

**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](mailto: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