

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

**Date:** 14 February 2023

**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 (30 November 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:** The funding for the projects is met by the Operations and Greenspace revenue budget.  
(Authorised by the Section 151 Officer and Chief Finance Officer)

**Legal Implications:** It is important that the Joint Management Committee is kept informed of activities undertaken in the Country Park.  
(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

**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 was a Road Traffic Collision at the top of Joel Lane, which resulted in the dry stone wall at the pinch point pedestrian entrance to Quarry Car Park being knocked down. This was repaired by the Greenspace Officer.
- 1.2 The Tameside Countryside Estates Team have installed a new gate into the Wood Yard after the old one had become rotten and difficult to open.
- 1.3 Members of the Werneth Low Environment Group have renovated two of the notice boards on site (near Quarry Carpark and at Lower Higham Carpark), replacing rotten wood and adding new Perspex to allow visitors to see the information more clearly. Information is in the process of being updated for 2023.
- 1.4 The rabbit population has remained high, and continues to be a problem due to damaging the ground in certain areas of the site (undermining paths, fence posts and creating holes which can cause trips and falls). Regular site visits identify these issues and time is planned in to fill with soil - which is taken from elsewhere on site to maintain the PH balance of the soil etc.
- 1.5 The Greenspace Officer has received 'Off Road Driver' training in January 2023, which has given the skills to help minimise the impact the Ford Ranger has when it is necessary to drive off road on the country park's sensitive ground - this is kept to a minimum.
- 1.6 There have been a few dead badgers reported or seen on site. The Greenspace Officer has been working with the South Manchester Badger Group representatives to ensure they are examined to try and determine the cause of death. All have been road traffic related deaths but it is important to rule out the cruel actions of badger baiters.
- 1.7 Litter and Fly tipping incidents remain high. Quarry Car park, Windy Harbour and along the road past the masts towards the golf course are all hotspots. The Greenspace Officer responds to these where practicable. All Fly tipping incidents are investigated if evidence is found and support is received where needed with the clear up through TMBC Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping teams.
- 1.8 Pathworks on site - costs have now been obtained from TMBC Estates Team for repairs to the section of footpath from the top of Cow Lane onto the Cenotaph. Work will be phased and will then continue down the field line. It is essential to control the flow of water to ensure these repairs are successful and therefore a new drainage ditch will need to be constructed. Hyde War Memorial Trust (HWMT) will be asked to contribute towards these costs as the work required is on land solely owned by the Trust.

## **2. PUBLIC EVENTS**

- 2.1 The Cheshire Dry Stone Walling Association have proposed the dates for the Dry Stone Walling courses to be run this year; 13-14 May and 9-10 September 2023 have been agreed. There is a need for more stone to be delivered onto site, which the Association are currently investigating.
- 2.2 Many thanks to HWMT for accommodating the Greater Manchester Orienteering event at Werneth Low on Saturday 12 November by opening the café and toilets to support the organisers of the event. Officers had reports back that it was a very successful event, which they hope to repeat again in the future.
- 2.3 Tour de Manc will return to Werneth Low again this year on 30 April 2023 and the venue is the Hare and Hounds Car park. This event sees a wide range of cyclists from Greater

Manchester, the country and even from abroad take in the Werneth Low air and sights following the gruelling climb up Cowlshaw. The event is being organised by Tameside MBC colleagues in Culture and with the Tour de Manc. Greenspace Volunteers will also lend a vital hand in making the visitors feel welcome, handing out refreshments and making the site look great for everyone to enjoy.

- 2.4 Officers continue to receive various filming requests for TV programmes to be filmed on Werneth Low. Many of these come in to us with very short timescales and cannot be accommodated. However there are others that we can agree to when site constraints allow. We are currently working with production teams to agree a drone flight for a Channel 4 documentary and ITV would like to film a weather report from Werneth Low. Agreement is always sort from Tameside MBC Communications Team along with HWMT and any outside parties before any agreements are decided. Production teams also have to provide us with the necessary documentation to protect the health and safety of everyone involved, the site and site users.
- 2.5 Updates to Tameside MBC webpages relating to Werneth Low: we have removed a page relating to visitors centres that included inaccurate information about the Lower Higham Visitors Centre and are currently overhauling the Werneth Low page so it provides more accurate information and further highlights how we would like visitors to use the site to prevent harm to wildlife and to follow the Countryside Code.

### **3. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE**

- 3.1 Officers note that the café is now operating every Sunday run by Volunteers from HWMT along with supporting other events and has received great feedback from site users.

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

- 4.1 The Greenspace Volunteers have continued to meet every Tuesday 10am till 3pm 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**. We have continued to use the tool stores and garage as shelter and storage, which has been working well.
- 4.2 We had a Christmas Celebration with a walk and celebration in the wood yard leading up to the Christmas break. This offered the opportunity to socialise and celebrate the year's achievements with some music, poetry and good food.
- 4.3 Volunteer Mike Kelly has completed hedge laying the field boundary hedge near the masts, which is looking great. We have the remainder of the 'brashings' to remove from the fields in the coming weeks. Mike has now continued laying the hedge along the riding track from Higham Cottages outside of the volunteering days.
- 4.4 We have enjoyed getting to know the new volunteers who joined the group and making them feel at home. Numbers remain high with on average 11 volunteers attending each week.

### **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>Completed</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Mousefields</b>	Hazel Coppice - planted over 20 years ago by Dave Cannon and the Stockport Conservation Volunteers, we have sectioned this large area into 16 'Coupes' which will be coppiced using traditional methods where possible, one section each year. The work is beneficial for wildlife by presenting a mosaic of different ages of Hazel regrowth.	<b>Ongoing each winter season</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Heathland on Hacking Knife</b>	We have been removing some of the trees on the heathland on Hacking Knife. This will be done very gradually over the coming years but is essential management to ensure that the oak, hawthorn and other trees do not take over this important BAP priority habitat.	<b>Ongoing each winter season</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Pond near the cenotaph and area nearby</b>	We have had to remove a den made from old planks, which was posing a risk to site users and some of the planks had made their way into the pond. The area has been cleared and removed off site.	<b>December</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Various across site</b>	Post festivities clear up of fireworks and other debris.	<b>January</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Side of the riding track next to the Cenotaph</b>	Clear ditch to prevent blockages in heavy rain, we used the soil to fill in the rabbit holes in this area presenting a health and safety risk to site users.	<b>January</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Baron Fields</b>	Keep drainage ditches and cross drains clear of soil build up and leaves.	<b>December</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Formal gardens and Orchard</b>	Weekly maintenance.	<b>Weekly</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Various across site</b>	Dry Stone walling repairs, small and larger repairs needed through vandalism on site.	<b>Various</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Across site</b>	Cross drains- these need regularly digging out to prevent further erosion on the stone paths.	<b>Various</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Visitors Centre Car Park</b>	Weekly litter pick, signs cleaned and driveway drainage maintained to keep clear.	<b>Weekly</b>