

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

Date: 29 February 2016

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 (17 November 2015).

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

1. Maintenance of Sites

- 1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2016 will begin 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.
- 1.2 Following a review of the Borough's tractor, grass cutting programme, undertaken due to reductions in Greenspace budgets, the two sites on Baron Fields have been identified as areas that potentially will not be cut this summer. Discussions with Operations managers are at the moment ongoing so no final decision has been made. It has been suggested that areas no longer cut could be transformed into woodland.

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 In November 2015 the Country Park received **£1,993** of grant income which was the interim payment for Year 6. Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total **£30,821** of grant income from Natural England.

3. Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service

- 3.1 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 17 members of the volunteer service.
- 3.2 At the September 2015 meeting of the Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service the volunteers agreed the major projects to be undertaken during winter and spring 2015/2016. An update on the progress so far can be found in the Appendices of this report in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.3 At a recent meeting of the Joint Committee members asked for a cost analysis of the Country Park Volunteer Service at the year- end 2015. Using attendance records for January to December 2015 it is calculated that the volunteers completed **3,730** work hours. Using the hourly rate of **£8.23** for agricultural wages if the Country Park paid this rate it would have cost **£30,697**. The volunteer expenses costs for this period was **£2,706**.

4. Public Events

4.1 The attendance for the 2015/2016 winter/spring programme of public events at the Country Park is as follows:

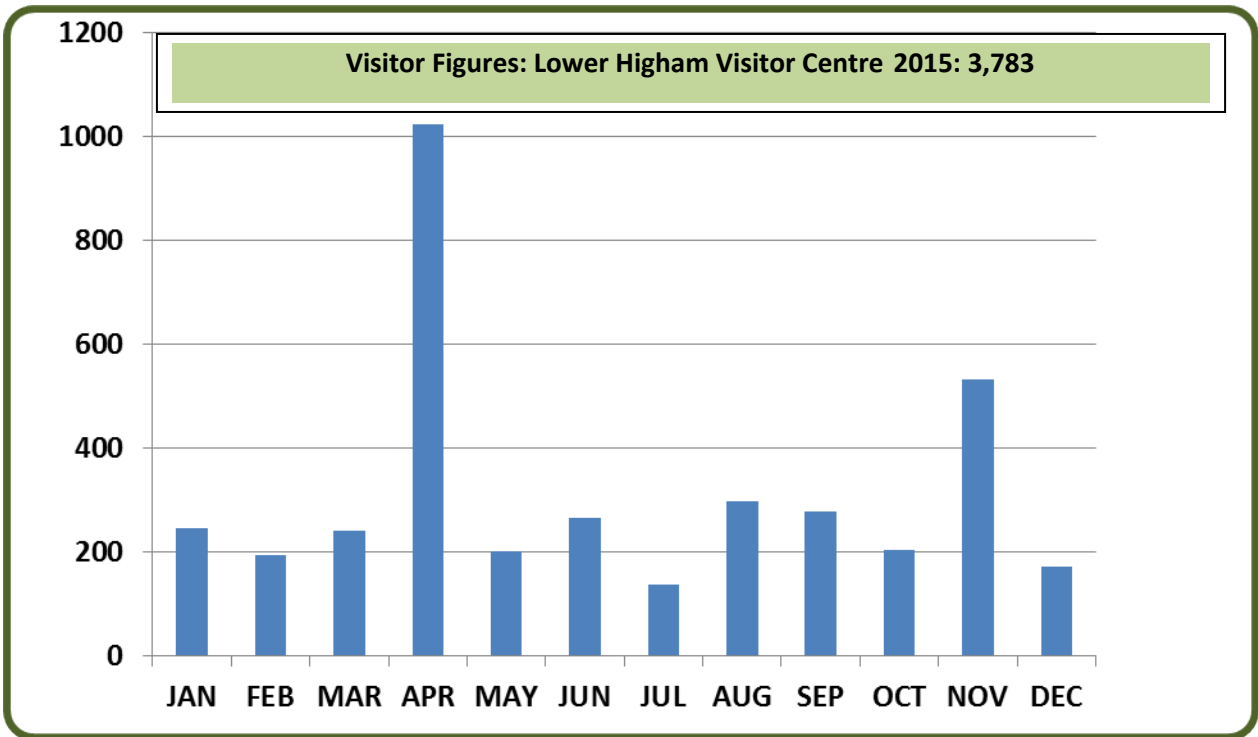
Date	Event	Attendance
4 th October 2015	Martin's Maps – Instruction on Map and Compass	2
6 th December 2015	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	42
27 th December 2015	Mid-Christmas Ramble	19
31 st January 2016	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	5
28 th February 2016	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
27 th March 2016	Easter Egg Hunt	--
24 th April 2016	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
Total to Date		68

5. Visitors – 2015

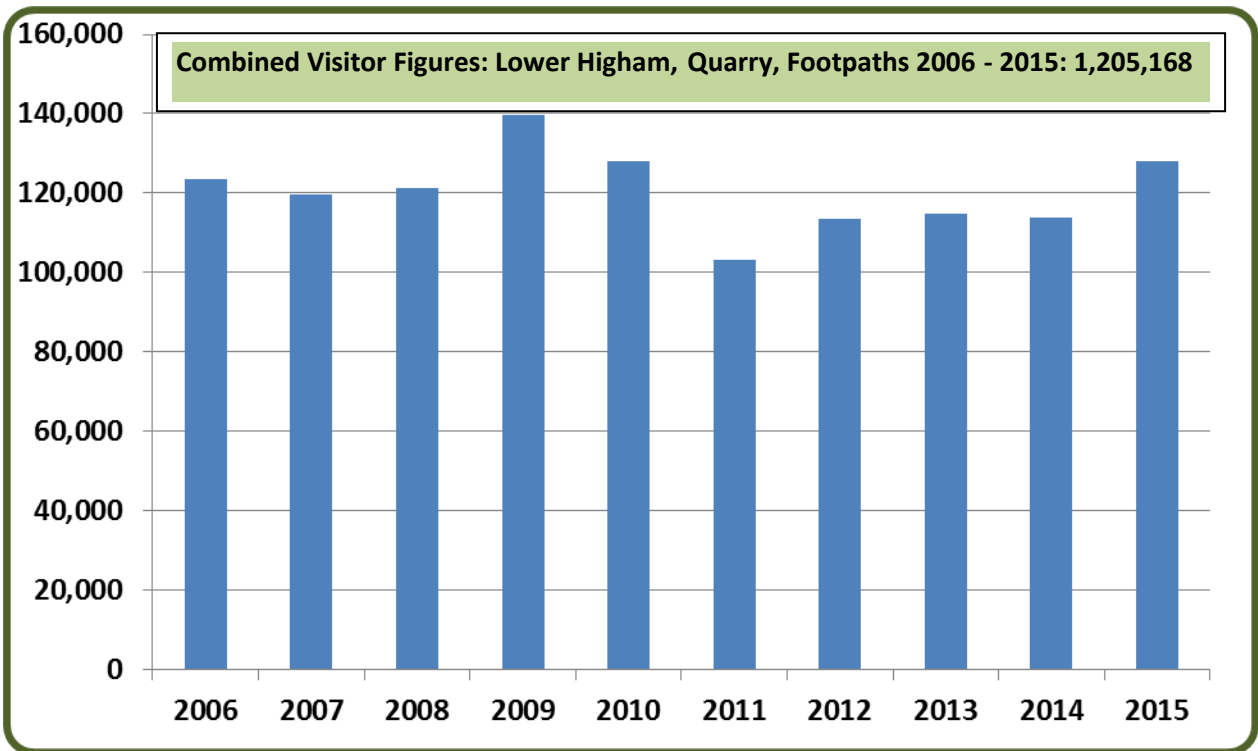
5.1 Active monitoring data for 2015:

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Counter on path from Lower Higham to Cenotaph	Counter on path from Quarry Car Park to Cenotaph
January	245	4,106	4,604
February	193	3,655	3,344
March	239	6,433	5,763
April	1,023	6,028	5,697
May	201	6,478	4,511
June	264	6,215	5,634
July	136	6,209	5,392
August	296	7,700	7,783
September	278	4,709	5,401
October	204	4,715	5,412
November	533	4,595	4,536
December	171	4,562	4,591
2015 Totals	3,783	65,405	62,668
Previous Years Totals:	4,114	61,228	52,431
2015 Differentials	(-331)	(+4,177)	(+10,237)

5.2 Barchart of Visitors to the Lower Higham Visitor Centre 2015:



5.3 Barchart of combined visitor figures on Lower Higham and Quarry Car Park Paths 2006 - 2015:



6. Wildlife Nature Conservation

- 6.1 In the next few weeks we will be displaying signs around the Country Park requesting visitors keep to footpaths when walking through the Park's managed meadows. Lapwings, Skylarks and Snipe use these areas to nest and raise their young and it's very important that we reduce disturbance to a minimum. All these birds have significantly reduced in numbers in recent years and it's important that the Country Park plays its part in their ongoing conservation. (A copy of the sign can be found in **Appendix 2** at the end of this report).

Notice to Visitors Requesting to Keep to Paths During the Breeding Season of Ground Nesting Birds

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK
SPRING – SUMMER 2016
NOTICE TO VISITORS

THE NEXT FEW MONTHS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE YEAR FOR THE COUNTRY PARK.

THE MEADOWS WHICH ARE RENTED TO LOCAL FARMERS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF HAY AND FOR GRAZING ARE SENSITIVE HABITATS FOR ALL SORTS OF WILDLIFE.

GROUND NESTING BIRDS, INVERTEBRATES, RARE WILD FLOWERS ALL FIND SANCTUARY IN THE COUNTRY PARKS WILDFLOWER MEADOWS.

TO HELP IN THE CONSERVATION OF OUR RICH LOCAL FAUNA AND FLORA WE REQUEST THAT YOU KEEP TO FOOTPATHS AT ALL TIMES WHEN WALKING IN THE MANAGED MEADOW AREAS.

DOGS ARE WELCOME BUT MUST BE UNDER CONTROL AT ALL TIMES, PREFERABLY ON A LEAD AND KEPT NEAR TO YOU TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF DISTURBANCE.

THIS REQUEST IS ONLY FOR THE FARMED AREAS OF THE COUNTRY PARK, THE AREAS AROUND THE CENOTAPH AND LAND OVER TO WINDY HARBOUR ARE OPEN ACCESS AND YOU ARE WELCOME TO ROAM FREELY.

BY COMPLYING WITH THIS REQUEST YOU WILL BE ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THE COUNTRY PARK CONSERVE ITS RICH NATURAL HERITAGE.

SINCERE THANKS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL THE COUNTRY PARK OFFICE ON: 0161 368 6667.