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: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	The funding for the projects is met by the Operations and Greenspace revenue budget.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	It is important that the Joint Management Committee is kept informed of activities undertaken in the Country Park.
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,
	2 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

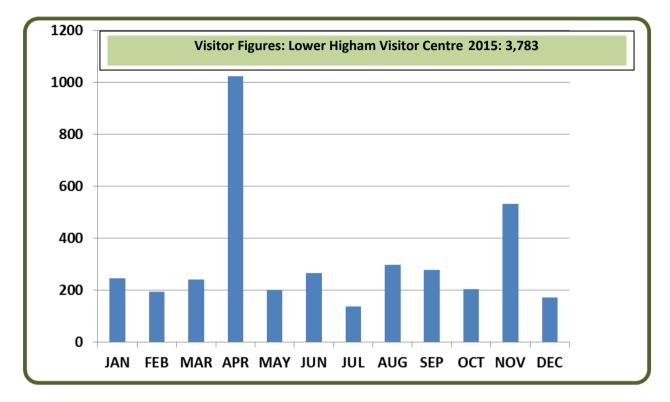
4.1 The attendance for the 2015/2016 winter/spring programme of public events at the Country Park is as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance					
4 th October 2015	Martin's Maps – Instruction on Map and Compass	2					
6 th December 2015	th December 2015 Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale						
27 th December 2015	19						
31 st January 2016	5						
28 th February 2016							
27 th March 2016	Easter Egg Hunt						
24 th April 2016	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel						
	Total to Date	68					

5. Visitors – 2015

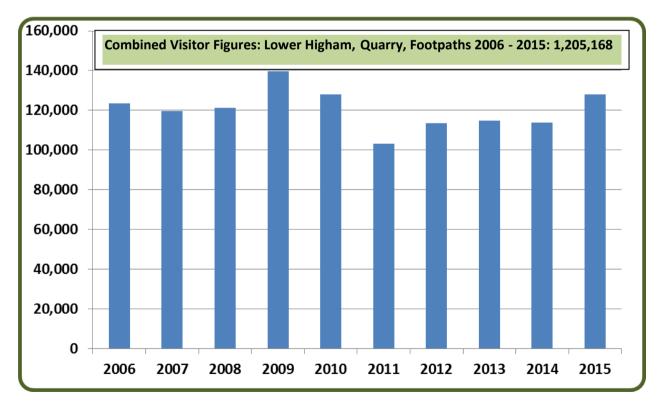
5.1 Active monitoring data for **2015**:

Month	Lower Higham	Counter on path	Counter on path			
	Visitor Centre	from Lower Higham	from Quarry Car Park			
		to Cenotaph	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			
Мау	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).

APPENDIX 1

Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteers 2015 2016 Winter Maintenance of Sites Projects

Project Ref	Location		Task					Comple	etion Date		
1	Lower Higham - Co	w Lane	Cut back,	prune hed	gerow and	sweep lar	ne, clean-o	ut grids	October 2015		
2	Cenotaph Area		Cut grass/	edge off.	October 2015						
3	Lower Higham Gare	dens	Clean bor	Clean borders and prune shrubs ready for Remenbrance Day					October 2015		
4	Lower Higham Visit	tor Centre	Clean all b	banking an	d hedgero	w around (Garage Buil	ding	October 2015		
5	Lower Higham Main	n Drive	Crown Lif	t trees and	l clean-off	banking			October 2015		
6	Lower Higham Car	Park	Prune tre	es/shrubs	along bord	er with ho	uses on Sp	ring Ave	October 2015		
7	Higham Lane		Install 2 m	netres of p	itched patł	n at stile at	Shepley's	Meadow	November 2015		
8	Baron Fields Hazel	Coppice	Coppice H	lazel in Me	emorial Cop	pice and p	process tim	ıber	January 2016		
9	Rear of Hillcrest		Thin-out (Coppice					January 2016		
10	Flaggy Path		Edge -off	and clean1	L34 metres	of flagg st	ones		January 2016		
11	Hackingknife Wood	land	Selective	thining					January 2016		
12	Lower Higham Orch	Lower Higham Orchard			of hedgero	w			March 2016		
13	Flaggy Path Hedge	row	Cut back 1	24 metres	of hedger	ow			March 2016		
14	QCP Picnic Area		Cut back 54 metres of hedgerow					March 2016			
15	Lower Higham Driv	e	Cut back 30 metres of hedgerow						March 2016		
16	Lower Higham Car	Lower Higham Car Park			Cut back 20 metres of Holly hedgerow						
17	Ash Cottage Picnic	Area	Cut back 46 metres of hedgerow						March 2016		
18	Holy Trinity Paddoo	:k	Cut back 60 metres of hedgerow					March 2016			
19	Riding Track		Cut back 1	40 metres	of hedger	ow			March 2016		
20	Earl of Warrington	Meadow	Grub out 128 metres of new laid hedgerow					March 2016			
21	Higham Lane		298 metres of hedge cutting layed hedgerow					March 2016			
22	Baron Fields Wood	lands	Selective thining especially along rights of way					March 2016			
23	Lower Higham Gar	dens	Clean-out long border and remove Lonicera					March 2016			
24	Rig Field Meadow		252 metres of Hedgerow Laying					March 2016			
25	Country Park		Audit and install waymarking/OA signs					March 2016			

Completed Projects					
completed i lojeets					

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.