

WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

23 February 2022

Commenced: 10.30 am

Terminated: 11.30 am

Present: Councillor Robinson (Chair), Mr Gradwell (Deputy Chair), Councillors Bowden, Chadwick, Cooper, J Fitzpatrick and Kitchen, Mr Bell and Mrs Ellis

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Owen and Mr Ainger

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the Werneth Low Country Park Joint Management Committee held on the 24 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

14. 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 there had been a spate of fly tipping incidents along Werneth Low Road, at the masts and down Higham Lane. Thanks were extended to the street cleansing team for their assistance with clearing the items. A Trust farmer had undertaken an emergency repair of the post and rail fencing to the field running alongside the riding track at the rear of the Cenotaph. In the coming months some longer lengths of Post and Rail fencing would need to be repaired or replaced by a contractor.

The Greenspace Development Officer reported that they had received complaints about the behaviour of dogs and their owners in and around the country park, namely owners not controlling their dogs, which was causing concern. In addition, there had been an increase in dog owners leaving bags of dog waste in bushes, which was especially prevalent at the Baron Road entrance to the Country Park. Officers would explore the possibility of the PDSA van visiting to promote responsible dog ownership. The situation would be monitored and further action taken if necessary.

The volunteers continued to work on the formal gardens, orchard and car park area in addition to carrying out work on the flags at the entrance of the visitor's centre and around the herb garden. There had been two incidents of damage to the knee rail fencing, protecting the driveway to the garage from the car park, that had been repaired by the volunteers. The situation would be monitored to see if in future some areas needed to be widened in order to prevent routine damage.

The Committee were notified that the Council's Arboricultural team had removed a dead tree from the wood yard next to the car park. It was hoped that the tree stump would be used by local woodpeckers. New fireproof secure storage boxes had been installed in the garage along with the installation of fire extinguishers with appropriate signage. The Council's Estates Team had installed a replacement memorial bench near the Cenotaph, overlooking the riding track. The Estates Team would be approached to see if the tractor could scrape the deep mud that had formed near the 'Shippons' following a complaint received from a local cyclist who reported that the area was impassable. The cyclist also requested that other tracks from the car park up to the Cenotaph be opened to cycling by removing the kissing gates. However, this would be costly and enable cyclists to descend a very steep slope quickly, causing potential collision with other site users. Officers would instead look to make improvements to the existing cycle track.

The Committee were advised that the quotes relating to various footpath works across the Country Park, as detailed in the report, had expired and the new quotes were likely to be approximately 15-20% higher. Trust representatives were asked what they could contribute to the footpath works and if there were any cost issues then a discussion could be had to see which of the works could be prioritised. It was imperative that a decision be made as the work was seasonal and the contractors needed to be booked in order to undertake the work in the upcoming drier months.

With regards to Public Events, the committee were informed that Werneth Low Country Park would be the venue for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons, which was part of an international (commonwealth) wide project where beacons would be lit all across the commonwealth at sundown on 2 June 2022. The running order of the event was detailed in the report and it was proposed that the location of the beacon be near to the Cenotaph. The views of the Committee on the event were welcomed before permission was given to Cultural Services to progress with the arrangements.

It was reported that the Cheshire Branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association had offered two more courses to be completed at Werneth Low over 2022. The first course would take place on 14 and 15 of May and the second course would take place on 10 and 11 of September. Previous courses had provided an excellent standard of rebuild and two more courses would improve more of the riding track wall, which was in a poor state of repair. The Tour De Manc would visit Werneth Low in May 2022 and a willow picture frame would be installed on Werneth Low Road from May until September 2022 to encourage walking and cycling in Tameside and to highlight the beautiful countryside the Borough has to offer.

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 a fire and safety inspection had been carried out that had resulted in a significant amount of expenditure. Sound insulation between the Visitors Centre and the flat had been installed and the kitchen conversion was on course for completion. The Trust looked forward to welcoming visitors back to the centre once final compliance was achieved. Trust representatives enquired about the contract for burglar and fire alarms and stated they were under the impression that the Council were arranging for the contract to be reinstated. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that contact details were required in order to setup the contract and had requested these on previous occasions but had not been sent them. They requested that the Trust provide names and contact details to the Greenspace Development Manager for them to forward onto the alarm company in order to get the contract reinstated.

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 clearing vegetation from the 'Shippons'

and Baron Field, dry stone wall repairs from Quarry Car park to the Cenotaph, general maintenance work on Quarry Car park and hedge laying along Werneth Low Road from Lofty Top towards Quarry Car Park and along the riding track from Higham Cottages.

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.

A Trust representative advised the Committee that pupils from a local school would like to erect some homemade bird boxes as part of an Easter trail and the teacher would liaise directly with the Greenspace Development Officer on the location of the boxes in and around the Country Park. Committee members also requested that the Easter event that used to take place within the Country Park before the pandemic be reinstated. A discussion was had on locking mechanisms on gates and scattering ashes in the Country Park. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that the scattering of cremated remains was not allowed in any of the Council's greenspaces and signposted members of the Committee to the [Memorial Benches and Trees \(tameside.gov.uk\)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/policies/memorial-benches-and-trees) policy on the Council website.

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 a previous meeting of the Joint Management Committee (Minute 6 refers). A Trust representative advised that a new local solicitor had been appointed and the Trust had recently received notification that the solicitors were in receipt of all documentation and would contact the Council directly with regard to the matter. The Greenspace Development Manager welcomed the update and expressed the need to reconvene the working group meetings as soon as possible. They advised that they would notify the Council's Legal team that the Trust's solicitor would be making direct contact with them soon.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That the Trust representatives discuss the proposed footpath works at the next Trust meeting and advise the amount they can contribute towards the work to the Greenspace Development Manager at their earliest possible convenience;**
- (iii) That the Trust representatives discuss the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon event with their own events team and respond with their thoughts to the Greenspace Development Manager at their earliest possible convenience. Once in receipt, the Greenspace Development Manager would request that a colleague from Cultural Services contacts the Trust directly; and**
- (iv) That the Trust notify the Greenspace Development Manager of the names and contact details for the alarm contract in order for it to be reinstated.**

15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members of the Committee requested that they would like to see the walk around the Country Park that took place immediately before the meeting reinstated and suggested that the virtual walk around the Park that has been shown during meetings remained in place for those who could not attend. The Greenspace Development Manager advised that the walk would be rescheduled as and when physical meetings returned.

RESOLVED:

That the Joint Management Committee meets as follows:-

- **27 July 2022**
- **30 November 2022**
- **22 February 2023**