

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Day: Wednesday
Date: 24 November 2021
Time: 10.30 am
Place: Zoom

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 28 July 2021 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:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 23 February 2022	

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Agenda Item 3.

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

28 July 2021

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11.50 am

Present: Councillors Bowden, Owen, Robinson, Mr Bell, Mrs Ellis, Mrs Evans and Mr Gradwell

In Attendance: Nicola Marshall Greenspace Development Manager
Katie Lowry Greenspace Development Officer

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Chadwick, J Fitzpatrick, Kitchen and Mr Ainger

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on the 10 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE 2021/22

It was reported that the following representatives had been appointed to serve on the Joint Management Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22:-

Representing Tameside MBC –

Councillors Bowden, Chadwick, Cooper, J Fitzpatrick, Kitchen, Owen and Robinson

Hyde War Memorial Trust –

Messrs Ainger, Bell, Gradwell and Mrs Ellis and Mrs Evans

4. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR 2021/22

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Councillor Robinson, Tameside MBC, be appointed Chair of the Joint Management Committee for 2021/22.**
- (ii) That Mr Gradwell, Hyde War Memorial Trust, be appointed Deputy Chair of the Joint Management Committee for 2021/22.**

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 10 February 2021.

The report outlined the following:-

- Maintenance of Sites
- Public Events
- The Lower Higham Visitor Centre
- Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service

With regards to Maintenance of Sites it was reported that a review of gates with straps for closing mechanisms was conducted, which identified that not one type of latch would work for all gates and therefore straps would be replaced once Coronavirus restrictions were lifted and it was safe to do so. Volunteers had undertaken a full review of the fencing on site and the signposts resulting in post and wire fence posts and two of the way marking posts being replaced; an action plan would be put in place for the autumn to address issues around signage.

The summer grass cutting programme had commenced, which included the grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points and picnic areas. A dying tree located at the edge of the wood yard had been identified, which would be removed by TMBC Arboriculture staff, and a bush had been relocated from near the well on Higham Lane to behind the memorial garden wall.

Antisocial behaviour continued to be an issue due to the recent spell of dry weather and had caused many issues including litter, burnt tents and large amounts of damage to dry stone walls. Many volunteer hours had been spent collecting litter and fixing the damage, which could have been spent on keeping the footpath's clear and removing invasive plants from the site. Queen's Piece had also suffered antisocial behaviour and issues with parked vehicles blocking the busy junction, which local Councillors had been involved with. As part of the volunteer days, new stone had been laid at the access point to Werneth Low Road footpath to help visitors get through the stile following damage from car tyres.

There had been complaints made to the Council over alleged early cutting of the meadows by a tenant farmer on Hyde War Memorial Trust land. Members of the public were concerned about ground nesting skylarks in the meadows, which had been compounded by posters produced by the Greenspace Officer advising members of the public to keep dogs on a lead in order to prevent disturbance to this sensitive habitat. Members of the Trust disagreed that there had been early cutting and made reference to the agreement. Officers requested that a copy of the agreement be sent to them and for there to be increased communication between the parties going forward to prevent further misunderstandings in the future.

The Greenspace Officer had met with a representative of the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit to ensure footpath works would not impact on the Greater Crested Newt Habitat on site, which it was agreed it would not, therefore the quotes for the footpath works could now be agreed as set out at section 1.11 in the report.

Although Coronavirus restrictions were being lifted by the Government, the Council was adopting a cautious approach based on Public Health advice and were assessing events through an application to the licencing team to ensure a Risk Assessment, including measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, were in place. Other events, such as volunteer led walks, were being reviewed to see if they could take place safely.

The Greenspace Officer plus two volunteers had attended Peace Day to help Hyde War Memorial Trust manage the event and assist getting cars up Cow Lane and parked next to the Cenotaph. The "Make sense of Nature" event was due to take place on 29 July, facilitated by Tameside Culture Team, and a poster had been produced, which would be displayed on site. Tour De Manc would take place on 5 September and the route again included Werneth Low. As in previous years TMBC Staff and volunteers would be handing out refreshments to the riders from 7.30am at the Hare and Hounds pub. The Dry Stone Walling Association had been in contact with a view to holding a

course in September - a meeting onsite would be arranged with the Greenspace Officer to identify an appropriate location for the course to take place.

Further work had progressed on the Lower Higham Visitor Centre to enhance visitor facilities that had been funded by the Trust. Officers had advised the Trust to seek advice on re-opening the Centre from Action Together who were providing expert advice to community groups throughout the Borough. Tenants were now leasing the residential property above the Visitor Centre and all works to make the flat legal and in a suitable condition to be leased had been organised and funded by the Trust.

The alarm monitoring contract for the Visitor Centre had ceased. Officers understand the frustration of the Trust that they were not informed of the date of the cancellation of the contract and acknowledge that the Trust should have been advised. The contract was held by the Council but it was not within the remit of the Greenspace Officer to be on call if the alarm went off. A request had been made for the Trust to provide a name and contact details to the Greenspace Development Manager in order to forward this information onto the alarm company.

It was reported that the Volunteer Service had continued to take place every Tuesday completing various essential tasks around the site with weekly litter picking. Examples of completed works were appended to the report and included work on the formal gardens and the onsite orchard. The service utilised the garage, which was a shared resource with the Trust, and storage needed to be purchased for the equipment. A site visit would be carried out on a Tuesday to discuss possible options and locations.

The Greenspace Development Officer delivered a presentation that provided a virtual walk around Werneth Low Country Park and highlighted work and projects that had been undertaken by the volunteer service.

RESOLVED:
That the report be noted.

6. JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

The Greenspace Development Manager submitted a report outlining the need to reconvene the Working Group, which had been established at the November 2018 meeting of the Joint Management Committee, in order to agree a new Joint Management Agreement for Werneth Low Country Park.

It was reported that two Working Group meetings had been held prior to the start of the global pandemic in March 2020, where it was agreed that both parties wished to enter into a new Joint Management Agreement and the general principles of wanting to maintain a country park were still important to all concerned.

The Greenspace Development Manager suggested a Working Group meeting to be held in the first week of August in order to progress matters, however, members of the Trust requested that the meeting be postponed until their solicitor had responded.

It had been agreed at the November 2018 Joint Management Committee that membership of the working group comprise of three Members from Tameside Council and two members from Hyde War Memorial Trust in order to reflect the makeup of the Joint Management Committee. However, members of the Trust had since requested there to be equal representation from both parties on the Working Group. It was therefore:-

RESOLVED:
(i) That the report be noted;

- (ii) That membership of the Working Group comprise of four Tameside MBC representatives and four Hyde War Memorial Trust representatives;
- (iii) That the representatives from Hyde War Memorial Trust be Mr Ainger, Mr Bell, Mrs Evans and Mr Gradwell; and
- (iv) That the representatives from Tameside MBC be Councillor Robinson and Councillor Jim Fitzpatrick; the other two representatives would be confirmed via email to the Greenspace Development Manager.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Management Committee meets as follows:-

- **24 November 2021**
- **23 February 2022**

Agenda Item 4.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	10 November 2021
Reporting Officer:	Emma Varnam - Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods, Place
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 (28 July 2021).
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 Katie Lowry, Greenspace Development Officer,



phone: 07519 617 515



e-mail: katie.lowry@tameside.gov.uk

1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 A full six monthly site inspection was carried out during October 2021 by the Greenspace Development Officer and actions will be discussed with the Greenspace Development Manager at the end of November. These actions will be carried out through a mixture of Volunteer work and contractors. As Coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, we replaced all the straps on the gates with straps for closing mechanisms however these have been cut again so a different strategy may be required.
- 1.2 The summer grass cutting programme for 2021 has concluded for the year, which has been completed through the Grounds Maintenance team paid for by Tameside Council. The programme includes: the grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas. In addition to this, contractors have been brought onto site to cut, bail and remove from site, grass from the area around the Cenotaph and 'New Piece'. We have also had the Tameside Estates Team Tractor Flail remove some brambles and overgrown vegetation in the Windy Harbour area to help with Balsam control next year.
- 1.3 The Cheshire Branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) has successfully run another 2 day course at Werneth Low for members of the public. Thanks to the Trust for paying their preparation bill. Another section of wall has now been re-built to a high standard by the trainees and more courses are to be run in 2022. Following the antisocial behaviour, which caused large amounts of damage to dry stone walls on the Low in the summer, a course was also arranged for the volunteers by Jack Taylor from Cheshire DSWA. Jack gave up a day of his time to come and tutor the volunteers (some who didn't have much experience of walling) on rebuilding this section. It was a fantastic day and we now have more of the team with the skills to rebuild damaged sections of wall on a regular basis. Sam Simpson who takes on the majority of this work is (a very fit and healthy!) 81 years old so we will need to look at expanding our skills to support him with this work in the future.
- 1.4 Volunteers have continued to work on the formal gardens and orchard on site on a weekly basis. The Trust have arranged for new gates to be installed on the Orchard entrances, which allow for gates to be closed when needed. We have bought some bulbs, which have been planted on site and should be on display by Spring. We have also worked on the Garden of Remembrance laying new sand in between the cobbles to spruce up the area.
- 1.5 Tameside drainage engineers have been involved with a water issue off Higham Lane, into the top end of Baron Fields where water was pooling in the field. After a lot of investigation it was found that a United Utilities water main, which wasn't on any maps, had burst. This is now fixed although there has been some damage to the hedgerow in the process.
- 1.6 The Defibrillator, which is situated on the wall of the garage outside of the visitors centre is monitored by the volunteers, was showing a low battery sign and the 'pads' were also out of date. The batter and pads have now been replaced, funded by Tameside Council, so that the Defibrillator is fully functional again if it is needed.
- 1.7 We have unfortunately had some of the hedge along Werneth Low Road cut by residents. A letter has been sent out to three properties in front of where the hedge was cut to explain that this is not acceptable and that any issues need to be discussed with us first. A copy of this letter was also displayed on site. This will need to be monitored as we did not receive a satisfactory response from the residents. Unfortunately, due to this cutting, it will now be some years before we can lay this section of hedge as part of our management regime.
- 1.8 Repairs to the road into the carpark at the Visitors Centre had been identified by the Greenspace Development Officer, following a quote from Tameside Engineers department it was agreed with the Trust for the costs of this to be split between Tameside Council and The Trust (just over £500 each) and this work has now been completed.

- 1.9 As reported at the last meeting the Greenspace Officer met with a representative of the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit to ensure the footpath works described below would not impact on the Greater Crested Newt Habitat on site, which it was agreed it would not and we can therefore go ahead. These Footpath works need to be agreed - quotes from Tameside MBC Engineers Department in December 2020 - cost of the works, as set out below will need to be revised / requoted as they are now out of date:-

Visitors Centre Carpark path to where it meets Cow Lane main path to the cenotaph:

Top section above kissing gate - 112m	£3,351.60
Lower section - 112m	£3,351.60

Higham cottages culvert:

Clean out the open ditch at the bottom of the bridle path	£ 437.00
Excavate for and construct pcc flag drainage channels 4nr	£1,722.00

Higham cottages end of riding track:

130m long	£3,931.20
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Cenotaph end of the Disabled path from Quarry carpark:

Wheelchair access path - 128m long	£3,830.40
Supply and install timber marker posts - 2nr @ £89.25	£ 178.50

Quarry Carpark end of the Disabled Path:

Wheelchair access path - 518m	£9,790.20
*Excavate for and install 4 sections of land drain (approx. 80m)	£1,848.00
(* dependent on approval from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit with reference to Great Crested Newts on site)	

Quarry Car Park end Picnic Area:

Sand down and re-stain 2nr picnic benches	£ 294.00
Excavate to form 2 short paths to improve access	£ 330.75

TOTAL: £29,065.25

Additional Works (previously quoted to Dave Cannon):

- a) Excavate the vegetation and supply, spread and consolidate Gritstone surfacing from the Cenotaph across to the riding track Corner adjacent to the golf course £3,237.60
- b) Carry out vehicle barrier and stone kerb renewal and straightening in the visitor centre car park £ 730.00

- 1.10 These prices are on the basis that all excavated materials being spread on site. They are also based on the works being carried out in good conditions if possible. As we can accept all, or some of these quotes, it would be good if the Joint Committee can agree which paths are the priority and for the spend to be agreed as soon as possible to prevent further deterioration.

2. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 2.1 Although Coronavirus restrictions have mostly been lifted by the Government, the Council is still assessing each event through an application to the licencing team to ensure a Risk Assessment, including measures to prevent spread of Coronavirus, is in place. We are still to review other events, such as volunteer led walks, very soon to see which of these can take place safely.

- 2.2 We had the Tour De Manc come through Werneth Low again in early September following a year off, the volunteers worked really hard along with Tameside Events staff and the Rights of Way Officer to give out water, fruit and snacks to riders coming through. Thanks to the Hare and Hounds for giving access to the carpark and their toilets for the event, which attracts a lot of riders from the local and wider area and shows what Werneth Low has to offer.
- 2.3 Tameside Culture Services delivered a 'Make sense of Nature' session aimed at children and families on 29 July. The event was well attended and we had over 190 visitors, some of whom had never been to Werneth Low before and were amazed at the fabulous views.
- 2.4 In September the BBC completed some filming up at Werneth Low for BBC Teach: Zoom In, Zoom Out - 10 x 4 minute digital video series for KS2 children covering topics within the geography curriculum including mountains, rivers and coasts. This is great coverage for the Country Park and what it has to offer our local schools and educational establishments.

3. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE

- 3.1 Officers note that further work has been completed on the Visitor Centre by the Trust to enhance visitor facilities as and when visitors can access the centre again. The Trust will present costs of this work and other expenditure at the meeting.

4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 4.1 The Volunteers Service has continued every Tuesday since the last report, completing various essential tasks around the site and weekly litter picking. Examples of the work completed can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 Volunteer session times have continued to be 10am till 3pm, which has allowed us to complete much more on site. We have continued to use the Garage as a base and have worked around the builders and materials needed to complete works on the Visitors Centre, which at times has been challenging.
- 4.3 Greenspace Officer Peter Longbottom came to another volunteer session in October to deliver the volunteer annual machinery training, which is an essential part of ensuring safe working on site to the remaining volunteers who could not attend last time.
- 4.4 Peter Osbourne has now formally joined the team as a full time volunteer and he is attending the sessions on most Tuesdays.
- 4.5 Hedgelaying has started again for the year with Volunteer Mike Kelly tackling a section along Werneth Low Road from Quarry Carpark end up to the first cottage.

APPENDIX 1

<u>Project Ref</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Task</u>	<u>Completion</u>
1	Higham Cottages Entrance	Clearing Vegetation from steps and bridle path	August 2021
2	Invasive species control	Baron Fields- Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. Quarry Carpark- Himalayan Balsam	August 2021
3	Flaggy Path	Cut back along fence line to keep path open	August 2021
4	New Piece wall	Dry Stone Walling as described above.	September 2021
5	Higham Cottages- Riding track	We had a major fence collapse on the riding track down to Higham cottages, this was cut up and stacked neatly on site.	September 2021
6	Various locations	Footpath cut back- grass and over hanging vegetation.	August / September 2021
7	Formal gardens and Orchard	Planting bulbs and re-sanding cobbles in memorial garden along with weekly maintenance of the long borders etc.	October 2021
8	Quarry Carpark	Another new post installed to prevent cars from driving out of the car park over the drainage ditch.	October 2021
9	Cow Lane and Cenotaph	Strimming of grass, removal of wreaths and litter picking around Cenotaph, Tameside sweepers on Cow Lane along with 2 weeks of Volunteering activities to cut back the edges etc. in preparation for Remembrance Sunday.	November 2021

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