

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

**Date:** 25 July 2016

**Reporting Officer:** Ian Saxon, 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 (29 February 2016).

**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

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## 1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2016 started 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 A new stile near Ash Cottage has been installed on the footpath through Higher Higham Meadows. Completed by the Operations Maintenance Team this new stile maintains the stock-proofing of this Environmental Stewardship meadow.
- 1.3 After last winter's storms the footpath near Higham Cottages has gradually become a danger to walkers (see **Appendix 1**). Members of the public have commented on the dangerous condition and at least one person has slipped injuring themselves.
- 1.4 Three contactors have been approached to tender for the installation of 36 metres of steps, a new stile, and the replacement of a short section of Country Park post and rail wooden fencing. At the time of submitting this report we are awaiting the final contractor's quotation.

## 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.
- 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 attendance for the 2015/2016 winter/spring programme of public events at the Country Park was as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
4 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	Martin's Maps – Instruction on Map and Compass	2
6 <sup>th</sup> December 2015	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	42
27 <sup>th</sup> December 2015	Mid-Christmas Ramble	19
31 <sup>st</sup> January 2016	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	5
28 <sup>th</sup> February 2016	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	30
27 <sup>th</sup> March 2016	Easter Egg Hunt	229
24 <sup>th</sup> April 2016	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	40
<b>Total</b>		<b>367</b>

- 3.2 The Country Park's summer 2016 programme of public events is now well underway. Details are published in the Council's events programme and are published on the Council's web pages. The programme and current attendance is as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> May	Map and Compass Navigation	2
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> May	Henry V Walk Around Werneth Low	20
Tuesday 31 <sup>st</sup> May	Leafy Folk on the Low	119
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> June	History Walk Around Werneth Low	12
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> June	Flora Walk around Werneth Low	5
Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> August	Flora Walk around Werneth Low	--
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> September	All Day Ramble to Cown Edge	--
<b>Total to Date</b>		<b>158</b>

- 3.3 The Alder Community High School cross country run around the Country Park was held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The event, which is in its tenth year, is in aid of The Christie Hospital. Last year £1,666 was raised, and at the time of writing report sponsorship money is still being collected.
- 3.4 On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June the inaugural cycling race The Tour de Manchester came over Werneth Low. The Country Park helped staff one of the race's drinks stations which was positioned outside The Hare and Hounds public house on Werneth Low Road. The race, which raised money for Manchester charities, arrived in the borough from Stockport and after going through Tameside went out to Saddleworth and Oldham. We have received positive feedback from cyclists and race organisers saying the Werneth Low drinks station was the best on the route.
- 3.5 The Hyde War Memorial Trust organised and held the Peace Day Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June. About 50 people attended the service which commemorated the signing of the Treaty of Versailles 1919 which was the official end of World War One.

### 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 17 members of the volunteer service.

4.2 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. The final list of works completed by April 2016 can be found in **Appendix 2**.

4.3 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 as 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 spreadsheet from the end of last year can be found in the **Appendix 3**.

## 5. VISITORS – 2016

5.1 Active monitoring data for **2016**:

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Counter on path from Lower Higham to Cenotaph	Counter on path from Quarry Car Park to Cenotaph
January	202	4,455	4,011
February	218	3,798	4,036
March	546	5,384	5,298
April	260	6,056	5,320
May	502	6,065	4,924
June	223	6,187	5,685
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			
<b>2016 Totals</b>	<b>1,951</b>	<b>31,945</b>	<b>29,274</b>
<b>Previous Years Totals:</b>	<b>4,114</b>	<b>61,228</b>	<b>52,431</b>

## 6. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

6.1 As summer progresses and milder weather continues the return of one of our most secretive mammals has been a welcome site. During the early evening it's now common to see Pipistrelle Bats flitting around the Lower Higham Buildings. These nocturnal mammals are Britain's most common bat and also the smallest. Colonies can be very large numbering hundreds but this one is much smaller. They can be seen, early evenings, right up to their hibernation period which usually starts in October.

Footpath at Higham Cottages, April 2016.





**APPENDIX 3**

<b>WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK NON-NATIVE INVASIVE WEEDS</b>											
<b>AREA TARGETS MONITORING SUMMER 2015 - 6th September 2015</b>											
Location				Species	HOURS WORKED					TO-DATE	
					2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		
1	Windy Harbour Logo Gate Stream			Himalayan Balsam	20	20	10	19	15		
2	Windy Harbour - Near Septic Tank			Himalayan Balsam	32	25	25	17	9		
3	Claytons Fields			Himalayan Balsam	0	0	0	0	16		
4	Werneth Low Road			Himalayan Balsam	0	0	0	0	9		
5	Higher Higham Meadows			Himalayan Balsam	3	6	6	8	7		
6	Rear of Higher Higham			Himalayan Balsam	1	1	1	4	4		
7	Lower Higham Wood Store			Himalayan Balsam	7	7	5	5	2		
8	Baron Fields Pond			Himalayan Balsam	24	20	20	10	4		
9	Rear of Orchard Rise			Japanese Knotweed	7	5	4	4	1		
10	Rear of Hilcrest Avenue			Himalayan Balsam	36	35	25	10	8		
11	Milkwort Bank			Himalayan Balsam	24	20	9	1	4		
12	Quarry Car Park			Himalayan Balsam	16	16	12	8	4		
13	Cock Brow Entrance to South Meadow			Himalayan Balsam	25	15	4	3	2		
14	Higham Cottages			Japanese Knotweed	5	0	20	5	2		
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>195</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>87</b>		<b>87</b>