

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Day: Monday
Date: 29 February 2016
Time: 10.30 am
Place: Lower Higham Visitor Centre - Werneth Low Country Park

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for the meeting from Members of the Joint Committee.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest from Members of the Joint Committee.	
3.	MINUTES The Minutes of the proceedings of the previous meeting of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on 23 November 2015 to be approved as a correct record.	1 - 2
4.	GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT To consider the report of the Greenspace Development Officer.	3 - 10
5.	PLANNING MATTERS The Planning Officer to update the Joint Management Committee on applications received in the vicinity of the Country Park.	
6.	URGENT ITEMS To consider any additional items the Chair is of the opinion shall be dealt with as a matter of urgency.	

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Agenda Item 3.

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, 23 November 2015

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11.15 am

Present: Councillors Robinson (Chair), Cooper, J Fitzpatrick and R Miah

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Bell, Bowden and Peet

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on 27 July 2015 were approved as a correct record.

11. GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Greenspace Development Officer submitted a report informing Members of the activities undertaken within the Country Park since the last meeting of the Joint Management Committee held on 27 July 2015.

It was reported that the footpath refurbishment work around the Baron Fields Woodlands area of the Country Park had been completed. The footpaths were a well-used route and lots of favourable comments had been received.

Members were informed that the Country Park had received a total of £28,827 of grant income from Natural England's environmental stewardship higher level agreement 2010-2020. An updated figure for year six of the ten year agreement would be brought to the next meeting. A successful inspection had been carried out by Natural England in July with the Country Park delivering real positive outcomes.

The 2015/16 greenspace volunteer service's winter maintenance of projects was outlined (as per appendix one of the report). Five of the 25 projects had already been completed during October and an update on the progress of works would be brought to the next meeting to include an approximate market price of carrying out the works.

Members heard that the summer 2015 programme of public events had completed with a final event being held in September and the 2015/16 winter/spring programme of public events had commenced. Visitor monitoring data across the park for 2015 was provided with a comparison to 2014 figures.

It was reported that the Country Park had been awarded its 12th consecutive Green Flag Award and the Park had witnessed the annual migration of pink-footed geese on-route from Iceland to the east coast of Britain. There has been an increase in the numbers of buzzards and roe deer, which was a good example of nature conservation, with decreased sightings of minks.

The Greenspace Development Manager presented the events programme booklet where a number of events were being run by volunteers. Ideas for upcoming events were currently being developed

and would be presented at a future meeting. Members suggested that the centre would benefit from internet access; it was agreed this would be explored and an update on progress would be supplied at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Committee meet as follows:-

DATE	VENUE	TIME
Monday 29 February 2016	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	10.30 am (preceded by tour of Country Park at 9.30 am)

13. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no items for urgent consideration at the meeting.

CHAIR

Agenda Item 4.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	29 February 2016
Reporting Officer:	Assistant Executive Director, Place David Cannon, Greenspace Development Officer
Subject:	GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT
Report Summary:	To inform Members of activities undertaken within the Country Park since the last meeting of the Joint Management Committee (17 November 2015).
Recommendations:	That the report be noted.
Links to Community Strategy:	To ensure that the Country Park is an attractive and environmentally friendly place to visit.
Policy Implications:	The activities in the Country Park are in accordance with Council policy priorities.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	The funding for the projects is met by the Operations and Greenspace revenue budget.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	It is important that the Joint Management Committee is kept informed of activities undertaken in the Country Park.
Risk Management:	Activities in the Country Park are kept under review in order to ensure any potential risks are dealt with adequately.
Access to Information:	Background papers and information can be obtained by contacting David Cannon, Greenspace Development Officer,  phone: 0161-368-6667  e-mail: david.cannon@tameside.gov.uk

1. Maintenance of Sites

- 1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2016 will begin in April. The programme includes the grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas and strips along footpaths.
- 1.2 Following a review of the Borough's tractor, grass cutting programme, undertaken due to reductions in Greenspace budgets, the two sites on Baron Fields have been identified as areas that potentially will not be cut this summer. Discussions with Operations managers are at the moment ongoing so no final decision has been made. It has been suggested that areas no longer cut could be transformed into woodland.

2. Environmental Stewardship – Higher Level Agreement 2010 – 2020 Update

- 2.1 Environmental Stewardship agreements have five primary objectives:

- Wildlife conservation
- Maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character
- Natural resource protection
- Protection of the historic environment; and
- Promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside

Environmental Stewardship – Higher Level agreements are only suitable for land that is of “**significant environmental interest**”.

- 2.2 In November 2015 the Country Park received **£1,993** of grant income which was the interim payment for Year 6. Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total **£30,821** of grant income from Natural England.

3. Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service

- 3.1 Since the last meeting of the Country Park Joint Management Committee the volunteers have held 3 meetings. The volunteers assist the Greenspace Development Officer with public events, the maintenance and general upkeep of sites, and staffing the visitor centre. There are at present 17 members of the volunteer service.
- 3.2 At the September 2015 meeting of the Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service the volunteers agreed the major projects to be undertaken during winter and spring 2015/2016. An update on the progress so far can be found in the Appendices of this report in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.3 At a recent meeting of the Joint Committee members asked for a cost analysis of the Country Park Volunteer Service at the year- end 2015. Using attendance records for January to December 2015 it is calculated that the volunteers completed **3,730** work hours. Using the hourly rate of **£8.23** for agricultural wages if the Country Park paid this rate it would have cost **£30,697**. The volunteer expenses costs for this period was **£2,706**.

4. Public Events

4.1 The attendance for the 2015/2016 winter/spring programme of public events at the Country Park is as follows:

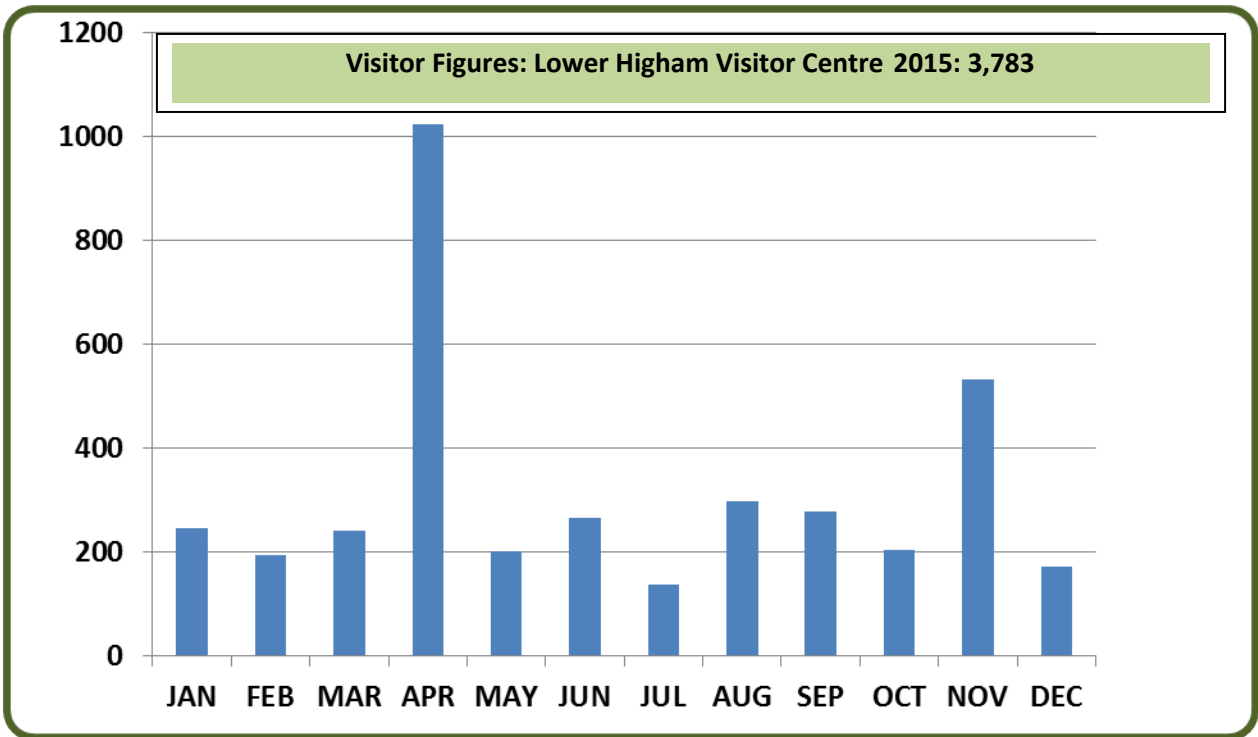
Date	Event	Attendance
4 th October 2015	Martin's Maps – Instruction on Map and Compass	2
6 th December 2015	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	42
27 th December 2015	Mid-Christmas Ramble	19
31 st January 2016	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	5
28 th February 2016	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
27 th March 2016	Easter Egg Hunt	--
24 th April 2016	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
Total to Date		68

5. Visitors – 2015

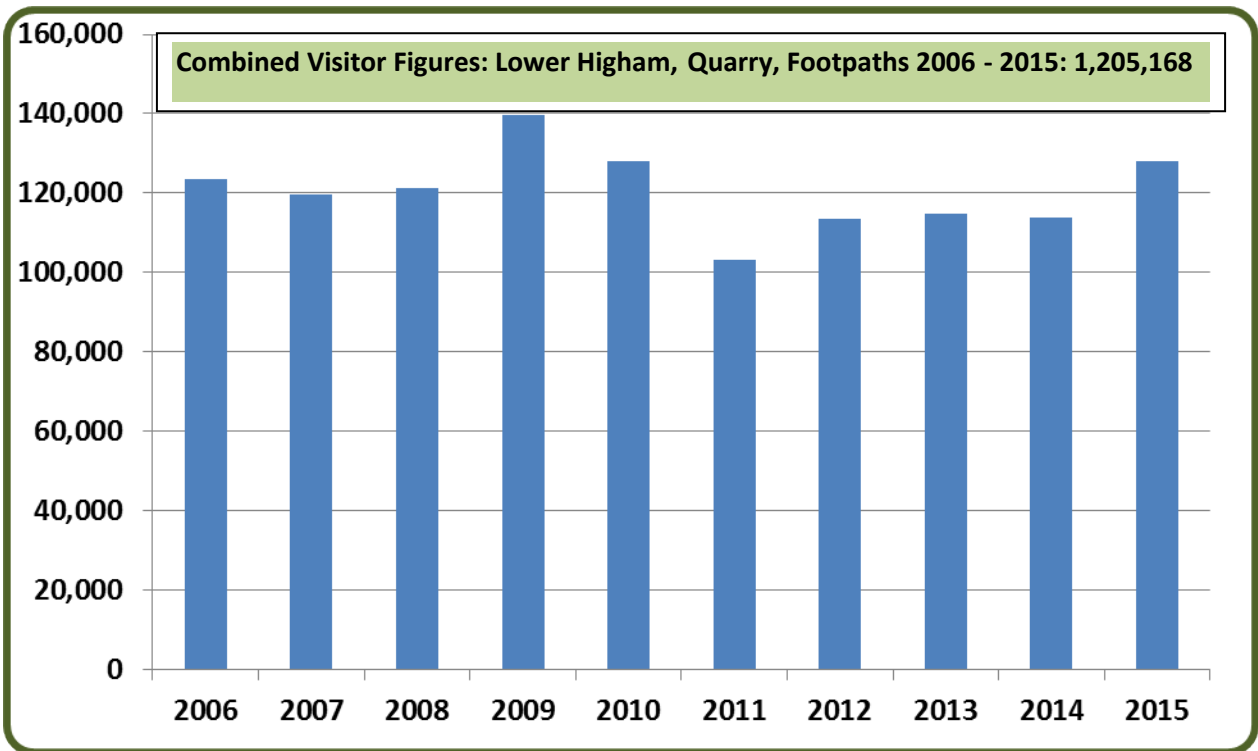
5.1 Active monitoring data for 2015:

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Counter on path from Lower Higham to Cenotaph	Counter on path from Quarry Car Park to Cenotaph
January	245	4,106	4,604
February	193	3,655	3,344
March	239	6,433	5,763
April	1,023	6,028	5,697
May	201	6,478	4,511
June	264	6,215	5,634
July	136	6,209	5,392
August	296	7,700	7,783
September	278	4,709	5,401
October	204	4,715	5,412
November	533	4,595	4,536
December	171	4,562	4,591
2015 Totals	3,783	65,405	62,668
Previous Years Totals:	4,114	61,228	52,431
2015 Differentials	(-331)	(+4,177)	(+10,237)

5.2 Barchart of Visitors to the Lower Higham Visitor Centre 2015:



5.3 Barchart of combined visitor figures on Lower Higham and Quarry Car Park Paths 2006 - 2015:



6. Wildlife Nature Conservation

- 6.1 In the next few weeks we will be displaying signs around the Country Park requesting visitors keep to footpaths when walking through the Park's managed meadows. Lapwings, Skylarks and Snipe use these areas to nest and raise their young and it's very important that we reduce disturbance to a minimum. All these birds have significantly reduced in numbers in recent years and it's important that the Country Park plays its part in their ongoing conservation. (A copy of the sign can be found in **Appendix 2** at the end of this report).

APPENDIX 1

Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteers 2015 2016 Winter Maintenance of Sites Projects

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completion Date
1	Lower Higham - Cow Lane	Cut back, prune hedgerow and sweep lane, clean-out grids	October 2015
2	Cenotaph Area	Cut grass/edge off. Clean area ready for Remembrance Day	October 2015
3	Lower Higham Gardens	Clean borders and prune shrubs ready for Remembrance Day	October 2015
4	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Clean all banking and hedgerow around Garage Building	October 2015
5	Lower Higham Main Drive	Crown Lift trees and clean-off banking	October 2015
6	Lower Higham Car Park	Prune trees/shrubs along border with houses on Spring Ave	October 2015
7	Higham Lane	Install 2 metres of pitched path at stile at Shepley's Meadow	November 2015
8	Baron Fields Hazel Coppice	Coppice Hazel in Memorial Coppice and process timber	January 2016
9	Rear of Hillcrest	Thin-out Coppice	January 2016
10	Flaggy Path	Edge -off and clean 134 metres of flag stones	January 2016
11	Hackingknife Woodland	Selective thinning	January 2016
12	Lower Higham Orchard	Cut back 40 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
13	Flaggy Path Hedgerow	Cut back 124 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
14	QCP Picnic Area	Cut back 54 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
15	Lower Higham Drive	Cut back 30 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
16	Lower Higham Car Park	Cut back 20 metres of Holly hedgerow	March 2016
17	Ash Cottage Picnic Area	Cut back 46 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
18	Holy Trinity Paddock	Cut back 60 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
19	Riding Track	Cut back 140 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
20	Earl of Warrington Meadow	Grub out 128 metres of new laid hedgerow	March 2016
21	Higham Lane	298 metres of hedge cutting layed hedgerow	March 2016
22	Baron Fields Woodlands	Selective thinning especially along rights of way	March 2016
23	Lower Higham Gardens	Clean-out long border and remove Lonicera	March 2016
24	Rig Field Meadow	252 metres of Hedgerow Laying	March 2016
25	Country Park	Audit and install waymarking/OA signs	March 2016

Completed Projects												
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Notice to Visitors Requesting to Keep to Paths During the Breeding Season of Ground Nesting Birds

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK
SPRING – SUMMER 2016
NOTICE TO VISITORS

THE NEXT FEW MONTHS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE YEAR FOR THE COUNTRY PARK.

THE MEADOWS WHICH ARE RENTED TO LOCAL FARMERS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF HAY AND FOR GRAZING ARE SENSITIVE HABITATS FOR ALL SORTS OF WILDLIFE.

GROUND NESTING BIRDS, INVERTEBRATES, RARE WILD FLOWERS ALL FIND SANCTUARY IN THE COUNTRY PARKS WILDFLOWER MEADOWS.

TO HELP IN THE CONSERVATION OF OUR RICH LOCAL FAUNA AND FLORA WE REQUEST THAT YOU KEEP TO FOOTPATHS AT ALL TIMES WHEN WALKING IN THE MANAGED MEADOW AREAS.

DOGS ARE WELCOME BUT MUST BE UNDER CONTROL AT ALL TIMES, PREFERABLY ON A LEAD AND KEPT NEAR TO YOU TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF DISTURBANCE.

THIS REQUEST IS ONLY FOR THE FARMED AREAS OF THE COUNTRY PARK, THE AREAS AROUND THE CENOTAPH AND LAND OVER TO WINDY HARBOUR ARE OPEN ACCESS AND YOU ARE WELCOME TO ROAM FREELY.

BY COMPLYING WITH THIS REQUEST YOU WILL BE ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THE COUNTRY PARK CONSERVE ITS RICH NATURAL HERITAGE.

SINCERE THANKS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL THE COUNTRY PARK OFFICE ON: 0161 368 6667.

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