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MEMORANDUM

Date: July 16, 2015

To: Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

From: R.J. Cardin, Director

Re: Director's Summary of Current Events

Listed below are activities the department has been involved with during May and June 2015.

From the Office of the Director

• The County Board of Supervisors is honoring Anne Lynch on July 22, 2015, for 30 years of dedicated service on the Parks and Recreation Commission. Commissioner Anne Lynch was appointed to the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission on February 19, 1985, by District 3 Supervisor, Fred Koory, Jr. During the past 30 years, Anne has provided advisory guidance to staff in the addition of more than 290 additional miles of trails and 30,000 additional acres of dedicated park lands along with the recommended approvals of twelve new or updated trail plans, ten new or updated park master plans and the 2009 Park Strategic System Master Plan. She has also recommended approval to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors for significant agreements and contracts such as the Cooperative Agreement with the Bureau of Land Management for management of the San Tan Regional Park in 1988, the Management Agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation to manage the enlarged Lake Pleasant Park area in 1990 and the Intergovernmental Agreement with the town of Cave Creek for operations of the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area in 2001. Other contributions include updating and recommending for approval revised Parks Commission By-Laws in 2003 and 2012, numerous Parks Fee Schedules, and the adoption of the revised Maricopa County Park Rules in 2003.

Parks would like to thank Anne for her dedicated service on the Parks Commission and to the citizens of Maricopa County!

 Parks General Fund request for operating start-up and Phase 1 development at the Hassayampa River Preserve was not included in the final County Recommended Budget for fiscal year 2016 (July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016).

Our initial request for the Preserve start-up was met with enthusiasm early in the budget process. Unfortunately, a number of factors have greatly limited the County's ability to pursue new efforts, not only for our Department, but also for Departments across the County. While General Fund revenues are growing, they are still not at pre-recession levels. A number of public safety and court related requests to deal with priority County mandates were submitted and only funded at a level to address the most critical issues. Finally, the State shifted an additional \$14 million in costs to the County during their budget balancing this past session.

This is certainly a set-back to moving forward with Vulture Mountain. We will, however, continue to proceed slowly toward the development of a new park for future generations of County residents, while continuing to provide recreation opportunities for residents and resource protection in our current system of parks. The County Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is already working with us to refine our budget request for fiscal year 2017 (the next budget cycle) to include additional park enhancements and funding for Vulture Mountain.

• During FY15, more than 1.6 million visitors entered the Maricopa County Parks system. This is a 14% increase from FY14 attendance counts and followed a 21% increase from the previous fiscal year.

Administration

Budget Status (through June FY15 first close):

- Enhancement Fund (241) Agency 305:
 - Enhancement Fund reported revenues of 12% or \$545,782 over the YTD budget of \$4,439,860.
 - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures of 1% or \$56,098 under the YTD operating budget of \$4,439,860.
- Lake Fund (240) Agency 302:
 - Lake Fund reported revenues of 12% or \$294,812 over the YTD budget of \$2,514,692.
 - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures at 12% or \$296,502 under the YTD budget of \$2,514,692.
- Spur Cross (225) Agency 306:
 - o Spur Cross reported revenues at 2% or \$5,927 over the YTD budget of \$266,411.
 - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures at 4% or \$11,863 under the YTD budget of \$266,411.

Finance Program:

- June is predominantly spent working to close the FY15 budget and then open FY16.
- The Yearly County Capital Asset report/validation is due in July. Finance staff continues to work with park staff to validate assets and ensure the report to Finance is accurate.
- The County's new finance/budget/procurement system (CGI Advantage) roll-out continues with multiple training sessions for department users. Park Finance staff attended multiple training sessions in June.

Contracts:

- Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Capital Hotel Management (CHM) has completed their observations and findings for the market, investment, and financial analyses of a resort development at Lake Pleasant Regional Park. This report is currently under review by management.
- Estrella Mountain Regional Park: The draft Use Management Agreement for Estrella Youth Sports (EYS) is currently being modified. The agreement will provide for the upgrade and expansion of our existing baseball fields and will be modified to include a contingency for each future phase (additional amenities and future multipurpose fields). The contingency will depend on market and financial feasibility and the final Estrella Master Plan revisions.
- Adobe Dam Regional Park:
 - The 500 Club had completed the necessary Army Corps of Engineers' (ACOE) Application for 408 Permit for construction of an addition to their existing building and a new banquet hall building at the Golf Course. Currently, it is under final review and comments at the Maricopa County Flood Control District (FCD). After FCD feels that all ACOE requirements have been met, the 408 Permit can be sent to the ACOE.
 - Legacy Sports, in collaboration with Parks, is developing a Well Water Use and Management Program that defines the process of importing 400 acre feet of non-potable well water from Parks well site to a proposed Lake to be constructed by Legacy Sports. This information is vital in the formation of the Use Management Agreement. Several reviews of the drafted document have been provided for comment. We expect to have a final document within 10 days. The management of the water system is a vital hurdle to the completion of the Use Management Agreement.

Human Resources:

• New Hires:

- Welcome Jessica Scalzitti as the new full-time Contact Station Assistant at Lake Pleasant. Jessica was previously working as a part-time/temp in the contact station.
- o Welcome to Lindsay Burns and Ashley Johnson, Contact Station Assistants, Lake Pleasant

• Farewells:

- o Farewell to Nora Lee Taylor, Park Office Assistant at White Tank. Nora left in June.
- Open positions and recruitments:
 - o Trades Supervisor Hire action pending.
 - o Park Maintenance Supervisor (Lake) Interviews underway.
 - Souvenir Fund Coordinator (HQ) Interviews underway.
 - o Office Assistant Specialized (WT) Open for recruitment.

Information Technology:

- Work continued on the new Point of Sale/Reservation system. Tentative go-live date is September 1, 2015.
- The department website contract was awarded to American Eagle and work has begun to outline how the new site will function and look.
- Replacement computers will be ordered in FY16 for all the 5-year old POS computers purchased in 2010. The first order for Lake Pleasant and the Desert Outdoor Center is being compiled for ordering in August.

Souvenir Fund:

- Work continues to ensure product line accuracy for barcodes and pricing in the new Point of Sale/Reservation System.
- Inventory for products that have been discontinued is also underway.
- Ordering has resumed for FY16 merchandise to arrive in July/August.

New displays have been ordered for several parks, updating displays in poor condition, reworking the sales areas for better organization and grouping, as well as finding fun ways to creatively display and sell various items.



The new plush area at Estrella Park

Volunteer Program:

- There have been many new applications submitted for park hosts in May and June for the Fall/Winter season. Usery, Spur Cross, Adobe, Cave Creek, DOC, and McDowell are already full for the season and have waitlists.
- Even with the summer heat, several volunteer groups have come to Lake Pleasant to assist with shoreline trash clean up. A group of Target employees and several community groups brought volunteers to the park.
- Year-to-Date Volunteer Hours:

	Jul-14	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-14	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15
Total Dept. Hours	2708	3303.5	3082.75	6101.83	9726	12287	12682	12547.85	13328.57	9876	4899.57	3451
Financial Savings	\$61,065	\$74,494	\$69,516	\$137,596	\$219,321	\$277,072	\$285,979	\$282,954	\$300,559	\$222,704	\$110,485	\$77,820
YTD Hours	2708	6011.5	9094.25	15196.08	24922.08	37209.08	49891.08	62438.93	75767.5	85643.5	90543.07	93994.07
YTD Savings	\$61,065	\$135,559	\$205,075	\$342,672	\$561,993	\$839,065	\$1,125,044	\$1,407,998	\$1,708,557	\$1,931,261	\$2,041,746	\$2,119,566
Prev. Year Month Total Hours	4052.25	2968.25	4252.45	5775.65	9401.25	9194.2	10204.35	20180.8	11224.6	8488.2	3782.5	2891.25
Prev. Year YTD Hours	4052.25	7020.5	11272.95	17048.6	26449.85	35644.05	45848.4	66029.2	77253.8	87542	89524.5	92415.75
Prev. Year Financial Savings	\$89,717	\$155,434	\$249,583.11	\$377,456.00	\$585,599.68	\$ 789,159.27	\$ 1,015,083.50	\$1,461,886.40	\$ 1,710,399.10	\$ 1,898,327.80	\$ 1,982,072.40	\$ 2,046,084.70
Number of Volunteers-current month	43	50	98	181	184	200	213	253	235	311	125	80

Planning and Development (Engineering) Highlights as of July 7, 2015

- Estrella Master Plan: Staff continues to coordinate with Estrella Youth Sports (EYS) regarding the "sports-field" project and with the City of Goodyear regarding the "brine-wetland" project. Approximately 60 comments were received at the April 30th public meeting and approximately an additional 70 comments were received during the public comment period which closed May 30th. Staff will meet August 6th to discuss the comments and will also meet with the Friend's Group that day
- Vulture Mountain Update: Staff is continuing to coordinate with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Department of Transportation (MCDOT) on refining the roadway design for the day-use, camping and off-highway vehicle (OHV) areas.

System Wide:

- The refurbishment of all (~75) restrooms (RRs), for all the parks began in January 2014. The project is expected to take four years and cost ~\$4 million. With the help of two "Job Order Contract" (JOC) contractors, staff is working to standardize interior and exterior finishes and hardware improvements throughout the park system.
 - Current Status: 7 RRs (all) are complete at Cave Creek; 1 RR is complete at Estrella; 7 RRs (all) are complete at McDowell; 2 RRs have been completed at Usery; 10 RRs (all of the "older" ones) are complete at White Tank; and 5 RR have been completed at Lake Pleasant.
- Septic pumping and miscellaneous upgrades have been completed at nearly all of the parks.
 Approximately \$980k was spent in FY14 and approximately \$915k was spent FY15.
- o Installations of new playground equipment in various parks and the specialized outdoor "circuit" fitness equipment at Usery were completed with an approximate cost of \$540,000 in FY15.
- The San Tan well project was successful and water was hit on March 23rd. The Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) water testing and permit process is continuing. Additional utility upgrades were also completed with this work.
- The upgrade of the electrical system at the White Tank maintenance compound has been completed as was Phase I of a project to construct new electrical hook ups for individual camp sites in the overflow area at Cave Creek.

Maricopa Trail and Trail Facilities:

- o The following trail segments are currently being worked on: 9, 11, 12, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35 and 78.
- The following property rights were acquired this period:
 - Segment 35 White Tank 3 Outfall Channel 2 miles from FCD
 - Segment 12 Happy Valley Parkway to SR303 5.25 miles from Peoria
- The following portions of the Maricopa Trail are in final agreement stages for perpetual easements on FCD property:
 - Segment 35 White Tank 3 Dam 2.1 miles
- The following portions of the Maricopa Trail are in process for purchase from the Arizona State Land Department:
 - Segment 35 North and south of I-10 on the Tuthill Road alignment
 - Segment 12 North of SR303 on Lake Pleasant Road.
 - Segment 11 East of SR303 on Happy Valley Parkway.
- Status:
 - Planning new trails in the Tonto National Forest Cave Creek and Mesa Ranger Districts, the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, on the Central Arizona Project south of Lake Pleasant Park, El Rio, Tres Rios, Verrado and the Fort McDowell Indian Community.
 - Installing additional signage.
- Trades Crew: One member of the Crew was very involved in the electric projects at White Tank and Cave Creek. The Crew completed ramada upgrades at McDowell and is currently working on ramadas at Cave Creek. A member of the Crew has been working extensively on fire system testing and repairs on the HQ Operations building and throughout the system.

 Trails Crew: The Trails Crew was able to use the Arizona Conservation Corps Crew (AZCC) with approximately 5.5 miles of new trail construction in Lake Pleasant Park and general cleanup and maintenance of an additional 24.5 miles of trails within Cave Creek, Estrella, McDowell, and Usery Parks. The AZCC crew will be back in late August to continue maintenance reconstruction and construction projects.

Park Operations Report

Cave Creek Regional Park:

- In May, the park conducted 15 interpretive programs with 133 participants attending with 22 repeat attendees. *Feeding Frenzy* was one of the highlighted programs with 40 attendees along with the *Clay Mine Adventure* with 27 attendees.
- In June, the park conducted 11 interpretive programs with 228 participants attending, which included 26 repeat attendees. The highlighted programs for the month were the *Wilderness Survival Series 1, 2* and 3 with a total of 169 attendees.

Desert Outdoor Center:

- The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (Parks) was approached by Wickenburg Conservation Foundation (WCF) and General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) to provide expertise in the development of a nature-based field trip program for Wickenburg schools, grades 4 8. This panel of program development experts consists of school teachers, wildlife managers, municipal recreation staff, and museum educators. The panel, called Wickenburg Area Outdoor Education (WAOE), meets monthly to develop the program framework. Adam Melle, an Interpretive Ranger at the Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant, is on this panel representing Parks. His insight provides in-depth knowledge on nature based program development, lesson plan writing, and Arizona academic standards. County Parks is recognized for the inquiry-based, real-world, and cutting-edge technology approach to presenting environmental education classes. Assisting in the development of this program continues to nurture the relations between the Parks and Wickenburg community.
- The 2015 Lake Pleasant Aquatics & Nature Camp at the Desert Outdoor Center was a SUCCESS!
 Approximately 217 Boy Scouts attended the camp over four weeks in June (up 9% from last year), earning almost 500 merit badges in topics ranging from sailing and canoeing to nature and cooking.
- This summer was a success largely due to the dedication and expertise of the DOC's staff of Interpretive Rangers and Maintenance Crew. The Rangers not only afforded excellent instruction to the campers, but also mentored the young counselors-in-training to build their expertise and abilities as future camp counselors. The maintenance staff provided valuable behind-the-scenes support by making sure the facility was kept up (which is a challenge in itself with teenage boys everywhere), delivering water, equipment and other necessary supplies to the dock as needed and even chipping in to help instructors with their programs.
- While still enjoying the accomplishment of this summer, we are already beginning to formulate a plan to make next year an even bigger success. In an effort to reach the underserved church community, a "trail to first-class" program is being developed. This program will meet the advancement needs of young scouts who have just begun the scouting experience by allowing them to meet necessary requirements to move up the ranks while introducing them to the many unique opportunities that our camp affords.
- The Stand Up Paddleboard award was just released in 2014. The DOC camp is striving to be the first in Arizona to offer this new, exciting and quickly-growing aquatic opportunity. Another aquatic experience we hope to offer next summer is a canoe/kayak trek across the lake with overnight camping for those older campers who are looking for more "high-adventure" camping. We hope these new programs, in addition to the constant improvements we make to our existing programs, will help our camp grow while meeting the needs of our local troops and scouts.

• 2015 was the first year we were able to allow non-scouts to attend camp. Without extensive advertising, we were able to register a handful of young men that were not part of scouting, yet they still immensely enjoyed the outdoor experiences on the dock, at the shooting range, and in our nature center. With more general marketing next summer, we hope to offer this unique camp to many other non-scouting youth across the Valley. More information for the Lake Pleasant Aquatics & Nature Camp can be found at www.grandcanyonbsa.org/lpc.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- In May, Estrella Park held 16 interpretive programs with a total of 227 participants. May's bird hike found a record 78 species of birds in only 2.5 hours and 2 miles of hiking. Due to the riparian habitat, Estrella has some of the best bird watching in the Valley.
- In June, Estrella Park held 13 interpretive programs with 169 people in attendance. The Maricopa County Teen Leadership Experience (MCLE) program brought more teens than previous years to Estrella programs in June.
- Estrella's patrons tend to picnic even in the warmer spring months and in May there were 17 ramadas and facility reservation rentals.
- On May 16th, the *Race Timers* event company held a long distance foot race at the Competitive Track with 163 participants enjoying a desert run in the park. This same company offered a foot race on June 6th at the Competitive Track; despite the heat, 174 runners participated in the challenging desert run.
- Starting on June 27th, the Aravaipa Running event company held a race at the Estrella Competitive Track.
 There were 144 runners and some even ran through the night enjoying cooler temperatures while grinding out many miles on the track.
- Estrella Park has been receiving mowing services from a mowing contractor. Research is being conducted if purchasing equipment and utilizing park staff and volunteers would lower the annual cost of this service.
- Estrella Park staff continues to address problematic boundary fence issues. The remote southwest and northeast corners of the park experience the highest number of fence cuts. ATV riders and 4-wheel drivers cut the fence and illegally enter the property. Repairs are regular events and ideas for issue resolution are being discussed.
- The Estrella Park turf sprinkler system continues to have valve breaks resulting in down time. Park staff
 met with sprinkler/turf professionals from the Goodyear Parks department to discuss and assess the
 Estrella Park sprinkler system. A summary of the results will help determine necessary repairs and aid in
 the planning for the future of the turf area.
- In May, park staff, hosts and volunteers made a push to reach farther parts of the park to clean, weed and trim trees and bushes in anticipation of the summer heat.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park:

- Lake Pleasant provided 17 interpretive programs during the months of May and June to the delight of over 300 program attendees. The park also offered assistance to the Desert Outdoor Center during the month of June to help with 16 days of Boy Scout camp. The highlights of the months included *Family Fun Fishing Clinic, Wet and Wild Hike and Splash, Desert Awareness* and the *Agua Fria Long Paddle*. The park experienced a14% increase in program attendees in FY15 from FY14. In addition, the parks Facebook page currently has over 1,200 likes and over 3,000 visits.
- The park saw a huge increase in user attendance over the past year, reaching approximately 840,000 visitors (a 16.5% increase from FY14). Park staff has continued to focus on improving the customer experience, and their efforts are definitely showing it.
- With the increased usage, brings additional challenges. Unfortunately, not everyone likes to pick up after themselves and the park has noticed an increase in trash found along the shorelines and other areas. Thanks to the efforts of the Maintenance Team, other staff and a volunteer group from Target (approximately 20 volunteers), the park has been able to stay on top of the issue. When performing cleanups in an area, the crew has been averaging about 4-5 large (55 gallon bags) of trash per location cleaned. This work is not easy, given the extreme weather conditions this time of year, but the crew has remained extremely positive and worked very diligently to provide a clean, safe atmosphere for customers to enjoy.

- The renovations to the Visitor Center are taking shape. The construction crew is currently working on
 installing drywall, taping and texturing the walls on the inside, and preparing the exterior walls for stucco
 treatment.
- The Lake Pleasant Interpretive Ranger, Administrative Supervisor, Park Supervisor and Parks Operation Manager have been working collaboratively with the Bureau of Reclamation to develop interpretive exhibits for the new Nature Center. Once completed, the exhibits will offer a significant educational enhancement and attraction for the new Nature Center.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- The last special event of the 2015 Fiscal Year was held the last weekend in May. The overnight foot race called the *Adrenaline Night Run* began at 7 pm and finished 12 hours later with 319 participants.
- The Interpretive Ranger held nine programs in addition to the Friday morning fitness hikes. Many felt the season had ended on April 1st so there were only 42 participants in May, but most were first time attendees.
- The summer night ride series got underway with two rides in May. The anxious mountain bikers came out to the park in big numbers for both rides with 143 riders the first weekend and 118 on the third weekend of May.
- In June, seven programs were offered with 53 all new attendees, most enjoying their first visit to the park.
- The summer night mountain biking rides continued and the numbers increased with 127 and 133 riders respectively for rides held on the first and third Saturdays in June.
- The display units in the Visitor Center were all replaced in June with new display units to match the year old critter cages. Matching wood panels in the two rooms of the center make a very nice cohesive appearance for park visitors. Orders will be placed shortly after the new fiscal year begins to stock the new shelves with exciting new merchandise.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- During the month of May, San Tan provided 29 interpretive programs with 414 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the *Scorpion Scavenger Hunt* which attracted 140 participants alone.
- During the month of June, San Tan provided 23 interpretive programs with 416 program participants. The highlight program for the month was our *Moonlight Hike*.
- Several projects are under way to help prepare us for the upcoming busy season, including striping the parking lots, painting and sealing the Nature Center floors, trail maintenance, fence repairs, sanding/sealing all wood features, and building inspections.
- The Supervisor has been working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Arizona State Parks and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to establish a better working relationship as it relates to our archaeological resources within our parks and site steward opportunities.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- The Park offered eight interpretive programs in May with 92 participants attending and two docent led programs with 34 attendees. The highlighted programs for the month: *Full Moon Hike* with 23 attendees and two (2) *Life Along The Creek* hikes with a total of 30 participants.
- The Park hosted six interpretive programs in June with 96 participants attending and one docent led program with nine participants. The highlighted programs for the month: Flashlight & Black Light Tour with 39 attendees and Rock Art of Spur Cross with 17 attendees.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- Usery Mountain Regional Park offered 15 interpretive ranger programs in May totaling 983 participants, and one docent lead program totaling 15 participants. In June, the park offered 12 interpretive ranger programs totaling 625 participants. Our popular Scorpion Hunt program kicked off and is averaging 134 participants per class.
- The Usery Mountain Archers are currently hosting a Thursday night Archery league from May through August. The league is held every Thursday night at 7pm and is open to all ages. So far, 132 adults and 21 youth have participated in the program.

- 40 archers participated at the Cinco de Mayo 3D Shoot and the FITA/NFAA Field Shoot archery tournaments held at the archery range.
- The Buckhorn Campground Nature Trail improvements were completed thanks to an eager Eagle Scout.
 17 new interpretive plaques were added to plants along the trail and a new interpretive brochure was created to give additional information on each plant.
- ASU Intern, Nicole Kallman, started her 9-week internship at the park working 15 hours a week. She works 3 days a week, with each day focusing on 1 of 3 different aspects of the park (interpretive services, maintenance/trails, and POS/Souvenir sales).

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- In May, White Tank provided 21 interpretive programs with 385 visitors attending. The moonlight hikes and snake feeding are always popular programs. With the warmer weather, evening and indoor programs are being offered.
- In June, White Tank provided 13 interpretive programs with 322 visitors attending. A wonderful marketing boost has been the Library's summer reading program which now includes all of the park's interpretive programs. The programs are advertised on the Library's summer reading website. If a participating reader attends a park program they can receive points towards the reading program.
- A notable program created by the interpretive ranger is the new Summer Sonoran Series family program in cooperation with the Library. This program is for families looking to connect with nature while getting out of the heat. Each program in the series explores a unique facet of the natural and cultural history of the Sonoran Desert and may include crafts, games, or hands-on activities.
- Unrecorded archaeological features have been discovered at White Tank Park. The Park Supervisor and
 interpretive ranger recently visited a number of petroglyph sites on the western edge of White Tank Park
 while checking the boundary fence. At these sites, they discovered previously unrecorded grinding stones
 and potential roasting pits, both inside and outside the park boundary. Data was collected and recorded
 through GPS units and photo surveys.
- The tortoise enclosure contractor has completed building the walls and fencing for the tortoise habitat. The draft signage has been approved by AZGFD and the park is working with the Friends of WTP to order and purchase the sign. The den and habitat has been designed and work will begin in July.
- The Butterfly Garden is doing well with the plants being watered bi-weekly. Signage will be added in this
 fiscal year.
- Maintenance staff and volunteers have added posts and fence to several illegal access roads that cross
 inside the park's west boundary. More boundary fencing issues will be addressed in FY16 to reduce impact
 on these otherwise pristine areas.

Vulture Mountain Regional Park:

- The Environmental Assessment for the proposed developed areas in the Vulture Mountains Recreation Area continues to proceed.
- In the spring, the Westside superintendent attended a 5-day OHV trail building workshop and Single Track Summit in Flagstaff hosted by Arizona State Parks and their OHV program. The 3-day field workshop consisted of learning how to plan and build single track trails for motorized dirt bikes. The 2-day Single Track Summit encompassed statewide issues and concerns with motorized trail access and travel. During the 5 days, the superintendent gained experience and insight into the world of OHV recreation. The networking with the state's OHV clubs, users and other agencies will prove to be valuable.