

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.
SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK.
JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.****THURSDAY 29 JULY 2010.****PARK MANAGER'S REPORT.****Contact: Gordon Gardner (Telephone: 023 9245 3405).****1. Introduction**

1.1 Extreme weather condition and poor economic condition were major problems last year. Staunton saw a 9% drop in visitor numbers compared to last year, this then lead to a % drop in income.

1.2 Staunton is reliant on visitor income from ticket sales, catering, gift shop. To help reduce the risk from unforeseen circumstances Staunton needs to diversify it's secondary income streams.

1.3 Conferencing, stronger membership following, exciting events program, fattening beef cattle, cycle hire and out door pursuits is to name but a few income streams which could be more resilient.

2. Business

2.1 With the falling returns from membership we are working on restructuring the membership offer. Rather than the 1 option starting at £25 there will be 3 opportunities to purchase a membership at Staunton. These will start at £19.50 for a individual renewal to £52.50 for a joint annual membership. We will not be continuing with the children's membership, this will now become part of the generous membership package.

2.2 Entrance prices will also change with adult entry increasing to £6.95 and a reduction to the children's price at £2.95. There will also be a concession price taking into account senior citizens and visitors with access issues. Overall more beneficial to purchase the Staunton Membership. Based on last years visitor numbers using the new prices we could have taken £292,000.

2.3 To help drive sells a new EPOS system will soon be arriving at Staunton.

2.4 We are currently working on cleaning up the membership database.

The goal is to remove all out of date information and have a orderly approach to managing input to the database. We currently have around 1800 'live' members. This is worth around £64,000 at the new prices.

2.5 Within the next month Staunton will return to reminding members that their membership is about expire.

2.6 At the same time as making changes to membership we will be introducing direct debit. This will help us have more loyal members and reduce our costs. After an initial opening fee the charges for running a direct debit are minimal, around 50p per membership.

2.7 A strong marketing campaign is in the offering with direct advertising to our current and historical members. The visitor services team will have a refresher course in 'gentle' selling and we will also be introducing 'meeters & greeters' to help promote this great offer.

2.8 There should be no future issues with the Culture All membership as it enhances what we offer. With a new streamlined database we would keep a Culture All member at Staunton.

2.9 To tap into the potential business from fishing licenses this will also be offered to all possible members in the membership literature.

2.10 The tearooms contract with Wings runs out in November, 2010. Staunton is getting £500 a month in rent plus 12.5% on gross income over £65,000.

2.11 It is my understanding that the JMC took a keen interest in the future of where Staunton goes with catering. Could I ask the JMC to help Staunton look for the best solution.

2.12 Conferencing has so far been under utilised. To begin with we will attract the HCC and other councils to use our facilities. Our prices are competitive and we offer a superb location. The administration team will be visiting Hillier Gardens for advise and inspiration.

2.13 Wedding's currently put on hold, most enquiries are put through County Caterers but wouldn't turn down a Wedding if it comes up. Focused will remain on the conference income.

2.14 The gift shop has a good reputation for choosing a range of stock to suit all ages. There could be more creativity in how we merchandise stock. The shop team will be visiting a number of gift shops and visitor attraction to view best practice. A drive to sell more in-house products through the shop.

2.15 Must be careful that in our determination to sale more Staunton products that all teams don't forget to manage the attraction.

2.16 Parking charges could soon apply on a daily basis, members would have a parking permit and paying visitors would get a refund on production of their parking tickets when they paid for a visit. Visitors not visiting the pay zone would have to pay for parking. The suggested charge would be around £2.00 for the day. Parking meters cost around £2000 each. It is difficult estimate the financial benefit from charging for car parking but I believe it has the potential to be over £15,000 per year.

2.17 It is recommended that at this stage the Joint Management Committee confirm and minute its support for this project. This will allow Staunton to arrange for the car parking meters as soon as possible with a view for them to be in place by August.

3. Staff

3.1 With the central budget squeeze started Staunton is using existing staff members to cover and help other departments.

3.2 The administration team will be getting the most out of conferencing, the front of house team will do more administration connected to visitor services. The ranger team will be supporting the gardening team with mowing within the pay zone.

3.3 The future goal is to have a range of staff of different experience and abilities. This could for example in the rangers team be a senior ranger, ranger, assistant and a apprentice. This would allow for more training opportunities and the ability for all staff to gain experience. Also this template is more economically viable.

3.4 One area of concern is the limited cleaning staff. The current team are doing their best to manage a large site. The new operations manager is preparing an overview of the current cleaning regime.

3.5 Welcome to Steve Jenner, Operations Manager. Steve will be responsible for health & safety, liaising with the rest of the team on maintenance issues, the cleaning team and managing contractors.

3.6 As the park manager I will be holding regular meetings with the management team. It is also important that I get the input from all the team what ever position they hold. We had our first team discussion recently, using a SWOT analysis to get the ideas flowing, very successful.

4. Events

4.1 Looking to create an events program worth £150,000 in gross income. Not only would this be an important new income stream it also has a marketing and social media impact as well. There would be four different events streams.

4.2 Exhibitions could utilise the barn between May and the end of October holding good quality painting, craft and textiles. Income would come from either a percentage of sales, site hire or a reliance on a higher footfall to the site.

4.3 Workshops ranging from photography, painting courses, horticultural days and animal husbandry. These courses could be held at the weekend when it shouldn't clash with room hire. Once our reputation for quality has been established then these courses will be over subscribed.

4.4 The local area has proven that paid for events such as plays and the proms are successful. Starting next year there needs to be a real emphasis on income generating events. Staunton would be looking at holding events with a maximum 1000 people.

4.5 Whilst Staunton may not continue to hold quite so many 'free' events out of the pay zone Staunton can use 'free' events as a draw to pull them within the pay zone. These could range from upgrading the children's activities to having a band stand style orchestra. It can also be a way of supporting local amateur dramatics.

4.6 To help this happen Staunton will need an events arena within the pay zone. Courtyard paddock could be simply taken down and that space used for main events.

4.7 Could it be recommended that the Management Committee support the changes to our events program and to creating an arena within the park to hold the larger events

5. Development and Efficiency Gardens

5.1 To fast track the process of where money should be spent to get the maximum impact I have created two groups, one to look at maintenance and efficiency and the other to look at key development projects.

5.2 The teams will be made up of four staff members from a cross section from all the teams. The key principle behind each idea is they either generate income or/and save money. It is important that the teams keep this simple, using the

research project work that has already been carried out to find projects that could have such an impact.

5.3 One project that will be discussed by the development team is the enhancing of the walled garden.

5.4 Also maintenance issues within the farm such as painting fences.

5.5 The farm will be looking at investing in more interesting animals such as wallabies, ostriches and reindeer. This gives Staunton marketing opportunities.

5.6 With the recent water leak costing Staunton a large sum of money an audit of all water pipes will be carried out.

5.7 The Operations manager will be carrying out a feasibility study on how Staunton could reduce its overheads relating to heating, water and energy.

5.8 Staunton will be moving away from hiring transport. Over the long term it will cost us less to service our own machinery and transport. We will also be reducing our vehicle numbers. Last year Staunton had a land rover and a van, this financial year we are testing out relying on one pick-up truck. This will reduce our transport costs by around £5000.

5.9 Lack of water basins and facilities across Staunton & the park. With a focus on hand washing at farm visitor attractions to improve health & safety we are looking at where these new points could be placed. Portsmouth water to promote water efficiency with more promotion around the park.

6. Education & Community

6.1 Portsmouth Water funding project is up for renewal in September. If plan goes ahead Portsmouth Water would like more signage around the park to promote Portsmouth Water. Need to make Portsmouth Water logo more visible, currently on new Welcome Leaflets, Entrance Boards and on Education forms.

6.2 Issues surrounding Education pricing particularly around the local schools membership of £100. This is felt to be far too generous and needs looking at again.

6.3 There is now a chance to take a serious look at education pricing as children's ticket price is reduced.

7. Marketing

7.1 Looking for a new logo but will gradually build it into the new shape. Need signs with more impact on the borders of Staunton. Also more visible sign to go

on the front gates and also along the fences. There is no feeling of arrival at Staunton.

7.1 In a view to reduce marketing costs Staunton will be linking with other attraction to create a “Best of Hampshire’s Countryside” voucher. Key principle behind this is to spread our name amongst other like minded visitors from other attractions. Staunton will manage this project therefore having control over who takes part.

7.2 Using the example from Hillier Gardens. Hillier’s has complete control over their website only using HCC for technical support. It is key that Staunton staff edit the website on a daily basis so that it remains interesting and fresh.

7.3 We have launched our Twitter, Facebook and Flickr pages. Already generating a lot of interest.

Recommendation:

- i) That the JMC note the content of this report.

Proposed Agenda Items – JMC

Now - Liz	JMC
Pricing	Parking
Membership	Events
	Marketing
	Catering

Section 100 D – Local Government Act 1972 – background papers

The following documents disclose facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. NB this list excluded:

- 1. Published works.
- 2. Documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.

TITLE _____ FILE _____

None _____ *