

# 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**