



**Mousehold Heath Conservators**

**14:30 to 15:20**

**15 March 2024**

Present: Councillors Sands (M) (Chair), Peek (Vice-Chair), Carrington, Champion, Hampton (substitute for Councillor Kidman) Kendrick and Lubbock, and Marion Maxwell (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and Willem Buttinger (Norwich Society)

Apologies: Councillors Fox, Francis and Kidman

In Attendance: Matthew Davies – Fringe Project Officer  
Councillor Giles, Cabinet Member for Communities and Social Inclusion

**1. Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Public Questions and Petitions**

There were no public questions or petitions.

**3. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2024.

**4. Report from Andy Hutcheson UEA on the Brick Earth Project**

Andy Hutcheson addressed the Committee.

Mr Hutcheson was working for the Sainsbury Institute and had been working on a project entitled “Later Prehistoric Norfolk Project/Archaeology for Well-being. This project had taken place on several sites across Norfolk and involved a wide range of communities, including schools in mid-Norfolk. The aim of the project had been to improve individuals’ mental health through archaeological field work. Through the practical experience of archaeology, a number of pupils had now chosen to study archaeology at university.

Andy Hutcheson was now applying for a second round of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and some educational funding. For this second funding round, the project would be looking to conduct field work on Mousehold Heath. This was due to both its history as an industrial site and its earlier history, including the use of the site as a civic place for the city of

Norwich. The project again would look to involve local communities and schools. The hope was that this could involve annual fieldwork on Mousehold Heath. The office base for the project would be 64 The Close Norwich, NR1 4DH. This would allow people to join and learn more about archaeology and learn a range of skills such as analysis of materials. The project on Mousehold Heath was currently being developed subject to the funding bid. Andy Hutcheson asked the Committee to support the project and to write a letter to the NLHF in support of the application.

In response to a member's query, Andy Hutcheson said that they were hoping to find materials related to the sites history of making bricks, how they were articulated and the period of time this took place in. The project was also hoping to find evidence of earlier time periods such as the Palaeolithic era and create a narrative of the history of the site over a longer period of time.

A member queried the size of the groups who had been involved with the Restoration Trust Project. In response, Andy Hutcheson said that the size of groups had varied and that there had been a total of 100 days of fieldwork with people at Arminghall, and the largest group had been 16 individuals. The intention for this project was to widen this for more people on a more ad hoc basis. As some of the focus for individuals for the Arminghall site had been art, an exhibition would be taking place at The Forum on 20 to 25 May.

Andy Hutcheson said that if funding was successful, the project would start in Summer 2025. The detailed project plan had not yet been completed so he could not confirm whether any fieldwork would involve the site of St William in the Wood's Chapel, but this could be a possibility and the project would work closely with Historic England.

A member asked how much of the project would be practical and whether training would be provided. Andy Hutcheson confirmed that parts of the project could be very practical, and a range of skills would be used. The previous project had involved high school and college students who were Special Educational Needs and Disabilities students. The project benefited pupils from backgrounds where they learned better with different learning styles.

In response to a member's query, Andy Hutcheson said that 64 The Close would be used to analyse materials post-excavation. The benefit of this location was that it was a less intimidating location to the University of East Anglia (UEA), which had been learning from the sessions held at the UEA.

The Chair commented that the Conservators would be happy to support the project and asked that the Committee Officer draft a letter for sign-off by the Chair. Andy Hutcheson thanked the Conservators for their time and asked that they championed the project to community groups and other institutions.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to:

- 1) thank Andy Hutcheson for introducing the project to the Conservators; and
- 2) ask the Committee Officer to draft a letter of support to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Chair to sign on behalf of the Mousehold Heath Conservators.

## **5. Mousehold Heath Conservators budget monitoring to 31 December 2023**

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Social Inclusion presented the report.

The figures to the end of period nine showed that it was expected that the forecast spend would be to budget and a number of costs would be reflected at year-end.

A member asked that the corporate recharges mentioned within the report be clarified. The Fringe Project Officer said that he would clarify this and report to the next committee meeting.

### **RESOLVED to:**

- 1) note the current budget monitoring and reserves position; and
- 2) ask the Fringe Project Officer to clarify the corporate recharges and report to the next committee meeting.

## **6. Mousehold Heath Management Update – 4 January to 26 February 2024**

The Fringe Project Officer presented the report.

He highlighted that the Mousehold Heath Warden had worked with the Norwich Fringe Project and volunteers to repair the Silver Birch Walk using clay that was on the site. As part of the heathland management, several saplings had been moved from heathland habitat to developing woodland. A number of volunteer hours had also been completed on Mousehold Heath. The Wardens also provided events and talks to organisations, including a talk to a local Sprowston community group.

The Cabinet Members for Communities and Social Inclusion highlighted that the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement had been extended to 2028 since this was considered crucial as it provided funding to manage heathland.

A member asked whether the graffiti that had been removed had required a specialist technique to remove it and whether the site was subject to frequent graffiti. The Fringe Project Officer said that it had been a one-off incident and Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) had different methods it employed when removing graffiti so would have used the most appropriate method.

In response to a member's query, the Fringe Project Officer said that in order to pump out the water in the Vinegar Pond this would need to be done when levels of fauna, such as the newt population, had dropped within the pond to ensure they were not adversely damaged. He would need to confirm with the Wardens to understand what the current newt population was.

A member queried where the fish that were removed from the Vinegar Pond were placed. The Fringe Project Officer confirmed that these were taken to the ornamental ponds within Eaton Pond.

A member commented that the Assist Trust and other volunteer groups that volunteered on Mousehold Heath could volunteer as part of the archaeology project led by Andy Hutcheson once it had started.

**RESOLVED** to note the contents of the Mousehold Heath Management Update of 4 January to 26 February 2024.

## **7. Report from the Mousehold Heath Conservators Management Sub-Group**

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Social Inclusion presented the report.

He recommended the following amendments within the report.

Recommendation 2a) to be amended to state “ask for quotes for the work with timescales for the start and completion of work, including from NCSL”.

Recommendation 2b) to be amended to read “agree to contract Tim Holt-Wilson to undertake the work to collate the information, text and images for the biodiversity trail leaflet, and use the Mousehold Heath projects budget to pay for this.”

Recommendation 2d) to be amended to read “ask the Fringe Project Officer to obtain a quote from Fish Track to pump out the remaining water and remove the fish when the Vinegar Pond is at its lowest water level during the summer months and agree to use the Mousehold Heath projects budget to pay for this.”

Recommendation 2c) to be deleted.

The costs for the repairs to the Pavilion would be paid from the Mousehold Heath Conservators revenue reserves. He highlighted that the current budget estimate for the works to the Pavilion was between 25 to 30 thousand pounds, which would put the level of revenue reserves close to the prudent minimum level.

The Chair commented that it was prudent to carry out the repairs since the Pavilion was an important feature of Mousehold Heath and further delay to this could warrant more costly works. Previous repairs to the exterior had recommended that renovations be carried out every five years and this proposed repair would be just outside five years.

A member queried whether posts could be installed near the Vinegar Pond to ask members of the public not to place fish into the pond. The Chair said that these posts were often vandalised, and it would become costly to replace these at frequent intervals.

The Fringe Project Officer said that, in regard to the female toilets next to Zak's, there were a number of options being discussed, including the possible demolition of these but he would need to speak to Zak's about this. The Project Manager – Delivery had recently contacted the Fringe Project Officer as there was a current issue with rats in the female toilet and options needed to be explored to ensure that this issue was resolved. NCSL would be visiting the site

to seal the likely sources of ingress and clean the building, the cost of which to be met from within the current budget.

The Fringe Project Officer highlighted that the toilet refurbishment was moving forward and that NCSL would be starting the works in late March, early April 2024 and updates of the progress would be reported to the Conservators.

**RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the contents of the report from the Mousehold Heath Conservators Management Sub-Group; and
- 2) Agree the following amended recommendations made by the Management Sub-Group:
  - a. Ask the project manager – delivery to:
    - i. Undertake a full survey of the exterior of the building, to assess the conditions of the paint and woodwork; and
    - ii. ask for quotes for the work with timescales for the start and completion of work, including from NCSL
  - b. Agree to employ Tim Holt-Wilson to undertake the work to collate the information text and images for the biodiversity trial leaflet and agree to use the Mousehold Heath projects budget to pay for this work
  - c. Ask the Fringe Project Officer to obtain a quote from Fish Track to pump out the remaining water and remove the fish when the Vinegar Pond is at its lowest level during the summer months and agree to use the Mousehold Heath Projects budget to pay for this work; and
  - d. Ask the management subgroup to discuss future options for managing the Vinegar Pond for biodiversity and preventing unwanted carp/goldfish from being placed into the pond.

**8. Schedule of Meetings – Civic Year 2024-25**

**RESOLVED** to note the schedule of meetings of the Mousehold Heath Conservators for the 2024-25 Municipal Year, subject to approval at the Annual Meeting of Norwich City Council to be held on 21 May 2024:

- 1) Friday 14 June 2024 at 14:30
- 2) Friday 13 September 2024 at 14:30
- 3) Friday 17 January 2025 at 14:230; and
- 4) Friday 14 March 2025 at 14:30.

CHAIR