

# Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee

## Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	Dawn Hudd - Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Elizabeth Buckingham – Cobtree Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Boxley

### Executive Summary

The information in the report is intended to give the Committee an understanding of the day to day work of the Estate and the issues that affect its management. It also provides a record of all that is achieved across the different parts of the estate.

The estate update covers the period from when the Committee last met in April 2018.

### This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

- That the report is noted.

### Timetable

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2018

# Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 This report covers the period from April 2018 to July 2018.

### Cobtree Manor Park

1.2 Maintenance of the park over this period covers spring and summer works  
Works to the park include:

- Weed management
- Tree works to dangerous and diseased trees
- Works to the tree border on the Forstal Road have been completed in compliance with Highway regulations.
- The main gates have now been repaired and repainted, the posts re-set and a refabricated height barrier hung.
- The CCTV mast has been re-sited to provide coverage of the main gates. The final connection and adjustment is scheduled to be completed by the end of July.

1.3 An application for the Green Flag Award 2018/9 was submitted in January and judging took place in June by Chris Worman MBE, Head of Parks, Rugby City Council. A Flag has been awarded with a score of 70-75. The judge's comments included

*'It was a privilege to visit Cobtree Manor Park and meet such dedicated staff.'*

*'The management plan contains improvement objectives for the park showing a clear commitment to further enhancing the park'*

*'The management understand the complexities of this landscape and how to manage all the different elements of the site.'*

*'Congratulations on such a great Green Flag Award park.'*

### Events

1.4 Love Parks Week 13<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup> July was celebrated with free drop-in craft activities, competitions and games and sports equipment for visitors to try.

A program of events for the summer holidays has been devised in partnership with Medway Countryside including Minibeast Habitat Building for different areas of the park and a 'Pollinator Party' day.

Kent Wildlife Trust launched the Wonderful Wordicular Word Trail between Tyland barn and Cobtree Manor Park on 12<sup>th</sup> July. The 2km wildlife themed poetry trail funded by the Cobtree Prize features nine interactive way markers created by children from St Peter's C of E Primary School working with a poet and storyteller. Trail leaflets have been produced and an interpretation board at each site installed.

## Community

- 1.5 Two Hadlow College Countryside Management students have returned to continue their work placements completing 180 hours and are currently working on planning planting for the community garden and carrying out fauna surveys.

## Visitor Numbers

- 1.6 There was an equipment failure that led to no data being available between 17<sup>th</sup> January and 27<sup>th</sup> April. This has been resolved and the counter is now functioning correctly. A quarterly comparison is not therefore possible but an increase in visitor numbers of 27.68% can be seen for the months of May and June 2018 combined compared to the same months in 2017.

	2016	Quarterly	% on previous year	2017	Quarterly	% on previous year	2018	Quarterly	% on previous year
Jan	15923			21652			no data		
Feb	15798			19574			no data		
Mar	18227	49948	-1.15	25676	66902	33.94	no data		
Apr	22144			30554			no data		
May	29076			24952			34489		38.22
Jun	22031	73251	3.43	25694	81200	10.85	30519		18.78
Jul	21043			31187					
Aug	33192			37491					
Sept	19468	73703	-5.57	23675	92353	25.3			
Oct	15124			24995					
Nov	17460			12290					
Dec	18138	50722	36.57	16623	53908	6.28			
	247624	247624		294363	294363				

## Car park

- 1.7 Car park income for the first 10 weeks of the 2018/19 financial year was £19,623 compared to £23,084 in the same period last year, a 15% decrease. This is attributable to the weather conditions particularly in March.

Car park refurbishment: this update is contained in a separate report

- 1.8 **Cafe and Visitor Centre update** A further break-in to the café occurred on 25th April. A 4X4 vehicle ram-raided the main entrance, destroying the door and glazing panes. A stroop was attached to the safe located in the internal storeroom and an unsuccessful attempt was made to pull it out causing damage to internal doors, walls and to racking, furniture, equipment and stock. The whole incident was captured on CCTV but there was not sufficient identifying evidence for the Police to pursue the

perpetrators. The vehicle entered the park from the Golf Course. An insurance claim is ongoing.

Security upgrades have been installed including anti-ram bollards, fixing of benches and upgraded HD CCTV. The additional bunding is under construction.

An Alder tree and six mature shrubs have been removed to allow an upgraded power supply to be connected to the café to enable DA GT to install improved kitchen equipment and refurbish the interior of the café .

A kiosk to provide scoop ice-cream has been installed adjacent to the Visitor Centre. This will be a temporary structure to assess the benefits based on income generation and customer feedback. Subject to a review of overall benefits over the summer and October half-term, a more permanent and sympathetically designed kiosk may be proposed to be installed with the agreement of CMET.

**Catering contract monitoring:** The contract monitoring meetings have commenced with the service provider and the first set of reports should be available at the next meeting.

### **Cobtree Manor Golf Course**

**1.9** A meeting was hosted by Mytime Active to update the Trust members with progress of the Planning Application for the new club house.

#### **Activities**

	<b>Q1 2017</b>	<b>Q1 2018</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Rounds Played</b>	<b>12,363</b>	<b>11,460</b>	<b>-903</b>

#### **1.9.1 Performance**

- The adverse weather conditions in April resulted in a poor start to the financial year.
- The excellent weather conditions resulted in much better performance for May and June 2018.
- The team continue to work towards Cobtree Manor Golf Course a Hub rather than just a golf course.

#### **1.9.2 CMGC Events**

- Hosted a Taylor Wimpey corporate day which included meetings, food and foot golf.
- World Cup event with food and beverage promotions.
- The golf course has continued with the successful Sunday carvery.

### 1.9.3 Community

The club is making plans to relocate the shop and shop staff into the bar area. The area freed up will be utilised for 'health and wellbeing' in the community.

### 1.9.4 Green Keeper's Tasks

- Keeping up with the cutting as it is growing season
- Working on limiting the damage resulting from the poor drainage

## Kent Life Farm Attraction

### 1.10 Kent Life Visitor Numbers

	Q1 2017	Q1 2018	Difference
Total Visitor Numbers	53,773	50,440	-3,333
Members Visits	10,490	11,112	622
Education Visits	7,808	8,643	835

#### 1.10.1 Maintenance and Improvements

- More investment in entertainment shows like the "Big Top" over the holiday periods.
- Wages and salaries have increased mainly due to an increase in maintenance, cleaning, grounds and gardens personnel.
- This increased investment has been made to improve the customer experience on site and help maintain the property to a higher standard.
- A number of cosmetic improvements have been carried out to the grounds including returfing bare areas and new paving

### 1.11 Cobtree Railway

The Cobtree Charity Trust trustees maintain their enthusiasm to realise this project.

Following a meeting between trustees and the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development it has been identified that in order to further progress the project a number of actions are now required:

The production of a fully costed business plan

Further detailed market research

Identification of sources of funding

Confirmation of extent of involvement and commitment from potential operating partners

Further detail of planned operations on each site

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## **2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

2.1 The report is to note only.

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## **3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 It is recommended that the information in this report regarding the performance of the Café/ Visitor Centre is noted.

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## **4. RISK**

4.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

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## **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

4.1 None.

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## **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

5.1 Any comments from the Committee will be passed on to the relevant parties.

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## **7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objects and the corporate priorities of the Council.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	Risks to running the estate are dealt with in the annual Estate Risk Management Report.	
<b>Financial</b>	Financial risks are considered in the ongoing finance updates.	Paul Holland Senior Finance Manager (client)
<b>Equalities</b>	No Implications	

## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- None
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None