

**Sir George Staunton Country Park  
Stakeholder Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting  
Held on Tuesday 1st December 2009, at 12:00am,  
in the Garrett Room, Staunton Country Park**

**Present**

**Hampshire County Council**

Cllr. Mrs Fairhurst  
Cllr. Mrs A Buckley  
Cllr. Frank Pearce  
Mr. Phil Halliwell  
Mr Mike Walls

**Local Member**

Mrs Byrom

**East Hampshire District Council**

Cllr Mrs D K Denston

**Havant County Council**

Cllr. M Fairhurst

**Havant Day Services**

Mr. Terry Hart

**Portsmouth Water Company**

Mr I Limb

**Havant Borough Council**

Mr Tony Lee

**Sir George Staunton Country Park**

Mr Lewis Paterson

**1. APOLOGIES**

Cllr. Mrs M Harvey  
Cllr. R. McIntosh  
Cllr Jenny Wride

**2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN.**

Cllr Mrs Fairhurst was nominated by the Forum and was elected as Chairman.  
Cllr Frank Pearce was nominated and elected as Vice Chairman.

**3. MINUTES OF STAKEHOLDER FORUM**

Minutes were discussed and they were agreed by members of the forum.

#### **4. MINUTES OF JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The JMC minutes were discussed and were noted. During the reading of the minutes, the catering facilities at Staunton were discussed and it was noted that a catering sub group had been established.

#### **5. PARK MANAGER'S UPDATE**

The Park Manager updated the Members of the Stakeholder Forum on the developments at Staunton since the previous update presented on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

Staunton continues to see steady growth in visitor numbers and community involvement at or exceeding the levels set within the outline ten year plan. Once again the high standards of service and quality of place have been recognised by external organisations through a number of prestigious awards.

##### **Business**

Due to uncertainty within visitor spend patterns and other budget pressures a number of vacancies are being held at Staunton. Changes which were being considered include introducing Apprenticeship posts which will both enhance training opportunities and create a progression from volunteer or placement through to full time staff. Consideration also being given to refocusing Visitor Services elements of Staunton operations.

This has been particularly successful year for Staunton with a number of accolades and accreditations being received. To date these include;

- *The Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Standard (VAQAS) accreditation*
- *Green Flag Award*
- *Green Heritage Site Award*
- *Britain in Bloom South & South East regional accreditation*

In addition the Staunton Education service has recently been inspected and we are confident that we will receive the coveted Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge in December.

Financial turnover has had a mixed fortunes during the first half of the financial year. General tolls and retail are performing at or above target however membership sales and catering spend have not met their targets. The drop in membership sales is particularly concerning and believed to be due to price sensitivity and the introduction of the Culture All Pass. With this in mind steps are being taken to address any potential shortfalls and careful consideration is being given to enhancing performance during the next twelve months period. Key steps include;

- *the establishment of a sub-group to the Joint Management Committee that is specifically working with the Park Team to address catering issues; and*
- *a review of the Staunton Membership packages in light of dropping sales and increasing competition from the Culture All Pass.*

##### **Recreation**

This summer saw a successful series of events held at Staunton including three Staunton Live! music events; the Havant Borough Council Play Day event; and the Hampshire Water Partnership's Water Festival Event. The combined attendance to these events was approaching 30,000

We continue to see growing recreational use of Leigh Park Gardens with visitor counters recording an increase of 45% (over 28,000 visitors) for the period April to September on 2008.

### **Heritage**

The vinery section of the glasshouse in the walled garden has now been restored and Hampshire architects are currently in the process of bidding for capital monies to restore the Arid House section during 2010.

With the establishment of temporary classroom accommodation on the Leigh Park Nursery Site, partnership working between Staunton, Havant Day Services and Highbury College has moved into a new phase. With an established working base the partnership will soon be positively impacting on the heritage landscape of Staunton. This project aims to create a fully accessible service to the community which provides learning, vocational and life skills opportunities to adults with learning difficulties in partnership with Havant Day Services and Highbury College.

### **Environment**

Following a programme of pathway improvements our woodland management regime continues with timber extraction, hazardous tree surveys and remedial works.

This year has seen, for the first time at Staunton, confirmed sightings of Nightjars within Leigh Park Gardens, testament to the quality of environmental management undertaken by the Team.

### **Education & Our Community**

Educational visits to Staunton continue to rise with the 2009 being the busiest year to date. Group visit figures to the Park are the highest yet with over 7,000 guided education visits in the last academic year.

Our supported volunteer scheme has now been established. This partnership project enables adults with learning difficulties to volunteer at Staunton each week on a range of tasks. As a result of receiving funding from the Learning Disabilities and Development Fund a part-time Supported Volunteer Coordinator has been recruited.

The Education Team is currently preparing an Access to Nature Bid which aims to provide a fully inclusive volunteer scheme for the local and wide community. In addition a series of events will be planned which will include regular community volunteer days, and family/parent & toddler / dads & lads type events.

Funding from Hampshire Learning has been utilised to refit a number of our meeting rooms and provide equipment for use in delivering a range of sessions for adult and family learning. This will include an IT suite, for people seeking Employment, to use to create CV's, complete job applications and gain new skills.

Following the Park Managers report he was asked a number of questions by the Forum:

**Q. Is the Culture All pass more expensive at Staunton than other sites.**

**A. The Park Manager responded** - No, there is one charge of £69 for a four person pass. Passes are available from a number of HCC sites and on-line. The site which sells the Pass retains the money. On-line sales are apparently to be split between sites.

**Q. So if people buy their Pass elsewhere and just visit Staunton do we get a share of the monies?**

**A. The Park Manager responded** - No, this was not the case and was one of his principal causes for concern. In addition when existing members who had purchased their Passes at Staunton were targeted centrally for online sales in future years Staunton would lose this income too.

The Park Manager referred to an earlier slide in his presentation which showed that sales of memberships at Staunton (including Culture All Passes) had dropped from 4000 to 2500 for the period April to October while member visits had only dropped from 15,900 to 15,200 for the same period. Whilst there would undoubtedly have been some drop off in sales due to price sensitivity after last years rise in Staunton Membership cost the fact that members visits had stayed so high was a major concern. The impact on this years budget was significant and would only grow in future years.

Phil Halliwell suggested that Gareth Miller, who deals with the Culture All Pass, should be invited to attend the next Joint Management Committee (JMC) to discuss any issues that have been brought up.

**Q. Have you thought about having a stall at the events selling Staunton Memberships?**

**A.** We do operate an information service and sell memberships during events and will aim to build on this in the future.

**Q. Have we thought about advertising the Park and services including membership over the Christmas period?**

**A.** Yes, we have adverts in the Portsmouth News to advertise it

**Q. Are the Future Jobs Fund posts additional to Staunton's existing establishment posts?**

**A.** Yes the future job fund will add 6 additional posts to our establishment although these will only be for a six month period in line with the scheme.

**Q. How many staff members does that now leave at Staunton?**

**A.** Currently 21 full time staff, but more if you include the non contracted staff. There are seven vacancies at the moment.

**Q. Will there be a sign for promoting the Estate Produce?**

**A.** We currently have a temporary banner, but we are investigating planning permission to have a permanent sign on the Petersfield Road aspect.

**Q. Why have volunteer numbers improve?**

**A.** We went through a period of review with the volunteer scheme so that we could offer a better service. Our new volunteer scheme is better managed and will improve further with the Access to Nature bid. These improvements have meant we can recruit more volunteers and better utilise them.

**Q. Have you thought about asking the customer what they think of our catering facilities?**

**A.** We do utilise customer feedback forms within catering and other sections of our operations. In addition we undertake regular questionnaires and secret shopper surveys.

**Q. Have you thought of selling firewood on the main road to catch the passers by?**

**A.** We are currently able to sell all of the firewood we can produce so the value of a sign at this time would be limited.

**Q. Have we ever approached holiday camps to do trips to Staunton? i.e. Mill Rytte Holiday Camp in Hayling?**

**A.** We have approached them in the past and will do again in the future.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Stakeholder Forum note the content of this report and indicate its support to the Joint Management Committee for;**

- (a) The completion and submission of an Access to Nature bid;**
- (b) The creation of a dedicated Friends of Staunton Group which will have representation at the Stakeholder Forum;**
- (c) The realignment of staff structure to include a layer of Apprenticeship posts within Farm, Gardens and Ranger sections.**

#### **TREASURER'S UPDATE**

Mike Walls updated the members of the forum on the current Finance Situation.

**RESOLVED:**

The Stakeholder Forum note the content of the Report.

#### **6. DATE OF NEXT STAKEHOLDER MEETING**

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 10:00am (Tea and Coffee available from 9:45am)

#### **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman thanked Lewis for all his hard work at Staunton and how greatly Staunton has developed since his arrival. All the members of the forum agreed.

The Chairman requested an update on the recruitment process for the Park Manager and expressed an interest in being part of the recruitment process and interview panel. Phil Halliwell was in agreement.

**RESOLVED:** Cllr Mrs Fairhurst (Chairman JMC & Stakeholder Forum) would be involved in recruitment process and a member of the interview panel for the post of Park Manager at Staunton.