



# **NORWICH** City Council

**Committee Name: Mousehold Heath Conservators**

**Committee Date: 20/01/2023**

**Report Title: Mousehold Heath management update 6 September to 22 December 2022**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Giles, Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing

**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:

- 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.

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.**

### AP80/03 MOUSEHOLD CONSERVATORS ITINERANT

3. An itinerant meeting was held on 2 September 2022, to discuss the management of the site regarding the aims and objectives of the Mousehold Heath Management Plan and Higher Level Stewardship Agreement (HLS).

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

### AS00/00 LEGAL ENFORCEMENT ACTION

4. An occupied caravan was parked on Britannia Road public car park for roughly six weeks, after initiating contact with the occupier to assist in permanent housing, a notice was served for eviction by our Legal Advice Team, the caravan and van was moved from site on Monday 28 November 2022 by the owner.

### AI30/02 TREE SAFETY INSPECTION

5. The second, six monthly tree safety inspection was undertaken by the Mousehold wardens at the end of September, identifying thirty five dying, dangerous trees and branches, mostly due to several high winds and adverse weather conditions, requiring work to manage tree safety risk. Most of the works were completed by the Mousehold wardens within three months. A Mousehold warden met a Norwich City Council Arboricultural Officer, to assess several large trees, and four specialised

works were passed on to be undertaken by the NCSL Arboricultural team.

6. An additional nine 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.

#### ML60/01 NORFOLK CONSTABULARY

7. The Mousehold Wardens liaised with police officers regarding anti-social behaviour.
8. A caravan and van arrived on Britannia Road public car park mid-October with a tenant occupying the caravan. The police were informed of the situation.

#### MP00/01 SITE PRESENCE

9. Mousehold wardens have continued to patrol the heath, focusing on areas with anti-social behaviour issues.
10. When found during patrols and work parties, litter has been removed on an ad hoc basis, to keep the site safe and clean.

#### RH35/01 ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES CRIME

11. 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!
12. Two bollards at the Mousehold Avenue end of Gilman Road have been vandalised and stolen. Norfolk County Council have been contacted and replacement bollards are on order.

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

#### ME04/01 LITTER PICKING

13. Mousehold wardens have worked with a NCSL litter picker to undertake extra litter picks to clear areas of litter exposed by fires and remove glass which could create a future fire risk also remains of fireworks after 5 November 2022 celebrations.

#### ME01/02 BOLLARDS

14. Three wooden bollards in Britannia Rd car park, have been re-installed by Mousehold wardens and volunteers, after they were illegally removed.

#### ME04/02 LITTER BINS

15. Two plastic litter bins have been burnt out across the site. The Mousehold wardens have been liaising with a Parks and Open Spaces Officers to replace them with cast iron metal bins to mitigate any future damage, as and when they are available. Five have already been installed.

16. All cast iron bins to be used are recycled from the City Centre.

#### ME04/03 FLY TIPPING

17. A number of fly tipping items were removed from the Pitch and Putt car park and the slip road at Britannia Road, including garden waste and building materials. Items found are removed and disposed of by NCSL's EPA crew.

#### ME12/01 REMOVE GRAFFITI

18. Graffiti was removed from the bandstand and a bench on the Fountain Ground, along with two adjacent litter bins.

19. An attempt has been made by the Mousehold wardens to remove a large amount of graffiti on trees in the Gurney Road area. Further attempts to remove the graffiti will be made in January.

#### ME41/01 MAIN PATHS

20. Seven paths have been maintained by brush cutting and raking vegetation to allow easy access to the site.

#### ME12/02 BANDSTAND CLEANING

21. The bandstand received its second clean at the beginning of November under our contract obligations with NCSL.

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

22. The vehicle access gate at Gilman Road had a new pivot joint fitted after the old one failed.

23. 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.

24. Norfolk County Council Highways has been contacted about replacement bollards on Gilman Road.

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

#### MH04/01 GLADE MANAGEMENT MAINTAIN

25. The Mustard Pond glade has been conserved by cutting and raking encroaching vegetation.

26. A deep hole forming a potential trip hazard was reported by the Mousehold Defenders and filled in by a Mousehold warden.

#### MH12/01 MAINTAIN ACID GRASSLAND

27. The Anthills and Wildflower meadows have been given their Autumn conservation cut by volunteers and the wardens.
28. Gilman Road Open Space and Wildflower Meadow 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 cutting under the supervision of the Mousehold wardens. The use of scythes is a more sensitive way to cut important habitats, with many other benefits to volunteers, site management and the environment.

#### MH31/01 SCRUB AND TREE REMOVAL

29. Invasive scrub and birch trees have been cut and cleared, to restore and conserve important heathland and grassland habitat, in line with the Natural England, Higher Level Stewardship Agreement (HLS) and Mousehold Heath Management Plan.

#### MH39/01 BRACKEN REMOVAL

30. Large areas of bracken were cut, pulled, raked and removed from heathland, grassland and woodland glade habitats by volunteers and the wardens. This Summer/Autumn task is crucial to conserving nectar rich heather species and complying with the Mousehold Heath HLS Agreement.

#### MH39/03 COMMON GORSE REMOVAL

31. Invasive common gorse, along with burnt gorse stems from this summer's fires, have been cut, chipped and removed from heathland/grassland areas, to conserve heather, grasses, western gorse and other dwarf shrub species. This gorse management also reduces fire risk across the site.

#### MH60/01 VINEGAR POND

32. After the prolonged intensive hot weather conditions experienced this summer, the water quality and level in the pond has now improved to normal conditions.

#### RA42/01 BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SURVEY

33. 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

34. A Community Moth Survey evening took place in September. Two new species for the site were identified, bringing the site list up to over 270 species.

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

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

#### RF22/01 MUSTARD POND GLADE FLOWER SURVEY

36. Members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders have carried out monthly flowering plant surveys, recording a wide range of colourful, nectar providing flowers.

#### RF22/02 ST JAMES' HILL SURVEY

37. A member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders and a Mousehold warden have undertaken a monthly plant survey on St James Hill.

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

#### AT50/01 VOLUNTEERS GENERAL

38. A total of 1239 community volunteer hours have been undertaken on the site between 6 September – 22 December 2022 by the following groups;

- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- Norwich High School for Girls
- Mousehold Heath Mousketeers
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Crown Commercial and WSP (County Council contractor) corporate groups.
- Harford Manor School volunteers
- Goodgym Norwich
- Assist Trust
- Many individual volunteers from the community

39. 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.**

**ME06/03 INFORMATION PANELS**

40. 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.

**MI60/01 EVENTS**

41. Two ROOTS environmental education and play activity session, for young people, organised through Norwich City Council Events Team, have taken place on the heath.
42. Three Enchanted Woods Forest School environmental activity groups have taken place increasing knowledge, interest and enjoyment of nature for young people.
43. 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 and Sunday 18 September 2022.
44. A Community Wildlife Workshop, focusing on an introduction to Winter Birds, was led by a local expert and a Mousehold warden on Thursday 8 December 2022.
45. 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.
46. A cross country run was undertaken on Wednesday 2 November 2022 roughly 150 runners attended.
47. 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.
48. 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.
49. As a group, they were guided through the woods, listening to the fictional retelling of Kett's Rebellion.

**MI60/02 GUIDED WALKS PROGRAMME**

50. The ten, walks, workshops and wildlife survey events making up the

Mousehold Heath Guided Walks and Surveys Programme 2022, have 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

51. 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

52. 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.

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

## Legal

54. 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.



<b>Consideration</b>	<b>Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:</b>
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**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Controls Required</b>
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**

55. This report is for members to note the activities on Mousehold Heath since the last committee meeting.

**Background papers: None**

**Appendices: None**

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