

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

Date: 20 November 2017

Reporting Officer: Assistant 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 (24 July 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 The summer grass cutting programme for 2017 finished at the end of September. The programme included 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.
- 1.2 Tameside Council Engineers have repaired two sections of tarmac on the main drive at Lower Higham Visitor Centre.

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 agri-agreement.

3. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 3.1. The summer 2017 public events programme for Werneth Low Country Park concluded at the end of September with the last event, The Cown Edge Ramble. The attendance for all the events was 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	6
Sunday 24 September	All Day Ramble to Cown Edge	38
Total to Date		63

- 3.2 The winter/spring 2017 to 2018 programme of events at Werneth Low Country Park is as follows:-

Date	Event	Attendance
17 December 2017	Christmas Ramble Around Werneth Low	--
28 January 2018	New Year's Ramble Around Werneth Low	--
25 March 2018	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
1 April 2018	Easter Egg Hunt	--
30 April 2018	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
Total		--

- 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. The organisers have confirmed that this year's run raised £3,000.
- 3.4 The Cheshire branch of The Dry Stone Walling Association have held 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 were Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 May and Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September. The Hyde War Memorial Trust funded the purchase of new stone required for the re-building and site preparation works. Cost £228.00.

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 4 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 2017 meeting of the Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service the Volunteers agreed the major projects to be undertaken during winter and spring 2017/2018. The project list of works with update of progress can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 The Greenspace Volunteers have been 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 also have two sites where Japanese Knotweed is present. At these locations we have for several years hand pulled these weeds and this has been very successful. The Volunteers also hand pull Ragwort out of our wildflower meadows before the hay is cut, which helps the tenant farmers. The target spreadsheet for this year can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.4 Volunteer Mike Kelly is very busy this autumn re-laying 200 metres of hedgerow near Higham Lane in Shepley's Meadow. This project is Heritage Lottery Funded and jointly managed with Woodland Officer, Andy Long from Manchester City of Trees. We expect to receive £5.00 a metre for the completed project.

5. VISITORS – 2017

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	165
August	390
September	179
October	173
November	--
December	--
2017 Totals to Date	2,815
Previous Years Total:	3,719

6. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

- 6.1 Once again Pink-footed geese have been seen flying high over Werneth Low on their annual migration south. These birds have been resting at Martin Mere on the Lancashire wetlands having left their summer breeding grounds in Greenland and Iceland. This autumn migration is one of the great wildlife spectacles in the North West and Werneth Low is a great place to watch it.

APPENDIX 1

Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteers 2017 2018 Winter Maintenance of Sites Projects

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completion Date
1	Hackingknife Woodland	Plant 2,000 Pseudo narcissi	October 2017
2	Lower Higham Drive	Cut back 30 metres of hedgerow	October 2017
3	Hackingknife	Tractor cut Rosebay Willowherb	October 2017
4	Lower Higham - Cow Lane	Cut back, prune hedgerow and sweep lane, clean-out grids	November 2017
5	Cenotaph Area	Cut grass/edge off. Clean area ready for Remembrance Day	November 2017
6	Lower Higham Gardens	Clean borders and prune shrubs ready for Remembrance Day	November 2017
7	Orchard Hedgerow	Reduce height along all length to aid summer cutting	November 2017
8	Lower Higham Cow Lane	Tractor flail hedgerow	November 2017
9	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Clean all banking and hedgerow around Garage Building	December 2017
10	Baron Fields Hazel Coppice	Coppice Hazel in Memorial Coppice and process timber	January 2018
11	Rear of Hillcrest	Thin-out Coppice	January 2018
12	Lower Higham Orchard	Cut back 40 metres of hedgerow	March 2018
13	Flaggy Path Hedgerow	Cut back 124 metres of hedgerow	March 2018
14	QCP Picnic Area	Cut back 54 metres of hedgerow	March 2018
15	Lower Higham Car Park	Cut back 20 metres of Holly hedgerow	March 2018
16	Ash Cottage Picnic Area	Cut back 46 metres of hedgerow	March 2018
17	Holy Trinity Paddock	Cut back 60 metres of hedgerow	March 2018
18	Riding Track	Cut back 140 metres of hedgerow	March 2018
		Total Hedge Cutting 484 metres	March 2018
19	Shepley's Meadow	200 Metres of Hedgelaying	March 2018
20	Ash Cottage	38 metres of Hedgelaying	March 2018
21	Milkwort Bank	Coppice/Cut Back Ulex europaeus (Common Gorse)	March 2018
22	New Piece Meadow	Remove/cut back encoaching blackthorn	March 2018
23	All Sites	Outstanding from access audit	March 2018
24	Baron Fields Woodland	Remove Blackthorn suckers from corner with Hillcrest	March 2018

[illegible]

APPENDIX 2

Werneth Low Country Park – Non-Native Weeds Target Areas for Summer 2017:

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK NON-NATIVE INVASIVE WEEDS													
AREA TARGETS MONITORING SUMMER 2017 -													
Location					Species		HOURS WORKED						TO-DATE
							2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1	Windy Harbour Logo Gate Stream				Himalayan Balsam		20	20	10	19	15	18	10
2	Windy Harbour - Near Septic Tank				Himalayan Balsam		32	25	25	17	9	6	6
3	Claytons Fields				Himalayan Balsam		0	0	0	0	16	2½	2
4	Werneth Low Road				Himalayan Balsam		0	0	0	0	9	8	12
5	Higher Higham Meadows				Himalayan Balsam		3	6	6	8	7	2½	2
6	Rear of Higher Higham				Himalayan Balsam		1	1	1	4	4	2½	2
7	Lower Higham Wood Store				Himalayan Balsam		7	7	5	5	2	½	2
8	Baron Fields Pond and Woodland				Himalayan Balsam		24	20	20	10	4	28	18
9	Rear of Orchard Rise				Japanese Knotweed		7	5	4	4	1	0	1
10	Rear of Hilcrest Avenue				Himalayan Balsam		36	35	25	10	8	8½	8
11	Milkwort Bank				Himalayan Balsam		24	20	9	1	4	6½	6
12	Quarry Car Park				Himalayan Balsam		16	16	12	8	4	5½	8
13	South Meadow				Himalayan Balsam		25	15	4	3	2	4½	4
14	Higham Cottages				Japanese Knotweed		5	0	20	5	2	0	0
15	Higham Cottages Riding Track				Himalayan Balsam		0	0	0	0	0	16	12
16	Werneth Low Road Facing H/H PH				Himalayan Balsam		0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL							195	170	141	94	87	109	94