

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

**Date:** 19 November 2018

**Reporting Officer:** Ian Saxon, Director of Operations and Greenspace  
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 (16 July 2018).

**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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 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 has been completed. 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 We have now received quotations from our contractors in regards to a small number of footpath repair projects. The projects and costs are as follows:-

- Resurfacing the footpath from Lower Higham to the Hackingknife: Cost: £6,384.
- Resurfacing the footpath from the Cenotaph across Hackingknife Meadow: Cost: £3,327.

1.3 Recently completed projects include the following:-

- Reforming ditches along Riding Track alongside Golf Course: Cost: £300.
- Repairing 30 metres of drystone walling at Quarry Car Park: Cost: £4,860.
- Installing new drainage at Baron Fields: Cost: £580.
- Ash Cottage Picnic area on Higham Lane installing new steps: Cost: £600.
- Lower Higham Visitor Centre installed new oak bench: Cost: £400.
- Cow Lane path to the Cenotaph installed new wooden gate: Cost: £400.
- Higham Lane dry stone walling repairs: Cost: £1,944.

All the above projects were funded by Tameside Council

1.4 During September and October work on installing a usable surface on the footpath and riding track along Werneth Low Road has been completed. Though the route is not within the official boundary of the Country Park the right of way links directly into it. The project also included path pitching, fencing, drystone walling, installing new gates and stiles. The total costs were £30,000. The project was funded by Tameside Council.

1.5 On 14 August, during the evening, a large number of stone flags were stolen from around the entrance to the Visitor Centre. The incident was reported to the Police but unfortunately there were two more thefts, at the same location, after that date. The cost of replacing the flags is £3,800 and is subject to an insurance claim by the Hyde War Memorial Trust.

## **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
- 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 to date £42,420 of grant income from Natural England.

### 3. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 3.1 The winter/spring 2018 to 2019 programme of events at Werneth Low Country Park have been planned and dates and details are as follows:-

Date	Event	Attendance
2 December 2018	Christmas Ramble Around Werneth Low	--
27 January 2019	Ramble Around Werneth Low	--
24 March 2019	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
21 April 2019	Easter Egg Hunt	--
28 April 2019	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
<b>Total</b>		

### 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 2 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 16 members in the volunteer service.
- 4.2 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 at 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 and number of hours completed by the Volunteers for this year can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 In 2007 the Country Park replaced all its post and wire stock proof fencing right across land belonging to both Tameside Council and the Hyde War Memorial Trust. This capital expenditure was secured by the Joint Committee from Council funds and the total cost for replacing 4,693 metres was £25,248. At this time suppliers of treated timbers had without consultation changed the chemicals of the timber preservation treatment. The outcome of this action has been the significant reduction in the viability of outdoor land management timbers such as post and wire fencing. Following a survey of the Country Park we are now in the process of replacing fencing posts the number of which amounts to many hundreds. This work is being undertaken by the Park's Volunteer Service.
- 4.4 At the September meeting of the Country Park Volunteers the list of work and wildlife nature conservation projects for the period October 2018 to April 2019 was discussed and agreed. We undertake this planning every year, which helps to monitor progress and gives direction to the work of the Volunteer Service. A copy of the project list can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### 5. SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE 11 NOVEMBER 2018

- 5.1 At the time of writing this report preparations are well underway for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1918 Armistice, Service of Remembrance. Trustees of the Hyde War Memorial Trust have been working tirelessly in recent months to make all the necessary arrangements for this very special occasion.

## 6. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE

6.1 The number of visitors to Lower Higham is as follows:-

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre
January	201
February	158
March	164
April	852
May	125
June	220
July	245
August	105
September	157
October	-
November	-
December	-
<b>2018 Totals</b>	<b>2,227</b>
<b>Previous Years Total:</b>	<b>3,680</b>

6.2 A defibrillator machine has been installed at Lower Higham Visitor Centre. The wall mounted security box containing the Defib is located next to the garage doors. Signs will be placed in notice boards around the Country Park informing visitors of its location. The person who installed and delivered the machine is organising a Defib training session for all Country Park staff.

## 7. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

7.1 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.

7.2 Other winter migrant birds seen around the Country Park recently include the Fieldfare and Redwing. These birds are from Northern Europe though occasionally they breed in the far north of Scotland. They are often seen stripping berries from the Park's Hawthorn trees and are a true sign that winter is on its way.



## APPENDIX 2

### WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEERS WINTER 2018 - 2019 MAINTENANCE OF SITES PROJECTS

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completion Date
1	Lower Higham Gardens	Plant 200 mixed tulips various areas	October 2018
2	Lower Higham Gardens	Late summer garden restructure planting	October 2018
3	Hackingknife	Tractor cut Rosebay Willowherb	October 2018
4	Lower Higham - Cow Lane	Cut back, prune hedgerow and sweep lane, clean-out grids	November 2018
5	Kenotaph Area	Cut grass/edge off. Clean area ready for Remembrance Day	November 2018
6	Lower Higham Gardens	Clean borders and prune shrubs ready for Remembrance Day	November 2018
7	Lower Higham Cow Lane	Tractor flail hedgerow	November 2018
8	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Clean all banking and hedgerow around Garage Building	December 2018
9	Hackingknife Woodland	Woodland management thinning out Hazel	December 2018
10	Lower Higham Orchard	Cut back 40 metres of hedgerow	March 2019
11	Flaggy Path Hedgerow	Cut back 124 metres of hedgerow	March 2019
12	QCP Picnic Area	Cut back 54 metres of hedgerow	March 2019
13	Lower Higham Car Park	Cut back 20 metres of Holly hedgerow	March 2019
14	Werneth Low Road	Cut back 356 metres of hedgerow	March 2019
15	Rig Field Meadow	Cut back 300 metres of hedgerow	March 2019
16	Holy Trinity Paddock	Cut back 60 metres of hedgerow	March 2019
17	Riding Track Higham Cotts	Cut back 140 metres of hedgerow	March 2019
18		<b>Total Hedge Cutting metres 1,094</b>	
19	Lower Higham Drive	50 metres of Hedgerow	March 2019
20	Lower Higham Orchard	Winter prune fruit trees	March 2019
21	Lower Higham Orchard	Replace 4 Apple trees	March 2019
22	Outdoor Park Seating	Inspect and repaint	March 2019
23	Black Path Baron Fields	Prune Willows by side of path	March 2019
24	All Sites	Outstanding from access audit	March 2018
	Completed Projects		