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WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Day: Monday
Date: 23 November 2015
Time: 10.30 am
Place: Lower Higham Visitor Centre - Werneth Low Country Park

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for the meeting from Members of the Joint Committee.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest from Members of the Joint Committee.	
3.	MINUTES The Minutes of the proceedings of the previous meeting of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on 27 July 2015 to be approved as a correct record.	1 - 4
4.	GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT To consider the report of the Greenspace Development Officer.	5 - 10
5.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS To note the dates of future meetings to be held on:- 29 February 2015 Lower Higham Visitor Centre	
6.	URGENT ITEMS To consider any additional items the Chair is of the opinion shall be dealt with as a matter of urgency.	

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Agenda Item 3

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

27 July 2015

Commenced: 10.30am

Terminated: 11.55am

Tameside MBC: Councillors Robinson (Chair), Bell, Bowden, Cooper, R Miah and Peet

Hyde War Memorial Trust: Mrs Eddowes
Messrs Ainger, Galvin and Gradwell

In Attendance: David Cannon, Greenspace Development Officer and Andy Cush, Planning Officer

Apologies for Absence: Councillor J Fitzpatrick and Mr Errington

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted from members of the Joint Management Committee.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2015/16

It was reported that the following representatives had been appointed to serve on the Joint Management Committee for the Municipal Year 2015/16:-

Representing Tameside MBC –

Councillors Bell, Bowden, Cooper, J Fitzpatrick, R Miah, Peet, Robinson and White.

Hyde War Memorial Trust –

Mrs Eddowes and Messrs Ainger, Errington, Galvin and Gradwell.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR 2015/16

RESOLVED

- (i) That Councillor Robinson, Tameside MBC, be appointed Chair of the Joint Management Committee for 2015/16.
- (ii) That Mrs Eddowes, Hyde War Memorial Trust, be appointed Deputy Chair of the Joint Management Committee for 2015/16.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the Joint Management Committee held on 16 March 2015 were approved as a correct record.

5. GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Greenspace Development Officer submitted a report, informing Members of the activities undertaken within the Country Park since the last meeting of the Joint Management Committee held on 16 March 2015.

The report outlined the following:-

- Maintenance of sites;
- Public Events;
- Werneth Low Country Park Volunteer Service;
- Visitor Monitoring; and,
- Wildlife Nature Conservation.

Members were informed that the refurbishment of Baron Fields was due to commence mid-August 2015 and would take approximately 3 weeks to complete. The material and stone had been purchased and placed in storage. A formal written submission had been gratefully received from Hyde War Memorial Trust to pay 50% of the costs. It was confirmed that access ways would not be affected and that contractors, following a risk assessment and method statement, would erect warning signs.

It was reported that two dry stone walling weekends had been arranged with the next scheduled event due in September 2015. The events were organised in conjunction with the Cheshire branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association and work was overseen by a master craftsman. These events offered members of the public the opportunity to build their skills whilst providing good advertisement of the Country Park.

Members heard that volunteers assisted with public events, staffing the visitor centre and the maintenance and general upkeep of the sites. A programme of work to target the control of non-native species, such as Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, had recently been agreed. Clarification was sought and provided on hogweed and giant hogweed. It was confirmed that the Park did not have any giant hogweed species.

The Committee were informed that this summer had been an exceptional year for wild flowers in particular the Common Spotted Orchid, *Orchis fuchsia*, which had been seen in great numbers in the meadows.

RESOLVED

That the Greenspace Development Officer's report be noted.

6. ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Greenspace Development Officer presented the Werneth Low Country Park Annual Report, which highlighted the work undertaken during 2014/15 and planned activities for 2015/16. Arrangements were being made to share the report with interested parties and a wider audience via publication on the Council's website.

A history of Werneth Low, location and size, ownership and creation of the Country Park was provided to the committee as detailed in the report. The vision for the Park was outlined which complimented the Tameside Greenspace Service priorities.

Members heard about the management of the Country Park and initiatives which involved the community. A variety of photographs were shown including the Cown Edge Ramble, hedge laying, stile alterations, woodland management and dry stone walling.

The highlights of 2014/15 were provided and included:-

- 4,010 visitors were welcomed to the Lower Higham Visitor Centre;
- The Country Park Greenspace Volunteers completed a total of 4,908 work hours;
- Using electronic counters the number of visitors recorded on the footpath from Lower Higham to the Cenotaph was 61,870 and the total recorded on the footpath near Quarry Car Park was 55,684;
- The Greenspace Development Officer had organised 12 events at which 871 people attended.

Members of the Joint Management Committee congratulated the Greenspace Development Officer for an excellent report and another successful year and asked for their thanks to be extended to all volunteers.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Report 2014/15 be approved.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

That the Joint Committee meets as follows:-



DATE	VENUE	TIME
Monday 23 November 2015	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	10.30 am (preceded by tour of Country Park at 9.30 am)
Monday 29 February 2016	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	10.30 am (preceded by tour of Country Park at 9.30 am)

8. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no items for urgent consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR

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Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	23 November 2015
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 (16 March 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,  phone: 0161-368-6667  e-mail: david.cannon@tameside.gov.uk

1. Maintenance of Sites

- 1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2015 concluded at the end of October. The programme included grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas and strips along footpaths.
- 1.2 The footpath refurbishment works around the Baron Fields Woodlands area of the Country Park have been completed. These footpaths are well used routes by many people especially school children making their way from the Arnold Road area of Gee Cross to Holy Trinity School on Higham Lane.

The work included scraping existing surfaces and relaying new wearing courses, excavation of new drainage ditches and installation of new drains and headwalls, excavation of existing drainage ditches and extending catchment areas.

The project cost was: **£6,298**.

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 January 2015 the Country Park received **£1,655** of grant income which was the final payment for Year 5. Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total **£28,827** of grant income from Natural England.
- 2.3 In July Emily Bryan from Natural England conducted a site inspection of the areas in this agreement. Particular attention was directed at the sward composition of the meadows now we are at mid-agreement. It was evident from the diversity and abundance present that the Environmental Stewardship Agreement management prescriptions are delivering real positive outcomes. This was altogether a very successful inspection.

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 4 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. The full list can be found in the Appendices of this report in Appendix 1.

4. Public Events

4.1 The Country Park's winter/spring 2014/2015 programme of public events has been completed with the final event in April. The attendance was as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
30th November 2014	Crichton Porteous Ramble	18
7th December 2014	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	56
28th December 2014	Mid-Christmas Ramble	22
25th January 2015	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	48
1st March 2015	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	18
5th April 2015	Easter Egg Hunt	731
28th April 2015	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	43
Total to Date		936

4.2 The Country Park's summer 2015 programme of public events has been completed with the final event in September. The attendance was as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
3rd May 2015	Martin's Maps – Instruction on Map and Compass	8
16th June 2015	Flora Walk Around Werneth Low	11
4th August 2015	Flora Walk Around Werneth Low	12
13th September 2015	History Walk Around Werneth Low	15
27th September 2015	All Day Ramble to Cown Edge	34
Total to Date		80

4.3 Two dry stone walling weekends have been completed during the summer one, in May and the other at the end of September. Thirty four people attended completing about 40 metres of wall build. These events are organised in co-operation with the Cheshire branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association. The Hyde War Memorial Trust supports the events by purchasing additional stone.

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

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

5. Visitors – Monitoring 2014 and 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	--	--	--
December	--	--	--
2015 Totals to Date:	3,079	56,248	53,541
Previous Years Totals:	4,114	60,848	52,431

6. Green Flag Award

- 6.1. This summer the Country Park received its twelfth consecutive Green Flag Award. This is a tremendous achievement and recognition of all the hard work undertaken by the diverse range of groups working for the good of the Country

The following lines are taken from information supplied by the group “Keep Britain Tidy” who manage the accreditation.

Green Flag: A national benchmark for parks and green spaces

“The Green Flag Award® scheme is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK. It was first launched in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country. The first awards were given in 1997 and, many years later; it continues to provide the high level of quality against which our parks and green spaces are measured. It is also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve high environmental standards, setting a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.

The Green Flag Award is one of a number of accreditation schemes that recognises excellence in the management of our public space.”

7. Wildlife Nature Conservation

- 7.1 Once again visitors to the Park have been treated to some wonderful sights of Pink-footed geese flying high over the Low on their annual migration south. The birds are en-route from Martin Mere on the Lancashire wetlands to the Norfolk coast. The first 22 birds arrived at Martin Mere from Iceland on the 11th September and by the 8th October there were 30,000 at the reserve.

This breath taking autumn migration is one of the great wildlife spectacles in the North West and Werneth Low is a great place to watch it.

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

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completion Date
1	Lower Higham - Cow Lane	Cut back, prune hedgerow and sweep lane, clean-out grids	October 2015
2	Cenotaph Area	Cut grass/edge off. Clean area ready for Remembrance Day	October 2015
3	Lower Higham Gardens	Clean borders and prune shrubs ready for Remembrance Day	October 2015
4	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Clean all banking and hedgerow around Garage Building	October 2015
5	Lower Higham Main Drive	Crown lift trees and clean off banking	October 2015
6	Higham Lane	Install 2 metres of pitched path at stile at Shepley's Meadow	November 2015
7	Baron Fields Hazel Coppice	Coppice Hazel in Memorial Coppice and process timber	January 2016
8	Rear of Hillcrest	Thin-out Coppice	January 2016
9	Flaggy Path	Edge -off and clean 134 metres of flag stones	January 2016
10	Hackingknife Woodland	Selective thinning	January 2016
11	Lower Higham Orchard	Cut back 40 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
12	Flaggy Path Hedgerow	Cut back 124 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
13	QCP Picnic Area	Cut back 54 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
14	Lower Higham Drive	Cut back 30 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
15	Lower Higham Car Park	Cut back 20 metres of Holly hedgerow	March 2016
16	Ash Cottage Picnic Area	Cut back 46 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
17	Holy Trinity Paddock	Cut back 60 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
18	Riding Track	Cut back 140 metres of hedgerow	March 2016
19	Earl of Warrington Meadow	Grub out 128 metres of new laid hedgerow	March 2016
20	Flaggy Path Hedgerow	L 36 ES Post laying trim 124 metres	March 2016
21	Higham Lane	298 metres of hedge cutting layed hedgerow	March 2016
22	Baron Fields Woodlands	Selective thinning especially along rights of way	March 2016
23	Windy Harbour	Complete topping to masonry wall and Cock Brow boundary	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										
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