

Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report July 2017

The report covers the period from March 2017 to July 2017

Park

Maintenance of the park over this period covers Spring and early Summer

Works to the park include:

Shrubbery maintenance

Planting of planters around the Visitor Centre

Removal of two diseased and thus dangerous trees

Two students with additional needs from the Grange School in conjunction with Hadlow College, studying for Level 2 qualifications in Conservation/ Horticulture, extended their six week work placements to the end of June working with the Cobtree Ranger two – three days per week. They undertook a range of tasks including conservation work in the meadow, shrubbery maintenance, plant identification and removing perennial weeds from a shrubbery and replacing with a small area of 'Pictorial Meadow'.

The Green Shoots project concluded after 12 weeks work restoring the 'secret' garden. Concluding report attached. The plot is now available for further project groups to cultivate, proposals are currently being evaluated.

A 'mystery shop' judging for the Green Flag Award took place in April. The results are embargoed until 18th July.

Incidents

A break -in occurred in the early hours of Tuesday 30th May. The container locks were broken and 30L of fuel and a strimmer engine were taken.

The Visitor Centre was broken into via the office door. The building alarm activated and Police were in attendance within half an hour. Forensics attended the following morning. CCTV coverage of the incident failed to provide usable evidence as the raiders were suited and masked.

It has been ascertained that entry to the park was via the Cottage driveway adjacent to the Golf Course and not via the main gates which remained locked.

Repairs to secure the building were undertaken the same day.

An insurance claim is progressing to recover losses.

Additional security measures have been implemented: an electric metal shutter is to be installed over the office door. The replacement safe has been repositioned so it is not in direct line to the door. Large boulders are to be placed on the driveway path to prevent further vehicular access by that route.

An assessment of CCTV provision has been undertaken by Medway Commercial Group following the break in. Final quotations on the options are pending

Events

Easter events included an Easter nature trail run by MVCP was fully booked with 25 participants.

The Cobtree Easter trail ran daily throughout Easter and attracted 526 participants.

The 'Decorate a Molehill' competition attracted 10 entries.

15 Mugs were decorated for Father's day with a picture of the event featured in the KM.

Forthcoming events leaflet attached

Café

The EPOS system was reinstalled in June and is fully functioning.

Price increases were implemented for the Easter holidays. Certain items will be further increased to reflect rising commodity prices and to bring prices broadly in line with similar operations eg KCC Country Parks.

A second point of sale was introduced during the Easter holidays to alleviate the queuing time. A permanent second point of sale is to be introduced in time for the summer holidays to serve drinks, ice-creams, snacks and toys. This will also be staffed during peak times.

Community

The Men in Sheds project continues to thrive. Problems with condensation in the Elephant House have led the project committee to seek funding for works to the roof to cure this. An internal partition has been created to house toilet facilities for which funding is also being sought.

During Love Parks Week, the 'This Girl Can' (a project run with Sport England to encourage females to be comfortable exercising in a fun, friendly and non-judgemental environment) coordinator from Maidstone Leisure Centre will be holding a stall and promoting the program.

A proposal for a weekly under 5s session delivering nature themed arts, crafts, storytelling and activities has been drawn up. It is proposed to run the sessions from September.

Marketing and Publicity

MBC Communications and Marketing are working on designs for interpretation panels for the corridor, improved signage for customers and

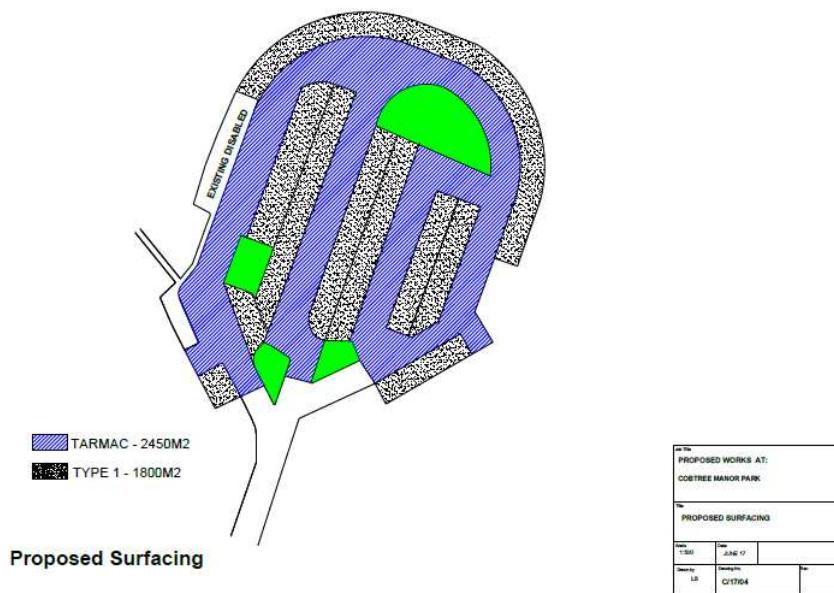
A customer survey is being designed for launch in the Summer holidays.

Car park

Car park income is at £6,544 above target to 30/06/17.

Car Park Resurfacing

As requested by members designs have been produced to improve the surface of the car park to prevent dust. The latest design, shown below, proposes to tarmac the road ways where cars turn and for the parking bays to be coarse gravel. This will prevent having a vast expanse of macadam in the park, will provide a hard wearing surface where vehicles drive and turn and will prevent dust. As well as the surfacing an extensive drainage system will need to be installed.



It is estimated that this will cost in the region of £250,000. The procurement information for this project is ready to go out to suppliers once the design is approved.

Golf Course Update

The new management agreement and lease for the operation of Cobtree Manor Golf Course are still not completed. This is due to a change of personnel at Mytime Active and further reviews and negotiations on much of the work which had previously taken place. Officers are hopeful that the final remaining items can be agreed quickly, and up update brought to the meeting on July 20th.

Cobtree Railway Project

The CMET Chairman and Jason Taylor attended the Cobtree Charity Trusts meeting on 10th July 2017, to give an update on the estate. The members of the Charity are still very keen to see a train on the estate, and following initial enquiries with Kent Highways regarding the feasibility of a tunnel which would allow the train the go under Forstal Road, have agreed to do some preliminary work to produce an initial specification for the project, look at costs and how this would be funded.