



# **NORWICH** City Council

**Committee Name: Mousehold Heath Conservators**

**Committee Date: 16/06/2023**

**Report Title: Mousehold Heath Conservators Annual Report 2022/23**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Giles, Cabinet member for communities and social inclusion

**Report from:** Head of Environment Services

**Wards:** Catton Grove and Crome

## **OPEN PUBLIC ITEM**

### **Purpose**

To provide an annual review 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:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the sustainable and healthy city corporate priority.

This report addresses Deliver a Capital Investment Programme in our parks that will improve visitor experience, maintain our heritage assets, and improve community cohesion. strategic action in the Corporate Plan.

### **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.

## **Introduction**

1. Mousehold Heath is a unique natural area made up of 88 hectares (184 acre) of woodland, heathland, and recreational open space within Norwich. Mousehold has played an important part in the history of Norwich, and it is a designated Local Nature Reserve and County Wildlife Site. It is important both for its wildlife and as a place where people can improve their health by exercising and unwind from the pace of city life.
2. In Tudor times, Mousehold Heath stretched as far north as South Walsham and was 22 miles round. The surviving remnant of the heath was given to Norwich City Council (then known as the local corporation) by the Dean and Chapter, to look after on behalf of the citizens of Norwich.
3. This was officially recorded in 1884 by Parliament in an agreement called the Mousehold Heath Confirmation Act and a body called the Mousehold Heath Conservators was formed to govern the heath. The Mousehold Conservators is comprised of city councilors, representatives of professional bodies and members of the public and meets four times a year, to oversee the management and protection of Mousehold Heath.
4. The Conservators also prepare an annual report which provides an overview of the work of the Conservators, any changes to the heath or new biological records and an opportunity to look forward and reflect on changes, opportunities, and issues that the heath faces. The report also highlights the significant level of voluntary activity as well as the numbers of events, walks and surveys undertaken.
5. The report also highlights how the community are involved with Mousehold Heath; through active involvement in its management and attending events and guided walks and talks, to find out more about their local open space.

## **The work of the Mousehold Conservators**

6. The management of Mousehold Heath is guided by the Management Plan 2019 - 2028. This seeks to balance the important ecological value of Mousehold with an equally important recreational site within an urban area.
7. The challenge is to balance these important and at times conflicting objectives.
8. The Conservators agree an annual work programme and budget in January each year for the following financial year and monitor the implementation of this plan at its meetings.
9. The management plan and further details of the work of the Mousehold Conservators can be found on the Norwich City Council website.

[https://www.norwich.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5043/mousehold\\_heath\\_management\\_plan.pdf](https://www.norwich.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5043/mousehold_heath_management_plan.pdf)

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

**AI00/01 GREEN FLAG AWARD APPLICATION**

10. The Mousehold Heath Conservators submitted a Green Flag application for 2022/23. Sites need to apply for a Green Flag award and be judged annually, ensuring the standards required are still meeting the criteria to receive an award. On this occasion the application was a successful one after a site inspection undertaken in May 2022 by a Green Flag Judge.

**AP80/03 MOUSEHOLD CONSERVATORS ITINERANT**

11. An itinerant meeting took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> September for committee members to discuss the management of the site regarding the implementation of the Mousehold Heath Management Plan and Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

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

**AI30/02 TREE SAFETY INSPECTION**

12. Following the two, six monthly tree safety inspection surveys (September and March), 59 dead, dying and dangerous trees and branches were identified as requiring works to manage tree safety risk and made safe accordingly. Most of the works were completed by the Mousehold wardens, with additional specialised tree works being ordered through the council's Arboricultural team and carried out by Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL).
13. An additional twenty-three 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.
14. Trees encroaching on to Gurney Road have been managed by the NCSL Arboricultural team, following a survey by a Norwich C.C. Arboricultural Officer.

**AR01/05 SEAT AND BENCH SPONSORSHIP SCHEME**

15. The dedication of Ian Kents memorial bench, located adjacent to the Wingfield Open Space, was undertaken on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May, with his family and friends. Ian was a dedicated member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders for many years, attending many work parties, events, surveys, and guided walks and was regularly seen on the heath walking his dog Frodo.

**AT40/01 CONTRACT MONITORING/IMPROVEMENT NCSL**

16. Damaged plastic litter bins were either repaired or replaced by Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL). Five plastic bins, which were prone to fire damage, have been replaced with cast iron bins.

#### MC81/01 VIEW FROM MOTTRAM MEMORIAL

17. Scrub has been cleared to retain historic views of the city and conserve open habitat biodiversity.

#### ML60/01 NORFOLK CONSTABULARY

18. The Mousehold wardens liaised with police officers regarding anti-social behaviour in the Gilman Road area.
19. The public notice/information board was stolen in early May located on the Pitch and Putt public car park, Gurney Road. This was reported to the police by the Mousehold wardens, and a new board ordered and installed.

#### ML60/02 NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

20. The Mousehold wardens have liaised with Norfolk Fire Service to ensure that fire crews have keys for access gates and bollards, allowing quick access to the site. Four fires occurred in the past year, including a large fire on St James Hill on a hot Friday afternoon in late July.

#### MI60/03 FOOTBALL PITCH PROVISION

21. With demand for local youth football pitches and facilities increasing, a youth pitch has been created and is available for hire at the Fountain Ground, Gurney Road, including changing rooms, showers, and toilets. Sprowston Football Club needed additional youth facilities and have booked the pitch this season.

#### MI60/04 FOOTBALL BOOKINGS MANAGEMENT

22. This youth facility can be booked via Norwich City Services Ltd on 01603 987922 or email [ncslsportsbookings@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:ncslsportsbookings@norwich.gov.uk)

#### MP00/01 SITE PRESENCE

23. Five campers have been informed of the Bylaws restricting camping and overnight stays in the area adjacent to the Pitch and Putt course, the Rangers House and central parts of the heath.
24. A caravan was removed from the Public Car Park at Britannia Road through our legal section, the occupier refused help from the Council to provide him with permanent accommodation.

25. Increased patrols were undertaken due to the exceptionally dry conditions. A group of teenagers were asked to put out a campfire on a dry part of heathland by a Mousehold warden.
26. A motor cyclist riding on St James Hill has been informed that he was breaking the Bylaws and asked to leave the natural area.

#### RH35/01 ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES CRIME

27. Two chickens were released on the heath possibly due to restrictions enforced regarding Avian flu, NCC guidelines were followed, Norfolk Wildlife Rescue were quick to respond and found them a new home, a big thank you to them!

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

##### ME01/01 GATES, FENCING AND BARRIERS

28. The emergency vehicle access gate at Gilman Road had a new swing joint fitted to replace the old one. Emergency vehicle access is now available.
29. A stolen vehicle was driven through the wooden access gate at Beech Drive. A temporary repair has been undertaken, until a permanent replacement can be fitted.
30. Norfolk County Council Highways were contacted about illegally removed bollards on Gilman Road. New bollards were installed on the cycle path to prevent vehicles from driving on the adopted highway.

##### ME04/01 LITTER PICKING

31. NCSL litter picked the whole site five days a week Monday to Friday, with just the car parks being litter picked at weekends.
32. Litter was removed from four camp sites and areas where vegetation has been cleared by our NCSL contractor and Mousehold wardens.
33. Before ground vegetation grew, Mousehold volunteer groups litter picked formally burnt areas on St James Hill, areas adjacent to the Rangers house and wooded areas across the heath.
34. Assist Trust volunteers have carried out a number of litter picks in the Gilman Road area.

##### ME06/01 FINGER POSTS AND WAYMARKERS

35. Nature Trail and Earth Heritage trail posts and discs have been maintained and any rotten or vandalised ones replaced. One Nature Trail post was stolen and replaced by a Mousehold warden and work placement student.

#### ME04/03 FLY TIPPING

36. Several fly-tipped items were removed from Hill Farm Track, Pitch and Putt car parks and other parts of the heath, including garden waste, and building materials. Items found are removed and disposed of by NCSL's EPA crew.

#### ME12/01 REMOVE GRAFFITI

37. Graffiti has been removed from three trees, three benches, five emergency vehicle access signs, the historical interpretation panel, the bandstand, two cycle route signs along Gilman Road and the notice board at the Pitch and Putt car park.  
The works were reported through the City Council online reporting form, with most of the removal works undertaken by the Mousehold wardens.

#### ME12/02 BANDSTAND CLEANING

38. The bandstand was cleaned at the beginning of November under our contract obligations with NCSL.

#### ME41/01 MAIN PATHS

39. Eleven paths have been cut to allow easy access across Gilman Road Open Space and the Desert Wildflower meadow by a Mousehold warden with help from volunteers. This has made the area accessible, whilst conserving biodiversity through providing nectar for pollinators in uncut areas, which receive a conservation biodiversity cut in early Autumn.
40. Over 21 paths have been maintained by brush-cutting, pruning saw and raking cut vegetation, including Mustard Pond Glade, Gilman Rd copse, in front of the Pavilion; St William's Chapel and along transect survey routes, by the wardens supported by volunteers, to allow access to, and across the site.
41. Scrub partially blocking the 'access path for all' and other paths on St James Hill have been cut back to improve access to the Mottram Memorial and historic city views.

#### ME41/03 CYCLEWAYS

42. Gilman Road, Gurney Road and Valley Drive cycle routes were swept to clear a build-up of leaf litter causing a public health and safety issue.

#### ME44/02 CAR PARK SURFACING

43. Maintenance works have been carried out to level the entrance and fill in potholes at Britannia Road public car park. This also included the re grading of the surface to provide a level parking area. The Pitch and Putt and Hill Farm Track public car parks have also had surface improvement works carried out.

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

**Heathland and Grassland management**

44. Lowland heathland is a scarce and threatened habitat and only a sixth of the heathland that was present in England in 1800 now remains.
45. However, Britain still has 20 per cent of the world's total area of heathland and this makes it important to conserve the existing heathland areas and look for opportunities to extend them.
46. The Government UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Lowland Heathland includes targets for establishing more lowland heathland to provide space for wildlife and open access to members of the community.
47. Similar declines have been seen in unimproved acid grassland habitat. Both of these habitats can be found at Mousehold and provide a home to a number of notable, declining and threatened species.
48. Heather is an important nectar source for many insects, such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies. A survey of solitary bee and wasps found a high number of scarce and threatened species on heather and bare ground, inhabiting the heath.
49. One of the management objectives is to address the reduction of open heathland and acid grassland across the site, which has occurred over the last 40 years. Of the total area of 88 hectares, only 12 hectares of Mousehold is covered by heathland.
50. Butterflies, such as Small Copper and Green Hairstreak, and a number of moth species, such as True Lover's Knott, Heath Rustic and Beautiful Yellow Underwing, are associated with heathland habitats, and were recorded on the heath.

**HL40/06 NATURAL ENGLAND HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP (HLS)  
AGREEMENT**

51. A grant of £30,600 was awarded to be paid in equal annual payments until the year 2022/23. Higher Level Stewardship funding has enabled the conservators to access specialist contractors to achieve their objective of improving the quantity and quality of heathland, a nationally important habitat.
52. The funding has been used to restore heathland and acid grassland, by removing scrub, mowing with a tractor-mounted Rytex mower, grinding stumps, and stripping humus to control nutrient enrichment of soil and create bare ground, in line with management plan and HLS objectives. This has resulted in existing heathland areas being enlarged and linked up.
53. Habitat improvements carried out during 2022-23 involved the removal of encroaching scrub, bracken and leggy gorse from existing heathland areas.



These works were undertaken by volunteers and the Mousehold wardens, who supervised the works, in compliance with the HLS agreement.

54. In short sward open areas, tree poppers were used to pull up birch saplings, which rapidly out-compete and shade-out heather and grassland species. Three hundred and fifty of these have been replanted on a formally gorse/bracken covered area along Gilman Road during volunteer work parties.
55. Future management will increasingly move from heathland restoration to maintenance as areas in the agreement are restored.
56. The HLS agreement was due to come to an end in November 2023. However, with a new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), Countryside Stewardship Scheme currently being implemented, Natural England has extended the existing Mousehold agreement until October 2027. A Natural England officer visited the site in March 2023 and is satisfied with the heathland and acid grassland habitat condition.
57. The council sent an expression of interest to Natural England to be involved in a pilot of the new scheme.

#### MH12/01 MAINTAIN ACID GRASSLAND

58. The Anthill and Wildflower Meadows had an annual conservation cut which was completed by volunteers and the wardens. The conservation of Anthills is ensured through sympathetic management techniques, such as using a cord trimmer and carefully raking around the large ant hill habitats.
59. All arisings were removed from site, minimising nutrient enrichment of the soil. These management techniques provide and maintain acidic soil conditions required by specialist grasses and wildflowers found on the heath.
60. This year the Desert and Gilman Road Wildflower Meadows were also cut as part of a 'Using a Scythe' course, which was undertaken by sixteen regular Mousehold volunteers, over two days, at the end of November. The course was a success, with all the volunteers now trained and able to complete meadow and bracken management cutting on Mousehold and other sites, under the supervision of the Mousehold warden. The use of scythes is a more sensitive way to cut ecologically important habitats, with many other benefits to volunteers, site management and the environment.

#### MH39/01: BRACKEN REMOVAL

61. Large areas of bracken were cut, pulled, raked and removed from heathland, grassland and woodland glade habitats by volunteers and the wardens. This summer task is crucial to conserving nectar rich heather species and complying with the Mousehold Heath's, Natural England, HLS Agreement.

#### MH39//03 COMMON GORSE REMOVAL

62. Invasive common gorse has been cut and removed from heathland areas to conserve heather, western gorse and other dwarf shrub species. This creates habitat diversity and structure and reduces the risk of large fires.

#### **Woodland management**

#### MH00/01 COPPICING

63. Woodland areas were managed through a number of techniques to diversify and enhance habitat and increase biodiversity, through ride creation, coppicing, and pollarding.
64. Work to maintain access to a section of woodland adjacent to Gilman Road by clearing dead and overgrown vegetation has continued. This work has been carried out to increase community access to a formally impenetrable area, with the aim of improving biodiversity and creating a more diverse environment for fauna and flora to become established.

#### MH03/01 NATURAL REGENERATION

65. Natural woodland regeneration is encouraged, rather than the planting of new trees, which ensures the trees within the woodland are of local provenance, minimising the spread of pests and disease.

#### MH04/01 GLADE MANAGEMENT, MAINTENANCE

66. Grassland habitat in the Mustard Pond glade has been maintained by cutting and raking encroaching vegetation, such as invasive bracken and dominant grasses.

#### MH08 DEAD AND DECAYING WOOD

67. Dead and dying trees were retained where safe to do so, to encourage a diverse structure to woodland and to ensure that there is a supply of dead and decaying wood for those specialist species which require it. Trees identified as posing an unacceptable level of safety risk were removed. Where appropriate dead wood is left on site as a habitat. Cut branches and other vegetation in the woodland has been left in piles to provide wildlife habitats.

#### MH31/01 SCRUB AND TREE REMOVAL

68. Thickets of scrub (i.e. bramble, gorse, etc.) are important habitats for insects and nesting birds. Where scrub has encroached onto heathland and grassland areas it has been cut to conserve important open habitats. Tree saplings encroaching on to important open habitats have been removed with many being replanted along Gilman Road.

## **Aquatic habitats**

### MH60/01 Vinegar Pond and MH60/02 Mustard Pond

69. Due to the extreme hot and dry weather conditions, the Vinegar Pond water level was very low last summer. There was evidence of algal and bacterial blooms compromising the health and safety of a large shoal of fish that were showing signs of stress due to the exceptionally low oxygen and water levels. This situation needed urgent action to remove the fish and transfer them into a much safer environment.
70. A private contractor was procured, and the fish (as many as possible) were removed by electrofishing. This method introduces an electrical current through the water stunning the fish so as they can be caught in a net, then transferred into large aeriated water tanks. The fish were then removed from site and released into an isolated ornamental pond. The fish, mainly goldfish, were unofficially introduced some years ago. There were no fatalities as a result of this action.
71. One frog and several common newts were captured at the time. These were released back into the pond as they are more adept at surviving under these extreme conditions.
72. To control future levels of fish and manage the negative impact they have on frog populations, it is advised to carry out the removal of fish on a regular basis for the next two years, to monitor and control levels to an acceptable level so as not to have an impact on spawning frogs and their development and survival into emerging adults.

## **Birds.**

### RA12/01 COMMON BIRD CENSUS

73. A Common Bird Census (CBC) survey was carried out by the wardens and volunteers in the Spring, following a transect route between Gurney Road car park and St James Hill. A highlight of the year for all involved was a dawn chorus survey in May.
74. Thirty-five species of bird were recorded (singing and/or calling), with many having breeding territories based on the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), CBC methodology. Overall, bird species and numbers were roughly consistent with previous years. Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Song Thrush, Wren and Blackcap saw increases in mapped territories, while Blackbird, Chaffinch and Dunnock showed slight decreases in territories.

## **Reptiles and Amphibians.**

### RA26/01 REPTILES SPECIES LIST

75. Common Lizard and Slow Worm were recorded throughout the spring and summer months. Ad hoc sightings of these species were recorded basking in recently restored open heathland and grassland habitats.
76. Frogs, frog spawn and tadpoles were greatly reduced this year in the Vinegar Pond, due large numbers of fish inhabiting the pond (see section 57 and 58).
77. Frogspawn increased in the Mustard Pond with Common Newts also recorded.

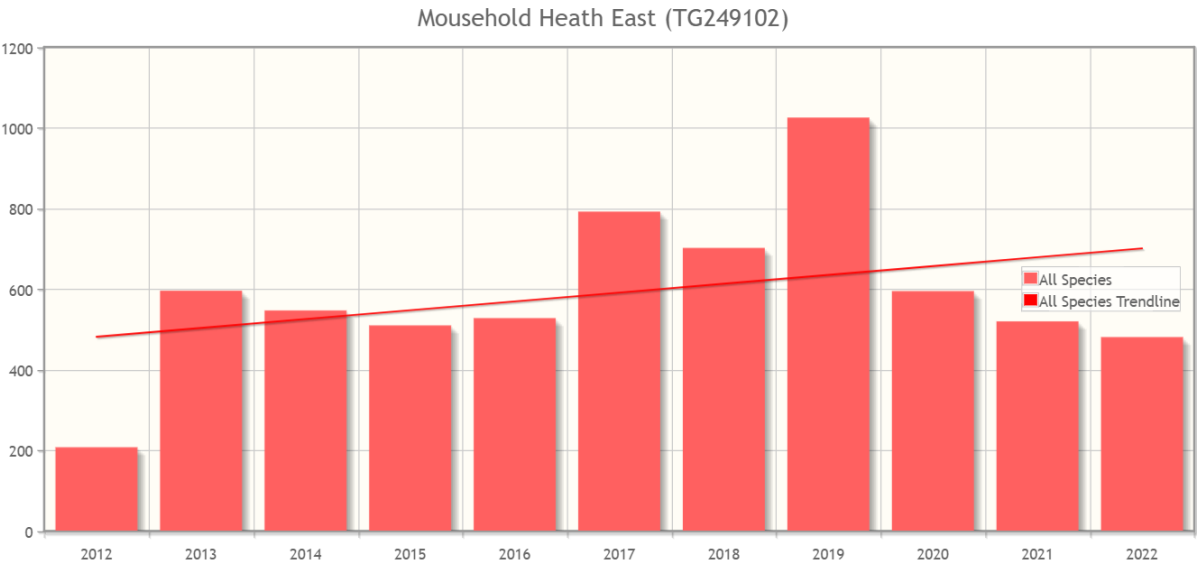
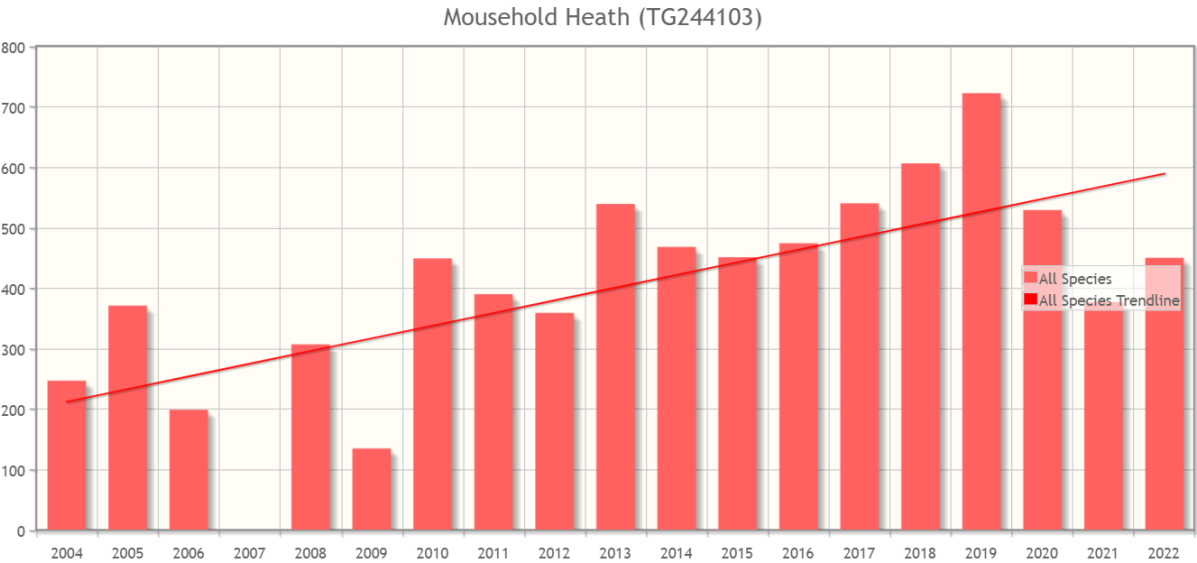
## **Butterflies.**

### **RA42/01 BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SURVEY**

78. The BMS is the largest and longest running biological survey in the country (established in 1976). Data is collected from over 1,200 sites in the UK, with 31 sites surveyed in Norfolk.
79. Butterflies are uniquely placed among British terrestrial insects and other invertebrate groups to act as indicators of the state of the environment. The results of the surveys are used by the national government to assess the impacts of climate change, health of ecosystems and the progress of governmental policy initiatives such as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes.
80. Not only are butterflies biologically suitable as indicator species, having rapid lifestyles and, in many cases, high sensitivity to environmental conditions, but the recording and monitoring volunteer and datasets built up by Butterfly Conservation (BC) and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, enable accurate assessment of their trends. BC use an index system to estimate butterfly abundance when a weekly count is missed.
81. Two, weekly BMS transect surveys have been undertaken by the wardens, often joined by volunteers. On the Mousehold Heath West survey, weekly counts recorded an estimated 609 (450 individual butterflies) butterflies. This is compared an estimated 472 (377) recorded in 2021.
82. Several local and characteristic species were recorded, such as Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Small Copper and Purple Hairstreak.
83. On the Mousehold Heath East transect, an estimated 587 (481 individual butterflies recorded) were recorded, compared to 654 (520) in 2021.
84. Following a good Spring for butterflies on the heath, the slight drop in numbers on the Mousehold Heath East transect in 2022 could be explained by the extreme heat and dry conditions which caused many foodplants and nectar plants to dry up and butterflies completing their flight period earlier. Due to its sandy, free-draining soils, Mousehold was significantly affected by the dry weather. Interestingly, on the Mousehold West transect in August and September 2021, there were 236, compared to 68 butterflies in 2022. On the

Mousehold East transect, there were 218 recorded in August and September 2021 compared to 137 in 2022. This drop in numbers in August and September were reflected at a Norfolk County level.

- 85. When taking into consideration that butterfly numbers have been declining nationally over recent decades, it is encouraging that the butterfly population trend line on both Mousehold BMS transects (see trend line graphs below) - when taking into account annual weather fluctuations and national population changes - are increasing.
- 86. An upward trend could suggest that the restoration and conservation of early-successional habitat, such as heathland, woodland glades, scrub and grassland, through bracken control and conservation cutting, is having a positive impact.



## **Dragonflies.**

### **RA56/01 DRAGONFLY SPECIES LIST**

87. An abundance of dragonfly and damselfly species have been recorded, such as Norfolk Hawker, Red Darter, Southern Hawker and Emperor dragonflies, etc., with over 60 Migrant Hawkers being recorded feeding together over heathland vegetation. Norfolk Hawker, which is a nationally threatened and scarce Red Data book species, was recorded for the sixth year in succession. It's nearest breeding site is Thorpe Marshes so they are presumably flying up to the heath to feed on the abundance of insects in open habitats. Many species are seen near the Vinegar and Mustard Pond during the summer months.
88. During a Community Wildlife Workshop on 12<sup>th</sup> August, a pair of copulating Willow Emerald Damselflies were recorded on a Hawthorn branch adjacent to the Mustard Pond. This large, metallic-green damselfly is a recent colonist, with numbers increasing in Southeast England since 2009. It is still a scarce damselfly, and this was the first record for the site.

## **Bumblebees.**

### **RA82/01 ST JAMES' HILL BUMBLEBEE SURVEY**

89. Seven, monthly, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, BeeWalk surveys, have been undertaken by the wardens with the help of a member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders. A total of 80 bumblebees, including Buff-tailed, Red tailed, White tailed, Common Carder, Tree and Early bumblebee species, along with 94 Honey bee, 5 Hairy-footed flower bee and 1 Ivy bee, were recorded along the transect route on St. James Hill. Most of these records were from bees feeding on Bramble sp. flowers in June. Species were also recorded feeding on Green Alkanet, Apple sp., Common Dandelion, Red and White dead-nettle.

## **Bats.**

### **RA92/01 NATIONAL BAT MONITORING PROGRAMME SURVEY**

90. Two, National Bat Monitoring Project (NBMP), Bat Conservation Trust Field Surveys were completed in July by the wardens assisted by volunteers, using a bat detector. A total of 74 Common pipistrelle passes (48 in 2021), 18 Soprano pipistrelle (5 in 2021), 1 Noctule passes (10 in 2021), 5 unidentified pipistrelle agg., were recorded during the transect survey, starting 20 minutes after sunset. This annual national survey was started on the heath in 2018. Bat population trend line analysis will help assess bat species and abundance on the site in future years.

## **Plants.**

### RF22/02 MUSTARD POND SURVEY

91. A monthly flowering plant survey has been undertaken by members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders, recording many beautiful and nectar-rich species in the sunny, woodland glade habitat. 22 new species for the Mustard pond area were identified during the surveys this year.

### RF22/03 ST JAMES' HILL SURVEY

92. A warden and a member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders carried out a monthly flower survey, identifying a number of new flowering plant species and bringing the total number up to 135 species in the last 12 years.

## **Objective F: To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.**

### MC03/01 ST WILLIAMS CHAPEL – VEGETATION REMOVAL

93. Invasive bracken and bramble have been cut and removed from chapel paths, banks, interpretation board and viewpoints by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Mousehold Mousketeers and the Mousehold wardens.

### MC81/03 CAVALRY TRACK

94. Under the supervision of a warden, volunteers have cleared vegetation, leaves and other dead vegetation to keep the historic track open and accessible.

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

### AT50/01 VOLUNTEERS GENERAL

95. A total of 3202 volunteer work hours were contributed, in the last year, by the following groups:
  - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
  - Mousehold Heath Defenders
  - Assist Trust (based at the Lazor House)
  - Mousehold Heath Mousketeers
  - Natwest, WPS, Crown Commercial, Anglian Water and Aviva Corporate Groups
  - GoodGym Norwich

- Norwich High School For Girls
  - 8<sup>th</sup> Norwich cub scouts
  - Harford Manor volunteers
  - Individual volunteers from the community
96. An Easton College student has completed a 150 hour work placement with a Mousehold warden. This workplace experience has increased the student's skills and knowledge by undertaking a wide variety of practical site management tasks. This has been mutually beneficial experience, with the student obtaining a Safe Use of Chipper and First Aid certificates and is attending a Pole-saw course with a Mousehold warden in June. He is starting a two-year Arboriculture course next year and is planning to complete another work placement (completing Autumn/Winter habitat and tree management works) with the Mousehold wardens in the Autumn term.
97. Since July 2008, there has been over 53,782 volunteer hours safely undertaken on the site. Volunteering has provided an opportunity for the community to become involved with the management of the heath, to increase their understanding of the projects being undertaken, the importance of the heath and to engender a sense of ownership and pride in the space.

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

**MI10/01 GENERAL INFORMATION SIGNS**

98. Two disabled parking signs and the No Overnight Parking sign have been replaced after being vandalised at Britannia Road public car park.

**MI60/01 EVENTS**

99. Four ROOTS environmental education and play activity session, for young people, organised through Norwich City Council Events Team, have taken place on the heath.
100. Eight Enchanted Woods Forest School environmental activity groups have taken place increasing knowledge, interest and enjoyment of nature for young people.
101. One Tribe gathering event has taken place providing environmental play and education activities organised through the Events Team.
102. A Norwich High School for Girls Activity Day took place on the heath in June organised by the Mousehold wardens and school staff. Activities included a history walk, litter picking and heathland management.
103. Tri-Anglia cross country club undertook a cross-country run-on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, roughly 150 runners attended.



104. Two, fully booked Heritage Open Day walks, covering the story of St William's Chapel, Kett's Rebellion and Geodiversity, have been enjoyed by members of the community. These walks were led by local experts and a Mousehold Warden on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September.
105. A Fungi walk was led by a local expert and a Mousehold warden on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October. A number of new species for the site were recorded bringing the total site list up to 302 species.
106. Three community moth survey evenings took place on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July and Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August, with 17 species of moth identified and released. Of these, there were eight new species bringing the site list up to 270 species.
107. Three Community Wildlife Workshop's took place this year, focusing on Moths, Butterflies and Winter Birds, led by a local expert and a Mousehold Heath warden.
108. On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May, in connection with International Dawn Chorus Day, a Dawn Chorus Common Bird Census Breeding Bird survey was undertaken, starting at 4.15am and finishing at 6.15am. The transect survey was led by a Mousehold warden and was followed by breakfast on the heath. Seven people attended the 'celebration of nature's daily miracle', on their doorstep.
109. A Forest bathing event run by the Nest Project discussing relaxation was organised through our Events Team and took place on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May.
110. A new community theatre performance, inspired by the events of local history, took place on Mousehold Heath. The event was spread over three weekends in September and October. Limbik, a Norwich-based theatre company lead audiences on a walk in the woods with some wonderful surprises as they retrace the steps of Kett's Rebellion of 1549.

Rebel Rabble is part audio trail and part theatrical performance where the cast interacted with an audience of up to 30 people at a time. Each audience member was provided with a pair of "silent disco" headphones, through which they simultaneously listened to an audio journey.

As a group, they were guided through the woods, listening to the fictional retelling of Kett's Rebellion.

#### ME06/03 INFORMATION PANELS

111. The public notice board was stolen from the Pitch and Putt public car park on Gurney Road. The old board was made of metal and thought to have been stolen for scrap metal value. A new notice board has now been installed made from recycled plastic to mitigate future theft.

#### MI60/02 GUIDED WALKS PROGRAMME

112. The walks, workshops and wildlife survey events making up the Mousehold Heath Guided Walks and Surveys Programme 2022, has been successfully

implemented by the wardens, inviting members of the community to learn more about, and enjoy, the sites biodiversity and natural features. One of the highlights was the Fungi Foray on 25<sup>th</sup> October, when 19 participants helped locate and record 45 species, with 4 new species for the site, increasing the site cumulative list to 302 fungi species.

## **RC30/01 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE**

113. Local historians, involved with the research and restoration of the WW2 RAF/USAF Air Base at Newman Road, Rackheath, have been researching military training/war activity on the heath with a Mousehold warden. A number of historic features of interest have been identified and the Historic Environment Record Team at Gressenhall have been notified.

### **Consultation**

114. This report is based on previous quarterly updates presented to the Conservators.

### **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.

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

### **Legal**

116. There are no legal implications to this report.

## 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

117. This report provides an annual summary of the activities on Mousehold Heath in the financial year 2022/23.

**Background papers: None**

**Appendices: None**

**Contact officer: Parks and Open Spaces Manager**

**Name: Paul Rabbitts**

**Telephone number: 01603 987716**

**Email address: [PaulRabbitts@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:PaulRabbitts@norwich.gov.uk)**



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