

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

AGM

26 OCTOBER 2020



April 2019 – March 2020

- This report covers the accounting period April 2019 – March 2020
- 2019 seems a lifetime ago in a different age
- Packed with fundraising and community events
- Volunteers involved across all areas in the park, events, education and admin



Finance – where does our funding come from?

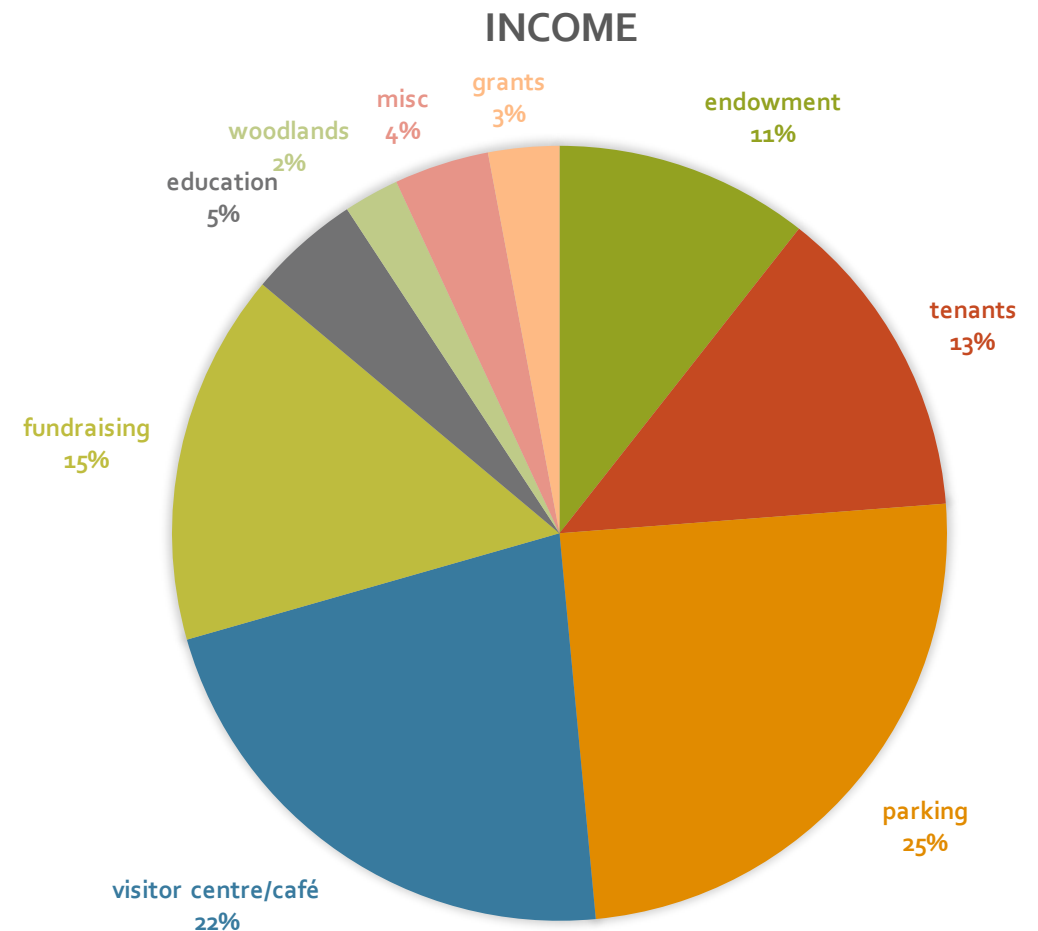
Car parking is the largest source of income.

Prices increased in September 2020 (Deferred from April 2020 due to Covid) to address rising cost of maintenance.

Profits from the Café which opened in 2018 are now the second largest source of income.

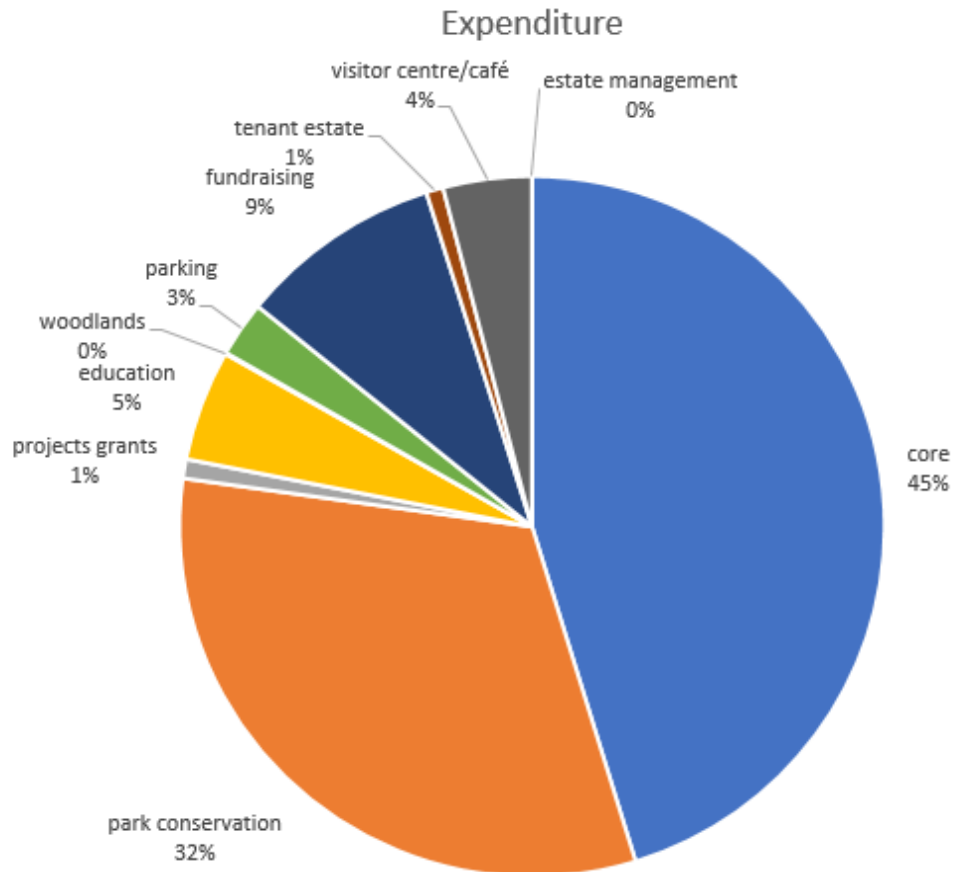
The Endowment handed to the Trust in 1992 to cover the ongoing maintenance of the Park now only provides for 11% of costs.

Fundraising includes money earned from events, donations, legacies, sponsorship and Membership fees.



Finance – how is the money spent?

- Core charity overheads (e.g. insurance, utilities, rates, accountancy fees) and office-based staff wages is the largest area of expense.
- Expenditure on our core objective of conserving the park for public benefit, including associated staff costs, is the second largest
- The cost of fundraising includes putting on events
- There is historic under-investment in wider estate management, reflecting lack of resources.



Conservation activities during 2019

Working with the Environment Agency for annual re-stocking of the River Lostock

Continued role in the River Douglas Catchment Partnership

Tackling Invasive Non-native Species (INNS) with balsam bashing

Regular wildlife reporting on the Friends Facebook page



Education & Community engagement in 2019

- Primary school on site learning
- Forest Camps
- Over 10's Dangerous Day
- National Citizenship Service (NCS) for 16-17 year olds
- Student placements – Myerscough College
- Health walks
- Nordic Walking
- Parkrun



Fly tipping

- Huge national problem with landowners bearing cost of disposing of rubbish left on their land.
- A big clean up was organised in woods next to Green Wood, with Clayton le Woods Parish Council community volunteers, and Chorley Borough Council Street Cleaning team.



Grant funding

- June 2019 Town Brow bridge – Friends of Cuerden Valley Park, Rambler's Holiday Fund
- November 2019 - new office computer systems, Friends of Cuerden Valley Park,
- April 2020 Coop Community Fund , £1,500 towards repairing paths to the Walled Orchard
- April 2020 Asda green token Community Fund £500 towards education equipment
- August 2020 Waitrose Depot green token scheme £500
- November 2020 final Coop Community Fund payment £xxx
- The Friend's have also given grants towards vital equipment used to look after the park including new lawnmower, hedgetrimmer and band saw.

Grant funding..

New bridge at Town Brow

Replaces washed away stepping stones

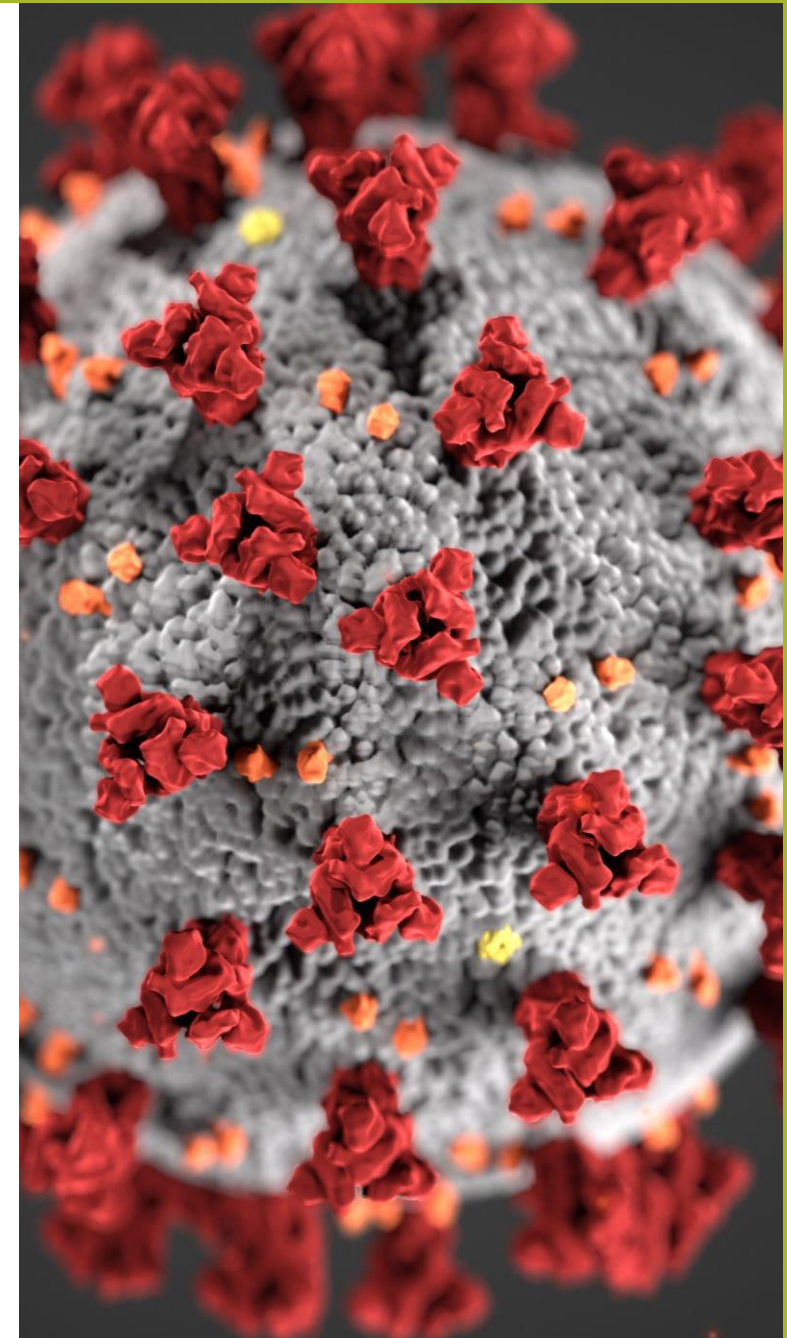
Built by volunteers

Funded by Friends of Cuerden Valley Park, and
Rambler's Holiday Fund.



March 2020 onwards

- This report also casts an eye on more recent activity between the end of the financial year in March 2020 and the AGM
- The new financial year coincided with the arrival of Covid 19 and lockdown
- Immediate impacts:
 - Furlough of 25 staff
 - Stop school visits
 - Stop volunteering
 - Cancel all fundraising events
 - Close the Café, office and toilets





Lockdown response

- Skeleton staff of four Rangers and Estate Workers, plus General Manager.
- We set an Emergency Budget to ensure we could survive
- We received several Government support packages, such as the business rate cancellation, VAT holiday, hospitality sector grant, furlough scheme.
- We kept the Park open through out to provide green space for the community to exercise in
- We kept our car parks open to earn some income to pay the bills
- In line with the national picture, the Park received huge volumes of visitors once lockdown started to ease.
- Common national problems of littering, barbeques, trespass and vandalism were prevalent.

Covid recovery

- All staff have returned from furlough
- There have been no redundancies
- Staff are now working differently
- Maximum three staff in the office at one time
- Regular homeworking
- Rangers assigned specific vehicles and tools
- Café open and Covid-secure
- School bookings have resumed
- Food & Craft Market restarted

But...

- Volunteering still suspended
- Office closed to public
- Health walks and parkrun still suspended
- No Forest Camps or Spooky Walk this year

Coronavirus
COVID-19



**WEAR
FACE MASK**

Covid recovery...



- We applied for and received a £27,600 grant from the Heritage Lottery Emergency Fund to support survival and recovery. The outputs will be:
 - Temporary visitor toilets adjacent Visitor Centre
 - New volunteer hut in the Yard for tools and socially distanced breaks
 - New gates at car parks to provide the means to close the site if required by Government or Police
 - Covering the cost of extra PPE and sanitizing materials
 - New laptop for Rangers to work from the Workshop rather than the office
 - Support to diversify from running events to alternative means of fundraising
 - Business Plan review to ensure we can adapt to a new working environment

Cuerden View Cafe

- The Café reopened for takeaway in July and customer's sat outside on donated picnic benches.
- Despite being well received and providing pleasure to many visitors, it wasn't commercially viable.
- In August indoor table service started
- We receive many compliments on our Covid-safety with customers feeling at ease and confident.
- All staff have returned to work
- Combination of table service and takeaway is viable and generating profits for the Trust.



Future project

New footpath and wildflower meadow project

Funding now approved from Lancashire Environmental Fund £30,000, and Clayton le Woods Parish Council CIL £25,000

New path connecting Visitor Centre to the main valley path

Replacement wooden bridge

Design work starts January 2021

Completion September 2021

Volunteers and schools to be involved in sowing the meadow

Recycled materials to be used in path and bridge construction



What we said we would achieve in 2019-20

- ✓ 1. Set a balanced budget and closely monitor performance against this.
- ✗ 2. Initiate a review of the Park Strategy.
- ✓ 3. Improve the income and profitability of Cuerden Valley Café Ltd.
- ✓ 4. Explore the options for major grant awards to develop the Park.
- ✓ 5. Increase the income from Lower Wood End Farm and explore the options for redevelopment.
- ✗ 6. Increase the overall income for the park through fundraising and events.
- ✗ 7. Fulfil the management plan in all routine matters.
- ✓ 8. Achieve a Green Flag award.
- ✓ 9. Review the investment policy and its delivery.
- ✓ 10. Deliver and improve the education programme so that it maintains its relevance and popularity.
- ✗ 11. Ensure the Visitor Centre is maintained in accordance with the Living Building Challenge principles.
- ✓ 12. Encourage greater involvement of Friends and volunteers in activities which support the Park.
- ✗ 13. Deliver at least one Trustee training session.

We balanced the operational budget for the first in a decade, thanks in part to receiving the first year's profit donation from our trading subsidiary Café company.

We achieved the Green Flag award for the 10th consecutive year in July 2019, and the 11th time in October 2020.

We merged the Friends of Cuerden Valley Park with the Trust in October 2019, creating a stronger more efficient organisation, with better communication with Members.

What we expect to achieve in 2020-21

1. To maintain the park to the highest possible standards as an amenity for all
2. Manage the threat of Covid 19 and ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and public in everything we do
3. Set an Emergency Budget that minimizes the impact of Covid 19 on the Trust's financial stability
4. Ensure that Cuerden Valley Café Ltd remains commercially viable
5. Fully explore and apply for grant support to sustain the Park through Covid 19 and into the future
6. Progress with the possible sale of an under-used farm site to generate funds to maintain the Park into the future
7. Review the Park Strategy and Business Plan
8. Actively seek to recruit new Trustees and develop a succession plan for future governance.

This year's objectives are heavily influenced by the Covid 19 pandemic, and reflect the impact this is having on the fundraising and finances of our charity, and of charities nationally.

We recognise that maintenance of the Park has not kept pace with the increased wear and tear from growing visitor numbers, or from the impact of increased flooding and rainfall.

Any questions?

- Email me a question in advance to manager@cuerdenvalleypark.org.uk and I will try to answer this during my presentation at the AGM.
- Ask me a question online during the video-conference, using the message facility or when prompted by the Chair.

Thank you for supporting the Park

Simon Thorpe
General Manager