

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

Date: 21 July 2020

Reporting Officer: Emma Varnam - Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods

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 (24 February 2020).

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

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1. MAINTENANCE OF SITES

1.1 The summer grass cutting programme for 2020 started 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 Due to the unprecedented inclement weather during September and October the following footpath resurfacing projects were delayed. Further restrictions, due to Corona Virus, involving the contractor, have delayed the implementation of this project to July 2020.

- Resurfacing the footpath from Lower Higham to the Hackingknife: Cost: £6,384.
- Resurfacing the footpath from the Cenotaph across Hackingknife Meadow: Cost: £3,327.

It has been agreed that the combined costs of the above projects will be funded equally by Tameside Council and the Hyde War Memorial Trust.

1.3 As reported at previous meetings of this Joint Management Committee 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:-

1. Lower Higham to Higher Higham	160 metres
2. Higher Higham to Shepley's Meadow	70 metres
3. Shepley's Meadow along Higham Lane	280 metres
4. Quarry Car Park to New Piece Meadow	675 metres
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1,185 Metres</u>

We have received from one of our contractors the estimate for the resurfacing works at £11,345. This project has now been passed on to Engineers Department, Tameside MBC for further development.

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 December we received £4,389 of grant income from Natural England in relation to this Agri-environment Scheme. Since the agreement started in January 2010 the Country Park has received in total to date £52,206 of grant income. The payment in December was the final payment, which concludes this Agri-agreement between Natural England and the Tameside owned parts of Werneth Low Country Park.

3. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 3.1. Due to Corona Virus restrictions all public events have been cancelled up to the end of September 2020.

4. THE LOWER HIGHAM VISITOR CENTRE

- 4.1 Due to Corona Virus restrictions the Visitor Centre was closed on Tuesday 17 March 2020 and will remain closed for the foreseeable future.
- 4.2 During Lockdown we received a huge amount of favourable messages and personal comments about how much our visitors have valued the opportunity to walk around the Country Park. The vast majority of visitors have complied with government advice concerning social distancing.

5. WERNETH LOW COUNTRY PARK GREENSPACE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- 5.1 Due to Corona Virus restrictions the Volunteer Service was stood down on the 17 March 2020. Work is progressing on developing a new operational Risk Assessment to include safety controls engineered to make the safe delivery of Volunteer Conservation Days in the light of the Corona Virus pandemic. We hope to have Volunteers working again in the Country Park by the middle of July.

6. WILDLIFE NATURE CONSERVATION

- 6.1 During the recent lockdown visitors have been treated to a really special and unique sound experience. With few cars around and even fewer aircraft the Dawn Chorus in April and May was amazingly loud and clear. Many visitors have commented on this and how much it lifted their spirits.