and this has led to an increase in the number of visitor related tasks. The Ranger Team has undertaken trail and facilities checks, which inevitably lead onto a series of remedial tasks to make sure there is compliance with all health and safety requirements.

The Rangers recently took part in an 'away day' where, as well as improving core habitat conservation skills, the Team spent time at Moors Valley Country Park looking at play provision. Some of the ideas at Moors Valley can be adapted to the situation within Staunton Country Park and the Ranger Team will be working with their colleagues at Queen Elizabeth Country Park to see how best we can incorporate these ideas into both Parks.

The Ranger Team would particularly like to acknowledge the continuing help and support of the volunteers, who as always have been a great help. The Team is looking at ways of increasing the number of Volunteer Rangers and creating more collaboration between the Volunteers of Queen Elizabeth and Staunton Country Parks.

The priority for the next few months will be getting the basics right, so the Team will be focusing on signage, paths and other visitors facilities as well as looking at ways of improving the visitor experience to the Country Park.

2.4. Operations Team (Steve Jenner)

The supported volunteers have completed the path work in the car park, funded by Sita. They will now be creating decorative fencing and entrance features to finish the project.

The Beacon Community team have painted lines in the car park in order to encourage visitors to park in designated spaces.

2.5. Education & Community Team (Gemma Summerfield)

Education Visits

After a wet start to the year education visits are down slightly by 15% from last year with approximately 850 children visiting the Park since January. The weather has deterred some school trips, however bookings are coming in for April, May and the summer term and we're confident with the busy summer that we'll have over 10,000 visits this academic year.

Portsmouth Water Partnership

The new Portsmouth Water Partnership Agreement has been agreed and signed for the next three years. We are launching the new Water I Spy Trail at Easter and the new Water Activity Packs have been sent out to all schools within the Portsmouth Water catchment.

Animal Care Course

The Year 2 students have started on their final assessments. The Education Team are investigating offering an additional Animal Care course to schools within the Havant and Waterlooville areas.

Break through @ the Barn

Staunton will be again be the venue for Breakthrough in the Barn on Thursday 22 May. An event for young people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities, offering information, advice & support from local colleges, training providers & agencies.

February Half term and Short Breaks day.

A busy February half term in the Park. The crafts and face-painting proved to be popular as ever. The RSPB and Creative Willow both had stands/activities in the Park over the week. The Happy Bird-day, Short Breaks funded event, was well attended with the visitors enjoying storytelling by Mike O'Leary.

Wildlife Watch Group

Meetings have taken place with perspective volunteer Group Leaders and the new Learning Co-ordinator at HWT to discuss the re launch of the Wildlife Watch Group after the Group Leader left at Christmas. Hopefully this will start running again in May.

Volunteer Scheme

Hampshire County Council has given each Country Park £1,000 toward volunteers. The funding will go towards a willow maintenance course, uniform and tools for the volunteers.

WW1 Project

Staunton is working with students from Park Community School to design and make a commemorative structure to illustrate the enormity of deaths during the 1st World War. The installation will depict the total number of combatants that died during the conflict, and will highlight those from Havant who fought and died. It will also illustrate the number of horse, dog, pigeons and other animals who died as a result of the conflict. The installation will be placed in Staunton Country Park linking in with the Fitzwygram family who were owed the Estate at the time and were horse enthusiasts. There will be a community event on 28 June at the Park to launch the installation which will be in place for the week. Park Community will be creating a DVD and leaflet of information about the project.

Staunton Festival – Education Group

The first meeting has been planned for 1 May to discuss the schools involvement with the Staunton Festival. JMC members welcome to attend.

Pimp your Bike Project

A project run by the Community Police Officers will be running over the Easter Holidays at the Coach House. Children will be working with the police to repair bikes that are then sold to raise money for charity.

2.6. Farm Team (Adrian McKay)

The Farm Manager has been asked to produce a farm improvement plan outlining the standards that need to be met in the farm and how these will be achieved. To be completed by 1 May 2014. This can be shared with JMC at a future meeting.

The Barn has been equipped in preparation for lambing. The route and surrounding landscaping to be completed in April, as well as permanent signage and interpretation. This area will be used for demonstrations, encounters and housing new-borns.

2.7. Garden Team (Chris Bailey)

After some significant difficulties the team have managed to source some lily seeds and these are now growing well.

3. Staff

All staff that are currently on change of contract have been extended until 1 October 2014. The Business Manager is creating a staff structure that will optimise use of the team, ensure all roles are appropriate and incorporate opportunities for apprentices. The structure will be completed by 19 May 2014, ready to be implemented on 1 October.

Due to the significant increase in visitors there is a recruitment drive for casuals who are able to assist at the Visitor Centre, car-park and deliver range of key visitor services. Existing staff have been covering core hours at weekends but due to pay-grades and enhanced pay policies this is not financially viable and therefore a large group of casuals is required.

The Education Officer and Senior Ranger are working with colleagues from Learning & Development to incorporate trainees and apprentices into the structure.

4. Performance

4.1. Visitor Figures

See Appendix 1. The last quarter continued the trend of increased visitors and set another record breaking year with 167196 visitors. By far the greatest increase has been membership and child visits. This has been a tremendous increase and has stretched the capacity of the Parks facilities, particularly the car park provision and increased queuing at the entrance.

4.2. Membership

See Appendix 2 for membership figures. A significant increase with 1,000 extra membership packages sold this financial year, totalling 6727 members.

4.3. Performance Reporting Figures

See Appendix 3 for performance, including visitor feedback and volunteer participation for 4th Quarter, whilst Appendix 4 gives a summary for the year. Appendix 5 shows comparison figures for Parks & Sites across the Countryside Service.

4.4. Finance

Although it is too early to confirm exact figures, it is thought that the projected surplus of £85,607 for 2013/14 reported to the last meeting will be exceeded. The full year end finance report will be presented to the JMC in June.

5. Development

- 5.1. A special meeting was held on Wednesday 12 March 2014 for JMC and Stakeholders to receive an update on the Transforming Parks programme by Adam Owen. It was well attended and stakeholders expressed keen interest in being more involved in future working groups and seeking joint funding. At this stage it is a priority for the team to ensure the basics are in place and lead on planning phases such as interpretation audit, access audit and collecting visitor survey data.
- 5.2. The American Grounds paddock is to be used as an overflow car park from Easter, with the aim of piloting this as an additional entrance point, possibly a Members only access.
- 5.3. The team have been selected to participate in the County's new appraisal pilot. There are 9 members of staff from the whole team who will represent the Countryside Service and included in only 70 from the whole of the CCBS department. The most significant change, from the current Individual Performance Plan, is that staff will be appraised on how they have achieved targets based on a set of competencies. The pilot is over a 6 month period, ending by September 2014, going live across the County from January 2015.
- 5.4. The Visitor Services Manager attended a 2-day training programme and is now a qualified Green Flag Judge. This is a great way to network with other Parks as well gain an insight into the accreditation scheme.
- 5.5. The Marketing Plan for the Park for 2014/15 focuses on targeting Portsmouth and surrounding area. This includes a more strategic approach via The Portsmouth News, increasing the digital advertising using keywords in online stories to trigger Staunton offers. Also there is a campaign using Stagecoach buses, featuring a bus wraparound, bus ticket advertising and discounts for those who come by bus and present their ticket. The aim of this is also to encourage more visitors to travel to the Park by bus in order to decrease parking pressure.

6. 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):	

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:

1.1.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1.

3. Climate Change:

How does what is being proposed 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?