

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Committee/Panel:</b>	Sir George Staunton Country Park Joint Management Committee
<b>Date:</b>	17 October 2014
<b>Title:</b>	Park Manager's Report
<b>Reference:</b>	6148
<b>Report From:</b>	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 23 June 2014.

#### 2. Contextual information

- 2.1. The following are unedited summaries provided by each Team Leader.

##### 2.2. Education & Community Team (Gemma Summerfield)

###### Education Visits

The number of education visits for the academic year 2013 -14, are similar to last year, with over 9,000 visits, of which 4,500 were guided sessions led by the Education Team.

With the new National Curriculum being introduced from September, we hope to see more schools make use of their Education Membership, to explore the seasons in the Park, which is a learning outcome in Science.

###### Education Team

Gemma Summerfield is Acting Education and Community Manager for a six month period, pending advertising and recruitment for the permanent post.

With the joint management of Staunton and Queen Elizabeth Country Park, now is the time to be reviewing the education staffing structure for the sites. The team have reviewed the needs of the Education Service and proposed a team structure that makes the most of the additional resources and staff across both sites.

###### Highbury College Animal Care Course relocation (16 – 19 years)

Over the summer Highbury College have been relocating their staff and animals to Staunton Country Park. From September, Highbury College will be delivering their Animal Care Courses at the Park three days a week. The Agreement includes the hiring of the Garrett Conference Room as a classroom and the animal hospital area to house their

reptiles and small mammals, with the plan to integrate them with the Park's animal collection in the future.

This is a fantastic opportunity for local students to experience a working environment and work with a range of farm animals. The Park benefits from £10,000 per annum for room hire, significant additional practical help on the farm and an opportunity to build on the Highbury Partnership to develop the 14 – 19 education programme.

#### The Petersfield School Animal Care Course (14 - 16 years)

We are pleased that The Petersfield School have agreed to carry on with the ever popular Animal Care Level 1 Course at the Park, taught by Jo Edney. There are now opportunities to progress onto the 14 -16 course alongside Highbury College.

#### Summer Holidays

The Activity Leaders were very busy running the popular crafts and face painting over the summer holidays. The crafts made £1400 profit. The new volunteers were an invaluable help in running the crafts alongside the Activity Leaders.

#### Short Breaks – Disability Family Days

During the summer holidays we ran two Short Breaks Events for children with disabilities and their families. The themes were Summer Celebration and Bees and blooms. Activities included talks by our Bee Keeper, planting seeds to take home, arts and crafts, story telling by Mike O'Leary and Hand to Mouth Theatre. Both events were well attended and enjoyed by the families attending and the general visitors, who listened to the story telling.

#### Volunteer Scheme

Back in June we successfully recruited 8 new volunteers who have been invaluable over the summer helping with crafts, activities, on the farm and general park duties.

We are now working with the outdoor teams to create role profiles for specific team volunteers. The next recruitment drive is planned for November.

### 2.3. Rangers (Steve Peach, Senior Ranger)

Over the last few months the Ranger Team's main focus has been on grass cutting, car park management and ongoing habitat management tasks.

The team have also been busy assisting with events and other visitor management tasks. The Country Park has seen a steady stream of visitors enjoying its pathways, quiet corners and as always the walks around the lake. We have been receiving some good verbal feedback from visitors who have generally been appreciative of the efforts the Ranger Team makes to keep the Park looking in good condition.

As always the Country Park area has benefited from the supported of a loyal band of volunteers, who as well as keeping the litter under control have also been undertaking path side clearance.

There are also volunteers carrying out a butterfly transect within the Country Park and this is adding to our overall biodiversity knowledge of the site.

Some members of the Ranger Team are now trained and certificated to use 360 diggers and dumpers. This training will greatly increase our capacity to undertake small works like ditch maintenance, pathway improvements and other small scale landscape construction projects.

The next few months will see the Ranger Team continuing with grass cutting and topping of some of the larger fields, the removal of areas blackthorn scrub and woodland management.

There are also a number of tasks to be undertaken on the Portsmouth Water land, including dealing with surface issues on a bridle path and cutting back vegetation again alongside bridle paths.

The Ranger Team will also be carrying out a number of joint tasks with their colleagues from Queen Elizabeth Country Park as we continue to develop a whole team approach to our work and find ways of using our collective skills and experience across both sites.

#### 2.4. Marketing (Sam Holly, Marketing Officer)

##### Advertising

Stagecoach campaign has had a great August with 130 vouchers redeemed, 73 in July and 24 in June. This does not factor in the amount of people that might have seen the bus and decided to come this is only people buying tickets from stagecoach.

We are looking into reviewing the advertising plan as numbers are down which could be down to the limited amount of advertising exposure this year. Hope to see an incline going back into Hampshire's top attractions in October and a Families Solent East advert.

##### Signage

It has been agreed that all faded signage will be replaced free of charge from the Sign Shop and hope to be at site at the end of next month. We are also looking into more signage around the park that will up sell our offerings such as the tearooms, membership etc.

##### Social Media

Currently looking into a social media campaign for early next year, which we hope will drive more fans to the page and create a better engagement with our existing fans.

#### 2.5. Farm (Adrian McKay, Senior Farm Ranger)

Over the summer there have been a lot of new arrivals. First to arrive was a llama, followed by an alpaca, then a filly foal followed by another alpaca, all being born during the day time in front of members of the public during the summer holidays. All are now hopefully in young for next summer.

The cows have finished calving with a total of 25 calves, of which the bull calves will be sold at six months of age and some of the heifers being kept as replacements for some of the older cows in the future.

Lamb sales have being going well through Salisbury market.

The team have been joined by Highbury College, which should be of benefit to both party's and hopefully in the future we will be able to use some of the exotics as exhibits on the farm.

### Shire horse (Rose)

Rose has produced a foal for the last three years. This has been carried out with the help from Cotebrook Shire Horse Centre, leaders in the Shire Horse Society, and Matt King, probably the most respected breeders of Shire horses in the world.

All the foals so far have been out of Moorfield Edward, a super Premium stallion of which there are only seven in the world. The foals are now under our Prefix of "Staunton", the first being "Staunton Chloe" with Belle to be registered this year.

The foals are normally weaned off at six months of age and sold to Matt King. The reasons for this are as follows:

- The foals we are breeding are highly regarded by Matt as potential show winners. So much so that he only requests photos of them before buying.
- We do not have the facilities, experience or the trained staff and time to bring these animals to their full potential. This would be a great loss to the Shire horse world.
- The cost of keeping a Shire horse is offset by the sale of the foal, and unless we sell the foals we would not have the room to breed a foal the following year, so removing the visitor experience of seeing a new born foal.

Due to Rose having a bad foot last year, which was caused by an ulcer in the hoof, the decision was made to not put her in foal this year. Hopefully we can continue the breeding programme in the future.

### 2.6. Visitor Services (Tim Speller, Visitor Services Manager)

#### Visitor Centre

Jacqui Hammond, Acting Visitor Services Officer, has decided to step down and return to her post as part-time Visitor Services Assistant. During this time the Visitor Centre has made great progress and she will definitely be missed. The structure will now be adjusted to bring in a replacement as well as to accommodate Laura Laming who is returning from maternity leave and will be overseeing both the QECP and Staunton centres.

#### Membership

Membership sales are doing well and the County is currently reviewing both the site specific schemes and the service wide Culture All Passport scheme.

The angling membership has moved over to a photo-ID system to comply with a request from the Environment Agency.

#### Education & Community

The team is currently being restructured to better cover the needs of both sites. Gemma Summerfield will oversee a team covering events, holiday activities, formal and informal education and volunteers. A new Little Squirrels group will be set up at Staunton to match the success of the three existing days of pre-school sessions at QECP.

All signage will shortly be introduced into the new cafe rooms and throughout the existing eating areas. These major on the history of the estate, the story of tea, dairying and grain.

#### Angling

The two clubs continue to work well together with regular meetings and competitions. The

water levels have been more stable this summer with no emergency pumps required. An extensive survey has been carried out of the water and sediment depths, and the Environment Agency is considering the reintroduction of aquatic weed to the lake after the absence of several years.

#### 2.7. Gardens (Chris Bailey, Head Horticulturalist)

Income generating activities continuing a strong trend with plant & produce sales positive. The team will need to reinvest in additional plant tables as some are no longer viable and are investigating methods to add a greater presence to the Plant Sales area.

With Beacon Community Partnership leading on plant sales the entire Gardens Team will refocus on the core responsibilities of continuing to plan & redevelop areas particularly with strong historical significance to the site.

Traditional Chinese Medicine beds planted, initially with the availability from the trade with further plantings as and when material is ready to order.

Invitations are to be sent to Historic Roses Society members for a meeting, to gauge opinions and feedback knowledge of proposal to create a dedicated Regency Rose Garden within the Walled Garden. In the interim the proposed beds, currently vegetables, will be ornamental plantings following consultation with above group.

Researching and planning the creation of a Fortune Border (Robert Fortune plant collector throughout China, Korea & Japan 1840s).

*Victoria cruziana* (Giant Amazonian Water Lily) is looking great after a considerable search to source reliable quality seed.

Replacing of old fencing adjacent to Golden Jubilee Maze with higher quality close board fencing as greater longevity and less expensive than existing English Hurdles.

Creation and installation of new path (60 tons of material) that now links the `top farm path` with access to the recently constructed `New Barn` and continues halfway along the Stock Border allowing future path construction through existing paddocks.

Following a desire to acquire the `footprint` of the original Leigh Park Mansion (1801-1866) of William Garrett and Sir George Thomas Staunton and the Head Horticulturalist liaising with Southampton University student Alistair Galt we now have information from resistivity (non invasive survey) that confirms the outline of the `First House`. It is hoped that Staunton can plot this and use natural stone, brick or indeed a small hedge to denote this historic aspect of the Park. Individual rooms are also feasible to mark out and the possibility for interpretation is a wonderful opportunity to inform visitors where very little currently exists.

#### 2.8. Beacon Community Partnership (Debbie Lyall, Right To Work Director)

The Beacon Community Partnership group numbers have grown; there are now over 30 people attending as Supported Volunteers daily. The Partnership allows this group of individuals a freedom and independence, that in the main they experience nowhere else in their lives, a senses of responsibility and wellbeing that they deserve and appreciate.

The team have been busy, here are a few examples of what's been achieved during the past wonderfully hot and humid months:

Growing veg, harvesting the produce and presenting it for sale - this is the first year that BCP have had majority responsibility for growing veg at Staunton to sell within the Cabin, the good news to date is that is has done well, achieving a 7% increase on income year on year. In order that we could take on greater planting much preparation work had to be completed on the Beacon site, more beds were created and additional compost bins built. Managing the compost bins alone has been a mammoth task, largely completed by a couple of the brilliant Havant Day Services team who worked for days on end getting the compost turned and sorting the bins in order to create a workable system. There is still not enough space so new raised beds are on order which will significantly increase growing capacity for the coming years.

Much fun was had during the week of painting the parking slots within the main car park. The team got dressed up in white overalls and headed off brushes in hand, looking more like a forensic team than decorators. The work had to be completed early in the day to avoid the hoards of visitors. It appears to have worked with visitors adhering slightly more to the now obvious parking bays.

A lot of hard physical work has been done in and around the new lambing shed, lots of cutting back overgrown brambled areas in order that a new path could be laid, the Garden Team completed the precision work in order that the Beacon group and the Thursday Volunteer group could move the 50 tonnes of heritage gravel. The finished result looks amazing, showing what great team work can achieve.

The team also moved a mountain of woodchip from the car park to the children's play areas to ensure that the area not only remains a safe play area but looks good for the visitors; this was completed early in the summer before the visitor numbers grew.

Now an annual job for the BCP group is trimming the entire perimeter hedge, this takes the team about two weeks to complete but the site looks much smarter once it's complete.

For the first year we prepared and planted many of the planters around the site, ensuring that our visitors are greeted by a colourful display at most points throughout the payzone. The team enjoyed this and loved hearing the positive comments from the visitors as they worked.

These tasks are in addition to the usual work of keeping the gardeners yard clear, litter picking and waste management throughout the park, assisting with all plant growing in the poly-tunnel, preparing animal feed, bramble cutting and helping the rangers to keep the Leigh Park Garden area looking clean and tidy.

### **3. Finance**

3.1. Separate report attached.

### **4. Performance**

4.1. Visitor Figures

See Appendix 1 for figures in comparison to previous years. The team are pleased that total visitors so far meet those set last year, due mostly to April's record-setting number of visits. The total for April to September 2014 is 111465, compared to 106,318 for the same period last year.

Other notable points include the increase in paid children, as forecast due to the reduction of the number of free children within the Membership scheme. However there has been a general increase in children's visits far beyond the 5% budgeted for. The Visitor Centre staff are asking visitors where they heard about the Park from, in order to measure the influence of promotional options, such as 'word of mouth', advertising, social media etc.

#### 4.2. Membership

Appendix 2 provides membership performance.

#### 4.3. BBQ's

There have been 33 BBQs since April 2014. Thirteen of these were in the large American Grounds area. This generated an income of £1,440.00. Expenditure includes the purchase of picnic tables at £1820, but these are used all year round to enhance our numbers for general visitor use, and transferring a portaloos across from the Coach House.

### 5. Other key issues

#### 5.1. Health & Safety Audit

Appendix 3 shows the Parks response following the one year anniversary of the Health & Safety Audit, coordinated by Steve Jenner, Operations Officer.

### 6. Marketing

6.1. Confident that the Park will receive the 37 hours marketing input in return for the financial contribution towards the central marketing team. As a result of this the Marketing Officers are working on priorities set by Park staff, including signage, accreditations and measuring key performance indicators.

6.2. The Park has renewed its full membership to Hampshire Top Attractions and the Business Manager has attended a full meeting at Paultons Park. The subscription fee of £2,300 provides a range of high profile promotional activity as well as the opportunity to network with key attractions. This enables vital information sharing on themes such as events, membership, retail and many more.

### 7. Future direction

7.1. Transforming Parks Programme - the Programme Manager, Stephanie Rogers, has provided the following update for the Countryside Service:

The programme has now moved into the requirements analysis and preparation stage. This means there will be an assessment of what each Park needs to be 'transformed' and how to be ready for this. Whilst a considerable amount of work was completed to produce the business case for the programme, further research and analysis work directly with customers, potential customers and other stakeholders is essential to fully understand what our customers want; and to achieve the benefits of the investment into the Parks. The Programme Team are currently in the process of contracting a consultancy to undertake this work, which is anticipated to start around 1 November 2014. It is expected that the research and analysis work will take around 4-6 months to be completed and will be followed by a period of evaluation. Once this evaluation has

been completed the team can proceed with developing master plans and project plans for the Parks. The master plan will specify what will be done at a Park as part of the transformation programme. It will detail the services and facilities to be offered together with any specific requirements. It will form the brief for each Park project to enable implementation.

7.2. Parks 4 People Workshop - a workshop for Park staff and the County's Historic Architect is taking place on 7<sup>th</sup> October to explore the suitability of the Lottery Fund. This is being led by a Project Manager, Sara Findlay, from within the Countryside Service.

7.3. HC3S – a change in arrangement regarding catering budget management has been made across the Service.

HC3S will pay for labour, direct other costs, food and cash collection. Parks will be responsible for any other costs.

## **8. Conclusion or 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>	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	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.)

Document

Location

None

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

**Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:**

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

This is a regular update report and therefore does not have any direct equalities impact implications. The Country Park complies with all equality legislation.

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

2.1. This is a regular update report and therefore does not have any direct crime and disorder impact implications.

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

3.1. The Country Park supports the natural environment, by the use of recycling where possible and supports the use of natural materials to adapt to climate change.