

**Report To:** **WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**Date:** 23 February 2022

**Reporting Officer:** Emma Varnam - Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods

**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 (24 November 2021).

**Recommendations:** That the Joint Management Committee:-  

1. Note the report;
2. Agree which footpaths in the Country Park are the priority for repair; and
3. Agree the location of the Beacon within the Country Park as part of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons project.

**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



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## 1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 There has been a spate of Fly Tipping incidents in recent months along Werneth Low Road, at the masts and down Higham Lane. Garden flags, settees, mattresses and other household items such as bags of children's toys and two bin bags of dog faeces have been dumped along the roadsides. Many thanks to TMBC Street Cleansing teams for their assistance with these items, which were too large to fit in the Ford Ranger.
- 1.2 The Trust's farmer had to do some emergency repair of the post and rail fencing to the field running alongside the riding track at the rear of the Cenotaph before the cows could be brought into the fields. There was a need in the coming months to replace or repair some longer lengths of Post and Rail fencing, which act as stock barriers. This will need to be a contracted job as the volunteers do not have time to complete such a long length of repairs.
- 1.3 We have had two emails from distressed members of the public around the behaviour of dog owners on site, not adequately controlling their dogs and causing concern. This needs to be monitored and further actions taken if necessary. The majority of dog owners using the Country Park do so responsibly however, we have seen an increase in the amount of new dog owners using the park and in places an abundance of poo bags being thrown into bushes and brambles. This has been especially prevalent at Baron Road entrance to the park. Officers will approach the PDSA to see if they are able to visit the car park with their minibus and promote responsible dog ownership – we have done this in other parks and it was well received.
- 1.4 Volunteers have continued to work on the formal gardens, orchard and car park keeping planting beds free of weeds and sprucing up the paths and cobbles. They have scrubbed all of the flags at the entrance to the Visitors Centre and around the herb garden to help prevent slips and falls. We have had two incidents where the knee rail fencing protecting the driveway to the garage from the car park has been broken by cars over the weekend. None of these incidents were reported to us, but the damage has been repaired by the volunteers in both cases. We have to acknowledge the increased size of the average vehicle and see if in future some areas need to be widened to prevent routine damage. This would need some investment however, as the tarmac area would need to be extended during the widening.
- 1.5 Tameside MBC Arboricultural team have attended and removed a dead tree from the wood yard next to the car park. The tree was identified last year as dying and needing to be removed due to the potential hazards of hitting traffic or pedestrians in the car park. They did a great job of removing the risk and leaving a stump, which will hopefully be used by local woodpeckers.
- 1.6 Riding track request - we have had a complaint from a local cyclist regarding the deep mud that forms near the 'Shippons', which has become so deep that it impossible to get through. The request also included that the other tracks from the car park up to the Cenotaph should be opened to Cycling by removing the kissing gates, this would be costly and would also allow cyclists to descend a very steep slope quickly, causing potential collision with other site users. The Greenspace Officer is proposing asking the tractor driver from the Council Estates Team to scrape the deep mud with the bucket once available again and see if this fixes the issue.
- 1.7 New Fire-Proof secure storage boxes were installed into the garage, which helps store the petrol power tools both more securely and controlling the risk of fire from the fuel in the engines. Following on from a TMBC Fire Safety inspection of the tool stores and garage a risk assessment has guided the installation of fire extinguishers with appropriate signage.
- 1.8 A replacement memorial bench has been installed near the Cenotaph, overlooking the riding track. The request was made from the family to pay for a new bench as the old one

was rotten at the base. Although we do not allow new memorial benches at Werneth Low we have allowed a like for like replacement and re-polishing of the plaque. The work was completed by the TMBC Estates Team and paid for by the family.

- 1.9 As reported at the last few meetings 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. The costs quoted are set out below but these date from December 2020 and we have been advised that there is likely to be a 15-20% increase due to increased labour and materials costs. We need the Trust to advise what they can contribute to the costs bearing in mind the majority of the path repairs required are on Trust Land.

**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 |
|-----------|-----------|

**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**

**Revised cost to take into account delays using 20% increase: £34,878.30**

**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

**Revised cost to take into account delays using 20% increase: £ 4,461.12**

- 1.10 These prices are subject that all excavated materials are spread on site. They are also based on the works being carried out in good conditions if possible, which will be in the coming months. 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 of the paths and possible accidents and potential personal injury claims through slips trips and falls.

- 1.11 The Greenspace Officer was asked to join the Environment Sub Committee of the Hyde War Memorial Trust to provide specialist advice where needed. There has been one meeting of the Sub Committee, which the Greenspace Officer attended.

## **2. UP AND COMING PUBLIC EVENTS**

- 2.1 The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons - this is part of an international (commonwealth) wide project where beacons will be lit all across the commonwealth at sundown on 2 June 2022. The event will be attended by Vice Lord-Lieutenant Sharman Birtles MBE JP DL and other elected Members, Aldermen, Freemen, MP's and other civic dignitaries. Once lit at sundown the beacon will burn for 1 hour. The beacon will be free standing and gas powered and removed at the end of the event.
- 2.2 The exact location needs to be agreed by the Joint Management Committee but it is proposed that it is located near to the Cenotaph.
- 2.3 There has also been a request for access to the Visitors Centre if possible to give somewhere for dignitaries to meet but there is an understanding that the event is late in the evening and therefore may not be possible.
- 2.4 The running order of the event is as follows:-
- Setup from 6pm
  - Event to take place from 8.30pm until 10.45pm and include a Brass Band, Piper, Choir and Speeches
  - Beacon Lit at 21.45pm and will burn for one hour
  - Event closes at 10.45pm
  - Site cleared by 11.30pm
- 2.5 We would welcome the views of the members of the Joint Management Committee on this event before we give permission to our colleagues in Culture Services.
- 2.6 Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association have offered two more courses to be completed at Werneth Low over 2022. The first course will take place on 14 and 15 of May and the second course will take place on 10 and 11 of September. Previous courses have provided an excellent standard of rebuild and two more courses would improve more of the riding track wall, which is in a poor state of repair.
- 2.7 The Tour De Manc will come through Werneth Low again in early September. Colleagues in Culture are planning on the installation of a willow picture frame on Werneth Low Road to encourage walking and cycling in Tameside and to highlight the beautiful countryside the Borough has to offer. The frame will be installed on Tameside Council owned land within the Country Park. Installation is planned for May 2022 and it will remain in situ until September.
- 2.8 In September 2021 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 has now been released and can be viewed via this [link](#). 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.

### **4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE**

- 4.1 The Volunteers Service has continued to meet 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 shelter and storage, which has been working well.
- 4.3 We had a nice Christmas celebration and walk within social distancing limitations using the wood yard to sing some songs and share memories.
- 4.4 Hedgelaying has continued with volunteer Mike Kelly completing more excellent work on the field boundary hedge for wildlife and boundary maintenance. Mike has completed many days outside of the usual Tuesdays to complete this work. Volunteers on Tuesdays have been removing brashings from the field and making dead hedges in other more appropriate areas.
- 4.5 Further dry stone walling repairs have been completed outside of the Tuesday sessions by Sam Simpson, which has helped to keep on top of the damaged caused by cattle and visitors.

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 As set out at the front of the report.

## APPENDIX 1

| <b>Project Ref</b> | <b>Location</b>  | <b>Task</b>   | <b>Completion</b>                        |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| 1                  | 'Shippons'- off Riding track rear of Cenotaph            | Clearing Vegetation from this important site showing the local history of Werneth Low   | November 2021                            |
| 2                  | Main path from Quarry Carpark to the Cenotaph            | Dry Stone Wall repairs, cutting back of shrubs encroaching on the path, field drain locating and clearance to improve drainage.   | November 2021                            |
| 3                  | Werneth Low Road- from Lofty Top towards Quarry Car Park | Mike Kelly- Hedgelaying field boundary hedge for wildlife and boundary maintenance. Volunteers on Tuesdays have been removing brushings from the field and making dead hedges in other more appropriate areas.  | November 21- Feb 22                      |
| 4                  | Quarry Car Park  | Removal of branches posing danger to scratching cars, clearance of the drainage ditches and removal of accumulated leaf litter and mud to extend the parking areas on the tarmacked section.  | December 2021                            |
| 5                  | Whole site   | Full site litter pick following on from the Christmas and New Year Holidays   | Jan 2022                                 |
| 6                  | Various locations  | Culvert clearance and maintenance of essential drainage.  | Jan 2022                                 |
| 7                  | Formal gardens and Orchard                               | Weeding, footpath Clearance, cobbles and scrubbing of the flags, fencing repairs and weekly maintenance of the long borders etc.  | Feb 2021                                 |
| 8                  | Riding track from Higham Cottages up the Low             | Group hedgelaying project- under Mike Kelly's guidance various group members have been involved with laying an old section of blackthorn hedge which has opened up the views at the top of the riding track and prevented future collapse of these hedgerow trees along with improving the hedge for nesting birds and acting as a wildlife corridor. | A section to be completed by March 2022. |
| 9                  | Baron Fields   | Removal of encroaching vegetation on paths and of brambles where Himalayan Balsam is invading and the brambles are preventing access to remove the balsam in the summer months.   | Feb 2022                                 |