

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

Date: 23 November 2015

Reporting Officer: 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 (16 March 2015).

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)

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 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 2015 concluded at the end of October. The programme included grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas and strips along footpaths.
- 1.2 The footpath refurbishment works around the Baron Fields Woodlands area of the Country Park have been completed. These footpaths are well used routes by many people especially school children making their way from the Arnold Road area of Gee Cross to Holy Trinity School on Higham Lane.

The work included scraping existing surfaces and relaying new wearing courses, excavation of new drainage ditches and installation of new drains and headwalls, excavation of existing drainage ditches and extending catchment areas.

The project cost was: **£6,298**.

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

Environmental Stewardship – Higher Level agreements are only suitable for land that is of “**significant environmental interest**”.

- 2.2 In January 2015 the Country Park received **£1,655** of grant income which was the final payment for Year 5. Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total **£28,827** of grant income from Natural England.
- 2.3 In July Emily Bryan from Natural England conducted a site inspection of the areas in this agreement. Particular attention was directed at the sward composition of the meadows now we are at mid-agreement. It was evident from the diversity and abundance present that the Environmental Stewardship Agreement management prescriptions are delivering real positive outcomes. This was altogether a very successful inspection.

3. Werneth Low Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service

- 3.1 Since the last meeting of the Country Park Joint Management Committee the volunteers have held 4 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 of the volunteer service.
- 3.2 At the September 2015 meeting of the Country Park Greenspace Volunteer Service the Volunteers agreed the major projects to be undertaken during winter and spring 2015/2016. The full list can be found in the Appendices of this report in Appendix 1.

4. Public Events

- 4.1 The Country Park's winter/spring 2014/2015 programme of public events has been completed with the final event in April. The attendance was as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
30th November 2014	Crichton Porteous Ramble	18
7th December 2014	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	56
28th December 2014	Mid-Christmas Ramble	22
25th January 2015	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	48
1st March 2015	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	18
5th April 2015	Easter Egg Hunt	731
28th April 2015	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	43
Total to Date		936

- 4.2 The Country Park's summer 2015 programme of public events has been completed with the final event in September. The attendance was as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
3rd May 2015	Martin's Maps – Instruction on Map and Compass	8
16th June 2015	Flora Walk Around Werneth Low	11
4th August 2015	Flora Walk Around Werneth Low	12
13th September 2015	History Walk Around Werneth Low	15
27th September 2015	All Day Ramble to Cown Edge	34
Total to Date		80

- 4.3 Two dry stone walling weekends have been completed during the summer one, in May and the other at the end of September. Thirty four people attended completing about 40 metres of wall build. These events are organised in co-operation with the Cheshire branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association. The Hyde War Memorial Trust supports the events by purchasing additional stone.

- 4.4 The 2015/2016 winter/spring programme of public events at the Country Park is as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
4th October 2015	Martin's Maps – Instruction on Map and Compass	2
6th December 2015	Ramble to Mottram in Longdendale	--
27th December 2015	Mid-Christmas Ramble	--
31st January 2016	Short Stroll Around Werneth Low	--
28th February 2016	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
27th March 2016	Easter Egg Hunt	--
24th April 2016	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
Total to Date		2

5. Visitors – Monitoring 2014 and 2015

5.1 Active monitoring data for 2015:

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Counter on path from Lower Higham to Cenotaph	Counter on path from Quarry Car Park to Cenotaph
January	245	4,106	4,604
February	193	3,655	3,344
March	239	6,433	5,763
April	1,023	6,028	5,697
May	201	6,478	4,511
June	264	6,215	5,634
July	136	6,209	5,392
August	296	7,700	7,783
September	278	4,709	5,401
October	204	4,715	5,412
November	--	--	--
December	--	--	--
2015 Totals to Date:	3,079	56,248	53,541
Previous Years Totals:	4,114	60,848	52,431

6. Green Flag Award

- 6.1. This summer the Country Park received its twelfth consecutive Green Flag Award. This is a tremendous achievement and recognition of all the hard work undertaken by the diverse range of groups working for the good of the Country

The following lines are taken from information supplied by the group “Keep Britain Tidy” who manage the accreditation.

Green Flag: A national benchmark for parks and green spaces

“The Green Flag Award® scheme is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK. It was first launched in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country. The first awards were given in 1997 and, many years later; it continues to provide the high level of quality against which our parks and green spaces are measured. It is also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve high environmental standards, setting a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.

The Green Flag Award is one of a number of accreditation schemes that recognises excellence in the management of our public space.”

7. Wildlife Nature Conservation

- 7.1 Once again visitors to the Park have been treated to some wonderful sights of Pink-footed geese flying high over the Low on their annual migration south. The birds are en-route from Martin Mere on the Lancashire wetlands to the Norfolk coast. The first 22 birds arrived at Martin Mere from Iceland on the 11th September and by the 8th October there were 30,000 at the reserve.

This breath taking autumn migration is one of the great wildlife spectacles in the North West and Werneth Low is a great place to watch it.

