



<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	18 March 2016
<b>Subject:</b>	Update on Activity at Southsea Castle
<b>Report by:</b>	Director Culture and City Development
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Full Council decision:</b>	No

---

## 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give an update on activity and plans at Southsea Castle.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **Agree a variation of the marquee charges to increase bookings, thus increasing income and possible investment in the maintenance of the Castle.**

## 3. Background

- 3.1 Southsea Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument owned and operated by Portsmouth City Council. The Castle is open fully to the general public, Tuesday to Sunday, March to October; the dates this year are 25 March - 31 October 2016.

- 3.2 Visitor numbers to the Castle are in the region of 97,000 per annum. This figure does not include visitors to the Courtyard Café in the winter months.

### 3.3 Castle Café and out of hours events

- 3.3.1 Following the departure of the previous operator from the site in 2014 an interim operator ran the café and champagne bar plus other events while a procurement exercise was carried out for a longer term solution. The interim provider, Café Henry, paid a fixed rent of £18,000 per annum plus 5% of all gross turnover.
- 3.3.2 Café Henry ran the Courtyard Café, a series of Champagne Bars, events for the Six Nations Rugby and Rugby World Cup. The Castle was also part of the Victorious Festival and Christmas at the Castle. These were all popular additions to the Castle offer.

- 3.3.3 Following a successful competitive tender process Café Henry were chosen as the new tenant to provide a café/restaurant on site, to cater for and manage all Castle wedding receptions and to provide events outside of normal Castle opening hours. The Courtyard Café will open all year round and there will be a full calendar of events such as the Friday Champagne Bar and Six Nations Rugby.
- 3.3.4 The new lease and associated agreement runs for 10 years from January 2016 with a 5 year break clause for both parties.
- 3.3.5 Café Henry will pay £20,000 per annum rent plus 5% of all gross turnover. In addition they have pledged an additional £30,000 each five years to the maintenance of the site.
- 3.3.6 Once income targets have been reached, additional income will go towards the upkeep of the wedding equipment and spaces plus the Castle as a whole.

### **3.4 Castle weddings and receptions**

- 3.4.1 Castle wedding receptions were previously managed by Yellow Kite, the initial catering partners who vacated the Castle in October 2014.
- 3.4.2 In 2014 the Museums and Visitor Services team introduced Castle wedding ceremonies on site. All ceremonies and receptions were managed by the Museums and Visitor Services team from November 2014 to December 2015, with the catering carried out by County Caterers.
- 3.4.3 During the current financial year 2015-16 a total of 10 wedding ceremonies and 11 wedding receptions were held at the Castle. The income for weddings in the financial year 2015-16 is £44,765 against a budget target of £25,000.
- 3.4.4 In 2016-17 there are currently 10 confirmed wedding ceremonies and 5 confirmed wedding receptions totalling income of £20,535. In addition there are 8 provisional wedding ceremonies and 7 provisional wedding receptions, totalling a further £27,050, awaiting confirmation.
- 3.4.5 In 2017-18 there are currently 3 confirmed wedding ceremonies and 1 confirmed wedding reception totalling £5,025 and 7 provisional wedding ceremonies and receptions totalling £24,615.

### **3.5 Further activity**

- 3.5.1 During Castle full opening hours there will be an events programme to include an event working with the Mary Rose Museum in the Spring half-term and other activities including art and craft, treasure trails, archery events and historical re-enactors. The Castle's knowledgeable costumed volunteers will continue to add to the offer in the open season.
- 3.5.2 A micro-brewery will open on site in March 2016 operated by Southsea Brewing Company, on a short lease of three years. The brewery will pay £1,500 per year

rent. This is a great opportunity to support a local business while adding to the Castle offer for visitors who will be able to watch the brewing process.

- 3.5.3 Southsea Archery Club continues to practice in the Castle Moat three evenings a week and offer free demonstration events for the Castle in exchange for this free usage.
- 3.5.4 Dark Encounters also offer Ghost Walks and Zombie Encounter events in the winter months and will look to work with Café Henry going forward to add these to their offer. PCC receives 50% of Dark Encounters ticket sales.

### **3.6 Planned improvements**

- 3.6.1 Southsea Castle can be challenging to upkeep given its historic nature and status. A number of maintenance projects and improvements have been made or are planned.
- 3.6.2 The Castle Marquee has recently been taken down, new supports added to the flooring; new roof covering purchased and a general clean for the whole structure.
- 3.6.3 A new lighting system to light the exterior of the Castle is currently awaiting installation. The system is in place in the Castle Moat in a temporary fix currently and is used for events such as Christmas at the Castle. This has been jointly purchased by PCC and Café Henry and is a major improvement to the site.
- 3.6.4 Café Henry have plans to install a second kitchen in one of the Courtyard Café store areas to enable them to better cater for Castle wedding receptions. This would be at their own cost and a significant improvement to the café space.
- 3.6.5 The Castle drawbridge decking will be replaced before Easter as this is showing significant wear and tear.
- 3.6.6 Additional railings are currently being procured by the Seafront Manager which will replace a broken section at the seaward side of the Castle and also allow an additional safe exit from the Castle tunnels.
- 3.6.7 The Castle cannons underwent some improvement in 2015 and a plan is currently being drawn up to continue this with more improvements planned for 2016.
- 3.6.8 The Castle shop income is currently on budget. The additional activity in the Castle should enable an increase in shop income. The shop fittings and available merchandise will be updated in 2016 with a view to increasing spend per head.
- 3.6.9 Improvements to signage and interpretation across the site are currently being drawn up, working with Café Henry.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 It is essential that we continue to grow the income at the Castle in order to meet budget targets and maintain the site. The Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and we have a duty to maintain this for future generations. It should also be noted that we may be at risk of not achieving income targets if the site is not well maintained.
- 4.2 Café Henry would like to help us to increase the use of the Castle Marquee for private bookings, especially on weekdays. In the last 12 months we have had only two private bookings at the Castle, one on a weekday and one on a Saturday.
- 4.3 A proposed reduction in the marquee hire charge down to £100 + vat for Monday to Thursday and a 35% discount for Friday, Saturday and Sunday will help boost private bookings in the Castle marquee, increasing income. Having a trial period of this reduced charge this year will enable us to measure the impact on booking numbers and can be followed by a full review of charges, if required, in the autumn. The emphasis will still remain on Wedding Bookings especially at weekends.

#### **5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

- 5.1 An EIA is not required to support the recommendations within this report as there is no change of policy.

#### **6. Legal comments**

- 6.1 The legal issues related to this recommendation are dealt with in the body of the report.

#### **7. Director of Finance comments**

- 7.1 The recommendation contained in this report seeks to vary the private hire charges for the marquee. This is in order to explore the demand for this service and to increase the income that could be generated from the use of this asset.
- 7.2 At present, income from private hire bookings is minimal so this is an opportunity to increase revenue.

.....  
Signed by:  
**Stephen Baily**  
**Director of Culture and City Development**

**Appendices:       None**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

.....  
Signed by:  
**Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport**