

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

24 November 2021

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11.25 am

Present: Councillor Robinson (Chair), Mr Gradwell (Deputy Chair), Councillor Kitchen, Councillor Owen, Mr Ainger, Mr Bell and Mrs Ellis

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Bowden, Chadwick and Cooper

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on the 28 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

10. 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 a six monthly site inspection was carried out during October 2021 and the actions arising would be undertaken through a mixture of volunteer work and contractors. The summer grass cutting programme for 2021 had been completed by the Grounds Maintenance team and contractors had removed grass from the area around the Cenotaph and 'New Piece'. The Tameside Estates Team Tractor Flail had removed brambles and overgrown vegetation in the Windy Harbour area to help with Balsam control. Work continued on the formal gardens and orchard and the Trust had arranged for new gates to be installed on the Orchard entrances. Spring bulbs had been planted on site and new sand had been lain on the cobbles in the Garden of Remembrance.

Tameside drainage engineers had been involved with a water issue off Higham Lane into the top end of Baron Fields where water was pooling in the field. After investigation it was found that a United Utilities water main, which was not on any maps, had burst. This had now been fixed although there had been some damage to the hedgerow in the process. A section of hedgerow along Werneth Low Road had been cut by residents, which would take a number of years before it could be lain again as part of the management regime. Residents had been sent a letter to explain

that this was unacceptable and any issues needed to be discussed with the Greenspace team in the first instance.

It was reported that the Cheshire Branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association had successfully run another 2-day course at Werneth Low for members of the public and more detailed tuition had been provided for the regular volunteers. A section of wall had now been re-built to a high standard by the trainees and more courses would be run in 2022.

The Committee was notified that the Council had purchased a new battery and pads for the defibrillator situated on the wall of the garage outside of the visitors centre. Repairs to the road into the car park leading to the visitor's centre had been completed with the cost equally split between the Council and the Trust. The costs for the required footpath works needed to be revised as the original quotes from December 2020 were out of date. The new quotes would need to be agreed by the Joint Committee and the areas of work prioritised in order to prevent further deterioration.

With regards to Public Events, it was reported that the Tour De Manc had visited Werneth Low in September with volunteers distributing refreshments to the riders. Thanks were extended to the Hare and Hounds for allowing use of their facilities. Tameside Culture Services delivered a well-attended 'Make Sense of Nature' session aimed at children and families on 29 July 2021 and the BBC had recently completed filming at Werneth Low for BBC Teach: Zoom In, Zoom Out, a video series for KS2 children covering topics within the geography curriculum.

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 they had recently met with Pure Innovations at the Visitor Centre to explore the possibility of siting a café at the centre and discussed how it could operate. A query was raised concerning legionella checks at the Visitor Centre and, following discussion, a Trust representative advised that they would investigate further.

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 invasive species control, clearing vegetation and fixing a large section of fencing on the riding track to Higham cottages. The annual machinery training took place in October and hedge laying had commenced on a section along Werneth Low Road from Quarry Carpark to the first cottage.

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.

The Chair thanked the Greenspace Development Officer for an informative report and interesting presentation and, on behalf of the Committee, extended thanks to the volunteers for the continual hard work that they carry out on the country park. Committee members expressed concern over the lack of younger volunteers and a discussion was held on ideas and possible opportunities to encourage a younger cohort of volunteers.

Thanks were also extended to the Hyde War Memorial Trust for their work and remarks were made on the fantastic Remembrance Sunday service held at the Cenotaph.

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 the previous meeting of the Joint Management Committee (Minute 6 refers). A Trust representative advised that the solicitors they had appointed in York no longer had capacity therefore a local solicitors had been formally instructed. A copy of the draft agreement had recently been sent to them and the Trust were awaiting their response.

The Greenspace Development Manger informed the Committee that an item on Godley Green would be brought to a future meeting.

A Trust representative asked for permission to share the report and presentation, including the presentation delivered at the last meeting, with fellow Trustees and a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. The Greenspace Development Officer agreed to the request.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Management Committee meets as follows:-

- **23 February 2022**