

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

**Date:** 19 February 2018

**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 (20 November 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,

 phone: 0161 368 6667

 e-mail: [david.cannon@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:david.cannon@tameside.gov.uk)

## 1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2018 is due to start the beginning of 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.

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

- 2.1 Environmental Stewardship agreements have five primary objectives:-

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

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

- 2.2 Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total £39,158 of grant income from Natural England.
- 2.3 At the time of this report the Country Park is compliant with all aspects of this agreement.

## 3. PUBLIC EVENTS

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

Date	Event	Attendance
<b>17 December 2017</b>	Christmas Ramble Around Werneth Low	<b>34</b>
<b>28 January 2018</b>	New Year's Ramble Around Werneth Low	<b>27</b>
<b>25 March 2018</b>	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
<b>1 April 2018</b>	Easter Egg Hunt	--
<b>30 April 2018</b>	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
<b>Total</b>		<b>61</b>

- 3.2 The summer 2018 programme of public events is currently being planned, which will include Flora Walks, a History Walk, a Poetry Walk and an all-day ramble to Cown Edge. All the events will be included in Tameside's Greenspace publications and social media platforms.

## 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 3 meetings. The volunteers assist the Greenspace Development Officer with public events, the maintenance and general upkeep of sites, and staffing the visitor centre. There are at present 15 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 Volunteer Mike Kelly has completed 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 per metre for the completed project.
- 4.4 In addition to the hedhelaying in Shepley's Meadow, Volunteer Mike Kelly is now laying a further 38 metres of hedgerow at Ash Cottage on Higham Lane. This project has also been included in the submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 4.5 On Monday 5 February the Country Park Volunteer Service celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting. Since 1988 the volunteers have played a major and significant role in the stewardship and care of the Country Park. Their work, focusing right across the whole management spectrum of the conservation of Werneth Low, has saved the Management Committee tens of thousands of pounds, provided a viable means of engaging the local and wider community and ensured the Country Park is fit for purpose.

## **5. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2017**

- 5.1 On Sunday 12 November 2017 the annual Service of Remembrance was held at the Cenotaph on Werneth Low. The commemoration was supported and attended by over 500 people and is the most important occasion in the Country Park's calendar of events.

## **6. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE**

- 6.1 Lauren Gradwell, The Hyde War Memorial Trust's archivist, has installed a new exhibition covering all the years of The Great War 1914 – 1919 in the visitor centre. The exhibition has raised much interest especially the poignant feature of young men, from the Ashton Brothers Training Corps, using Werneth Low as a training ground prior to joining the armed services.
- 6.2 On 23 January we welcomed 30 Year 4 children from Holy Trinity School Gee Cross to the Visitor Centre. The children learnt about the Country Park, in particular the history of the purchase of the land and farm in memory of the 710 servicemen from Hyde, Gee Cross and Newton killed in The Great War.
- 6.3 Arrangements are well underway for the 11<sup>th</sup> Alder School Cross Country Run around Werneth Low Country Park. This annual event raises thousands of pounds for The Christie Hospital in Manchester and is a great link between our local schools and the Country Park.

## 7. VISITORS – 2017

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

<b>Month</b>	<b>Lower Higham Visitor Centre</b>
<b>January</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>February</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>March</b>	<b>357</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>590</b>
<b>May</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>390</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>November</b>	<b>759</b>
<b>December</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>2017 Totals</b>	<b>3,680</b>
<b>Previous Years Total:</b>	<b>3,719</b>

## 8. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

- 8.1 Over the winter there has been a small flock of Bullfinches in residence around the gardens at Lower Higham. Feeding off Sunflower seeds on the bird table these handsome finches are normally seen at lower locations than Werneth Low. The collective noun for a group of Bullfinches is: a bellowing, which may be linked to their piping call that can be heard at no small distance.

