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WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Day: Wednesday
Date: 30 November 2022
Time: 2.00 pm
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 23 February 2022, to be approved as a correct record.	1 - 4
4.	MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2022/23 Tameside MBC Councillors Bowden, Colbourne, Cooper, Kitchen, Owen, Robinson and Roderick. Hyde War Memorial Trust Mr Ainger, Mr Bell, Mrs Durkin, Mrs Ellis and Mrs Halliday.	
5.	APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR FOR 2022/23 In accordance with the decision taken at the meeting of the Joint Management Committee held on 5 August 1986, the offices of Chair and Deputy Chair are held in rotation by a member of each of the constituent bodies. The Committee should in respect of this Municipal Year 2022/23, select the Chair from Hyde War Memorial Trust and the Deputy Chair from Tameside MBC.	
6.	HYDE WAR MEMORIAL TRUST UPDATE To consider the report of the Greenspace Development Manager.	5 - 6
7.	GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT To consider the report of the Greenspace Development Officer.	7 - 12

From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Charlotte Forrest, Senior Democratic Services Officer, 0161 342 2346 or charlotte.forrest@tameside.gov.uk, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note the date of the next meeting of the Joint Management Committee, as follows:-

- 22 February 2023

Agenda Item 3.

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

23 February 2022

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11.30 am

Present: Councillor Robinson (Chair), Mr Gradwell (Deputy Chair), Councillors Bowden, Chadwick, Cooper, J Fitzpatrick and Kitchen, Mr Bell and Mrs Ellis

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Owen and Mr Ainger

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on the 24 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

14. 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 28 July 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 there had been a spate of fly tipping incidents along Werneth Low Road, at the masts and down Higham Lane. Thanks were extended to the street cleansing team for their assistance with clearing the items. A Trust farmer had undertaken an emergency repair of the post and rail fencing to the field running alongside the riding track at the rear of the Cenotaph. In the coming months some longer lengths of Post and Rail fencing would need to be repaired or replaced by a contractor.

The Greenspace Development Officer reported that they had received complaints about the behaviour of dogs and their owners in and around the country park, namely owners not controlling their dogs, which was causing concern. In addition, there had been an increase in dog owners leaving bags of dog waste in bushes, which was especially prevalent at the Baron Road entrance to the Country Park. Officers would explore the possibility of the PDSA van visiting to promote responsible dog ownership. The situation would be monitored and further action taken if necessary.

The volunteers continued to work on the formal gardens, orchard and car park area in addition to carrying out work on the flags at the entrance of the visitor's centre and around the herb garden. There had been two incidents of damage to the knee rail fencing, protecting the driveway to the

garage from the car park, that had been repaired by the volunteers. The situation would be monitored to see if in future some areas needed to be widened in order to prevent routine damage.

The Committee were notified that the Council's Arboricultural team had removed a dead tree from the wood yard next to the car park. It was hoped that the tree stump would be used by local woodpeckers. New fireproof secure storage boxes had been installed in the garage along with the installation of fire extinguishers with appropriate signage. The Council's Estates Team had installed a replacement memorial bench near the Cenotaph, overlooking the riding track. The Estates Team would be approached to see if the tractor could scrape the deep mud that had formed near the 'Shippons' following a complaint received from a local cyclist who reported that the area was impassable. The cyclist also requested that other tracks from the car park up to the Cenotaph be opened to cycling by removing the kissing gates. However, this would be costly and enable cyclists to descend a very steep slope quickly, causing potential collision with other site users. Officers would instead look to make improvements to the existing cycle track.

The Committee were advised that the quotes relating to various footpath works across the Country Park, as detailed in the report, had expired and the new quotes were likely to be approximately 15-20% higher. Trust representatives were asked what they could contribute to the footpath works and if there were any cost issues then a discussion could be had to see which of the works could be prioritised. It was imperative that a decision be made as the work was seasonal and the contractors needed to be booked in order to undertake the work in the upcoming drier months.

With regards to Public Events, the committee were informed that Werneth Low Country Park would be the venue for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons, which was part of an international (commonwealth) wide project where beacons would be lit all across the commonwealth at sundown on 2 June 2022. The running order of the event was detailed in the report and it was proposed that the location of the beacon be near to the Cenotaph. The views of the Committee on the event were welcomed before permission was given to Cultural Services to progress with the arrangements.

It was reported that the Cheshire Branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association had offered two more courses to be completed at Werneth Low over 2022. The first course would take place on 14 and 15 of May and the second course would take place on 10 and 11 of September. Previous courses had provided an excellent standard of rebuild and two more courses would improve more of the riding track wall, which was in a poor state of repair. The Tour De Manc would visit Werneth Low in May 2022 and a willow picture frame would be installed on Werneth Low Road from May until September 2022 to encourage walking and cycling in Tameside and to highlight the beautiful countryside the Borough has to offer.

With regards to the Lower Higham Visitor Centre it was noted that further work had been completed on the Visitor Centre by the Trust to enhance visitor facilities as and when visitors could access the centre again. Trust representatives advised that a fire and safety inspection had been carried out that had resulted in a significant amount of expenditure. Sound insulation between the Visitors Centre and the flat had been installed and the kitchen conversion was on course for completion. The Trust looked forward to welcoming visitors back to the centre once final compliance was achieved. Trust representatives enquired about the contract for burglar and fire alarms and stated they were under the impression that the Council were arranging for the contract to be reinstated. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that contact details were required in order to setup the contract and had requested these on previous occasions but had not been sent them. They requested that the Trust provide names and contact details to the Greenspace Development Manager for them to forward onto the alarm company in order to get the contract reinstated.

The Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service 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 clearing vegetation from the 'Shippons' and Baron Field, dry stone wall repairs from Quarry Car park to the Cenotaph, general maintenance work on Quarry Car park and hedge laying along Werneth Low Road from Lofty Top towards Quarry Car Park and along the riding track from Higham Cottages.

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.

A Trust representative advised the Committee that pupils from a local school would like to erect some homemade bird boxes as part of an Easter trail and the teacher would liaise directly with the Greenspace Development Officer on the location of the boxes in and around the Country Park. Committee members also requested that the Easter event that used to take place within the Country Park before the pandemic be reinstated. A discussion was had on locking mechanisms on gates and scattering ashes in the Country Park. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that the scattering of cremated remains was not allowed in any of the Council's greenspaces and signposted members of the Committee to the [Memorial Benches and Trees \(tameside.gov.uk\)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk) policy on the Council website.

The Chair requested an update on the Trust's position with regards to the Joint Management Agreement following on from the Council's request to reconvene working group meetings at a previous meeting of the Joint Management Committee (Minute 6 refers). A Trust representative advised that a new local solicitor had been appointed and the Trust had recently received notification that the solicitors were in receipt of all documentation and would contact the Council directly with regard to the matter. The Greenspace Development Manager welcomed the update and expressed the need to reconvene the working group meetings as soon as possible. They advised that they would notify the Council's Legal team that the Trust's solicitor would be making direct contact with them soon.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted;
- (ii) That the Trust representatives discuss the proposed footpath works at the next Trust meeting and advise the amount they can contribute towards the work to the Greenspace Development Manager at their earliest possible convenience;
- (iii) That the Trust representatives discuss the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon event with their own events team and respond with their thoughts to the Greenspace Development Manager at their earliest possible convenience. Once in receipt, the Greenspace Development Manager would request that a colleague from Cultural Services contacts the Trust directly; and
- (iv) That the Trust notify the Greenspace Development Manager of the names and contact details for the alarm contract in order for it to be reinstated.

15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members of the Committee requested that they would like to see the walk around the Country Park that took place immediately before the meeting reinstated and suggested that the virtual walk around the Park that has been shown during meetings remained in place for those who could not attend. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that the walk would be rescheduled as and when physical meetings returned.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Management Committee meets as follows:-

- 27 July 2022
- 30 November 2022
- 22 February 2023

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Agenda Item 6.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	30 November 2022
Reporting Officer:	Nicola Marshall - Greenspace Development Manager
Subject:	HYDE WAR MEMORIAL TRUST UPDATE
Report Summary:	To provide an update to members of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee on the changes that have taken place in Trustee membership at Hyde War Memorial Trust since the last Joint Committee meeting in February 2022.
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 Nicola Marshall, Greenspace Development Manager

 phone: 07814541623

 e-mail: nicola.marshall@tameside.gov.uk

1. HYDE WAR MEMORIAL TRUST

- 1.1 Since the Joint Committee Meeting in February 2022, Hyde War Memorial Trust have undergone changes in Trustees and this report provides an update on those changes.
- 1.2 The Annual General Meeting of Hyde War Memorial Trust took place on 21 July 2022 where new Trustees were appointed and there was a change of Chair and Secretary.
- 1.3 The Trustees of Hyde War Memorial Trust are:
- | | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Jane Durkin | Chair |
| Susan Plackett | Trustee |
| John Bell | Trustee |
| Shibley Alam | Trustee |
| Pamela Steven | Trustee |
| Susan Ellis | Trustee |
| Margaret Halliday | Trustee |
| Carl Rogerson | Trustee |
| Andrew Richardson | Trustee |
| Cllr Betty Affleck | Trustee |
| Peter Ainger | Trustee |
| Richard Ekin | Trustee |
- 1.4 The Trustees appointed to the Joint Management Committee are:
- Peter Ainger
John Bell
Jane Durkin
Susan Ellis
Margaret Halliday
- 1.5 Officers are committed to working with the Trust and have met twice with the new Chair, Secretary and other Trustees. These meetings are not replacements for the Joint Management Committee but have allowed Officers and Trustees to get to know each other informally and agree best ways of communicating and understand the respective roles of Officers and Trustees. These meetings will continue to discuss any day to day management and maintenance issues in the country park, which do not need to be discussed in detail at the Joint Management Committee Meetings.
- 1.6 The Joint Management Committee Meetings will continue to provide strategic direction, oversight of the maintenance regimes and have overall control of the management and maintenance of the country park. As an example of the difference between the meetings it may be that at the informal meetings Officers would advise the Trustees that a small section of fencing work will be taking place with the work being undertaken by volunteers and the material costs will be covered through existing approved budgets. If there was a need for additional budget to replace large sections of fencing this would be presented to the Joint Management Committee Meeting as the Joint Management Committee Membership would need to discuss this and agree if they want the work to be undertaken and decide how it can be funded.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 As set out at the front of the report.

Agenda Item 7.

Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	30 November 2022
Reporting Officer:	Emma Varnam - Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
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.
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 The Greenspace Officer for Werneth Low has undertaken chainsaw training and assessment during the Summer of 2022, which will allow more self-sufficiency to react to fallen trees on site and undertake other woodland management work.
- 1.2 After the site inspection was undertaken by the Greenspace Officer in April it was found that many of the gates and stiles were in a poor condition. The Tameside Council Countryside Estates Team were engaged to undertake replacement and refurbishment works at several places across the site. New stiles and supporting fencing have been installed along the path down the edge of Higham Lane and near the Cenotaph to ensure horses do not access this area from the bridle path.
- 1.3 The Council Grounds Maintenance Teams have continued with the grass cutting programme on site, which has now completed for the year. We had issues with the width of the opening into the picnic area at Beasoms Lane, which meant this area did not get cut. We will widen this entrance next year to ensure the new mowers can fit through.
- 1.4 The cutting of some of the meadows has been problematic again this year with contractors engaged not cutting at an appropriate time of year for the habitat and species in these areas due to lack of communication. We will endeavour to prevent this happening again in future.
- 1.5 The rabbit population has remained high, as seen by the damage in certain areas of the site. The volunteers along with local horse riders have been filling some of the more problematic holes; such as in the riding track up from Higham Cottages and around the cenotaph where risk of injury is higher.
- 1.6 Thanks again to Greenspace Officer John Courtman for spraying the Japanese Knotweed on Orchard Rise for a second day this year. Residents contacted the Council and the area was treated. As previously reported, a licence for spraying herbicide near water courses was applied for and granted by the Environment Agency for this area and we will now monitor this for regrowth and treat again if necessary in the coming year.
- 1.7 A review of the Site Risk Assessment was carried out and shared with the Hyde War Memorial Trust (HWMT). Consequently a meeting was arranged with the HWMT farming contractor to consider and review the Health and Safety practices of the work on site. Posters have been erected at the entrances of the fields where the cows are grazing on the site to warn members of the public of their presence, especially those with dogs. The cattle are all young and have been selected by the farmer on their behaviour to try and reduce risk. During the dry weather at the start of the grazing season, bowzers were brought onto site to ensure the cattle had drinking water. which were situated safely at the edge of the field. We will continue to work to improve practices in future.
- 1.8 Litter and fly tipping incidents remain high, we have also suffered continued antisocial behaviour through the summer, with groups of youths gathering and destroying walls. A local resident has raised concerns about the ditch next to land close to Windy Harbour, as cars have been driving onto this area during the summer. We will investigate increasing the depth and width of this ditch to prevent this from happening again. All fly tipping incidents are investigated if evidence is found and support is received through the Council Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping teams where needed with the clear up.
- 1.9 Himalayan Balsam is continuing to advance and claim new areas of the site despite many hours put into control methods by the Greenspace Volunteers. We have shared 'Best Practice' documents with HWMT to pass onto Werneth Low Golf Club at a meeting between the two parties to raise awareness on the matter.

- 1.10 A full site inspection has been carried out, as per the Council Greenspace Policy, in October 2022. Fencing, especially post and rail stock fencing, is showing signs of deterioration and we need to find a way of funding these, especially the longer stretches of fencing, which will be too much for the TMBC Countryside Estates team to take on along with other regular commitments.
- 1.11 Pathworks on site - different options for surfacing are currently being explored by the Greenspace Officer with help from colleagues in the Council. These may offer a better solution to the erosion we are suffering when heavy rains fall on Werneth Low that wash the smaller stones away. This will be discussed with the Joint Management Committee to prioritise the paths that are most needed to be repaired and what the costs of this will be.
- 1.12 Werneth Low Environment Group (CIC) - the Greenspace Officer has continued to attend the meetings of this newly formed group who would like to offer support, guidance and assistance for events and projects at Werneth Low. Since the last report there have been more meetings and a walk on part of the site.

2. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 2.1 The Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) completed the second course of the year on 10 and 11 of September. Once again the Bridlepath next to the work site needed to be closed for safety and signs were erected to give advance notice of this 1 week before. The path was then closed for the duration of the weekend with barriers and signs. The site was prepared by the DSWA, who kindly accommodated another participant, the Grounds Keeper from Werneth Low Golf club, who was hoping to improve his skills over the course of the weekend. Another great stretch of wall was completed and course dates are currently being set for next year.
- 2.2 Many thanks to HWMT for accommodating the up and coming Greater Manchester Orienteering event at Werneth Low on Saturday 12 November by opening the café and toilets to support the organisers of the event.
- 2.3 The Remembrance Sunday event at the Cenotaph was held at 12noon on Sunday 13 November, organised by HWMT and supported by the Greenspace Officer and Greenspace Volunteers on the day.

3. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE

- 3.1 Officers note that the café is now operating every Sunday run by Volunteers from HWMT along with supporting other events. Thanks to HWMT for the afternoon tea, which was put on for the Greenspace Volunteers in October.

4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 4.1 The Greenspace Volunteers have continued to meet every Tuesday 10am till 3pm 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 We have continued to use the tool stores and garage as shelter and storage, which has been working well.
- 4.3 Greenspace Officer and Volunteer Mike Kelly held a meeting to discuss the next sections of hedge to lay. Hedge laying has now commenced for the season, starting with a field boundary hedge near the masts.

- 4.4 We have welcomed new volunteers into the group in recent weeks. Numbers remain high with on average 11 volunteers attending each week, which allows us to complete multiple tasks around the site with the excellent skills the volunteers have acquired, for some, over many years.
- 4.5 We have bought more bulbs for the site this Autumn, adding to the colour in the gardens in Spring and adding to the diversity of the site with wild daffodils being added to the edge of the woodlands. The Gardens have been well looked after and managed by the Greenspace Volunteers who have added plants and maintained others to keep it looking lovely throughout the year.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As set out at the front of the report.

APPENDIX 1

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completed
1	Quarry Car Park	Remove overhanging branches from obscuring the view for cars exiting the car park.	July
2	Various	Footpath cut back, footpaths across the site need cutting back regularly throughout the summer. Volunteers trained in using power tools such as strimmer and hedge trimmers to increase the speed at which this work can be undertaken but it still takes many days.	July-September
3	Various Locations	Himalyan Balsam removal- we are hoping to push back to areas difficult to control.	July- September
4	Park Picnic area close to Quarry Car	Cut back hedge and remove clippings.	September
5	Side of the riding track next to the Golf Course	Clear ditch to prevent blockages and cut back hedgerow	September
6	Baron Fields- near Orchard Rise	Cut back vegetation along the ditch to prevent flooding.	October
7	Formal gardens and Orchard	Weekly maintenance and planting of bulbs.	October
8	Main path from Quarry Carpark to the Cenotaph	Dry Stone walling repairs.	September
9	Werneth Low Road Paths	Cut back to allow ease of passage.	September
10	Across site	Cross drains- these need regularly digging out to prevent further erosion on the stone paths.	July- October
11	Higham Cottages	Step clearance and bridleway management, removing overhanging branches and filling in Rabbit holes in the path.	September
12	Field boundary wall- Cow Lane side of riding track	Rebuild wall damaged by youth	September
13	Woodland near Arnold Road entrance	Removing rope swings, litter and debris from woodland after summer holidays.	September
14	Visitors Centre Car Park	Weekly litter pick, signs cleaned and driveway drainage maintained to keep clear.	Weekly
15	Cow Lane and Cenotaph	Clearance, cutting and preparation for Remembrance Sunday with help from TMBC Road sweepers.	November

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