

Report to Mousehold Heath conservators
19 October 2012
Report of Head of local neighbourhood services
Subject Mousehold Heath management plan review

Item

8

Purpose

To review progress of the implementation of the Mousehold Heath management plan 2008-2013.

Recommendation

To review and comment on progress and request that officers bring a finalised plan for the period 2013-2018 to the meeting of the Conservators in January 2013.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority City of character and culture

Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications that arise from the report at this time. Future costs will be identified annually through the development of an annual works programme which will be presented to Conservators for endorsement and will be met from existing budgetary provision.

Ward/s: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Gihawi – Play, parks and open spaces

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

1. In June 2008 the Conservators endorsed the Mousehold Heath Management Plan 2008-2013.
2. The plan set out a number of management objectives and proposed actions based upon a range of environmental, cultural and historical information and data, which identified the importance of Mousehold as an open space within the City.
3. The plan identified two broad management objectives which were to:
 - Ensure that the area is managed as effectively as possible to maintain and enhance its wildlife and historic value
 - Promote and enhance people's access to, and enjoyment of, the site
4. The plan also identified a set of management objectives which were:
 - Maintain, enhance and increase areas of heather and lowland heath vegetation
 - Join existing areas of heathland vegetation
 - Control encroachment by trees on open heathland areas
 - Control bracken on open heath areas
 - Maintain and enhance acid grassland areas
 - Maintain and enhance areas of woodland selected for retention
 - Maintain footpaths for public access
 - Safeguard and improve management of the St. William's Chapel site
 - Provide interpretation on history and natural history of site
 - Increase public understanding of issues relating to conservation of lowland heaths
 - Encourage sympathetic use of the site by the public through informal recreation and education
 - Discourage misuse and antisocial behaviour by users, especially the setting fire of vegetation
5. These were used to frame a set of management themes which have been used to prepare an annual work programme. These are:
 - Habitat management
 - Management of the historic environment
 - Visitor management

- Visitor infrastructure
6. The plan identified a 10 year work programme and best practice suggests that this be reviewed at year five as circumstances and opportunities can change.
 7. The implementation of the plan has been influenced by the following:
 - The two Mousehold wardens undertaking a greater range of practical work that would have previously been carried out by contractors with budgetary implications. This has resulted in the Conservators budget being used more effectively
 - Increased involvement from volunteers including work carried out by the Mousehold Defenders, groups such as TCV and various one off activities
 - Access to Government environmental grant income, which have now been reduced due to public sector budget reductions
 - Increased events and guide walks leading to a better understanding and use of the heath by residents across the City of character and culture A more structured approach to biological data capture
 - Increased partnership working
 - Available budgetary provision which is allocated through a precept that the Conservators make on the City Council
 - Others
 8. A high level review of the plans implementation has been prepared which is included in appendix 1. This identifies progress against the main objectives, reasons for any change and recommendations for years six to ten.
 9. Based on the level of resources available to the council, the Conservators are requested to:
 - Discuss and consider progress
 - Review the specific works recommendations where these have been provided
 - Identify any areas that should prioritised during the next five years
 - Request officers bring the final revised plan to the January meeting of the Conservators, together with a costed work programme for 2013-14 for approval.
 10. The final plan will be uploaded onto the Mousehold section of the council's website so that it can be accessed by residents and partners.

MOUSEHOLD HEATH MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2008 - 2012

	Type	Location Name	Item	Action	Status	Status reason	Recommendations for years 6 - 10
1	Habitat Management -	Vinegar Pond	Vinegar Pond	Monitor condition	Completed		Continue to monitor condition
2		North of Zak's (or other location)	New pond	Investigate feasibility of new pond	In progress on schedule	Recently agreed and work ordered	
3	Habitat Management - Heath	Heathland areas	Gorse management	Cut/collect gorse areas on rotation	In progress on schedule	Ongoing annual work	
4		Heathland areas	Scrub clearance	Cut scrub	In progress on schedule	Continue scrub clearance and/or maintenance works specified in management plan objectives and Map 3: Heathland Management	Continue scrub clearance and/or maintenance works specified in management plan objectives and Map 3: Heathland Management
5		Heathland areas	Scrapes	Remove topsoil from selected areas to encourage heathland regeneration	In progress on schedule	Part of an annual programme	Continue annual humus/nutrient stripping to encourage and conserve diverse heather age/structure
6		St. James' Hill	Scrub clearance	Cut back scrub	Completed		
7		All Heathland areas	Control scrub regrowth	Control regrowth from previously cut scrub	In progress on schedule	Ongoing annual heathland management to be carried out.	Monitor sites as part of ongoing annual heathland management to be
8		Heathland areas	Bracken control	Cut/bruise bracken in open areas	In progress on schedule	Ongoing programme to encourage other heathland vegetation	Continue bracken control as long as necessary; review annually
9		Playing field adj to pitch & putt	GNDP project	Monitor/manage heathland project area	In progress on schedule	Project area to be officially finished and opened in Spring 2013	
10	Habitat Management - Grassland	The Desert	Grassland management	Cut areas & remove arisings (Cons.Cut 5)	Completed		Continue annual conservation cut in October.
11		The Anthills	Grassland management	Cut areas & remove arisings (Cons.Cut 5)	Completed		Continue annual conservation cut in October.
12		The Anthills	Grassland management	Control any encroaching scrub	Completed		
13		St James' Hill/Cav Track area	Scrub management	Control, or coppice areas on rotation	Completed		Review need for any further work annually & implement if required
14	Habitat Management - Woodland	Long Valley	Coppicing	Expand woodland glade	In progress on schedule		Continue to coppice on eight year rotation as part of woodland management
15		Gilman Rd	Path/cycleway	Complete tree work (if not done 2010/11)	In progress on schedule	Ongoing works	Continue as necessary
16		All areas	Programmed works	Carry out safety related tree works	In progress on schedule	Ongoing works	Continue as necessary
17		All areas	Emergency works	Carry out safety related tree works	In progress on schedule		Continue as necessary
18		All areas	Woodland Grant Scheme	Investigate viability for Mousehold	In progress delayed	Grant scheme withdrawn	Review future opportunities & follow up if appropriate to Mousehold
19	Historic Landscape Management	St. William's Chapel Site	Maintain site	Clear encroaching vegetation to agreed plan	In progress on schedule		Review need for further work annually
20		St. William's Chapel Site	Interpretation sign	Design & install	In progress on schedule		
21		Tram Track	Historic routes	Open up	In progress on schedule		
22	Visitor Management	Whole site	School visits	Organised visits & activities	In progress on schedule		

23		Off site	School talks	Talks & activities to schools	In progress on schedule		On going programme
24		Whole site	Public events	Organise & run year round programme	In progress on schedule		On going programme
25		Whole site	Interpretation Plan	Develop interpretation plan recommendations	Completed		Implementation depending on resources in 2013-14
26		Whole site	Site management notices	Produce site info notices prior to works commencing	Completed		
27		Orienteering Trail route	Orienteering Trail	Replace trail posts/review upgrade	In progress delayed	Financial implications	Implementation depending on resources in 2013-14
28		Selected areas	Geological interpretation	Design & implement	Completed		
29		Whole site	Easy access	Continue to review easy access provision & propose improvements	In progress on schedule		As and when needed depending on resources available
30		Off site	Web Site	Update Mousehold Heath pages on council website	In progress on schedule		
31		Whole site	Guided walks programme	Deliver annual programme of guided walks/activities	Completed	Ongoing, annual programme.	On going programme
32		Whole site	Litter	Litter pick	Completed		Organise as & when need arises
33		Whole site	Fly-tipping	Remove fly-tipping as it occurs	In progress on schedule		Organise as & when need arises
34	Visitor Infrastructure	All Paths	Paths	Cut back either side as necessary	In progress on schedule	Ongoing, annual work.	On going programme
35		All Paths	Paths	Level/fill as necessary	In progress delayed	Financial implications	As and when needed depending on resources available
36		St. James' Hill	Easy access track	Cut back encroaching scrub	In progress on schedule		
37		Cavalry Track	Path	Trim back as necessary	In progress on schedule		
38		Fountain Ground	Changing Rooms	Oversee commissioning/management of new building	Completed		
39		Fountain Ground	Bandstand/Changing Rms	Electrical safety testing	Completed		
40		Pavilion area	Visitor point	Examine feasibility/progress	In progress delayed	Financial implications	Tied in into the interpretation plan and available budget
41		Pavilion area	Pavilion access track	Maintain to safe standard	Completed		Review condition annually & organise necessary repairs
42		Britannia Rd car park	Car park	Essential maintenance as required	Completed		Review condition annually & organise necessary repairs
43		Pitch & Putt car park	Car park	Essential maintenance as required	Completed		Review condition annually & organise necessary repairs
44		Gilman Rd car parks	Car parks	Maintain as necessary	Completed		Review condition annually & organise necessary repairs
45		Whole site	Access hubs	Continue development of 'hubs' to enter the site (link to Interpretation Plan)	In progress on schedule		Tied into interpretation plan and resources available
46		Selected locations	Welcome to M'hold signs	Review potential new signs	In progress delayed	Financial implications	
47		Various	Benches	Replace/repair as required	Completed		

48		Various	Signs	Replace/repair as required	Completed		
49		Various	Bollards	Replace/renew as required	In progress delayed	In current work programme - locations to be prioritised	Dependant on resources available
50		Car parks	Car park surfacing	Review durable surfaces	In progress delayed	Waiting options and decision by Conservators	Dependant on resources available
51		Areas with BMX activity	BMX biking	Monitor & review measures to resolve unauthorised BMX activities	Completed		Monitor as part of on going wardening
52		Whole site	Emergency works	Emergency repairs contingency	In progress on schedule		
54	Review & monitoring	Off site	Management Plan	Review & revise plan	Completed		Review plan at Year 10 & revise or produce new plan
55		Off site	Conservators Meeting		Completed		
56		Off site	Cons Working Group Mtg		Completed		
57		Whole site	Itinerant	Organise site visit to review work plan progress & priorities for next financial yr	Completed		
58		Off site	Annual Work Programme	Drafted and agreed by Conservators	Completed		
59		Heathland Areas	Heathland Regeneration	Monitor heathland regeneration	In progress on schedule		Monitor as appropriate
60		St James' Hill	Bank regeneration	Monitor vegetation on area cleared in 2008	In progress on schedule		
61	Surveying & recording	All	Common Bird Census	Carry out weekly during season	In progress on schedule		On going programme
62		All	Butterfly transect	Complete 26 week transect	In progress on schedule		On going programme
63		All	Fungi survey	Survey & record fungi	In progress on schedule		On going programme
64		All	Miscellaneous species	Collate records	In progress on schedule		On going programme
65		All	Dragonfly survey	Monitor weekly throughout season	In progress on schedule		On going programme
66		All	Annual report	Collate information & produce report	In progress delayed	Resources not identified to complete during 2012 to date	Resource to be identified if possible
		Heathland areas	Heathland Management	Apply for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)	Completed		Manage areas according to HLS guidelines if grant application is successful
		Various	Geological conservation	Identify, agree & implement works	Completed		
		Whole site	Events/activities	Organise public events	In progress on schedule		On going programme
		Pavilion	Pavilion building	Monitor repair proposals	In progress delayed	Waiting information from NPS for	
		Valley Drive/Gilman Rd	Connect2 cycle project	Input to plans	In progress on schedule		