



NORWICH City Council

Committee Name: Mousehold Heath Conservators

Committee Date: 14/06/2024

Report Title: Mousehold Heath Management 26 February to 17 May 2024

Portfolio: To be confirmed

Report from: Head of Environment Services

Wards: Catton Grove and Crome

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To provide a quarterly update on activities on Mousehold Heath relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Conservators note the contents of the report.

Policy Framework

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- An open and modern council.
- A prosperous Norwich
- A fairer Norwich.
- A climate responsive Norwich.
- A future proof Norwich.

This report contributes to the first and fourth of these priorities.

This report contributes to the “Collaborative Council”, “Delivering Excellence”, “Vibrant parks and open spaces for all” and “Growing our capacity to adapt to climate change” objectives within these priorities.

The report helps to meet the Mousehold Heath management plan objective(s):

A: To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.

Report Details

1. The report details the work, activities and issues arising on, and relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives.
2. The objectives are:
 - A) To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.
 - B) To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.
 - C) To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.
 - D) To manage Mousehold Heath in a way that has a positive impact on the environment.
 - E) To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.
 - F) To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.
 - G) To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.
 - H) To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

Objective A: To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.

AI00/01 GREEN FLAG AWARD

1. The judging for the green flag award 2024-25 was undertaken in April. A site visit with two Green Flag judges took place and they were welcomed by Cllr Giles, Matt Davies, Will Stewart and Nigel Hales. They were guided around the Heath, stopping at various locations of interest. The outcome will be revealed along with our other parks and open spaces that applied for Green Flag status, on 1st July 2024.

Objective B: To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.

AI30/02 TREE SAFETY INSPECTION

2. The first, six monthly tree safety inspection of the year was undertaken by the Mousehold wardens in early April, identifying twenty-five dead, dying, windblown, dangerous trees and branches. Many of these were damaged by high winds last winter and been affected by the long, dry spells of weather which Norfolk has been experiencing in recent years. Most of the works identified have been carried out by a Mousehold warden and Easton College work placement student.

3. Fourteen additional dead, dying, dangerous and windblown trees and branches, spotted during patrols and reported by members of the community, have been made safe and cleared by the Mousehold wardens working with an Easton College Student. The oldest tree was a windblown, split Rowan tree blocking a path near the pitch and putt course. Three of these large trees required a winch operation, undertaken by a qualified Mousehold warden, to make the trees safe.
4. One large wind damaged mature oak was made safe by the NCSL tree team, and a large, dead sycamore tree was made into a standing dead wood habitat which will provide excellent habitat for wildlife in the future.
5. A closer inspection to the designated Forest School area, adjacent to the Pavilion, was undertaken by a Mousehold Warden and an Arboriculture Officer, this was to ensure public Health and Safety of users, due to its high use, by local Schools and organised events booked through our Events Team.

MC81/01 VIEW FROM MOTTRAM MEMORIAL

6. A request was made by committee members to update the Mottram Memorial plaque located at the pinnacle of St. James Hill.
7. As the plaque is in bad repair, a company was approached to provide ideas and examples of what materials were available for the replacement. Another option would be to re-install the original bronze plaque stored at City Hall.
8. Justin from Apex signs, the approved company to undertake the work, has been invited to the June Conservators meeting, where he will discuss alternative options / materials, besides Bronze, for the replacement of the plaque. Justin will also be able to advise the Conservators on costs timelines for the completion of works.

ML60/01 NORFOLK CONSTABULARLY

9. The Wardens liaised with police officers regarding anti-social behavior including the abandoned car and graffiti mentioned below.

MP00/01 SITE PRESENCE

10. Mousehold wardens have continued to patrol the heath, focusing on areas with anti-social behaviour issues.
11. Campers who declared themselves homeless have been put in contact with the Homeless and Rough Sleeper Officer to request the Pathways team make contact with them to look into provision of permanent accommodation.

RH35/01 ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES CRIME

12. An abandoned car parked in the Pitch and Putt car park, Gurney Road was reported through our online reporting system, the car was then removed by the owner.

Objective C: To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.

ME04/01 LITTER PICKING

13. Large amounts of litter have been removed from Britannia Rd, St James Hill and Gilman Road areas. Also, significant amount of litter has been litter picked from areas of leggy gorse that has been coppiced.

ME01/02 BOLLARDS

14. One wooden bollard in the Pitch and Putt car park was re-installed by a Mousehold warden and a work placement student.

ME02/01 BENCHES/SEATS/PICNIC BENCHES

15. A new bench was installed to replace a vandalised bench near St William's chapel by a Mousehold warden with help from a work placement student and volunteer.
16. Five benches were sanded down and painted by a Mousehold warden and woodchip spread around the benches, to suppress weed growth, in the Pavilion car park.
17. Rotting wooden steps were replaced, adjacent to Gilman Road car park, using in situ windblown oak timber by a Mousehold warden and TCV volunteers.

ME04/02 LITTER BINS

18. Graffiti was removed from three litter bins in total, located at Gilman Road, Gurney Road and the Wingfield Open Space.

ME04/03 FLY TIPPING

19. A number of fly tipping items were removed from Britannia Road, including garden wooden fencing panels and building materials. Items found are removed and disposed of by NCSL's EPA crew.

ME06/01 FINGER POSTS AND WAYMAKERS

20. Two, vandalised Earth Heritage Trail way-marker discs and posts have been replaced by the Mousehold wardens.
21. Two red/blue way marked trail discs have been replaced.

ME12/01 REMOVE GRAFFITI

22. The historical interpretation panel situated on Gurney Road and road signs and lamp posts, were targeted with non-offensive graffiti. This was reported through our online reporting system and dealt with.

ME14 SITE BUILDINGS, MAINTAIN / IMPROVE TOILETS

23. Gents Toilets refurbishment update

The Property Services Team have advised that they are aiming for the Gents toilets to be refurbished and open by the end of June. The purchase order has been raised and sent to NCSL.

ME41/01 MAIN PATHS

24. Eight paths have been cut, raked and cleared using battery brush cutters by Mousehold volunteers on Gilman Rd meadow and in front of the Pavilion to maintain easy access, along with conserving biodiversity. Grass arisings are made into habitat piles.

Objective E: To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.

MH31/01 SCRUB AND TREE REMOVAL

25. Birch saplings have been pulled up in open, low growing heathland areas, using tree poppers, by wardens and volunteers.

MH60/01 VINEGAR POND

26. It was recommended by the Environmental Agency and FishTrack - the contractor used to carry out the electro fishing - that the best way forward to control the fish population was to drain the pond and try and remove all the fish at once. This method would be a more cost-effective way of realistically mitigating the fish population.

This is in line with aims and objectives within the management plan, to encourage and protect, frog and newt populations along with any other aquatic fauna and flora.

As and when the right conditions arise, this task will be undertaken, a quotation in the region of £3,000.00 has been received and will cover the costs for the draining of the pond and the removal of fish. It will also include all licences relating to the relocation and transportation of the fish to a more suitable location.

RA12/01 COMMON BIRD CENSUS

27. Weekly bird surveys have been undertaken by the Mousehold wardens with support from volunteers, including a Community Dawn Chorus Survey Walk, starting at 4.30am, on 9th May.

RA42/01 BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SURVEY

28. Two, weekly, Butterfly Conservation, Butterfly Monitoring Scheme transect surveys have been carried out by the Mousehold wardens joined by volunteers.

RA44/01 MOTH TRAPPING SURVEY

29. Several community moth survey evenings are planned this summer. These are part of the Mousehold Heath Guided Walks Programme 2024. The event planned for 25th April 2024 was cancelled due to cold and wet weather.

Thanks to support from attendees, the current site moth list is 273 species, with the challenge to reach 300 species recorded on the heath. The next moth survey evening is in July.

RA82/01 ST JAMES' HILL BUMBLEBEE SURVEY

30. Monthly Bumblebee Conservation Trust, BeeWalk transect surveys have been undertaken by a Mousehold warden.

RA92/01 NATIONAL BAT MONITORING PROGRAMME

31. NBMP Bat Transect Field Surveys are planned for July.

RF22/01 MUSTARD POND GLADE FLOWER SURVEY

32. Members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders have carried out monthly flowering plant surveys, recording 23 species in May.

RF22/02 ST JAMES' HILL SURVEY

33. A member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders and a Mousehold warden have undertaken a monthly plant survey on St James Hill. During the May survey, 35 species were recorded, including one new species for the site (Wild Garlic). This record increased the cumulative St James Hill list to 143 flowering plant species.

Objective G: To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.

AT50/01 VOLUNTEERS GENERAL

34. 335 community volunteer hours have been completed between 26.02.24 – 17.05.24, by the following groups;

- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- Mousehold Heath Monday and Tuesday volunteer group
- Assist Trust
- Easton College Work Placement Student
- TCV
- Many individual volunteers from the community

A Brush Cutter training course was organised by a Mousehold warden in early May. Five Mousehold volunteers attended and passed the course, increasing volunteer skills and community involvement in managing the heath for people and wildlife.

Objective H: To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

MI60/01 EVENTS

35. Two Forest School environmental education events were undertaken. These were booked through the Events Team. Approximately twenty five people attended each session.
36. The first Community Wildlife Workshop Walk took place in April, covering an introduction to moths and other spring wildlife on the heath.
37. A cross country run for Norwich School was organised through our Events Team. Approximately fifty runners took part.

MI60/02 GUIDED WALKS PROGRAMME

38. The Mousehold Heath Guided Walks and Surveys Programme 2024-25 has been put together by the wardens. The aim of the programme is to encourage members of the community to learn more about, and enjoy, the Heath's biodiversity, natural features and landscapes. The Norwich City Council Comms team created a poster, which can now be viewed on Mousehold Heath and local community neighbourhood boards and the Norwich City Council website.

MI20/07 BIODIVERSITY TRAIL

39. The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society president has been contacted to discuss additional ecological surveys on the heath this year in conjunction with the new trail.

A Mousehold warden and Tim Holt-Wilson, (Geological Specialist and Environmentalist who wrote the Mousehold Heath Earth Heritage Trail and has been employed to write the Biodiversity Trail leaflet), are meeting in July to discuss the delivery of the new resource, assess

possible new biodiversity interest points and create a timeline for implementation.

Consultation

40. None

Implications

Financial and Resources

Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and Budget.

41. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources at this time.

Legal

None

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	None
Health, Social and Economic Impact	None
Crime and Disorder	The Mousehold Wardens will continue to work with Norfolk Constabulary to ensure that the Heath is a safe place to visit.
Children and Adults Safeguarding	Safeguarding is a priority for the Mousehold Wardens, and they will continue to signpost vulnerable individuals to the services that they require.
Environmental Impact	The Mousehold Wardens will continue to improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Financial	Failure to adequately plan and monitor activities could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme
Operational	Failure to adequately plan and monitor activities could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme
Legal	The Council cannot comply with its legal duty to ensure that buildings are safe for users to access	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme

Reasons for the decision/recommendation


42. Review of current budget will ensure that there are adequate resources to carry out required work.

Contact officer:

Name: Matthew Davies, Project Officer

Telephone number: 07733102013

Email address: matthewdavies1@norwich.gov.uk

	<p>If you would like this agenda in an alternative format, such as a larger or smaller font, audio or Braille, or in a different language, please contact the committee officer above.</p>
---	--