

**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:** The funding for the projects is met by the Operations and Greenspace revenue budget.  
**(Authorised by the Section 151 Officer and Chief Finance Officer)**

**Legal Implications:** It is important that the Joint Management Committee is kept informed of activities undertaken in the Country Park.  
**(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

**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](mailto: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

<b>Project Ref</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>New Piece</b>	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.	<b>Oct</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Gardens and along edge of Hacking Knife</b>	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.	<b>Oct</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Cow Lane and Cenotaph</b>	Removal of leaves and encroaching vegetation from Cow Lane and last cut of grass at the Cenotaph to prep for Remembrance Sunday.	<b>Nov</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Near Higher Higham</b>	Coppicing small oak trees which were blocking the view from the bench towards Manchester.	<b>July</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Various</b>	Cross drains- these are maintained on a weekly-monthly basis by removing leaves and soil. This helps prevent path erosion on site.	<b>Oct- Feb</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Stone Pitched path from VC towards Quarry Car Park</b>	We cleared the overgrown Stone Pitching of grass to reveal the full width and enable ease of access for walkers.	<b>November</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Cow Lane Riding Track</b>	Replacing post and rail fencing along this stretch which posts had rotten to ensure a good boundary for livestock.	
<b>8</b>	<b>Flaggy Path Steps</b>	Stone top up to prevent slips trips and falls.	<b>December</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Various</b>	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.	<b>Oct- Feb</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Formal gardens and Orchard</b>	Weekly maintenance, removal of leaves, weeding of beds and maintaining the garden of remembrance.	<b>Weekly</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Visitors Centre Car Park and Quarry Car Park</b>	Weekly litter pick, signs cleaned and driveway drainage maintained to keep clear. Cobbles received a thorough clearing at the end of November.	<b>Weekly</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Quarry Car Park</b>	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.	<b>January</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Werneth Low Road near Golf Course.</b>	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.	<b>January</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Top of Flaggy path onto the main path from Quarry Car park.</b>	Construction of a new section of footpath with drainage to enable ease of access and less standing water causing deep puddles in this area.	<b>February</b>