

Report to	Mousehold Heath conservators 16 June 2017	Item
Report of	Head of citywide services	8
Subject	Mousehold Heath Conservators annual report 2016-17	

Purpose

To seek the views of the Mousehold Heath Conservators on the draft annual report for 2016-17 to enable a final version to be published and distributed.

Recommendation

- 1) To approve the content of the Mousehold Heath Annual report 2016-17 subject to any amendments identified at the meeting being made.
- 2) To delegate authority to the Parks and open spaces manager to produce the finished version of the report with the communications team .
- 3) To produce a PDF version of the finished report for the Norwich City Council website, a hard copy of the document for each member of the committee, and also copies for circulation to local schools.
- 4) To write a letter to the local press at the time the annual report is published, to thank volunteers for the time they have given up to help look after the heath and to the raise awareness of the heath, the annual report and the work of the Mousehold Heath Conservators

Corporate and service priorities

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

Financial implications

Any financial implications arising from this report will have or will be met from approved budgetary provision

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Background

1. In recent years, the Mousehold Conservators have prepared an annual report.
2. The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of management works undertaken during the course of the year, to highlight the level of community involvement in the site, a summary of any biological surveys undertaken and that the report has an element of looking forward within it.
3. Conservators have previously agreed that the draft report is presented and signed off at the June Conservators meeting. The finished document to be published and distributed to members and local schools before the start of the school holidays.
4. The timescale for signing off the draft report, receiving any final comments and getting it designed, published and distributed before the start of the school holidays is tight.

2016 – 2017 report

5. Officers have produced an initial draft of the Mousehold Heath Conservators annual report 2016/17 (Appendix A).
6. To enable more efficient use of staff resources the draft document has been produced as a word document for ease of editing. The images referred to within the document have been taken by the wardens and will be incorporated in the report.
7. The structure of the annual report has been revised so that it relates more directly to the management objectives and themes contained in the current management plan. This will be refined further in the future, once the management plan has been completed to follow a format which will run so that will run through the management plan, annual work programme, annual report, quarterly heath updates.
8. Once the content has been considered and approved (subject to amends) at the Mousehold Conservators' meeting it will be used to produce a final desktop published version by the communications team.
9. A PDF version of the annual report will be made available on the Norwich City Council website and hard copies will be circulated to; all the Mousehold Conservators; local schools and a few copies retained for issuing to officers and other interested parties.
10. At the Conservators' meeting on the 17 March 2017 it was resolved to ask the chair and the parks and open spaces manager to write a letter to the press thanking them for their work on the heath.
11. A letter to the press just prior to the distribution of the annual report would provide an opportunity to link the work of the volunteers to achievements on the heath and also raise public awareness of the heath, the annual report and the work of the Mousehold Heath Conservators.

[FRONT COVER]
Mousehold Heath Conservators
DRAFT annual report 2016 – 17

[INSIDE FRONT COVER]

Aerial image of heath possibly showing it at its most open??

Contents

1 Chairman's welcome

2 Introduction

Mousehold Heath
The work of the Mousehold Conservators

3 People

Access
Volunteering
Community involvement
Partnership working
Activities and events
Sports

4 Nature

Heathland management
Grassland management
Woodland management
Tree safety management
Ecological surveying and monitoring

5 Heritage

Landscape

6 Infrastructure

Access
Car parks
Signage
Security
Access permissions

7 Resources

Staff
Budget
Facilities
Contacts

8 Contacts and further information

9 Appendices

Appendix 1: Progress on woodland management objectives
Appendix 2: Butterfly monitoring scheme data
Appendix 3: Butterfly species recorded 2016-17
Appendix 4: Common Bird Census survey results 2010-16
Appendix 5: Plant species recorded St James' Hill
Appendix 6: Plant species recorded new pond glade
Appendix 7: Plant species recorded Desert wildflower area

Chairman's welcome

Content to be confirmed with Chair.

[Image of chair]

Signature

Councillor Maxwell
Chair – Mousehold Heath Conservators

Introduction

Mousehold Heath

Mousehold Heath is a unique 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. 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.

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.

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.

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 level of voluntary activity as well as the numbers of events, walks and surveys undertaken.

The report also highlights how the community are involved with Mousehold Heath; through active involvement in its management and also attending events and guided walks and talks to find out more about their local open space.

The work of the Mousehold Conservators

The management of Mousehold Heath is guided by a management plan with the current plan approved in 2013 (to be reviewed 2017/18). This seeks to balance the important ecological value of Mousehold with an equally important recreational site within an urban area.

The main management objectives for Mousehold Heath are therefore to:

- ensure that the area is managed effectively
- maintain and enhance its wildlife and historic value
- promote and enhance people's access to and enjoyment of the site.

The challenge is to balance these important and at times conflicting objectives.

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.

The management plan and further details of the work of the Mousehold Conservators can be found on the Norwich City Council website.

www.norwich.gov.uk

3 People

Volunteering

4367 hours of volunteer time were recorded for the site in the last year, an increase of 247 hours on last year's total. These tasks were organised and supervised by the wardens, making sure that the practical works were implemented in a safe working environment and adhering to management plan objectives.

A wide range of practical management tasks were undertaken including; bracken and grass cutting and raking, path maintenance, coppicing, woodland thinning, tree safety works, litter picking, installation of bollards and benches, sapling pulling, wildlife surveys, etc.

These tasks increase community involvement with the site, Norwich's largest open space, and not only help to deliver the management plan objectives but also improve people's understanding and enjoyment of the site, build up a sense of ownership and pride in the site and also have benefits relating to physical and mental health.

The following groups carried out work this year:

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Norwich Community Green Gym
- New Mousehold Heath Volunteer Group
- Citizens Volunteer Service
- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- The Assist Trust
- Norwich City College Duke of Edinburgh group
- Easton College Foundation student group
- Easton College work placement student
- Students from George White School
- City College student group
- City College work placement
- Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award work placement.
- Norwich High School for Girls
- Many individual volunteers from the community.

A new volunteer group – The Mousehold Heath Volunteers

In late 2016 The Norwich Community Green Gym volunteer group disbanded. The group had provided an opportunity for local people to get involved in conservation management work on a number of sites in the city. Mousehold Heath is one of the sites that the group worked on regularly.

The loss of the group removed one of the opportunities for people to be active in the natural environment along with the associated health benefits. There was also an impact on the delivery of management works through the loss of the group.

The Mousehold wardens identified an opportunity to support the development of a new volunteer group to ensure that all the benefits of volunteering could continue to be realised. In January 2017 the Mousehold Heath Volunteer Group was formed. The group undertake two practical tasks a month, supervised by the Mousehold wardens.

Since the group was formed, they have made a significant contribution to woodland and heathland management work. Debris left by Storm Doris has also been cleared, along with maintenance and vegetation clearance from footpaths, (Photo number 36).

The Mousehold Wardens have organised and supervised over 31,000 hours of volunteer work on the heath in the past 9 years. These works have significantly contributed to improving peoples lives as well as meeting objectives set out in the management plan and Higher Level Stewardship agreement.

(Photo number 39).

Community Involvement

Through guided walks, education activities, volunteer work days and other activities, there has been an increase in partnership working this year. The community groups, business and education organisations that have been worked on and used the heath are Norwich High School for Girls, Norwich School, City College, George White/Mousehold Avenue/Parkside Schools, Assist Trust, Citizen Volunteer Service, Horning Walking Group, etc.

Corporate Community Action Days involving employees from Amey, RBS and the Naked Wine Company, have undertaken practical tasks to improve the site for people and wildlife.

The site, with its accessible city location, is an ideal environment for children to experience the 'great outdoors'.

The conservator's ongoing development of environmental education has continued this year.

There has been continued support to encourage and implement Forest School activities, with pupils from Mousehold Avenue infants, Parkside and George White Middle School. These events continue to be popular with the pupils and parents.

A number of community based Wild4 Wellies activities took place, providing environmental education and play for children.

Additional environmental activities involving pupils from local schools are to be initiated by the wardens through 2017-18 and also through the inclusion of professional conservation organisations including the RSPB and local experts providing community education workshops.

These activities increase involvement, understanding and enjoyment for local children and local community groups regarding nature conservation and its importance.

Partnership Working

This year has seen an increase in camping on the heath by those who are homeless, possibly due to an increase in those without accommodation rather than an increase in the popularity of the site as a place to stay. The wardens have worked on a number of occasions with the council's Homeless/Rough Sleeper Coordinator for support to be provided. This included site visits resulting in temporary accommodation being found until a more permanent arrangement could be made.

A missing child alert was initiated by the police regarding a young child missing from home overnight; the Wardens were involved with the police in searching the heath for several hours. The incident resulted in a positive outcome when the child was found at Catton Park.

Travellers gained access onto the Greater Norwich Development Project area adjacent to Mousehold. The site is owned by Norfolk County Council (Education) and used by Open Academy students as an educational resource for carrying out practical heathland restoration and management also including the establishment and management of a wild flower meadow around the outskirts of the field.

Following their departure, the wardens worked with officers from Norwich City Council's Parks and Open Spaces department to clean adjacent areas of the heath.

During their stay, the pitch and putt course was closed due to public health and safety concerns. At the same time the interpretation panel on the site of the Greater Norwich Development Project was vandalised.

At a site visit by the Conservators on their itinerant meeting, it was agreed to fund the installation of a replacement panel to be installed within the GNDP project area. As this is a restricted area, it was thought to be a good idea to install a duplicate panel on the fencing of the GNDP area, adjacent to the track leading to the pitch and putt course, so that the information about heathland management was also accessible to visitors to the heath.

A number of fly tipping incidents occurred across the site - on one occasion two bollards were removed to gain access from Gertrude Road onto Gilman Road, resulting in a large amount of household rubbish being dumped on the wildflower area adjacent to the wildlife pond. The wardens worked in partnership with Norwich City Council officers in the Environmental services and Highways teams to reinstall the damaged bollards, to ensure the future security of the site was maintained and to remove the fly tipped items.

During a similar incident bollards were illegally removed and damaged, resulting in the wardens working with Norwich City Council Highways Department to order a repair of the bollards and secure the site.

(Photo number 21)

(Photo number 22)

(Photo number 23)

On a day to day basis, to ensure that the site is safe and accessible to members of the community, the wardens work closely with Norwich Norse (Environmental) Ltd, various Norwich City Council departments and other contractors.

Activities and events

While the heath is used considerably for informal recreation, the conservators have continued to ensure it is available for events and activities aimed to widen resident's understanding and knowledge of its local history and nature conservation management, through organised guided walks and volunteer days.

A guided walks programme organised and led by the wardens and local naturalists, was delivered to increase involvement, understanding and enjoyment of the site. Walks this year have included, four seasonal community wildlife watch walks, fungi forays, a dawn chorus, butterfly management, site management and four moth survey evenings.

A number of additional walks were led by the wardens for specific groups and members of the community throughout the year on request, including walks for Parkside School, Horning walking group and Norwich Community Green Gym.

The Mousehold Wardens were approached by the RSPB who have developed a community outreach project delivering events to connect families to nature in greenspaces in and around Norwich including Mousehold Heath where five events took place; this project is funded by the supermarket chain Aldi.

The Family Events Officer for the RSPB provided all the equipment and resources required to deliver simple wildlife activities such as minibeast hunts, bird watching, scavenger hunts & trails, the idea being that families could join in with an activity for a short period of time (approx. 30 mins) whilst visiting or attending organised events.

(Photo number 5)

A number of guided walks organised by the Mousehold wardens took place including moth evenings, as well as a number of impromptu events advertised for the local community and volunteers.

(Photo number 6)

Two Brass Band concerts took place at the Fountain Ground on June 26th and 10th July; these were free for the public to attend.

(Photo number 7)

Wildlife Watch Walks were organised in Winter/Spring/Summer and Autumn in partnership with Norfolk County Council Adult education, in addition to our guided walks programme - all were very well attended.

A Playdays event was organised by the Norwich City Council Events team on 25th July, from 11.00am to 3.00pm, on the Fountain Ground, including environmental education activities with the RSPB, face painting and other organised outdoor activities. This was very well supported and enjoyed by local residents.

(Photo number 8)

The Common Lot Theatre Company toured the City with their production of Ketts Rebellion; a production took place on July 10th at Gilman Road Open Space, thankfully the weather was bright and dry ensuring a large audience.

(Photo number 9)

On 11 November 2016, an Armistice Day memorial service arranged by the Mousehold Defenders took place at the Airmen's Memorial, Gurney Road.

(Photo, number 1)

A Winter solstice gathering on the 21-12-16 was organised by the Mousehold Defenders to mark the shortest day and longest night of the year, which was held adjacent to the wild flower meadow, Gilman Road.

Two Norwich HEART Heritage weekend walks were organised. The first was a geological themed, superbly led walk by Tim Holt-Wilson, supported by the wardens. The second was a fascinating social and landscape history walk, focussing on the stories of St William's Chapel and Kett's Rebellion by local historian Colin Howey. Both walks were fully booked and a great success.

An additional Geodiversity walk was organised and led by Tim Holt-Wilson and the wardens as part of the Norfolk Walking Festival, which attracted over thirty members of the community.

A total of 317 members of the community attended these walks and events.

(Photo number 11)

Sports

Football Pitch

A full sized football pitch is available at the Fountain Ground Sports Pitch, Gurney Road, including changing rooms, showers and toilets.

29 senior matches and one junior match were held at the Fountain Ground in the 2016/17 season, income from the facility was £1672.05. Five fixtures were cancelled by clubs.

The cost per booking for the 16/17 season was £60.80 (standard charge) or £50.67 (VAT exempt)

The facility can be booked via Norwich Norse (Environmental) on 01603 894140 or email sportsbookings@norwichnorse.co.uk

(Photo number 10)

4 Nature

Heathland management

Lowland heathland is a scarce and threatened habitat and only a sixth of the heathland that was present in England in 1800 now remains.

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.

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.

Similar declines have been seen in acid grassland habitat. Both of these habitats can be found at Mousehold and provide a home to a high number of scarce and threatened species.

Heather is an important nectar source for many insects such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies. A survey of solitary bee and wasps found a number of scarce and threatened species on heather and bare ground inhabiting the heath.

Butterflies such as Small Heath, Small Copper, Common Blue, and Green Hairstreak are only found in the heathland and acid grassland areas.

One of the priority management objectives is to address the reduction of open heathland and acid grassland across the site, which has been happening over the last 40 years. Of the total area of 88 hectares, only 8.66 hectares of Mousehold is covered by heathland.

In 2012, Norwich City Council secured - on behalf of the conservators – grant funding from Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS), to restore and conserve areas of heathland and acid grassland over a 10 year period.

A grant of £30,600 was awarded to be paid in equal annual payments until the year 2022. This funding has been allocated to restoring heathland and acid grassland, removing scrub, mowing with a tractor-mounted Ryttec mower (photo number 28), grinding stumps and stripping humus, giving heather seeds in the seed bank a chance to grow. This has resulted in existing heathland areas being enlarged and linked up.

The funding has enabled the conservators to access specialist contractors to achieve this objective as part of the HLS agreement.

Ongoing habitat conservation improvements were carried out through the HLS agreement during 2016-17.

This year, a further 0.6ha of poor quality, degenerating heathland habitat, covered in dense bracken and bramble growth was restored, (Photo 20)

Removal of encroaching trees, scrub and bracken from existing heathland area's has been carried out, these works are usually undertaken by volunteers, in compliance with the Higher Level Stewardship agreement. The works also include humus stripping and the use of a cut and collect machine to control nutrient enrichment of soil, in line with management plan objectives.

Future management will increasingly move from heathland restoration to maintenance as areas in the agreement are restored.

Grassland management

Important areas of Acid Grassland were also included in, the HLS agreement, with the Desert (Photo 13), Ant Hills (Photo 15), St. James Hill and the area adjacent to the wildlife pond being cut once a year, in early to late autumn, depending on weather conditions.

All arisings are removed from site, minimising nutrient enrichment of the soil, (Photo 14). These management techniques provide and maintain acidic soil conditions required by specialist grasses and wildflowers found on the heath

The removal of any encroaching scrub and trees also takes place following regular plant surveys carried out with the help of volunteers to monitor potential problem weed species (ragwort, thistles etc.), which are controlled only if present in large numbers.

Where present the conservation of ant hills is ensured through sympathetic management techniques.

Natural England who is overseeing the HLS agreement, carried out an annual habitat condition assessment and complimented the quality and quantity of the works undertaken this year and the progress of the HLS agreement to date.

Woodland management

Mousehold today is largely covered in secondary woodland and scrub, consisting mainly of oak and birch, with some rowan and sycamore. These are species which readily invade open areas.

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

Woodland areas were managed through a number of techniques to diversify and enhance the habitat through ride creation, coppicing, and pollarding.

Work has continued through clearance to restore woodland glades to provide a more diverse structure to the vegetation and to increase biodiversity.

Work to restore a section of woodland adjacent to Gilman Road by clearing dead and overgrown vegetation and thinning trees was continued. This work has been carried out to increase community access to a formally impenetrable area and improve biodiversity. (Photo number 27)

There has been a large amount of woodland management work carried out by the Mousehold wardens and volunteers. See **Appendix 1: Woodland management**, for detailed information on the progress made in delivering the woodland management objectives.

Tree safety management

Due to exceptionally high winds experienced through parts of 2016-17 and particularly during Storm 'Doris', an above average number of tree works were carried out by the Mousehold wardens to make dangerous trees safe, especially next to and over main pathways (Photo 29). Over one hundred individual tree issues were identified by the wardens on tree safety surveys, routine patrols and reported by members of the community.

Tree surveys carried out by the Mousehold Wardens on a six monthly basis, in September 2016 and March 2017, identified a total of 59 trees (see Map 2: Tree survey map), adjacent to or blocking pathways, which were dead, dying or dangerous and requiring, in some cases, urgent attention or ongoing monitoring (Photo 12).

Where possible, dead/dying trees were retained, to encourage a diverse structure to the woodland and to ensure 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.

Norwich Norse (Environmental) Ltd, the council's joint venture company carried out essential tree safety works along Gurney Road and adjacent to the Pavilion at the Fountain Ground.

Beech Drive

Two large Beech Trees situated on Beech Drive were blown over into adjacent gardens during Storm Doris. These were cleared by Norwich Norse (Environmental) Ltd.

The space created by the fallen trees exposed a near-by Beech tree. Following an inspection by a Norwich City Council arboriculture officer, it was decided that the tree required immediate works to reduce the crown. The larger wood was left on site to provide a good dead wood habitat for insects, while making the area safe for the general public.

Aquatic habitats

The Vinegar pond and wildlife ponds are the only source of water on the heath. These habitats are continually monitored to identify any unwanted imported plants needing removal along with collecting debris.

Since the installation of clay linings in each of the above ponds, water levels have remained high, even in prolonged dry weather conditions providing an ideal environment for spawning Common frogs.

These conditions have also resulted in the presence of Common newts, which can be seen in the margins, along with a wide variety of damsel and dragonfly species. The ponds are also important as bathing and drinking resource for birds and mammals,

(Photo number 26)

Ecological surveys and species monitoring

Butterflies

Two Butterfly Conservation Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) transects were surveyed by the wardens, on a weekly basis, between April and October.

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 29 sites surveyed in Norfolk.

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 and the progress of governmental policy initiatives such as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes.

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 and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, enable accurate assessment of their trends.

When taking into consideration that butterfly numbers nationally and in Norfolk decreased in 2016, it is pleasing to see that butterfly numbers on Mousehold, when taking into account annual weather fluctuations and national population changes, are increasing.

There were 474 butterflies recorded during the survey on the Western side of Gurney Road (**Appendix 2, chart 1**). Sections 1, 11, which are through woodland glades and sections 2, 5, 7, through heathland/acid grassland areas show high abundance of butterflies (**Appendix 2, chart 2**) .

Recently restored open habitat areas, such as section 7, the heathland area near Wingfield, have seen a significant increase in abundance this year (**Appendix 2, chart 3**).

The Mousehold Heath East BMS transect survey recorded a total of 528 butterflies, mainly in the recently managed and restored areas of the anthills (section 1) and heathland (sections 4, 5 and 6). (**Appendix 2, chart 4**), (**Photo 31**).

The average upward trend (illustrated on charts with a dotted line) of butterfly abundance over a number of years, (**Appendix 2, charts 1 and 3**), suggests that management work to provide open habitats such as heathland, acid grassland and woodland glades, has had a positive effect resulting in increased sunlight and nectar producing plants - is having a positive effect on the abundance and diversity of butterfly species.

Over 70 members of the community were involved in the surveys.

Moths

Four public moth survey evenings, along with ad hoc surveys have been completed. Over 100 moths were recorded during the surveys, including 7 species new to the site. Many colourful and characteristic heath species were recorded during the surveys, including an impressive Black Arches viewed on 15.08.16 and an attractive Small Dusty Wave recorded on 12.09.16

These surveys have resulted in the site species list increasing to 220 species.

Birds

A Common Bird Census (CBC) survey was carried out by the wardens with the help of volunteers. 30 species of bird were recorded as having breeding territories based on the CBC methodology. There was a general increase in territories during the 2016 nesting season, with Blackbirds, Greenfinches, Long tailed tits, Tree creepers and Great spotted woodpeckers, having a particularly good year, see **Appendix 4**. The gradual increase in the total number bird territories, suggests that conservation management work undertaken to increase habitat diversity, age and structure, along with an increasing dead wood habitat, is having a positive effect.

Two of the many highlights out on site this year, has been watching two young Kestrels fledge from an owl box which had been put up by the Mousehold Defenders and wardens some years ago. Also four Tawny Owlets were viewed (**photo 30**) freshly emerged from trees close to the ring road.

Plants

A monthly plant survey on St James' Hill was carried out by members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders and wardens (**Appendix 5**).

Two further monthly surveys in the New Pond/Hawthorn Glade (**Appendix 6**) and the Desert wildflower area, (**Appendix 7**), have been carried out by members of the

Mousehold Heath Defenders, recording a wide variety of nectar providing wild flowers.

The surveys provide important data to site managers to monitor and inform habitat conservation and management decisions. The data also increases interest, understanding and enjoyment of the site by visitors.

Bumblebees

A monthly survey was carried out by a member of the Defenders and a Mousehold warden on St James Hill. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust transect survey recorded a number of bee species, including Buff-tailed bumblebee, White-tailed bumblebee, Re-tailed bumblebee and Common carder bee. Bee numbers increased along the transect route in 2016 suggesting that habitat management work such as opening up the Cavalry Track and clearing scrub from St James Hill, to conserve grassland, is having a positive effect.

Damselflies and dragonflies

A good number of species have been recorded such as Large red, Common blue, Azure damselflies along with the Norfolk hawk, Red darter and Emperor dragonflies, with over 120 Migrant hawkers been recorded feeding over heathland vegetation in August. Norfolk hawk, which is a nationally threatened and scarce British Red Data Book species, was recorded for the third year in succession. Its nearest breeding site is Thorpe Marshes so they are presumably venturing up to the heath to feed on the abundance of insects in open habitats.

Many species are now seen near the Vinegar Pond, which following its restoration a few years ago, is now holding water throughout the year.

Reptiles and amphibians

Common Lizard were recorded in good numbers throughout spring and summer months, with many seen basking in recently restored open heathland and grassland habitats. (Photos 34, 35)

Frogs had a very productive year with many adults being seen in early March and frog spawn and tadpoles in the Vinegar and New Pond, (Photo 26)

There were ad hoc sightings of both Slow worm and Grass snake at various locations across the site.

5 Heritage

Landscape

St William's Chapel

Following interpretation panel installation last year, it was apparent that the site needed to be managed; with the intention of visitors being able to visibly see key areas of the Chapel's remaining earthworks from the information panel. This would involve removing vegetation from the boundary markers and areas of the chapel.

Three wardens worked in close partnership with David Robertson, the Historic Environment Officer for Norfolk County Council, to develop a management plan which was adopted by the Mousehold Conservators in January 2016.

The aims and objectives involved the removal of vegetation and scrub from selected areas of the site to improve interpretation and access.

The first stage of these works was carried out this year involving many local volunteer groups, supervised closely by the wardens (Photo 32)

Map 1 outlines the banks and ditches that were to be cleared and the main pathways leading to and through the site itself, to be cleared and maintained.

The dense vegetation clearance and thinning work carried out this year has resulted in a major improvement in the access and interpretation of the site (Photo 33).

A fully booked Heritage Open Day walk visited the chapel site, with a local historian discussing the story of St William in detail which the participants thoroughly enjoyed.

Interpretation

A proposal for a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to develop a project to investigate and interpret the brick making history of the heath from a third party was considered by the Conservators, but subsequently withdrawn by the applicant.

The installation of a Perspex panel and metal frame for the St. Williams Chapel interpretation board was completed in early April.

(Photo number 25)

Map 1: St William's Chapel



6 Infrastructure

Access

A number of main pathways were cleared during the year of overhanging vegetation, across the whole site including the site of St. Williams Chapel. Earth mounds identified in the inner and outer boundary of the chapel were also included to improve the interpretation of the site in conjunction with the new interpretation panel.

The four corner marker stones were also revealed after the clearance of vegetation identifying the extent of the chapel's perimeter.

(Include photo ??)

A twenty five meter section of Breedon gravel surfacing needed repairing along the disabled pathway leading to the Mottram Memorial due to erosion. The repair included the importation of fresh Breedon gravel to complete the works.

(Photo number 3)

To compliment these works, substantial clearance of encroaching vegetation was cleared from either side of the disabled access pathway at St. James Hill to protect the surface and maintain open access.

(Photo number 4)

A large build-up of mud had collected along a stretch of the Tram Track used daily by visitors to the heath, impeding access. This was addressed by the use of a mini digger carefully scraping away the top surface of mud whilst causing minimal disturbance to the underlying sandy gravel base resulting in a clean hard surface.

(Photo number, 2)

Due to a steep gradient and high usage the path around the southern edge of St James Hill started to erode making it an increasing difficult traverse to reach Spitalfields on Kett's Hill. With the help of TCV volunteers, the Mousehold wardens purchased and installed timber to stabilise and make the path safe to walk along,

(Photo number 38)

Car parks

The success of Britannia Café has seen a substantial increase in pressure on Britannia Road public car park due to increased visitor numbers. Issues caused by people parking on the verge of Britannia Road have included restricting access for the Norwich Tour Bus and local residents.

The Conservators have put considerable resources into the issues relating to Britannia Road and the car park. Not only in terms of short term repairs to the heath carpark but also in engaging in the consultation process. A decision needs to be made relating to the highway issues and also the cafe access, which is outside the control of the Conservators. Further consultation is planned by the Highway department. The Conservators will continue to play a role in that consultation process. Once a scheme has been decided upon the Conservators will then be able to determine the best form of management for the car park on the heath.

Regular maintenance and regrading works were carried out at the pitch and putt, Britannia Road and pavilion car parks, to the surface to maintain safe conditions for vehicles and pedestrians.

(Photo number 18)

At the main entrance to the Britannia Road car park uncut gravel was used to try and stabilize the condition of the surface to protect erosion problems this seems to have had a positive effect.

(Photo number 19)

Signage

As requested by the Conservators, the blue Public Car Parking sign mounted on the lamp post adjacent to the public car park in front of the pavilion was replaced with a more informative sign including symbols indicating public and disabled toilet facilities and the inclusion of a woodland walk.

(Photo number 16)

Security

A Section of chain link fencing was repaired along with a new pedestrian gate installed at the Fountain Ground sports pitch on Gurney Road.

(Photo number 24)

A number of bollards and benches were repaired and replaced throughout the year. In an effort work more effectively and efficiently, these works were carried out by Mousehold wardens with the help of a Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE) student, who was keen to develop his work experience and practical skills. This method reduced budget spends and also gave the student a sense of achievement and vital skills for future employment, (Photo 37).

Installation/access permissions

An application was submitted by National Grid to highlight a gas supply pipe line which runs along the highway of Britannia Road and the public car park.

National Grid were given permission to install marker posts to highlight the gas main to ensure contractors working on the site are aware of the location.

(Photo number 17)

7 Resources

Staff

Mousehold Heath is looked after on a day to day to day basis by two wardens who cover the site seven days a week, except when annual leave, illness and training prevent this. The high level of staff presence on site helps visitors feel safe, and enables a high level of monitoring of the heath which in turn enables a swift response to site issues and deters asb; it also provides a consistent point of contact for new and regular visitors to the heath, to report problems to, or to get information from which helps them enjoy their visit.

The wardens have and will continue to support a range of volunteers in delivering works and events on the site to meet the objectives defined in the management plan.

The wardens' in depth knowledge and understanding of the heath, its users and also site issues is critical in supporting the Conservators in their decision making.

Budget

The Conservators took into consideration the financial challenges facing local authorities and did not increase their precept to the council for operational items within their control. There was some unavoidable growth relating to salaries, premises cost and re-charges.

The Conservators also carried out an exercise to look into the works delivered on the site relating to the grounds maintenance, cleaning and trees contracts to ensure they were obtaining value for money.

Looking forward the financial pressures will continue with no realistic opportunity for major growth in the precept. The management plan review being undertaken in 2017/18 will provide an opportunity to identify any required changes in the management plan, such as a review of football provision which is currently subsidised by the Conservators, continuing and developing volunteer involvement to enable more to be delivered with no increase in budget and also the potential to use the capital receipt held to reduce pressure on the revenue budget.

Facilities

Mousehold heath is very important as a haven for wildlife and recreation contained within an urban area. Management of a site containing nationally declining habitats, a wide range of biodiversity, local historical importance and a range of different users with different needs is complex and challenging.

Public access points, infrastructure and on site facilities also require continued maintenance and upkeep which has an impact on the budget and this work will need to continue. The cost of equipment and works will need to be considered alongside the life expectancy of the installation. All projects will need to consider the need to design out future costs as part of their development.

Whilst major change to the management plan is neither needed nor affordable, the management plan indicates the need to improve 'access hubs' as and when required. A review of the access points and works required will be informed by the aims and objectives of the new management plan.

8 Contacts and further information (Whatever the corporate protocol is for contact is etc??)

For further information:

Nigel Hales, Mousehold Warden 01603 ??????

William Stewart, Mousehold Warden 01603 ??????

Email:???

Email:???

www.???./???/???

Crime reporting in progress 999, non-urgent 101

[INSIDE BACK COVER]

Image of heath in recent times more covered with trees