

Report To: **WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Date: **24 July 2017**

Reporting Officer: Assistant Executive Director, Place
David Cannon, Greenspace Development Officer

Subject: **GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT**

Report Summary: To inform Members of activities undertaken within the Country Park since the last meeting of the Joint Management Committee (13 February 2017).

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)

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 David Cannon, Greenspace Development Officer

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1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 Fairway Landscapes Ltd has now completed the installation of 38 metres of new steps at the Higham Cottages access point. The final cost for this project was £3,524. This project was funded by The Hyde War Memorial Trust.
- 1.2 Following formal site inspections around the Country Park contractors working on behalf of the Country Park Joint Committee have completed drainage repairs in the car park at Lower Higham. The gully, with protective grill, near the herb garden, has been removed and a wider gully with new protective grill has been installed. The cost of this project was £1,841 and was paid by Tameside Council.
- 1.3 The summer grass cutting programme for 2017 started in April. The programme includes the grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas and strips along footpaths. The cost of this programme of maintenance is paid by Tameside Council.
- 1.4 The Operations Maintenance Team have been very busy around the Country Park during spring. This is a list of the works completed by the Team since the last meeting of the Joint Committee:-
- At Cock Brow Entrance to South Meadow installed new kissing gate.
 - At Ash Cottage installed 10 metres of flagged path.
 - At New Piece Field Meadow installed new 12 foot field gate.
 - At entrance to Golf Course, Hackingknife Meadow, installed new stile.
 - At entrance to Baron Meadows replaced gate in kissing gate.
 - At Hackingknife Meadow installed new 12 foot field gate.
 - On riding track network repaired 6 metres of post and rail wooden fencing.
- 1.5 At current contractor prices this programme would cost £2,850. The cost of this work was paid for by Tameside Council.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – HIGHER LEVEL AGREEMENT 2010 – 2020 UPDATE

- 2.1 Environmental Stewardship agreements have five primary objectives:-
- Wildlife conservation
 - Maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character
 - Natural resource protection
 - Protection of the historic environment; and
 - Promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside
- 2.2 Environmental Stewardship – Higher Level agreements are only suitable for land that is of “significant environmental interest”.
- 2.3 In May 2017 the Country Park received £2,175 of grant income which was the Final Payment for Year 7. Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total £39,158 of grant income from Natural England.
- 2.4 At the time of this report the Country Park is compliant with all aspects of this agreement.

3. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 3.1 The attendance for the Country Park's Winter/Spring 2016/2017 programme of public events is as follows:-

Date	Event	Attendance
25 October 2016	Woods, Wands and Wizards	110
4 December 2016	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	49
8 January 2017	Highs and Lows Ramble	22
5 February 2017	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	18
12 March 2017	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	15
16 April 2017	Easter Egg Hunt	323
30 April 2017	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	34
Total		571

- 3.2 The summer 2017 public events programme for Werneth Low Country Park is as follows:-

Date	Event	Attendance
Tuesday 23 May	History Walk Around Werneth Low	8
Sunday 28 May	Map and Compass Navigation	1
Tuesday 13 June	Flora Walk around Werneth Low	10
Tuesday 8 August	Flora Walk around Werneth Low	--
Sunday 24 September	All Day Ramble to Cown Edge	--
Total to Date		19

- 3.3 The Alder Community High School cross country run around the Country Park was held on Tuesday 2 May. The event, which is in its eleventh year, is in aid of The Christie Hospital. Last year £3,363 was raised, and at the time of writing this report sponsorship money is still being collected.
- 3.4 On Sunday 4 June the cycling race 'The Tour de Manchester' came over Werneth Low. The Country Park helped staff one of the race's drinks stations located outside The Hare and Hounds public house on Werneth Low Road. The race, which raised money for Manchester charities, arrived in the borough from Stockport and after going through Tameside went out to Saddleworth and Oldham.
- 3.5 The Hyde War Memorial Trust organised and held the Peace Day Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Sunday 25 June. About 60 people attended the service which commemorates the signing of the Treaty of Versailles 1919 which was the official end of World War One.
- 3.6 The Cheshire branch of The Dry Stone Walling Association will be holding two training courses in the Country Park during the summer. These events are basic training in this countryside skill and are a good introduction into the theory and practical of wall building. The course dates are Saturday/Sunday 21/22 May and Saturday/Sunday 23/24 September. The Hyde War Memorial Trust funded the purchase of new stone required for the re-building.

4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 4.1 Since the last meeting of the Country Park Joint Management Committee the volunteers have held 5 meetings. The volunteers assist the Greenspace Development Officer with public events, the maintenance and general upkeep of sites, and staffing the visitor centre. There are at present 18 members in the volunteer service.

- 4.2 At the October 2016 meeting of the Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service the Volunteers agreed the major projects to be undertaken during winter and spring 2016/2017. The project list of works and final update of progress can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 The Greenspace Volunteers are very busy through the summer on a multitude of projects and none more important than the control of non-native invasive flowers. The main species is Himalayan Balsam which if left unchecked will choke out native wildflowers. We monitor the amount of time site by site and record the data on a spreadsheet. This information is analysed as the end of the year, which enables us to decide the most important sites to attack the following year and to give an overall picture of the problem the Country Park faces from these dangerous weeds. The target spreadsheet for this year can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.4 In 2017 four of the Country Park's volunteers achieved their 10 year Service Award. Anita Allan, Linda Mellor, Ros Pape and Hazel Shepherdson have made a significant contribution to the care and stewardship of Werneth Low.
- 4.5 On Tuesday 2 May the Mayor of Tameside invited the four volunteers to the Mayor's Parlour at Dukinfield Town Hall for tea and cakes. It was a warm hearted occasion thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

5. VISITORS – 2016

- 5.1 Active monitoring data for The Lower Higham Visitor Centre 2017:-

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre
January	207
February	202
March	357
April	590
May	339
June	213
July	--
August	--
September	--
October	--
November	--
December	--
2017 Totals to Date	1908
Previous Years Totals:	3,719

6. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

- 6.1 The Country Park's hay meadows have once again delivered a colourful seasonal display of grasses and wildflowers. At Hackingknife Meadow, for the first time, Southern Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) have been found. This species is well distributed throughout the south of England as far north as North-east Yorkshire but is absent from Scotland and Ireland where it is replaced by the Northern Marsh Orchid. The presence of such special wild flowers in the Park's hay meadows is a reassuring point that our sympathetic environmental management is helping to conserve this increasingly rare habitat.

APPENDIX 1

Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteers 2016 2017 Winter Maintenance of Sites Projects Final Update

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completion Date
1	Hackingknife Woodland	Plant 1,000 Pseudo narcissi	October 2016
2	Quarry Car Park Frontage	Plant 1,000 Pseudo narcissi	October 2016
3	Lower Higham Gardens	Plant 1,000 Pseudo narcissi	October 2016
4	Lower Higham Drive	Cut back 30 metres of hedgerow	October 2016
5	Lower Higham Gardens	Plant 600 Tulip bulbs	October 2016
6	Lower Higham - Cow Lane	Cut back, prune hedgerow and sweep lane, clean-out grids	October 2016
7	Cenotaph Area	Cut grass/edge off. Clean area ready for Remembrance Day	October 2016
8	Lower Higham Gardens	Clean borders and prune shrubs ready for Remembrance Day	October 2016
9	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Clean all banking and hedgerow around Garage Building	October 2016
10	Werneth Low Country Park	Complete audit of all sites of Non Native Species	October 2016
11	Higham Lane	Install 2 metres of pitched path at stile at Shepley's Meadow	November 2016
12	Baron Fields Hazel Coppice	Coppice Hazel in Memorial Coppice and process timber	January 2017
13	Rear of Hillcrest	Thin-out Coppice	January 2017
14	Flaggy Path	Edge -off and clean 134 metres of flag stones	January 2017
15	Hackingknife Woodland	Selective thinning	January 2017
16	Lower Higham Orchard	Cut back 40 metres of hedgerow	March 2017
17	Flaggy Path Hedgerow	Cut back 124 metres of hedgerow	March 2017
18	QCP Picnic Area	Cut back 54 metres of hedgerow	March 2017
19	Lower Higham Car Park	Cut back 20 metres of Holly hedgerow	March 2017
20	Ash Cottage Picnic Area	Cut back 46 metres of hedgerow	March 2017
21	Holy Trinity Paddock	Cut back 60 metres of hedgerow	March 2017
22	Riding Track	Cut back 140 metres of hedgerow	March 2017
23	Higham Lane	298 metres of hedge cutting layed hedgerow	March 2017
24		Total Hedge Cutting 812 metres	March 2017
25	South Meadow	286 metres of hedgelaying - Mike Kelly	March 2017
26	Flaggy Path	Improve footpath into Ash Cottage Picnic area	March 2017
27	All Country Park	Review sign posting and way marking/install new signs	March 2017
28	Windy Harbour Hedge	Grub out base	March 2017
29	New Piece Meadow	Re- form drain at base of Blackthorn Hedgerow	March 2017
30	South Meadow	Clear all cuttings from Hedge Laying works	March 2017
31	Lower Higham Gardens	Plant "in the green" 3,000 Galanthus nivalis	March 2017
	Completed Projects		

