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WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Day: Wednesday
Date: 21 February 2024
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 11 October 2023 to be approved as a correct record.	1 - 4
4.	GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT To consider the report of the Greenspace Development Officer.	5 - 8
5.	WERNETH LOW MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2029 To consider the report of the Greenspace Development Officer.	9 - 48
6.	JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT To consider a report of the Greenspace Development Manager.	49 - 50
7.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS To note the provisional dates of future meetings to be held on:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 July 2024• 16 October 2024• 12 February 2025	

From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Charlotte Forrest, Senior Democratic Services Officer on 0161 342 2346 or charlotte.forrest@tameside.gov.uk, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

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Agenda Item 3.

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

11 October 2023

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11:30am

Present: Councillors Robinson (Chair), Kitchen and Owen
Jane Durkin (Deputy Chair), Pete Ainger, Sue Ellis and Maggie Halliday

In Attendance: Nicola Marshall Greenspace Development Manager
Katie Lowry Greenspace Development Officer

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Bowden, J Fitzpatrick, Roderick, Colbourne and John Bell

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED

The Minutes of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on 14 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

10. 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 (JMC).

The report outlined the following:-

- Maintenance of Sites
- Public Events
- The Lower Higham Visitor Centre
- Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service

With regards to Maintenance of Sites the JMC were told that, following on from the work completed in March and April by the Tameside Council Countryside Estates Team to redesign drainage and improve surfacing from the top of Cow Lane up to the Cenotaph, more work had been completed in early August to make modifications and improvements to water collection and prevent erosion. It was reported that this was working well and had coped well with the recent inclement weather. Members of the Committee were encouraged to report any issues that they encountered.

The JMC were informed that the Council's Grounds Maintenance Teams had completed grass cutting on formal areas such as the Orchard, around the Visitors Centre Car Park and picnic areas on the site along with the grass at Arnold Road Entrance. The hazel coppicing project at Mousefields, which was started in Winter 2022 had looked splendid in the spring and early summer, but had unfortunately deteriorated in the past few weeks due to local deer eating the foliage. The Greenspace Officer would review the work based on this and plan a new approach for winter 2023.

The Greenspace Development Officer advised that a concerted effort to push the Himalayan Balsam back and prevent it encroaching into new areas of the Country Park had taken place with successes in the woodlands at the bottom of Baron Fields, where there had been a big reduction in

the last two years. The Greenspace Development Officer and Volunteers had focussed their efforts on preventing it encroaching over the riding track from Higham Cottages up into the important heathland habitat, the hedgerows at the top of Baron Fields and removing it from the edges of South Meadow. Officers extended their thanks to members of the public and volunteers who had put extra time in this year into tackling this invasive plant.

An update was provided on the pond renovation project at the edge of Great Stone Low and New Piece. It was reported that some life had returned to the area with sightings of Brown Hawker Dragonflies laying eggs in August and there was more diversity to the vegetation at the edge of the pond with a patch of meadow sweet emerging alongside foxgloves and lots of sedges and rushes.

The JMC were notified that the Hyde War Memorial Trust had commissioned new signs to be made in Spring 2023, which were made from durable materials with an attractive design and displaying a clear message to visitors about the presence of Ground Nesting Birds. The signs were erected in parts of the site that the ground nesting birds such as Sky Larks were occupying. Officers were grateful for the information received to help locate the nests and also to the volunteers for erecting the signs (numbered so they can be re-used next year) and taking them down again at the end of the season. Officers were also grateful to the vast majority of visitors, especially those with dogs, who adhered to the message to stick to paths to avoid disturbing these rare birds to help increase their numbers nationally.

It was reported that the Country Park's wildflower meadows were looking wonderful again in mid-summer. Hay cutting had been delayed until 21 August due to the continuous rainfall throughout early August. The hay was then cut, baled and removed from the Country Park by the Tenant Farmers. Unfortunately some incidents of bale rolling did occur, with damage to a dry stone wall on site. Officers would look to address this next year and put measures in place to prevent possible accidents. The young cows had now returned to site, occupying in the first instance the fields near the Visitors Centre and Spring Avenue, then they would be moved around site to new pastures for the remainder of the season.

The JMC were made aware that litter and fly tipping incidents unfortunately remained an issue with hotspots located at Windy harbour and along Werneth Low Road. Volunteers regularly litter pick the site and everyone was grateful for their time and efforts. The Greenspace Development Officer responded to fly tipping incidents where practicable and support was received where needed with the clear up from the Council Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping teams. All Fly tipping incidents were investigated if evidence was found.

In relation to Public Events, the Committee were informed that the Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association ran a two-day course over the weekend 9-10 September 2023, posters for which were displayed on site. The Lancashire Dry Stone Walling Association ran a weekend course on the 16 July and completed another section of the wall along the riding track at the back of New Piece field. Officers were very grateful for the improvements to the walls on site that had been achieved on both of these weekends. It was noted that the Hyde War Memorial Trust had paid for the stone to be delivered to site and the site preparation costs.

It was reported that the Hyde War Memorial Trust ran another great event for this year's Peace Day ceremony on the 25 June 2023 with a brass band. The Trust welcomed members of the public at the Visitors Centre after the event for light refreshments and an opportunity to chat and remember those who had been lost. Greenspace staff and volunteers assisted with car parking and logistics. The Trust were congratulated for their fantastic organisation.

The Greenspace Development Officer advised that the Council's Culture Team ran a successful event called 'Forage Delights' on Wednesday 9 August from 11am to 3pm, which was attended by over 150 people, where natural art was created, stories told and herb scented playdoh was made. The Hyde War Memorial Trust opened the café and Visitors Centre for people to use the facilities and get refreshments. She was pleased to announce that another event, "Apples & Alchemy", had

been arranged by the Culture Team to be held at Werneth Low Country Park on Sunday 29 October from 11am to 3pm.

The Greenspace Development Manager told the JMC that BBC Manchester Radio had requested to do a piece on Werneth Low and she would keep them updated with the details.

With regards to the Lower Higham Visitor Centre, it was noted that the café continued to operate every Sunday and was run by volunteers from the Hyde War Memorial Trust along with supporting other events, which had enhanced the visitor experience and encouraged new people to visit the site and appreciate what was on offer. It was reported that the weekly 'Welly Walks' had been a great success, 50 visitors had attended the Heritage Open Day in September to appreciate the wonderful Heritage on offer with guided walks and archives to look through. A family orienteering day, based on a Halloween theme, was planned for 28 October. There had also been visits from the Brownies, a Werneth Low Calendar Competition, an example of which was shown to the members of the JMC, and a new Facebook page, which had been organised by the Trust. The Facebook page had enabled better communication with members of the public around regular activities such as the work undertaken on site and the dates and details of various events.

It was reported that the Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service continued to take place every Tuesday completing various essential tasks around the site with weekly litter picking. Examples of completed works were appended to the report and included vegetation and hedge cutting, hedge laying, path and ditch clearance, a gate installation on Higham Lane, weekly maintenance in the formal gardens and orchard, Himalayan Balsam removal and dry stone wall repairs.

Thanks were extended to the Hyde War Memorial Trust for arranging an Afternoon Tea Celebration on Tuesday 26 September for the volunteers to thank them for their contributions to the upkeep of the site on a weekly basis. It was conveyed that the refreshments and kind words were very much appreciated by the volunteers.

The Greenspace Development Manager commended the improved communication and collaborative work between the Council and the Hyde War Memorial Trust. She thanked those who had submitted their comments on the Werneth Low Management Plan 2023-2028, which had been updated to reflect the comments, and advised that a final version of the Plan would be circulated to members of the JMC prior to consultation before formal adoption at the next meeting of the JMC, scheduled for 21 February 2024.

The Chair requested an update on the Joint Management Agreement. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that she had received it back from the Trust and would forward it onto the Council's legal team to review the comments. She further advised that a meeting of the Working Group needed to be convened imminently and asked for confirmation of membership from Tameside MBC and Hyde War Memorial Trust, who had equal representation on the Working Group.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted;
- (ii) That a final version of The Management Plan 2023-2028 be circulated to Members of the Joint Management Committee prior to consultation with other groups;
- (iii) That The Management Plan 2023-2028 be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Management Committee, scheduled for 21 February 2024, for formal adoption by the Committee;
- (iv) That the three representatives from Hyde War Memorial Trust be confirmed to the Greenspace Development Manager;
- (v) That the three representatives from Tameside MBC be confirmed to the Greenspace Development Manager; and

- (vi) That a meeting of the Working Group be arranged at the earliest possible convenience for all parties.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Management Committee meets as follows:-

- 21 February 2024

CHAIR

Agenda Item 4.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	21 February 2024
Reporting Officer:	Emma Varnam - Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
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 (11 October 2023).
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 and Chief Finance 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 Katie Lowry, Greenspace Development Officer,  phone: 07519 617 515  e-mail: katie.lowry@tameside.gov.uk

1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 The work completed by the Tameside Council Countryside Estates Team to redesign drainage and improve surfacing from the top of Cow Lane up to the Cenotaph in March and April (with further modifications in August 23) has held up well against the winter weather so far; the drainage systems are enabling water to be collected off the path surface into the ditch network, slowing down the speed of the water and preventing erosion to the path surface.
- 1.2 The Council Street Cleansing Team were on hand again with the small sweepers to help with preparations for Remembrance Sunday, we utilized them on Cow Lane to remove large quantities of leaves after the Volunteers worked hard on vegetation cut back etc.
- 1.3 Officers have seen a deterioration in the condition of fencing across the site, some of which have been repaired/replaced with timber stocks purchased in autumn. Spring will see another formal Site Inspection where fences and quantities needed to be replaced can be estimated but the costs of this could be high in the coming years.
- 1.4 The cows came into Werneth Low during September 2023 and farming signs were erected at the entrance to the fields where the cows were, these were then taken down and moved with the cows, however sometimes the cows were moved at weekend and therefore it took a day or more for the signs to be moved which caused issues for some visitors to the site with dogs. Officers will aim for better communication next year with the farmer to try and ensure that the signs are moved more promptly.
- 1.5 There has been an outbreak myxomatosis, a disease which only affects rabbits, in the country park. Officers have had many reports of dead rabbits which can be upsetting to some people; however sad this is it is part of the natural cycle of population numbers fluctuating and falling since the disease arrived in the country. The Greenspace Officer will move affected rabbits into areas which are less visible when seen.
- 1.6 Officers are grateful to Mike Kelly who has continued his annual hedgelaying at the country park again this year, working on a hedge boundary along Werneth Low Road from the Golf Course towards Lofty Top which is looking great so far.
- 1.7 There have been a number of litter and fly tipping incidents; Quarry Car Park is still being targeted as an area for fly tipping. Other hotspots are Windy harbour and along Werneth Low Road. The Greenspace Officer responds to fly tipping incidents or help is sought from the Council Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping teams. All Fly tipping incidents are investigated and if evidence is found enforcement action will be taken.
- 1.8 Trees planted on site by members of the public without permission from the Hyde War Memorial Trust or Tameside Council have been removed. These are kept in pots in the wood yard so if anyone would like them back we can offer this with the proviso that they are not planted again on Werneth Low.

2. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 2.1 Hyde War Memorial Trust's Remembrance Sunday ceremony on the 12 November 2023. The Brass Band was again in attendance and visitors had a lovely time despite the weather. The Trust then welcomed members of the public back into the Visitors Centre for light refreshments and to remember those who have been lost in conflict. Greenspace staff and volunteers attended to help out with car parking and logistics.
- 2.2 "Apples & Alchemy" ran on Sunday 29 October from 1100-15.00 arranged by the Council Culture team to celebrate National Apple Month. Operation Farm were onsite with their

apple press, visitors could build dens, roast marshmallows, turn apples into bird feeders, and join the alchemists for create fragrant potions and mystical transforming clay masks. This event has been partly funded by the Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for Communities and Place.

3. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE

- 3.1 Officers note that the café is now operating every Sunday run by Volunteers from Hyde War Memorial Trust.
- 3.2 The Visitors Centre and Café have continued to support other events which have brought new people to the site. The Werneth Low Calendar Competition saw some wonderful entries and many people got engaged and got a lot out of this new venture, along with lots of people having images of Werneth Low in kitchens and offices all over the world.
- 3.3 The Facebook page continue to improve communication with site users and showcasing the volunteer work completed on site each week.

4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 4.1 The Greenspace Volunteers have continued to meet every Tuesday 10am till 3pm since the last report, completing various essential tasks around the site and weekly litter picking. Examples of the work completed can be found in **Appendix 1**. They have continued to use the tool stores and Garage as shelter and storage which has been working well.
- 4.2 The Volunteers had their Christmas Celebration in the Wood Yard on Tuesday 19 December where they made wreaths, sang songs and celebrated the massive achievements of 2023. The Council and Hyde War Memorial Trust want to formally record their thanks to all of the volunteers for the hard work, dedication and support that you give week in week out in all weathers to improve and maintain Werneth Low Country Park.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As set out at the front of the report.

APPENDIX 1

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completed
1	New Piece	Removal of encroaching blackthorn from hedgerow into this field to maintain it's open nature for the benefit of ground nesting birds and flora in this area.	Oct
2	Gardens and along edge of Hacking Knife	Native bulb planting in Hacking Knife (Tenby Daffodils) to add to early nectar and pollen available for bees. Tulips and other bulbs planted in the formal gardens to add colour and interest for visitors, human and wildlife.	Oct
3	Cow Lane and Cenotaph	Removal of leaves and encroaching vegetation from Cow Lane and last cut of grass at the Cenotaph to prep for Remembrance Sunday.	Nov
4	Near Higher Higham	Coppicing small oak trees which were blocking the view from the bench towards Manchester.	July
5	Various	Cross drains- these are maintained on a weekly-monthly basis by removing leaves and soil. This helps prevent path erosion on site.	Oct- Feb
6	Stone Pitched path from VC towards Quarry Car Park	We cleared the overgrown Stone Pitching of grass to reveal the full width and enable ease of access for walkers.	November
7	Cow Lane Riding Track	Replacing post and rail fencing along this stretch which posts had rotten to ensure a good boundary for livestock.	
8	Flaggy Path Steps	Stone top up to prevent slips trips and falls.	December
9	Various	Dry Stone walling repairs, small and larger repairs completed- some collapses, some vandalism. Most recent at Quarry Car Park where a Road Traffic Accident happened due to a sudden ill health at the wheel.	Oct- Feb
10	Formal gardens and Orchard	Weekly maintenance, removal of leaves, weeding of beds and maintaining the garden of remembrance.	Weekly
11	Visitors Centre Car Park and Quarry Car Park	Weekly litter pick, signs cleaned and driveway drainage maintained to keep clear. Cobbles received a thorough clearing at the end of November.	Weekly
12	Quarry Car Park	Tree management- a snapped limb was spotted in an Alder Tree at the top of Quarry Car Park and reported in. GDO chainsaw backup was received to attend to this and make it safe, we also cleared a dead Hazel from the entrance.	January
13	Werneth Low Road near Golf Course.	Removal of hedgelaying brushings from the field and construction of wind-rows at the edge of the field to create habitat for small mammal and other wildlife.	January
14	Top of Flaggy path onto the main path from Quarry Car park.	Construction of a new section of footpath with drainage to enable ease of access and less standing water causing deep puddles in this area.	February

Agenda Item 5.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	21 February 2024
Reporting Officer:	Emma Varnam - Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
Subject:	WERNETH LOW MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2029
Report Summary:	This report sets out the need for a 5 year Management Plan, which sets out the approach that the TMBC Greenspaces Team will take to manage the Country Park and includes the plan.
Recommendations:	That the 5 Year Management Plan be adopted by the Joint Management Committee.
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 and Chief Finance 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 plans to manage the Country Park.
Risk Management:	Management of the Country Park is 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 Katie Lowry, Greenspace Development Officer,  phone: 07519 617 515  e-mail: katie.lowry@tameside.gov.uk

1. MANAGEMENT PLANS

- 1.1 The purpose of a management plan for a site like Werneth Low Country Park is to set out the way it will be operationally managed to ensure that it is protected as a special place for people and wildlife.
- 1.2 Management Plans are frequently created for a wide range of habitats and sites including urban parks, woodlands, scheduled ancient monuments and local nature reserves. They set out how the site will be managed and maintained in terms of habits but also how visitors will be managed on site including any restrictions.
- 1.3 The Management Plan sits alongside and complements the Joint Management Agreement; the Joint Management Agreement sets out how Hyde War Memorial Trust and the Council work together strategically to oversee the delivery of the Country Park whilst the Management Plan is a more operational document which sets out the land management framework.
- 1.4 The previous Management Plan has now expired so the Council have updated the Management Plan, attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.5 The purpose of this Management Plan is to lay down a management framework for Werneth Low Country Park through the Joint Management Committee for the next 5 years from 2023 to 2029. This plan will:
 - Assist in achieving a balance between recreational use and wildlife nature conservation
 - Assist in the conservation of the landscape and historical features
 - Help in the promotion and marketing of the Country Park
 - Ensure management can be achieved within resources available
 - Guide the formulation of annual Action Plans
- 1.6 Particular sections within the plan will:
 - Record the existing attributes of the Country Park in particular its wildlife nature conservation value and historic features
 - Give information about the Country Park
 - Identify its value and significance
 - Explain what management is intended to achieve
 - Outline the means which will be used to do this
 - Identify who will do what, when and what resources are required
 - Provide a way of checking the effectiveness of site management

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 As set out at the front of the report.

**WERNETH LOW
COUNTRY PARK**

**MANAGEMENT PLAN
2024 – 2029**

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Purpose of the Plan
- 1.2 Sustainable Management

2. AIMS

- 2.1 The Vision
- 2.2 Overall Aims

3. SITE DETAILS

- 3.1 Location and Size
- 3.2 Ownership
- 3.3 Creation of the Country Park
- 3.4 Formal Management Arrangements and site status
- 3.5 Occupancy
- 3.6 Access
- 3.7 Biodiversity - Habitats and Wildlife
 - 3.7.1 The habitats
 - 3.7.2 Unimproved and semi-improved acidic grassland, and poor semi-improved acidic grassland
 - 3.7.3 Improved grassland
 - 3.7.4 Neutral grassland
 - 3.7.5 Amenity grassland and shrub borders
 - 3.7.6 Deciduous woodland
 - 3.7.7 Dry heath
 - 3.7.8 Field boundaries
 - 3.7.9 Wetland
 - 3.7.10 Flora
 - 3.7.11 Fauna
- 3.8 Site Furniture
- 3.9 Site Cleanliness
- 3.10 Formal Designations (Map 6. SBI designations)
- 3.11 Organisation
- 3.12 Land Use
- 3.13 Landscape
- 3.14 Historical Attributes

- 3.15 Physical Attributes
- 3.16 Cultural and Aesthetic Attributes
- 3.17 Recreation

4. PROPOSED MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Sustainability
- 4.2 Landscape and Habitat Management
 - 4.2.1 Overall landscape objectives
 - 4.2.2 Habitat Objectives
 - 4.2.3 Unimproved and semi-improved acidic grassland, and poor semi-improved acidic grassland
 - 4.2.4 Improved grassland
 - 4.2.5 Neutral grassland
 - 4.2.6 Amenity grassland
 - 4.2.7 Broadleaved woodland
 - 4.2.8 Dry Heath
 - 4.2.9 Field Boundaries
 - 4.2.10 Wetlands
 - 4.2.11 Habitat Surveys
 - 4.2.12 The surrounding land: control of development
- 4.3 Visitor Management
 - 4.3.1 Visitor Management Objectives
 - 4.3.2 Responsible use
 - 4.3.21 Litter/Fly Tipping
 - 4.3.3 Walking
 - 4.3.4 Horse Riding and Cycling
 - 4.3.5 Dog walking
 - 4.3.6 Noisy pursuits that may endanger other visitors
 - 4.3.7 Drones
 - 4.3.8 Metal Detecting
 - 4.3.9 Kites
 - 4.3.10 Car parking
 - 4.3.11 Golf
 - 4.3.12 Events
 - 4.3.13 Interpretation
 - 4.3.14 Site Furniture
- 4.4 Management of Historical and Cultural aspects of the site.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 Country Park Budget
- 5.2 The Hyde War Memorial Trust
- 5.3 Health and Safety
- 5.4 Training
- 5.5 Monitoring and Review

6. PROGRAMME OF MANAGEMENT

MAPS

- 1. Location
- 2. Ownership
- 3. Occupancy
- 4. Access
- 5. Habitats
- 6. Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) maps.
- 7. Field names

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this Management Plan is to lay down a management framework for Werneth Low Country Park through the Joint Management Committee for the next 5 years from 2023 to 2028.

This plan will:

- Assist in achieving a balance between recreational use and wildlife nature conservation
- Assist in the conservation of the landscape and historical features
- Help in the promotion and marketing of the Country Park
- Ensure management can be achieved within resources available
- Guide the formulation of annual Action Plans

Particular sections within the plan will:

- Record the existing attributes of the Country Park in particular its wildlife nature conservation value and historic features
- Give information about the Country Park
- Identify its value and significance
- Explain what management is intended to achieve
- Outline the means which will be used to do this
- Identify who will do what, when and what resources are required
- Provide a way of checking the effectiveness of site management

1.2 SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

This plan follows the principles of sustainable environmental management is consistent with the Government's 25 year environment plan and Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (which places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity). Good resource management and sympathetic approaches to environmental stewardship will ensure the continued enjoyment of the Country Park. This is a main theme of the management plan which runs through all sections.

2. AIMS

2.1 VISION

The vision for Werneth Low Country Park is a place where nature conservation and informal countryside recreation are in balance. It is a place where natural beauty is enhanced, where wildlife can thrive and where visitors regardless of their ability or background, can spend an enjoyable and fulfilling time.

2.2 OVERALL AIMS

The overall management aims are:

1. To manage the Country Park in a way that sustains and improves the quality and variety of its wildlife and landscape, and where recreation activity is in harmony with this.
2. To facilitate access for visitors
3. To manage the Country Park for its cultural and historic importance
4. To encourage education and participation in the practical management of the Country Park by engaging volunteers from the local community in weekly Conservation days.
5. To provide a high quality service to visitors, through the Joint Management Committee allow them a voice on how the Country Park is managed.
6. To maintain a safe and healthy environment, befitting a Country Park

3. SITE DETAILS

3.1 LOCATION AND SIZE

Werneth Low Country Park is located in Hyde, Tameside on the edge of the Pennines. It lies at an elevation of 279 m (915 ft) above sea level with a Prominence of 112m which clearly defines it in the local landscape. The Country Park consists of approximately 81 hectares (200 acres) of hilltop and hillside.

Grid reference: Visitors Centre SJ960935. Postcode SK14 5LR

MAP 1: Location



3.2 OWNERSHIP

60 hectares (150 acres) belong to the Hyde War Memorial Trust, including the Visitor Centre buildings. Tameside Metropolitan Council owns the remaining 21 hectares (50 acres) of land in the park.

See MAP 2: Ownership.

3.3 CREATION OF THE COUNTRY PARK

The Country Park was officially established in 1980 when the Hyde War Memorial Trust and Tameside MBC and the then Greater Manchester County Council entered into a formal agreement relating to the establishment and management of the park. Responsibilities relating to Greater Manchester County Council were passed on to Tameside MBC in 1986 when the County Council was abolished.

3.4 FORMAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND SITE STATUS

The Country Park is formally managed by the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee. The committee is made up of trustees of the Hyde War Memorial Trust and elected members of Tameside MBC. It meets three times a year and is advised by various officers of the Local Authority with governance provided by Tameside MBC Democratic Services. A full time Greenspace Officer is employed by Tameside MBC and has day to day responsibility for the Country Park.

The site is a designated Country Park. Parts of the site are classified as Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) on the Greater Manchester Register of SBIs (https://gmlrc.org/wildlife_sites/).

3.5 OCCUPANCY

The Hyde War Memorial Trust manage 20 hectares (50 acres) of grassland through a Farm Business Tenancy agreement with a tenant farmer. The Trust also leases a further 7 hectares (17 acres) to the Werneth Low Golf Club. Tameside Council lease 20 hectares (50 acres) of grassland on an annual licence to local farmers.

See MAP 3: Occupancy.

3.6 ACCESS

There are statutory and concessionary footpaths through the Country Park. The horse riding and cycle tracks are also concessionary. In much of the Country Park, visitors are encouraged to keep to the paths, and not roam. However, the Hackingknife to Windy Harbour area has been designated as open country under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

See MAP 4: Access.

3.7 BIODIVERSITY - HABITATS AND WILDLIFE

3.7.1 The Habitats

The Country Park is a valuable wildlife resource both locally and regionally. The main habitats in the Country Park are:

- unimproved acidic grassland
- semi- improved acidic grassland
- poor semi- improved grassland
- improved grassland
- neutral grassland

- amenity grassland
- deciduous woodland
- dry heath
- field boundaries (hedgerows and walls)
- wetlands

See MAP 5: Habitats.

(These are classifications used nationally by Natural England and have been identified by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit).

3.7.2 Unimproved and semi-improved acidic grassland, and poor semi-improved grassland

This includes the majority of the grazed or hay cropped land in the Country Park. 20.5 hectares (50 ³/₄ acres) of these habitats are on land owned by the Hyde War Memorial Trust, while 19 hectares (49 acres) are on land owned by Tameside Council. Species composition will have been modified by fertilizer or grazing.

Semi - improved acidic grassland areas lie especially in the Hackingknife area. In other areas (such as Baron Fields) the habitat incorporates scrub borders with broadleaved woodland.

There are also areas of acidic grassland on the golf course (see section 3.7.5)

Poor semi-improved grassland is found in land formerly leased to the Werneth Low Horse Riding Club (1 hectare, 2½ acres) which because of its seclusion and low public access is being managed solely for wildlife nature conservation. The meadow is boggy over 50% of its area, with soft rush dominant. It has interesting wildflower plant communities within which the Common Spotted Orchid can be found.

3.7.3 Improved Grassland

This is found in two meadows north and south of Cow Lane. It is also found in meadows around Windy Harbour in conjunction with poor semi-improved grassland.

3.7.4 Neutral Grassland

This extends across fields west of Werneth Brook. It is dominated by tufted hair grass and tall herb. Although species poor, left as it is it nevertheless provides a good habitat for small mammals and invertebrates. It also provides natural cover for Brown Hare.

3.7.5 Amenity Grassland and Shrub Borders

This includes some path edges, the golf course, formal areas adjoining the Visitor Centre. This is an intensively managed habitat, regularly mown, and is species poor, although the fruit trees in the orchard and shrubs provide a food source, especially in autumn. However, it is so managed either

because of the recreational use (golf course) or to provide a well cared for formal appearance at the entrances to the Country Park.

Werneth Low Golf Club lease 7 hectares (17 acres) of land from the Trust. While most of this is amenity grassland, there are areas with wildlife value such as the “roughs” of semi-improved acidic grassland and areas of dry heath.

Acknowledging the fact that this area of the park does have a strict management regime, there still must be close co-operation to ensure that the golf course area is managed in line with the principles of the Country Park.

3.7.6 Deciduous Woodland

Deciduous woodland, both semi-natural and broadleaf woodland plantation is confined to three main areas: Pipers Clough (a Grade B Site of Biological Importance) Hackingknife and Calf Hey. Pipers Clough is the oldest of the three. It contains a mixture of Oak, Rowan, Alder, Holly, and Birch and is typical of the kind of Clough woodland found all over the southern Pennines

Hackingknife and Calf Hey woodlands were planted in the early 1980s. Though these woodlands are still young in comparison to Pipers Clough, they are still important habitats with a high wildlife nature conservation value. The ground flora of the two new woodlands has developed with Bluebells have increasing in number and Broadleaved Helleborine has been recorded there. Hacking Kknife and Calf Hey woodlands comprise Oak, Hazel, Silver Birch, Wild Cherry and Sweet Chestnut.

3.7.7 Dry Heath

On the slopes of the Country Park facing north and east dry heathland has in the last 40 years become the dominant habitat. This is due primarily to traditional sheep grazing being stopped when the Country Park was established. The dominant species are Heather and Bilberry. In the past accidental grass fires have encouraged the spread of the heath over areas of course grassland. Wildlife species found about the heath include Green Hairstreak butterfly, which in the north of the British Isles is uncommon. Oak saplings have started to become established on the Heath; these along with encroaching scrub are to be managed to prevent natural succession of these areas into Woodland.

Dry heathland comprises just 2% of the habitats of Tameside so its continued presence in the Country Park is therefore important both locally and nationally.

3.7.8 Field Boundaries

Boundary habitats on the high ground are dry stone wall, with hedgerow on the lower ground. There are over 5km (3 miles) of dry stone walls within the Country Park boundary. The walls are key components in the landscape structure and provide a valuable linear habitat. Shrews, Mice and Voles can all be found in and around dry stone walls and with these small insect eating mammals come the larger species that hunt upon them. Weasels and Stoats

are common in the Park and are usually seen by or near a wall, and wildflowers and lichen both take advantage of the protection the walls afford.

In 2006 contractors working in the Country Park discovered Great Crested Newts hibernating in the base of stone walls. This discovery further emphasised the wildlife nature conservation importance of boundary habitats. We do not know what the current status is of the Great Crested Newts in the Country Park as no recent evidence of them has been found.

On the lower slopes hedgerows are the main boundary feature, though there are areas that have both walls and hedgerows present. In these areas there is an interesting mix of upland and lowland wildlife. Some hedgerows were planted through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and are managed through laying, while others are older, ancient hedgerows that will be left unmanaged. Hedgerow planting replaces post and wire fencing that has low wildlife value and is detrimental to the landscape aesthetics. Hedgerow habitat is very valuable to a wide range of wildlife especially winter migrant bird such as Fieldfares and Redwings. It is with these species in mind that much of the Parks hedgerows are not excessively cut or pruned which would thus deprive these birds of an important food source.

3.7.9 Wetlands

a) Clough Streams

Two streams rise on Werneth Low Country Park that are major tributaries of the River Tame. The stream in Pipers Clough flows to Godley Brook and the stream alongside Calf Hey woodland flows through Gower Hey wood. These water courses are only small brooks while within the park boundary, but they do contribute to the diversity of habitats. The water contains no fish and little, if any, aquatic wildlife. Other large species benefit from the presence of water. There are other small streams and drainage ditches that take off floodwater.

b) Acid Flushes

The hydrology of Werneth Low causes many fresh water springs to surface in many places in the Country Park. Where the water cannot easily flow away, small areas of acidic bog can develop. These bogs are known as acid flushes and are dominated by the Common Sedge. They have very acidic chemistry and support few wildflower species. Their main importance is as nesting sites for ground nesting birds, as these birds are declining in numbers, the conservation of their breeding sites is of the up most importance. Acid flushes are also a main landscape component of the Southern Pennines.

c) Ponds

The amount of wetland in the Country Park is small, amounting to only two small ponds and 3 other areas of seasonal wetland. The depth of water is shallow in the ponds and in dry summers, historically only two of them dried out but in recent years with hotter summers we have had no standing water present within the Country Park from Spring onwards. Their main conservation value is in the fact that they provide a breeding habitat for Great Crested Newts, Dragonflies and other invertebrates such as Toads and

Frogs. These ponds do not support any fish life due to the shallow water, but do support some interesting flora such as Water Crowfoot.

More management of these areas is needed to prevent excessive growth of willows, try and retain more water and prevent Himalayan balsam becoming prevalent.

3.7.10 Flora

Most notable in the Werneth Low area is the annual flowering of the Country Parks hay meadows. They contain interesting communities of wildflowers and grasses and species of conservation significance including Common Spotted Orchid and Yellow Rattle. In woodland areas of the Country Park Broad-leaved Helleborine is found along with Bluebell and Yellow Archangel both of which have Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) conservation concern status.

On the slopes of dry heath Heather and Bilberry dominate with small areas of Crowberry and small areas of Gorse.

Several notable weeds occur around the Country Park: Ragwort, Creeping Thistle, Broadleaved Dock and Rosebay Willowherb. Non-native invasive plants Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam are also present and require management to prevent them taking over new areas.

The Country Park has many species of fungi present, most notable the Pink Waxcap, found in the meadow around the War Memorial. This species is the subject of a Biodiversity Action Plan.

No records for lichens or bryophytes are held something which this management plan hopes to address.

3.7.11 Fauna

There are no faunal records specific to the Country Park. Informal surveys have been completed for summer migrant birds but only on an infrequent basis.

At Baron Fields 3 species of Warbler breed; the Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Blackcap. Historically on the higher meadows ground nesting birds included: the Lapwing, Skylark and Snipe however Snipe and Lapwing are now uncommon and Skylarks have suffered habitat loss due to the recreational pressures on the site. Golden Plover and Curlews have been recorded on their spring migration. The Kestrel, Buzzard, Little Owl, Tawny Owl and Short-Eared Owl are seen. Waxwings have been recorded and Wheatears in spring.

Mammals present in the Country Park include Rabbit, Fox, Badger, Brown Hare, Stoat and Weasel and bats.

3.8 SITE FURNITURE

When the Country Park was formally established in 1980, Signposts, seating, picnic tables, way marking, notice boards, gates and stiles were installed- these are in some instances showing signs of age are require some updating. Examples are:

Benches/seating, Picnic tables, brown and white highway signs.

All timber used on site is from Forest Stewardship Council accredited suppliers with an F.S.C. certificate.

3.9 SITE CLEANLINESS

Visitors to the Country Park consistently tell us that the site being free from litter and dog fouling is important for an enjoyable visit.

Dog fouling has been an issue in the Country Park since the early 1980s, but since the 2020 Lock down this has increased even more due to the large numbers of dogs being exercised in the area. Despite increased public awareness of the health hazards and waste bins being provided at the main entrances to the park dog poop bags are still found regularly around the park. Bins are however well used by the good majority and emptied on a weekly basis by Tameside Council's Street Cleansing Department.

Litter bins are not provided within in the Country Park, with visitors being encouraged to follow the Countryside Code and take their litter home where possible or use the bins at the car parks and at the main entrances. The Greenspace Volunteers and staff spend a part of each Conservation day on litter collection duties and we continue to try and educate visitors on responsible dog ownership and not to drop litter.

We unfortunately also suffer from Fly tipping incidents where vehicles can access parts of the site (e.g. Windy Harbour). These incidents are dealt with as they occur with support from TMBC Street Cleansing Dept where needed.

3.10 FORMAL DESIGNATIONS

There are two Sites of Biological Importance in the Country Park:

1. Werneth Low Country Park- (grade B)
 - Pipers Clough, valuable deciduous woodland
 - Fields including Flaggy, High Meadow, Rough Moor, New Piece and part of Great stone low, for species-rich neutral grassland and supporting Great Crested Newt communities.
2. Higher Higham Meadows (grade C), important grass/wildflower plant communities

Sites of Biological Importance are sites of a countywide value, identified by The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.

See Map 6. Sites of Biological Importance

3.11 ORGANISATION

The management structure for the Country Park is as follows:

THE COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

(elected members of Tameside Council and trustees of the Hyde War Memorial Trust)

|
GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

|
GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

|
GREENSPACE VOLUNTEERS

The Country Park is administered by the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee on a basis of a formal Country Park through the Joint Management Agreement. This originally ran from the 19th March 1979 to July 2020. A new agreement is currently being drawn up whilst the old agreement is rolling forward on an annual basis.

Day to day management is the responsibility of the Greenspace Development Officer who reports to the Greenspace Development Manager, Tameside MBC. The Greenspace Volunteers assist in a variety of ways in the management of the Country Park but mainly through weekly 'Conservation Days' where practical conservation action and maintenance tasks improve the site for both Visitors and Wildlife.

3.12 LAND USE

The overall land use, for planning purposes, is recreation. This use "overlays" a number of other land use types, reflecting the way the Country Park is managed

1. Farming

By far the largest such land use, which has created the enclosed field pattern of the landscape, so common to this area of the southern Pennines

2. Open access land

Land without access restrictions to visitors

3. Golf course

4. Clough woodland and planted woodland less than 50 years old

Present on four sites

5. Dry heathland

This has re-established on the higher, north facing slopes

6. Formal areas

These include the formal shrub and grass areas around the Visitor Centre, car parks, picnic sites and main entrances

3.13 LANDSCAPE

The overall landscape character is of open upland with patchwork patterns of enclosed fields. Wooded Cloughs radiate down from high ground linking the hilltop with lower, gentler farmland. The west boundary of the Country Park is urban fringe, the north boundary is semi-urban and the east and south boundary is rural.

3.14 HISTORICAL ATTRIBUTES

The history of Werneth Low goes back thousands of years and there are many historical features still visible today that record the effects of over 5000 years of human activity. The Ancient Celts of this area, the Brigantes, used Werneth Low as a burial ground and area of ritualistic worship. The Romans took the area sometime after 55 AD and built a wooden fort on the Hackingknife. In 1086, when the Domesday Survey was undertaken following the Norman invasion, Werneth Low was mentioned along with nine other places in Cheshire and valued at 10 shillings and declared “waste”.

One of the most recent historical effects on the landscape was the Enclosures Acts which portioned the Low into fields. These boundaries are exactly the same today as marked on the 1840s tythe map. On the higher ground, dry stone walls were used to enclose the land and on the lower slopes, hedgerows were used. This patchwork of field boundaries is an important part of the historical landscape.

There is no doubt that Werneth Low is an important archaeological area. The Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit has researched and excavated several sites within the Country Park and published a number of reports and documents. All archaeological features and remains are recorded on the Sites and Monuments register.

The historical buildings and structures within the Country Park are the Cenotaph (see 3.17), Hackingknife ‘shippons’ and the Lower Higham buildings (the Visitor Centre).

3.15 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

In recent years in this part of the southern Pennines, the weather has been milder with less snow and generally warmer temperatures. The hydrology in the Country Park is a main physical feature with many natural springs present that flow on an irregular frequency adding a dynamic aspect to the landscape. Erosion by run off following heavy rain fall has been a regular natural feature of the area with records of severe erosion going back to Victorian and Edwardian times.

The soil chemistry is traditionally acidic containing few nutrients. The base stone is Millstone Grit.

3.16 CULTURAL AND AESTHETIC ATTRIBUTES

The War Memorial (Cenotaph) is an important feature of the cultural landscape. It is visible from most locations in the park and from surrounding areas and is a poignant reminder of the impact on the local community of the two World Wars. Much of the land in the Country Park was purchased in 1921 following a public appeal to buy Werneth Low to preserve it as a place for recreation and as a memorial to the 710 men from Hyde who perished in the Great War 1914-1919.

3.17 RECREATION

The Country Park provides a recreational facility that caters for a wide range of informal pursuits. It is promoted as a place where visitors can enjoy the peace and quiet of the countryside, a place for recreation and reflection.

The aim is to manage recreation at a level that sustains the natural beauty and wildlife nature conservation value of the park. It is recognised that not all demands for recreation can be met.

By far the most popular use of the park by visitors is walking. There is a network of surfaced and unsurfaced paths crisscrossing the site. The footpaths are currently segregated from the horse and cycle tracks. Access points are made welcoming to visitors by regular removal of litter, provision of information boards and minimising restrictive or unnecessary signs. Regional and middle-distance routes through the Country Park include:

The Tameside Trail

The Cown Edge Way

The Trans Pennine Trail

The Etherow Goyt Valley Way

There are picnic areas at Lower Higham and Quarry Car Park additional facilities have been adapted such as bench seating, picnic tables and surface improvements. Other facilities include:

The Werneth Low Memorial Garden

The Lower Higham Herb Garden

The Croft Picnic Area

4. PROPOSED MANAGEMENT

4.1 SUSTAINABILITY

All actions identified in this management plan will be assessed before implementation, and subsequently evaluated, to ensure they meet current recommendations and legal requirements.

The management implications concerning the effects of global climate change will need to be taken into account as information and advice is made available, the plan has taken into account the Governments 25-year Environment Plan. The ethos of sustainability will be woven through every aspect of management, at all levels, ensuring Werneth Low Country Park takes a prominent position in the “green thinking” of the local community and the wider stage.

4.2 LANDSCAPE AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT

4.2.1 Overall Landscape Objectives

The Werneth Low Country Park landscape is an important resource. It is an historical statement reflecting the results of hundreds of years of human activity. It is regionally important as an example of Cheshire Pennine- fringe hill country. The overall landscape objectives are:

- To maintain the openness of the higher ground, to give a sense of space, with extensive views over the surrounding countryside.
- To maintain and develop deciduous woodland on the lower slopes and cloughs.

- To maintain formal areas only around the Visitor Centre, car parks, and picnic sites as identified in the maintenance contract with Tameside Council.
- To maintain traditional field boundaries.
- To safeguard features of historic interest.

4.2.2 Habitat Objective

The value of wildlife nature conservation at Werneth Low Country Park continues to be of great importance. The area is a haven for a wide range of wildlife through the diversity of habitats present on site, which need to be carefully managed in order to increase the biodiversity potential of the site. Measuring any increase in biodiversity and monitoring habitats has not formally taken place in the past few years. In future surveys for example measuring plant diversity and abundance in the hay meadows will be a priority.

The overall habitat objectives are:

- To maintain a variety of habitat types and to sustain or enhance their wildlife nature conservation value.
- To actively survey specific habitats and species to build a resource of environmental measurements to compare against.

4.2.3 Unimproved, Semi- Improved Acidic Grassland and Poor Semi-Improved Acidic Grassland

The management prescriptions for the grazed or hay-cut areas are broadly similar, but there are some differences. The Tameside Council owned meadows were managed through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme with Natural England from 1999 until 2020. The Schemes management prescriptions were strict, employing the best management practice for wildlife; as such, these management techniques have continued to be employed:

- Hay to be cut each year and cuttings removed from site. The cutting not to take place before the 15th July to permit flowers and grasses in the sward to seed and protect ground-nesting birds.
- Cut material to be turned at least once to help seed shedding.
- A one metre strip to be left uncut alongside the field edge to act as a wildlife refuge.
- After grazing is allowed up to 31st October. Stocking rates to be kept low to avoid poaching of the ground.
- Farmyard manure may be applied but only at a rate of 4 tonnes/hectare annually.
- Rolling and chain harrowing may be carried out between 1st August to 25th March.
- There must be no supplementary feeding of livestock.

Additional information:

http://www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk/assets/pdfs/Hay_meadow_and_pasture_management.pdf

The Hyde War Memorial Trust has similar prescriptions in their annual agreement with the tenant, but these are not as detailed and specific. Through a close working partnership between the Greenspace Officer, The Trust and the tenant farmer of the Trust, issues relating to wildlife nature conservation on Trust land will be addressed. These issues will include agreeing the timing of the hay cut and monitoring the right time to chain harrow. As about half of the Country Park is managed in this way, it is important in land management terms that the habitat management is in line with the objectives.

Baron Fields area:

- Maintain the cut grass areas for recreational use once a month May to September.
- Thin existing scrub woodland leaving longer living species such as the Oak.
- Where appropriate plant tree whips to diversity the age structure of the woodland.
- Manage Himalayan balsam in this area with hand pulling concentrating on pushing in back to the west side of the site which is privately owned.
- Explore the option of 'Leaky Dams' on the west side of site as the Himalayan Balsam number is reduced.
- Treat Japanese Knotweed with herbicide (licence obtained from Environment Agency 2021 for 5-year treatment plan) around the Scout Hut land and Orchard Rise.
- Manage and maintain culverts in this area to ensure water flow is not impeded on its entry into Baron Road to prevent possible flooding to local residents.

Hackingknife Meadow

- Mow sward once a year and remove hay. The cutting to take place late in the season, 15th August to 15th September to benefit late summer wildflowers such as the Harebell.
- Monitor effects of management regime biennially.
- Waxcap fungi areas to be conserved through specific management for these species; avoid sward height over 10cm, clear competing vegetation to allow grasses and herbs to flourish.
https://www.plantlife.org.uk/application/files/5116/3480/2509/Waxcap_ID_guide_PL_2014.pdf

New Piece Meadow Nature Reserve

- Formerly used by the Werneth Low Horse Riding Club this meadow has been managed since 1998 as a small area solely for wildlife nature conservation. Hay has been taken since that date always after the 15th July, however to tie in with cuts on Hackingknife this is more probably to take place after 15th of August. Monitoring plant and Bryophyte communities in this area will be advantageous to ensuring a good timing of cut to help these plants thrive.
- Restrict public access to the site.
- Monitor the sites improving abundance and diversity annually.

- Maintain the hedgerow and drystone wall field boundaries, preventing encroaching blackthorn from the hedgerow becoming prevalent in the field margins by cutting back in late Autumn/ early winter.

4.2.4 Improved Grassland

- Continue to manage by hay cutting and grazing licence issued by the Hyde War Memorial Trust.
- Delay hay cutting until after the end of June.
- Monitor changes in species diversity.

4.2.5 Neutral Grassland

- Adopt a policy of non-intervention to ensure this habitat remains as a good feeding area for birds and as a refuge area for mammals such as Hares.
- Monitor any changes to the habitat and introduce appropriate measures.

4.2.6 Amenity Areas

- Mow picnic areas once every two weeks April to October (Contract with Tameside Council).
- Tractor flail Baron Fields once per month May to October (Contract with Tameside Council).
- Prune fruit trees in Orchard as required and replant if necessary.

The Golf Course

In consultation with the Werneth Low Golf Club

- Maintain existing management regime especially the cut and non-cut areas of the course, understanding the habitat potential of areas of reeds etc and why these areas should remain uncut.
- Review annually chemical used on the course as run off eventually, via watercourses, find its way into other parts of the park.
- Maintain the landscape features of the course i.e. the drystone walls.
- Prevent encroachment of Himalayan Balsam in golf course land and from the golf course into the Country Park. This is especially important when areas are near to important heathland (SBI land at Pipers Clough), the responsibility for the control of Himalayan Balsam rests with the landowner or tenant of the land.

4.2.7 Deciduous Woodland

- Maintain policy of non-intervention at Pipers Clough (SBI) to maintain its delicate eco system.
- Mousefields Coppice- planted 1989 the coppice is now fully mature and needs management to enhance its wildlife potential. Starting 2022-23 season, place the area under a coppice rotation system divided into 16 Coupes. 1 Coupe to be cut over 2 seasons to give a mosaic of different light and height structures in different areas. Rabbit protection is likely needed to prevent excessive predation to regrowth of coppiced hazel. Oak standards (late planting) to remain in place for the first rotation and then reviewed after this date for impacts on outcompeting/ over shading. Oaks will coppice and will have interesting effects

as and when done. Arisings to be made into dead hedges away from the stools to give additional nesting and habitat potential in the area without out shading out regrowth. Monitoring of ground flora and fauna will be advantageous to gather data on benefits of coppicing.

- Monitor growth at Hackingknife and Calf Hey Woodland, thin out if required, leaving longer living species such as Oak.
- Coppice Hazel trees every 10-15 years at Hackingknife and Calf Hey.

4.2.8 Dry Heath

- Maintain policy of no grazing over this area.
- Continue to remove tree seedlings to lower ground to halt scrub succession.
- Prevent further encroachment of Himalayan balsam especially in the Pipers Clough/ Windy Harbour area
- Monitor effects of accidental burning if it occurs.
- Gather information on Green Hairstreak Butterfly populations to inform future management regimes to benefit this rare insect.

4.2.9 Field Boundaries

Dry stone wall management:

- Repair as soon as possible, within 3 months, as even small sections of fallen wall can soon become much larger repairs.
- Large repairs and re-builds to be completed by contractors.
- Complete re-builds only between the months of April to October avoiding hibernation disturbance to Great Crested Newts.
- Continue to assist the Dry Stone Walling Association to run courses on site to increase the skill set of this ancient art in the local community.

Hedgerow management:

- All new hedgerows to be planted at a rate of 6 species per metre, double rowed – 4 Hawthorns, 1 Hazel, and 1 Blackthorn/Holly (Holly preferred due to- Blackthorn suckers encroaching, manage any sucker growth to prevent encroachment into other habitats).
- Hedgerows to be laid on a 10-15 year cycle and left uncut for at least 2 years afterwards.
- Ancient hedgerows to be left unmanaged as components of the landscape structure.

4.2.10 Wetlands

Werneth Low is not a notable area for wetland. However, the small areas of ponds and flushes do support a varied mixture of wildlife. This includes Great Crested Newts, historically Snipe (which we hope to encourage back onto the site), and a

variety of wild plants. Maintaining the water areas on Werneth Low is a main priority, the overall objectives are:

For all areas manage the presence of Himalayan Balsam in wet areas (very difficult on steep slopes therefore push back to accessible land)

- a) Clough streams and drainage ditches
 - Monitor water quality and have tested if required.
 - Regularly inspect drainage ditches for blockages/erosion
- b) Acid Flushes
 - Prohibit drainage improvements to these areas
 - Continue non-intervention to afford these eco-systems stability
- c) Ponds
 - Where possible, maintain open water areas.
 - Prevent natural succession to marsh areas by intervention, coppicing of willows to help manage water levels.
 - Prevent, where necessary, overgrazing by cattle.

4.2.11 Habitat Surveys

Improving the diversity of wildlife is a key action of Tameside Councils' Biodiversity Action Plan. Regular surveys of habitats and species will be undertaken in partnership with the Greater Manchester Ecological Unit and other key partners. Surveys will take a variety of forms, from simple species counts to more in-depth measurement of abundance and diversity using indices indexes.

Modern day apps (e.g. <https://www.inaturalist.org/>) and web information from Greater Manchester Record Centre (https://gmlrc.org/wildlife_recording/simple/) can help more people who would like to identify wildlife easier and record it to collaborate and contribute to citizen science projects. When data is gathered in this way it can be verified and add to local and national reports. It can be particularly helpful in helping generate information on how Climate Change may be impacting our habitats and species; evaluation may then allow appropriate actions will be implemented.

4.2.12 The Surrounding Land: Control of Development

Maintaining the open character and quality of the surrounding landscape is important in order to safeguard the character of the Country Park itself.

The Joint Management Committee will continue to be consulted on all planning matters that impinge on the Country Park.

4.3 VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Country Parks deliver a range of benefits, services and recreational opportunities at a comparatively low cost.

Werneth Low Country Park is a popular area for informal outdoor recreation as a multi-functional green space. The overall visitor management objectives are:

4.3.1 Visitor Management Objectives

- Continue to provide visitors with a high-quality service, in line with the Country Park Natural England standards.
- Continue to promote the Country Park mainly for informal recreation and as a place where visitors can enjoy the peace of the countryside.
- Provide opportunities for all, consistent with achieving a balance between recreation, nature conservation and landscape quality, and minimising conflict between recreational users.

4.3.2 Responsible Use

- Responsible use of the Country Park will enable all users to enjoy their visit.

This will be sought through the following:

- Informing visitors of their responsibilities by use of the Countryside Codes, in leaflets, in information cabinets, by targeting particular groups (face to face meetings).
- At events - where visitor's behaviour is unreasonable, in the interest of staff safety and enjoyment of the area by others, police involvement may be necessary.

4.3.21 Litter/ Fly tipping

- Continue weekly litter patrols through the Park.
- Increase patrols and clean ups in summer months in areas prone to gatherings of people and 'party' type litter inside the site.
- Monitor the frequency of collections of the bins placed along the highway and report any problems to Tameside Street Cleansing Team who we work closely with.
- Work with Tameside Fly Tipping and Street Cleansing Teams to appropriately investigate fly tipping incidents and look to prosecute wherever possible. Windy Harbour, Werneth Low Road and Beacoms Lane are particular hotspots.

4.3.3 Walking

- Access points into the Country Park will continue to be made welcoming to visitors, for example by regular removal of litter and provision of information boards.
- All footpaths are waymarked
- Footpaths including their signposting or waymarking will be checked every 6 months and a complete audit every 12 months. Small repairs to be included in annual maintenance programmes.
- Regional and middle-distance routes will be managed and promoted where these pass through the Country Park and links to the wider network of footpaths beyond the boundary of the Country Park will be maintained. These include the Tameside Trail, Cown Edge Way and Trans Pennine Trail.

4.3.4 Horse Riding and Cycling

Currently all Horse riding and Cycling takes place on specially designated tracks. The following management for the tracks will be undertaken:

- Maintain the entrances to the riding track network that will provide safe access.
- At access points and where footpaths cross the tracks provide signs restricting the use of the tracks to horse riders and cyclists.
- Maintain the tracks, where budget allows, with a sound, stone surface to allow safe passage, paying particular attention to rabbit burrows under the tracks which can cause collapse.

4.3.5 Dog Walking

Werneth Low is popular with dog walkers. Dog fouling is problematic especially leaving bagged poo on site. There have also, unfortunately, been incidents of problems with uncontrolled dogs in the Country Park. Seasonally, due to ground nesting birds on site, we will also ask dog walkers to keep their dogs on a lead and stick to the footpaths to prevent disturbing these important rare species such as Sky Larks.

The following management measures will continue and be reviewed annually:

- Signs will be in notice boards, requesting dog owners to clean up after their dogs and during ground bird nesting season, signs on site requesting visitors to keep their dogs on a lead and keep to footpaths.
- Periodic poster campaigns to try and reduce the incidences of littering and dog poo bags being hung in trees or left on site.
- Working with the Hyde War Memorial Trust to have information in the Visitor Centre, working with partners such as the Dogs Trust to help educate visitors on responsible dog ownership.

4.3.6 Noisy pursuits and pursuits that may endanger other visitors

Recreation users will not be permitted where they create unacceptable levels of noise or create dangers for other users of the Country Park. This includes: remote controlled model plane flying (either engine driven or gliders); launching rockets etc.

4.3.7 Use of Drones

The use of drones by members of the public is not permitted anywhere within the Country Park. Occasionally, when professional film crews request permissions to fly drones to capture images, these will be granted as long as specific licences are provided due to the specific exclusion zones around Manchester Airport and the flight path.

4.3.8 Metal Detecting

Metal detecting is not permitted on any part of Werneth Low Country Park. We are fortunate to have significant buried archaeological remains on site as well as ground nesting birds and other important flora and fauna which could be disturbed or damaged as a result of this activity.

4.3.9 Kites

- Single line kites can be flown on the Hackingknife area.
- Twin line stunt kites, kites manufactured to produce audible effects and large aerofoil kites will not be allowed to be flown anywhere in the Country Park.

4.3.10 Car Parking

There are 2 car parks in the Country Park. The Lower Higham Visitor Centre car park and Quarry car park.

- Parking is currently free of charge. This will be kept under review.
- All car parks to be inspected and cleaned of litter on a weekly basis.
- Car park barriers and signage and surrounding grass shrub areas to be maintained to a high standard.

4.3.11 Golf

The golf course occupies land near Windy Harbour extending towards the Cenotaph.

- In liaison with the HWMT and the Golf Club, the Greenspace Officer will seek the reduction, as much as possible, of the use of agricultural fertilisers and herbicides in the management of the green areas, the retention of large areas of rough to serve as wildlife reserves and help to control Himalayan Balsam on their land.
- The Golf Club to inform the landowner (The Hyde War Memorial Trust) of any intent to alter the course or landscape before work commences.
- The Greenspace Officer will continue to provide directional sign posting for walkers using paths that cross the golf course.

4.3.12 Events

The Greenspace Officer and Greenspace Volunteers support annual events that are organised on site examples include; supporting the two Hyde War Memorial Trust events for Peace Day and Remembrance Sunday, the DSWA courses, educational activities run by Culture Services and other ad-hoc events. Along with the Trust we will look to increase the variety and quantity of events which support the aims of this plan and benefit the site and local community.

4.3.13 Interpretation

The interpretation of the Country Park to visitors enables a more interesting and educational experience. Interpretation unlocks the story of the site, its past, present and future and offers opportunities for Lifelong Learning. Country Park publications, public events, outdoor information such as viewfinders and the Visitor Centre services are key components of the interpretive process. These services, together with new ones, will be developed during the implementation of this plan.

The Visitor Centre is now run by volunteers from the HWMT and is currently operating as a café and information centre on a Sunday each week. We will

continue to work together through the Joint Management Committee to input into the information available at the Visitor Centre to help visitors find out about the site.

The Greenspace Development Team, where practical, will continue to make places available for work experience placements.

4.3.14 Site Furniture

- Check formally every 6 months on formal site inspections and record condition through photos. Implement repairs or remove items as necessary. We no longer allow new memorial benches on site, however when a family would like one to be replaced this is accepted. Other memorial benches will remain on site until they are no longer safe, replaced, if budget allows, with a similar type of bench.
- Around the Visitor Centre seating, picnic tables, notice boards and main entrance gates to be painted with “cetol” brand preservative.
- Clean annually all laminated, brown and white site information boards.
- Review all waymarking posts once a year. Renew way marking signs and rasp clean timber as required.

4.4 MANAGEMENT OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE SITE.

In order to safeguard and further reveal features of historic interest, and to bring these and the Country Park’s cultural associations to life, the following management will be adopted:

- Continue to work closely with Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit, on any proposals to undertake further archaeological investigation.
- Maintain a policy of non-intervention by Greenspace Team on sites that have an archaeological value.
- Continue to ban the use of metal detectors on the site.
- Continue the programme of managing the historic landscape features in the Country Park (dry stone walls, hedgerows) as set out in Section 5.3.9 of this management plan.
- Continue to liaise with the Hyde War Memorial Trust, as guardians of the Cenotaph, in the upkeep of this monument.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 COUNTRY PARK REVENUE BUDGET

Under the Country Park Agreement between Tameside Council and the Hyde War Memorial Trust, the Council is responsible for funding the revenue consequences of running the Country Park. The Greenspace Officer and the Greenspace Manager will actively monitor the expenditure throughout the year.

5.2 THE HYDE WAR MEMORIAL TRUST

The Trust have from the very beginning of the Country Park financed from their own accounts projects that befit the park and are compatible with the conditions of their scheme issued to them by the Charity Commission in 1976. The Trust receives income from investments, donations and the tenancies of hay meadows and the golf course. Projects funded by the trust include the Memorial Garden at Lower Higham and the restoration of landscape features such as dry-stone walls.

The Trust will continue to consider financing specific projects that are compatible with their Charity Commissions 1976 trust scheme.

5.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY

There is a wide range of health and safety policies and practices that operate in the Country Park, and which are constantly being monitored, evaluated and improved. The key aims of health and safety management are:

- To provide as safe an environment as possible for visitors and staff in the Country Park.
- To encourage the safe and responsible use of the Country Park by various users.

The following measures will be implemented:

- Incidents involving health and safety issues will be responded to in accordance with Tameside Council's Health and Safety policies and practices.
- The Greenspace Officer will complete the site Risk Assessment and review this with the Greenspace Development Manager on an annual basis.
- The Greenspace Officer will provide a point of contact with a range of organisations with an interest in the health and safety aspect of the Park's, management: the police, environmental health officers etc
- All sites in the Country Park will be formally checked every 6 months and documented on a Site Inspection Form, which is then archived. Day to day patrolling of site by volunteers and concerned members of the public contribute to allowing us to respond accordingly to any issue relating to the health and safety of sites.
- All contractors working on site will comply with the conditions set out in approved Risk Assessments and Method Statements.
- The Greenspace Officer will continue to be responsible for the implementation and active monitoring of the Country Park's health and safety programme. The programme includes the quarterly powered tools inspection, P.P.E. equipment inspections, fire extinguisher inspections, first aid kit inspections, ladder inspections etc.
- The Health and Safety Officer will review annually the Health and Safety Compendium and the C.O.S.H.H. register.
- The Greenspace Officer with support of TMBC Arboricultural and Countryside Estates Officer will be responsible for the implementation of the Council's procedure for the management of dangerous trees, and the annual inspections.

- A lone working procedure exists for staff and volunteers in the Country Park, and this will continue to be followed.
- Staff and volunteers will continue to receive health and safety training as needed.

5.4 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

As part of annual reviews training needs for staff and volunteers involved in the management of the Country Park are identified. Courses are then arranged and paid for by TMBC. These include essential training such as First Aid and machinery competency courses as well as skills training such as Dry-Stone walling courses.

5.5 MONITORING AND REVIEW

It is proposed that the monitoring of this plan will be completed annually at the summer meeting of the Joint Management Committee.

Site monitoring the effects of this plan will be achieved through basic visual assessments to more detailed and specific investigations to ensure that the work programmes continue to be compatible with the Vision for the Country Park.

Variations to this plan will be reported to the Joint Management Committee. These will be appended to this plan.

6. PROGRAMME OF MANAGEMENT

The following schedule lists the Country Park management tasks proposed during the currency of this plan; the Country Park Ranger will be responsible for its implementation:

ITEM						
QUALITY ASSURANCE	Frequency	2023/ 24	2024/20 25	2025/ 26	2026/ 27	2027/ 28
Formal site inspections documented with photographs	October and April	X	X	X	X	X
Prepare maintenance of sites programme for following season and share with Greenspace Volunteers	Twice a year	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate volunteer experience through questionnaires	Once a year	X	X	X	X	X
Hold 3 meetings of the Joint Management Committee	July/November /March	X	X	X	X	X
Provide input into the Culture Services event Planning	As required	X	X	X	X	X
Complete review of this Management Plan	March	X	X	X	X	X
Advise at meetings of the Hyde War Memorial Trust	March/May June/September November	X	X	X	X	X
Review Tameside Web pages concerning the Country Park	March	X	X	X	X	X
ITEM						
LAND MANAGEMENT						
	Frequency	2023/ 24	2024/20 25	2025/ 26	2026/ 27	2027/ 28
Manage Country Park landscape in line with objectives set out in 5.3.1	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Manage hay meadows in line with objectives set out in 5.3.3	Continual	X	X	X	X	X

Hay meadows cut and remove hay	After 15 th July	X	X	X	X	X
Hay meadows owned by Hyde War Memorial Trust cut and remove hay	After 1 st July	X	X	X	X	X
After-grazing of all hay meadows	Up to 31 st October	X	X	X	X	X
ITEM	Frequency	2023/ 24	2024/20 25	2025/ 26	2026/ 27	2027/ 28
LAND MANAGEMENT						
Investigate new ELMS and possibilities for WLCP	As information available.	X				
New Piece Meadow cut for hay	After 15 th Aug		X		X	
Continue to manage New Piece Meadow in line with objectives set out in 5.3.3	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to manage the Hackingknife Hay Meadow in line with objectives set out in 5.3.3	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Set up monitoring and recording systems for hay meadows as set out in 5.3.2 and 5.3.13	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Remove scrub from dry heath on north facing slope from Hackingknife to Windy Harbour	November-March	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to manage Baron Fields as amenity grassland, cut once a month	May-September	X	X	X	X	X
Maintain Golf Course as set out in 5.3.6	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Maintain amenity grassland as identified in the Grounds Maintenance Contract	April-October	X	X	X	X	X
Manage broadleaved woodland as set out in 5.3.7	Continual	X	X	X	X	X

Coppice Hazel trees in Calf Hey and Hackingknife woodlands	December		X			X
Coppice Mousefields	November-end of February		X			X
Maintain dry stone walls and where necessary complete repairs within 4 weeks	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Assess dry stone walling complete rebuilds	April and October	X	X	X	X	X
Monitor wetlands and record species diversity and abundance as set out in 5.3.10	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Identify and protect hibernation sites for Great Crested Newts and other amphibians and reptiles	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
ITEM						
LAND MANAGEMENT	Frequency	2023/24	2024/2025	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Inspect outdoor site furniture and repair as necessary	April and October	X	X	X	X	X
Cetol site furniture and clean notice boards	April	X	X	X	X	X
Litter pick car parks and main routes	Weekly	X	X	X	X	X
Undertake audit of way marking and signage	March/April	X	X	X	X	X
Review TMBC Ground Maintenance Contract	March	X	X	X	X	X
Annual meeting with tenants of the Country Park	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
ITEM						
VISITOR MANAGEMENT	Frequency	2023/24	2024/2025	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28

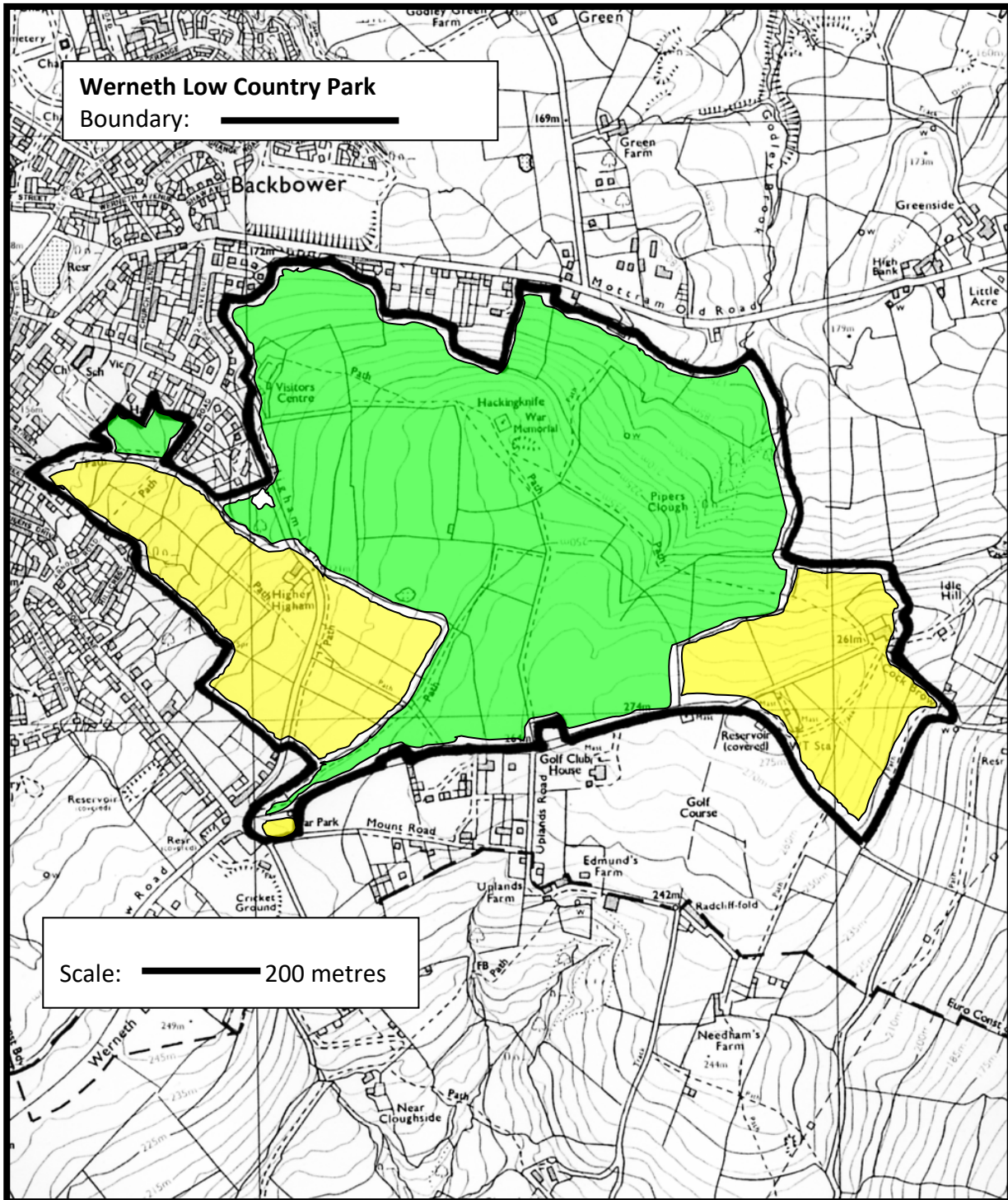
Complete audit of footpaths and riding tracks, include any repairs into maintenance of sites programmes	April/ October	X	X	X	X	X
Hold meetings with the Hyde War Memorial Trust and Golf Club concerning issues affecting the Country Park	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
ITEM						
HISTORY AND CULTURE	Frequency	2023/ 24	2024/20 25	2025/ 26	2026/ 27	2027/ 28
Support Hyde War Memorial Trust with their research and archive	As needed	X	X	X	X	X
Monitor safeguarding of archaeological sites utilising the Greater Manchester Archeological Unit where needed. http://www.gmau.manchester.ac.uk/	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
ITEM						
HEALTH AND SAFETY	Frequency	2023/ 24	2024/20 25	2025/ 26	2026/ 27	2027/ 28
Complete all H/S active monitoring	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Review H/S Compendium	April	X	X	X	X	X
Review COSHH register	April	X	X	X	X	X
ITEM						
Complete tree inspection procedure	June/July & after storm	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to require risk assessments and method statements from contractors working in Country Park	Continual	X	X	X	X	X
Undertake review of Volunteers Training	June/ as needed as					

requirements and plan training.	new volunteers join	X	X	X	X	X
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Map 1: Location

Map 2: Ownership



Key:

Land belonging to Tameside Council



Land belonging to Hyde War Memorial Trust



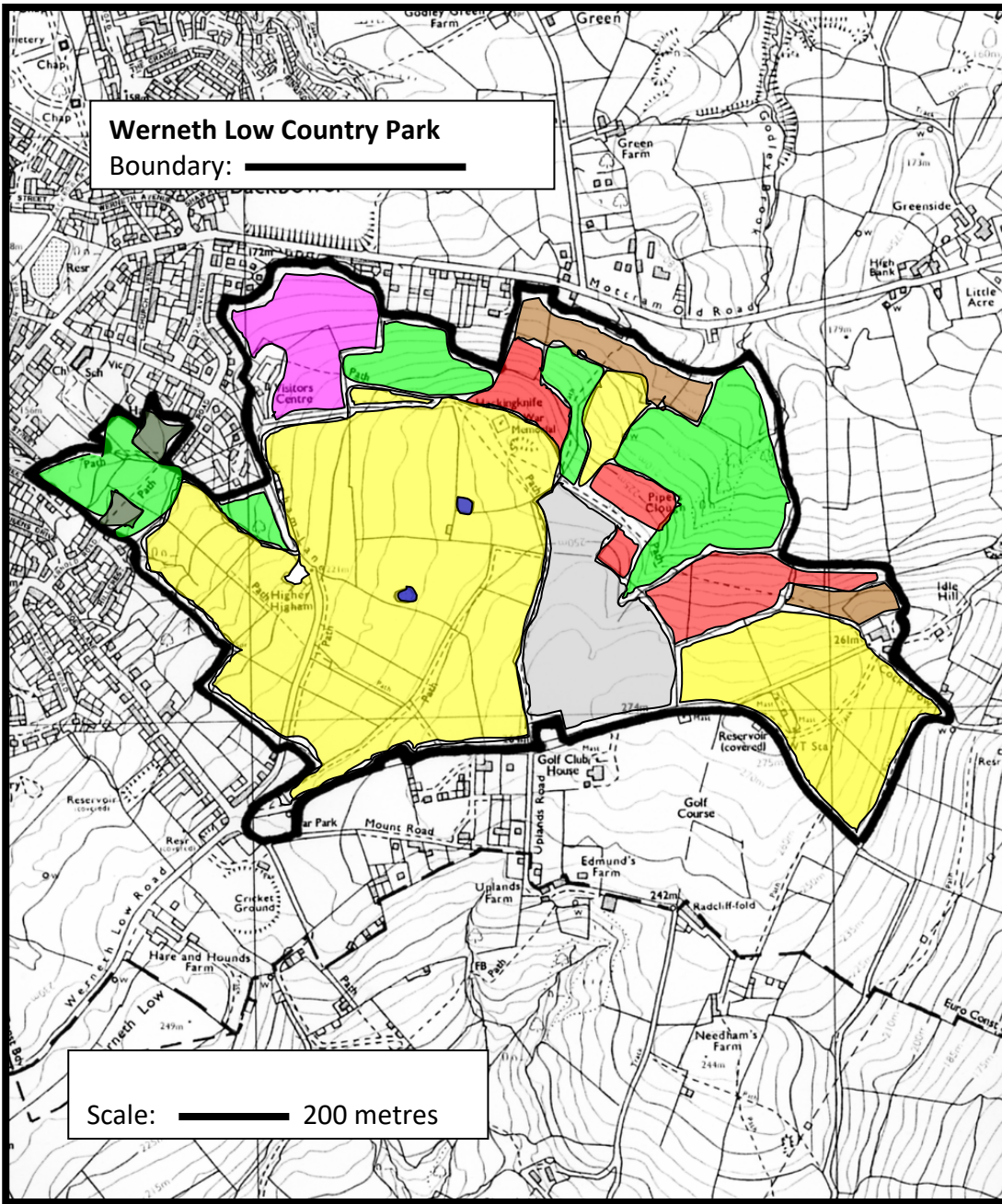
Map 3: Occupancy



b) Rights of Way Map (Green) Permissive Paths- Orange.



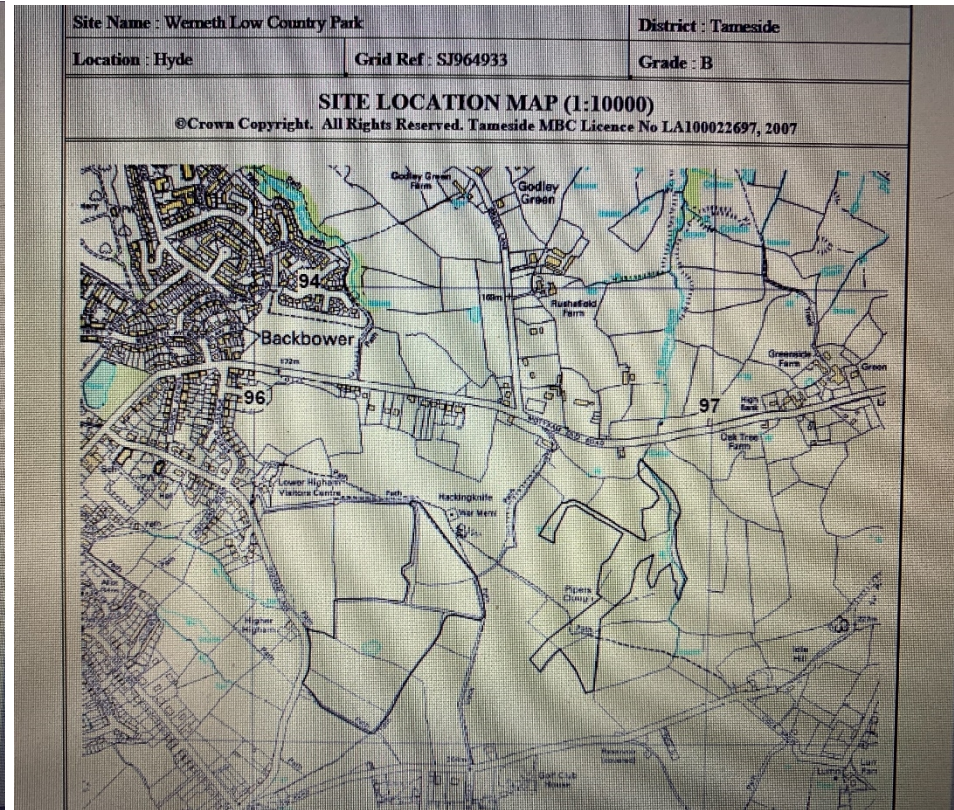
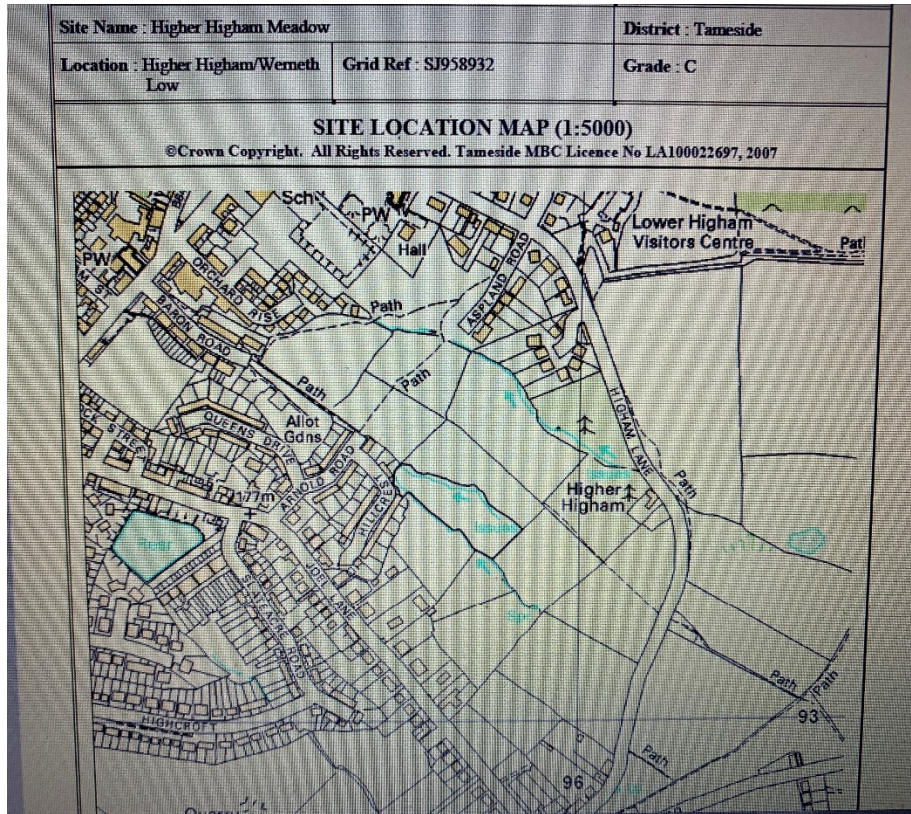
Map 5: Habitats



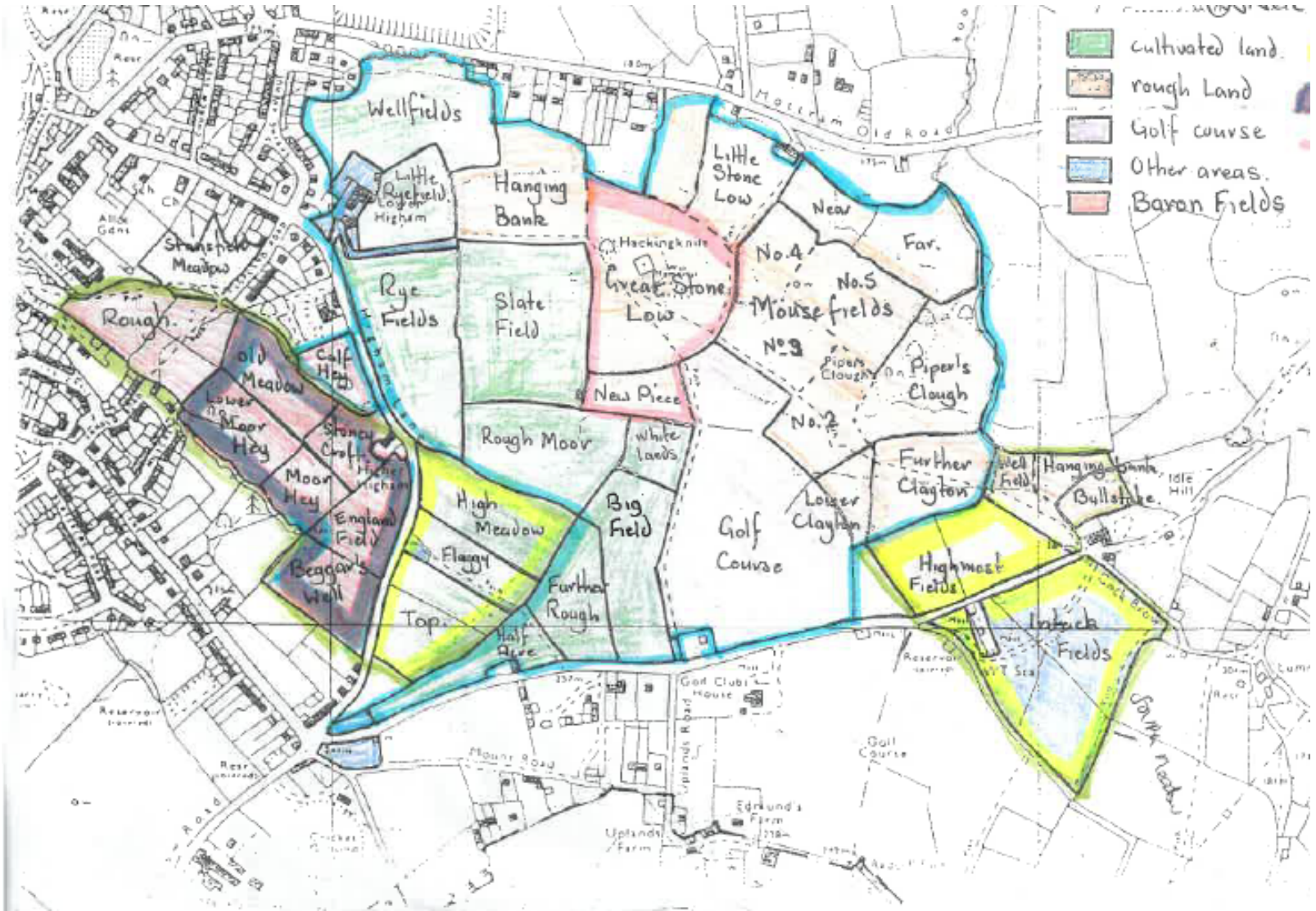
Main Habitats Type Key:

- Broadleaved Woodland Dry Heathland Amenity Grassland
- Semi-Improved Grassland Improved Grassland
- Golf Course Seasonal Standing Water Scrub

Map 6: Sites of Biological Importance



Map 7: Field names



Agenda Item 6.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	21 February 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nicola Marshall - Greenspace Development Manager
Subject:	WERNETH LOW JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT
Report Summary:	To inform Members of progress towards the signing of a new Joint Management Agreement.
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 and Chief Finance 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 Nicola Marshall, Greenspace Development Manager



phone: 07814541623



e-mail: nicola.marshall@tameside.gov.uk

1. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

- 1.1 Both the Council and the Trust acknowledge that it is an appropriate time to review the Joint Management Agreement.
- 1.2 Two previous Working Group meetings were held however these ceased at the start of the pandemic in 2020 as people had other priorities. In the meantime, the previous Greenspace Officer, who was also a private tenant of the Trust, retired and left the Trust's residential accommodation.
- 1.3 Both parties had agreed that they wanted to enter into a new Joint Agreement and that the general principles of wanting to maintain a country park were still important to all concerned.
- 1.4 Since the initial meetings there have been changes in membership of Hyde War Memorial Trust so it was at the February 2023 meeting that a new Joint Management Agreement working group would be established.
- 1.5 The membership of the Working Group was to comprise of Trustees from Hyde War Memorial Trust and elected Councillors. The Greenspace Manager would support the meeting by providing background papers.
- 1.6 The Working Group then met in March 2023 to review the draft agreement and the Trust subsequently shared this with their Legal Team. There were then some delays with both parties in terms of time to work on the project and other priorities however the Trust's advisors then submitted a revised draft Agreement.
- 1.7 The Working Group then met on 13 December 2023 to review the amendments; the latest version of the Joint Management Agreement is now ready to be reviewed by both parties' legal teams with a view to getting it agreed as soon as possible.
- 1.8 A further update will be provided at the June 2024 Joint Management Committee meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 As set out at the front of the report.