

Report To: WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Date: 27 July 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 (23 February 2022).

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



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1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

- 1.1 We were fortunate to have the Sky Larks return to site in February and signs were put up in the fields that nests had been seen by RSPB associates to try and warn dog walkers to avoid the nests to prevent disturbance. Other posters highlighting the ground nesting birds have been produced by local school children and put up on site by the Werneth Low Environment Group. Many of these have been torn down and it would be good to think of a more robust, semi-permanent way of highlighting the nests next year to prevent unnecessary losses of these rare chicks.
- 1.2 A full site inspection was undertaken by the Greenspace Officer in April 2022; the inspection is undertaken twice a year and is done across all Greenspace sites. The report is written up with photographs to illustrate issues and kept on file. The report assists with generating the work programme for the next six months and highlights longer term issues that need to be considered. The inspection has highlighted that lots of the infrastructure in the Country Park is getting to the end of its life; fencing, gates and stiles will all need replacing in the coming years and we need to find a way of funding these, especially the longer stretches of fencing, which are required for stock proofing.
- 1.3 Volunteers and the TMBC Grounds Maintenance Teams have ensured the Orchard is looking great and grass is well maintained. Volunteers have continued managing the formal flower beds, donating extra plants from home and making them look lovely, the Spring bulbs were beautiful this year. Volunteer John Jones has also taken on the re-laying and cementing of the cobbles outside 'The Croft' Picnic area in the gardens, which now looks much better and will hopefully reduce the amount of weeds growing in the area.
- 1.4 We seem to have had a large increase in the rabbit population in the park, they are digging in areas not seen by the volunteers and Officers before. Some holes are then added to by dogs digging at them, which need filling in if near footpaths. A snare was found on the Pipers Clough side of site, reported and removed. We do not allow snares to be placed and those found doing so will be reported to the police.
- 1.5 Thanks to Greenspace Officer John Courtman for spraying the Japanese Knotweed at Baron Fields near Orchard Rise, residents were fearful that this would spread onto their properties. A licence for spraying herbicide near water courses was applied for and granted by the Environment Agency and the spraying carried out. We will now monitor this for regrowth and treat again if necessary.
- 1.6 The Greenspace Officer has been attending meetings of the Werneth Low Environment Group who offer support, guidance and assistance for events and projects at Werneth Low. Since the last report there have been monthly meetings where the group have come together to discuss issues and form ideas.
- 1.7 Sadly fly tipping has continued around the County Park, mainly along Werneth Low Road, Windy Harbour and Beacoms Lane. Volunteers and locals alert the Council to this if it is not known about already and we deal with it as promptly as possible. Many thanks to the Council Street Cleansing teams for their assistance with items which were too large to fit in the Ford Ranger.
- 1.8 Visit Britain and The Manchester Museum jointly approached the Council regarding permission to film at Werneth Low for footage to contribute to a documentary about the Greening of Greater Manchester. The filming permission was granted by the Hyde War Memorial Trust and took place on 29 March.

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
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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

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 based on all excavated materials being 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.

2. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 2.1 The Tour De Manc came through Werneth Low on Sunday 1 May and this year we used Quarry Car Park as the base for the refreshment stop. Signage was installed the week before to give notice to users that the car park would be closed for the morning. The event went very well and lots of people from outside the area got to experience the wonderful views that can be seen from the Country Park.
- 2.2 Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association completed the first of two courses on 14 and 15 May, which were fully booked. The riding track up the edge of Cow Lane needed to be closed for safety reasons and notices were put up to warn people of this up and coming closure. The participants had excellent weather for the weekend and produced an excellent rebuild of the wall, which had been in a poor state of repair. The second course will be on 10 and 11 of September 2022.
- 2.3 The Queen's Jubilee Beacon event took place on Thursday 2 June. This was not a public event but a small ceremony took place before the Beacon was lit, it could be seen across the borough and stayed lit for 1 hour. Thanks to our colleagues in Culture Services for planning this event.
- 2.4 The Hyde War Memorial Trust's Peace Day Event took place on 26 June and was a great success. Volunteers contributed on the day of the event by helping with the traffic management and litter picking took place at the site before the event to make sure it looked perfect. Thanks to all for good team working and a good afternoon.

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 and an Open Day took place on 10 April with a good turnout.

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 shelter and storage, which has been working well.
- 4.3 Hedgelaying was completed for the year with Volunteer Mike Kelly making an excellent job of the field boundary hedge. 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.
- 4.4 Further dry stone walling repairs have been completed outside of the Tuesday Sessions by Mike Kelly.
- 4.5 We welcomed temporary Volunteer Dan who was on his year 10 work experience placement - Dan has volunteered before for events such as Memorial Sunday. He worked really hard at the start of our Himalayan Balsam pulling season, and we would welcome him again in the future.

APPENDIX 1

Project Ref	Location	Task	Completed
1	Werneth Low Road- from Lofty Top towards Quarry Car Park	Mike Kelly - Hedgelaying field boundary hedge for wildlife and boundary maintenance. Volunteers on Tuesdays REMOVE brashings from the field and making dead hedges in other more appropriate areas.	Feb - March
2	Riding track from Higham Cottages up to Golf Course	Hedgelaying- finish as much as possible within the weather and time constraints. Use brashings to make dead hedge further down the track. Plant hedging- in other areas along the track to see how they cope with the Rabbit predation.	Feb
3	Side of the riding track next to the Golf Course	Protect new hedgerow from damage from livestock and people with fencing.	April / May
4	Baron Fields- near Orchard Rise	Cut back vegetation along the ditch and open up areas where Knotweed is for spraying	April
5	Formal gardens and Orchard	Cobbled area outside the Croft- re-lay cobbles in cement (JJ)	March – April - May
6	Main path from Quarry Carpark to the Cenotaph	Dry Stone Wall collapsed- rebuilt with pipe to improve drainage.	April- May
7	Werneth Low Road Bridle path	Cut back to allow ease of passage- Fencing collapse	April
8	Across site	Fence posts mapping- replaced as needed (MK)	April / May
9	Field boundary wall- Cow Lane side of riding track	Rebuild wall damaged by youth	April / May and June
10	Benches in orchard and any other needed	Sanding and re-staining the benches. (BW)	May
11	Knotweed in Baron Fields	Environment Agency permissions granted last year- Spraying of Knotweed completed by John Courtman with KL assist.	May
12	Wood Yard	New gates constructed by Volunteers for the composting areas.	April
13	Fencing on top Riding Track from Higham Cottages nr Cenotaph	Temporary Fencing installed to prevent people crossing over from the riding track onto the Cenotaph Field, TMBC Estates Team to complete asap.	May
14	Various Locations	Himalyan Balsam removal- we are hoping to push back to areas difficult to control.	May and June
15	Visitors Centre Car Park	Weekly litter pick, signs cleaned and driveway drainage maintained to keep clear.	Weekly
16	Cow Lane and Cenotaph	Clearance, cutting and preparation for Peace Day	June