

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

10 February 2021

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11.35 am

Present: Mr Gradwell (Chair), Councillors Robinson (Vice-Chair), Chadwick, Cooper, Kitchen and Owen, Mr Ainger, Mr Bell and Mrs Evans

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Bowden and J Fitzpatrick

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 1 December 2020 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 1 December 2020.

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 the summer grass cutting programme for 2021 would be reviewed to determine if the frequency of the cuts were appropriate for the Country Park. The programme of grass cutting included the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas and strips along footpaths. It was reported that work carried out by BT Openreach had resulted in damage to the riding track along Werneth Low road leading from Queen's Piece to the Hare and Hounds. Remedial works to this area would take place as soon as the weather and ground conditions allow.

An update was provided on the footpath resurfacing works that had unfortunately been further delayed due to the third National Lockdown and inclement winter weather. The report detailed updated quotes from contractors for the cost of the works and it was anticipated that the works would commence in the spring. A discussion ensued over the possible implementation of multi-use paths within the Country Park and it was agreed that a report on the matter be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Management Committee.

Members of the committee were informed that some fences in the Country Park were beginning to fail and it was proposed that they were not replaced as laid hedges were now creating the

boundary. Hedges created a more attractive option, increased important hedge habitats and removed the need to maintain fencing. A photo detailing an example of the collapsed fencing was appended to the report.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all public events had been cancelled and the Lower Higham Visitor Centre would remain closed until it was deemed safe to re-open. The Greenspace Development Manager and Senior Management team at TMBC had reviewed the volunteering service following the latest National Lockdown announced on 4 January 2021. Due to robust risk assessments and protocols that had previously been established, it had been decided that the volunteer service could remain operational throughout the lockdown. At present, due to the cold weather and not wanting to use the indoor garage space for shelter during the lockdown, the volunteering activities ceased at 1pm. A table listing the work that had been completed by the volunteers was appended to the report.

The Greenspace Development Manager notified members of the committee that the Council's legal department had completed the draft of the new Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Agreement and a meeting of the sub-group could be arranged to take matters forward. Representatives of the Hyde War Memorial Trust advised that they had appointed a solicitor and suggested that the new agreement contained detail around the Visitor's Centre following the complexities that arose due to staffing changes over the summer. Following discussion it was agreed that membership of the sub-group be increased to include four Council representatives and four representatives from the Hyde War Memorial Trust.

The Greenspace Development Manager also notified members of the committee that they had received a request for metal detecting on Werneth Low Country Park. Following discussion all members of the Joint Management Committee were in agreement that the Country Park was not an appropriate place as it was managed parkland with public rights of way. The Park also had a range of important habitats, ground nesting birds and was a site of archaeological significance, which made it unsuitable for unofficial digs.

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. Members of the committee extended their thanks and requested that the presentation be shared.

Members of the Joint Committee commented on gates being left open within the Country Park, which the Greenspace Development Officer would discuss with the volunteer rangers in order to find a workable solution. The Chair provided an update on the visitor's centre and a discussion was held on flying drones.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That a report on the possible implementation of multi-use pathways within the Werneth Low Country Park be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Management Committee;**
- (iii) That the membership of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Agreement sub-group be increased to comprise of four Council representatives and four representatives from the Hyde War Memorial Trust; and**
- (iv) That the Greenspace Development Manager arrange a meeting of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Agreement sub-group.**

15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Management Committee meets as follows:-

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