

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

**Date:** **18<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

**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 (**19<sup>th</sup> November 2018**).

**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)

**Legal Implications:**  
(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,

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## 1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2019 will start at the end of March. The programme includes: the grass cutting of the Lower Higham Visitor Centre area, car parks, access points, picnic areas and strips along footpaths. The cost of this programme of maintenance is paid by Tameside Council.

1.2 We have now received quotations from our contractors in regards to a number of footpath repair projects. The projects and costs are as follows:

Resurfacing the footpath from Lower Higham to the Hackingknife: **Cost: £6,384.**

Resurfacing the footpath from the Cenotaph across Hackingknife Meadow: **Cost: £3,327.**

Access restrictions, due to ground nesting birds, reduce the time period to implement on site projects. To avoid damage to the wildlife nature conservation value of the Park footpath resurfacing needs to be undertaken between July to October. Therefore, a decision on the funding needs to be agreed as soon as possible.

1.3 In addition to Item 1.2 the Greenspace Development Officer has audited all the footpaths within the Country Park. Some of these paths have not been resurfaced in several years and the condition is such that it is now time to undertake some repair works. There are 4 sections:

Lower Higham to Higher Higham	160 metres
Higher Higham to Shepley's Meadow	70 metres
Shepley's Meadow along Higham Lane	280 metres
Quarry Car Park to New Piece Meadow	675 metres
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,185 metres</b>

Based on contractor prices from previous years, and including additional amounts for reforming ditches and drains, the estimated cost to repair the above sections of footpaths is **£10,861.**

Similar to Item 1.2 of this report access restrictions apply to these projects.

1.4 Recently completed Maintenance of Sites projects include the following:

- Reforming ditches along Riding Track alongside Golf Course: **Cost: £300.**
- Repairing 30 metres of drystone walling at Quarry Car Park: **Cost: £4,860.**
- Installing new drainage at Baron Fields: **Cost: £580.**
- Ash Cottage Picnic area on Higham Lane installing new steps: **Cost: £600.**
- Lower Higham Visitor Centre installed new Oak bench: **Cost: £400.**
- Cow Lane path to the Cenotaph installed new wooden gate: **Cost: £400.**
- Higham Lane dry stone walling repairs: **Cost: £1,944.**
- Lower Higham Visitor Centre Car Park emergency tree surgery: **Cost: £300.**
- Replacement water heater for Visitor Centre servery: **Cost: £493.**

All the above projects were funded by Tameside Council

1.5 On the 14<sup>th</sup> August, during the evening, a large number of stone flags were stolen from around the entrance to the Visitor Centre. The incident was reported to the Police but unfortunately there were two more thefts, at the same location, after that date. The cost of replacing the flags is: **£3,800** and is subject to an insurance claim by the Hyde War Memorial Trust.

## 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 Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total to date **£43,507.** of grant income from Natural England.

## 3. PUBLIC EVENTS

3.1. The winter/spring 2018 to 2019 programme of events at Werneth Low Country Park is now underway. Details are as follows:

Date	Event	Attendance
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December 2018</b>	Christmas Ramble Around Werneth Low	<b>32</b>
<b>27 January 2019</b>	Ramble Around Werneth Low	<b>12</b>
<b>24 March 2019</b>	Roman History of Werneth Low Walk	--
<b>21<sup>st</sup> April 2019</b>	Easter Egg Hunt	--
<b>28 April 2019</b>	Ramble to Chadkirk Chapel	--
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>

## 4. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

4.1 Since the last meeting of the Country Park Joint Management Committee the Volunteers have held 2 meetings. In February the Volunteers held their 31<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting which included a review of past years work and a discussion as to the long term future of the group. 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 in the Volunteer Service.

4.2 At the September meeting of the Country Park Volunteers the list of work and wildlife nature conservation projects for the period October 2018 to April 2019 was discussed and agreed. We undertake this planning every year which helps to monitor progress and gives direction to the work of the Volunteer Service.

An updated copy of the project list can be found in **Appendix 1.** at the end of this report.

4.3 Mention should be made that during the autumn and winter volunteer, Mike Kelly is once again hedgelaying in the Country Park. This time Mike is working at the Higher Higham Meadows laying a hedge that the volunteers planted in 2002. This kind of project had high wildlife nature conservation value and contributes to the overall landscape mosaic.

## 5. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE

5.1 The number of visitors to Lower Higham is as follows:

Month	Lower Higham Visitor Centre
January	201
February	158
March	164
April	852
May	125
June	220
July	245
August	105
September	157
October	115
November	585
December	94
<b>2018 Totals</b>	<b>3,021</b>
<b>Previous Years Total:</b>	<b>3,680</b>

## 6. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

6.1 Though winter is still upon us there are many signs of spring around the Country Park. Now only confined to a few areas around Werneth Low, male Lapwings can be heard, early in the morning performing their territorial display. This sound is evocative of open farm land, but sadly, due to multiple reasons, it is becoming rarer and rarer. The best place to observe Lapwings on Werneth Low is near the Queens Piece on Werneth Low Road. At one time most hay meadows on Werneth Low had at least two breeding pairs of Lapwings every springtime.

6.2 Maintaining wetland areas around the Park plays an important part in providing good habitat for birds such as the Snipe. These wading birds can be found in large flocks overwintering on Werneth Low. It's very important to conserve wet areas in the Parks meadows as these places are also used in spring and summer as breeding sites.

Snipe are small brown birds which make a plaintive call when flying in the open. For most of the time they feed in reeds and rushes well hidden from view.

# APPENDIX 1

<b>WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEERS</b>							
<b>WINTER 2018 - 2019 MAINTENANCE OF SITES PROJECTS</b>							
<b>Project Ref</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Task</b>					<b>Completion Date</b>
1	Lower Higham Gardens	Plant 200 mixed tulips various areas					October 2018
2	Lower Higham Gardens	Late summer garden restructure planting					October 2018
3	Hackingknife	Tractor cut Rosebay Willowherb					October 2018
4	Lower Higham - Cow Lane	Cut back, prune hedgerow and sweep lane, clean-out grids					November 2018
5	Genotaph Area	Cut grass/edge off. Clean area ready for Remembrance Day					November 2018
6	Lower Higham Gardens	Clean borders and prune shrubs ready for Remembrance Day					November 2018
7	Lower Higham Cow Lane	Tractor flail hedgerow					November 2018
8	Lower Higham Visitor Centre	Clean all banking and hedgerow around Garage Building					December 2018
9	Hackingknife Woodland	Woodland management thinning out Hazel					December 2018
10	Lower Higham Orchard	Cut back 40 metres of hedgerow					March 2019
11	Flaggy Path Hedgerow	Cut back 124 metres of hedgerow					March 2019
12	QCP Picnic Area	Cut back 54 metres of hedgerow					March 2019
13	Lower Higham Car Park	Cut back 20 metres of Holly hedgerow					March 2019
14	Werneth Low Road	Cut back 356 metres of hedgerow					March 2019
15	Rig Field Meadow	Cut back 300 metres of hedgerow					March 2019
16	Holy Trinity Paddock	Cut back 60 metres of hedgerow					March 2019
17	Riding Track Higham Cotts	Cut back 140 metres of hedgerow					March 2019
18		<b>Total Hedge Cutting metres 1,094</b>					
19	Lower Higham Drive	50 metres of Hedge laying					March 2019
20	Higher Higham Meadows	131 metres of Hedge laying					March 2019
21	Lower Higham Orchard	Winter prune fruit trees					March 2019
22	Lower Higham Orchard	Replace 2 Apple trees					March 2019
23	Outdoor Park Seating	Inspect and repaint					March 2019
24	Black Path Baron Fields	Prune Willows by side of path					March 2019
25	All Sites	Outstanding from access audit					March 2018
	Completed Projects						