


Report To:	WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date:	21 November 2016
Reporting Officer:	Ian Saxon, Assistant Executive Director, Place David Cannon, Greenspace Development Officer
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 (25 July 2016).
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 David Cannon, Greenspace Development Officer,  phone: 0161-368-6667  e-mail: david.cannon@tameside.gov.uk

1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2016 has been completed. The programme included: the grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas and strips along footpaths.
- 1.2 The Operations Maintenance Team have installed new gates in the kissing gate stiles at Quarry Car Park Picnic Area and at Radcliffe's Field Meadow.
- 1.3 After last winter's storms the footpath near Higham Cottages has gradually become a danger to walkers. Members of public have commented on the dangerous condition and at least one person has slipped injuring themselves.
- 1.4 Three contactors were approached to tender for the installation of 36 metres of steps, a new stile, and the replacement of a short section of Country Park post and rail wooden fencing.
- 1.5 Fairway Landscapes Ltd was the successful applicant tendering a price of £3,500. To-date the preliminary work of clearing the work area has been completed and the contractor is due to install the steps later this month.
- 1.6 At a recent meeting of the Hyde War Memorial Trust the Trustees agreed to fund all the costs of this project.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – HIGHER LEVEL AGREEMENT 2010 – 2020 UPDATE

- 2.1 Environmental Stewardship agreements have five primary objectives:
 - Wildlife conservation
 - Maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character
 - Natural resource protection
 - Protection of the historic environment; and
 - Promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside
- 2.2 Environmental Stewardship – Higher Level agreements are only suitable for land that is of "significant environmental interest".
- 2.3 In October the Country Park received £2,174 of grant income which was the interim payment for Year 7. Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total £36,983 of grant income from Natural England.
- 2.4 At the time of this report the Country Park is compliant with all aspects of this agreement.
- 2.5 On the 5 October the Country Park hosted a training course for Natural England (NE) ecologists. The aim of the course was to improve the field skills of NE ecologists in identifying plants in the vegetative form on acidic grasslands. On the day, six ecologists from Cambridge attended and the whole event was an interesting and rewarding experience. It was also a great opportunity to showcase Tameside's Greenspace to an audience from further afield.

3. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 3.1 The Country Park's summer 2016 programme of public events concluded with The Cown Edge Ramble at the end of September. The attendance for the entire summer events programme at Werneth Low Country Park was as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
Sunday 1 May	Map and Compass Navigation	2
Sunday 29 May	Henry V Walk Around Werneth Low	20
Tuesday 31 May	Leafy Folk on the Low	119
Tuesday 7 June	History Walk Around Werneth Low	12
Tuesday 21 June	Flora Walk around Werneth Low	5
Tuesday 9 August	Flora Walk around Werneth Low	9
Sunday 25 September	All Day Ramble to Cown Edge	31
Total to Date		198

- 3.2 The Winter/Spring 2016/2017 programme of public events for the Country Park is as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
25 October 2016	Woods, Wands and Wizards	110
4 December 2016	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	--
8 January 2017	Highs and Lows Ramble	--
5 February 2017	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	--
12 March 2017	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
16 April 2017	Easter Egg Hunt	--
30 April 2017	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
Total to Date		110

- 3.3 The Alder Community High School cross country run around the Country Park was held on Tuesday 3 May. The event, which is in its tenth year, is in aid of The Christie Hospital. The amount raised for this year has now been confirmed at: £3,363.

- 3.4 On Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 September, the Cheshire branch of The Dry Stone Walling Association held their basic training course. This second course for this year in Werneth Low Country Park was in Great Rye Field Meadow and fourteen people attended building nearly 20 metres of wall. The Hyde War Memorial Trust funded the purchase of new stone required for the re-building.

4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 4.1 Since the last meeting of the Country Park Joint Management Committee the volunteers have held 3 meetings. The volunteers assist the Greenspace Development Officer with public events, the maintenance and general upkeep of sites, and staffing the visitor centre. There are at present 17 members in the volunteer service.
- 4.2 At the October 2016 meeting of the Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service the Volunteers agreed the major projects to be undertaken during winter and spring 2016/2017. The project list of works can be found in **Appendix 1** at the end of this report.
- 4.3 The Greenspace Volunteers have been very busy through the summer on a multitude of projects and none more important than the control of non-native invasive flowers. The main species is Himalayan Balsam which if left unchecked will choke out native wildflowers. We monitor the amount of time site by site and record the data on a spreadsheet. This

information is analysed as the end of the year which enables us to decide the most important sites to attack the following year and to give an overall picture of the problem the Country Park faces from these dangerous weeds. The final end of year 2016 monitoring spreadsheet can be found in the **Appendix 2** at the end of this report.

5. VISITORS – 2016

5.1 Active monitoring data for 2016:

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Counter on path from Lower Higham to Cenotaph	Counter on path from Quarry Car Park to Cenotaph
January	202	4,455	4,011
February	218	3,798	4,036
March	546	5,384	5,298
April	260	6,056	5,320
May	502	6,065	4,924
June	223	6,187	5,685
July	146	5,789	5,528
August	212	7,837	6,410
September	157	4,979	4,502
October	321	3,978	4,252
November	--	--	--
December	--	--	--
2016 Totals to Date:	2,787	54,528	49,966
Previous Years Totals:	4,114	61,228	52,431

6. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

- 6.1 Earlier this year we were contacted by a local solicitor regarding a bequest from an estate. We were informed that £1000 had been left to the Country Park in a will and the money would be put towards a suitable project to improve the Park.
- 6.2 Following discussions with Natural England, Emorsgate Seed Suppliers and our local tenant farmer it was agreed to reseed with a wildflower mixture one of the Country Park's hay meadows.
- 6.3 A mixture of wildflower and grasses has been purchased for South Meadow near Windy Harbour and we plan to cast the seed later this month.
- 6.4 The hay meadow will flower annually, be an improvement to the ecology of the area and significantly improve the ambience and landscape of Werneth Low. Details of the seed mixture can be found in **Appendix 3** at the end of this report.

APPENDIX 2

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK NON-NATIVE INVASIVE WEEDS													
AREA TARGETS MONITORING SUMMER 2016 - 1st October 2016													
Location				Species	HOURS WORKED						TO-DATE		
					2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016			
1	Windy Harbour Logo Gate Stream			Himalayan Balsam	20	20	10	19	15	18			
2	Windy Harbour - Near Septic Tank			Himalayan Balsam	32	25	25	17	9	6			
3	Claytons Fields			Himalayan Balsam	0	0	0	0	16	2½			
4	Werneth Low Road			Himalayan Balsam	0	0	0	0	9	8			
5	Higher Higham Meadows			Himalayan Balsam	3	6	6	8	7	2½			
6	Rear of Higher Higham			Himalayan Balsam	1	1	1	4	4	2½			
7	Lower Higham Wood Store			Himalayan Balsam	7	7	5	5	2	½			
8	Baron Fields Pond and Woodland			Himalayan Balsam	24	20	20	10	4	28			
9	Rear of Orchard Rise			Japanese Knotweed	7	5	4	4	1	0			
10	Rear of Hilcrest Avenue			Himalayan Balsam	36	35	25	10	8	8½			
11	Milkwort Bank			Himalayan Balsam	24	20	9	1	4	6½			
12	Quarry Car Park			Himalayan Balsam	16	16	12	8	4	5½			
13	South Meadow			Himalayan Balsam	25	15	4	3	2	4½			
14	Higham Cottages			Japanese Knotweed	5	0	20	5	2	0			
15	Higham Cottages Riding Track			Himalayan Balsam	0	0	0	0	0	16			
TOTAL					195	170	141	94	87	109			

APPENDIX 3

Seed Composition for South Meadow, November 2016 - Werneth Low Country Park:

English name	Latin name	Percentage of mix by weight
Grasses		
Crested dog's tail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	10%
Common bent grass	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	10%
Red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	10%
Sweet vernal grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	10%
Yellow oat grass	<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	5%
Quaking grass	<i>Briza media</i>	5%
		50%
Wildflowers		
Common bird's foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	5%
Common/black knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	4%
Meadow vetchling	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	3%
Self heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	2%
Betony	<i>Stachys officinalis</i>	2%
Tufted vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>	2%
Native wild red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	5%
Oxeye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	15%
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	1%
Autumn hawkbit	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	1%
Field Scabious	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	10%
		50%
TOTAL		100%