

Committee Name: Mousehold Heath Conservators

Committee Date: 30/09/2022

Report Title: Mousehold Heath management update 1 June to 5 September 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

1. An itinerant meeting was arranged for committee members to discuss the management of the site regarding the implementation of the management plan and the implementation of the biodiversity strategy for the improvement of nature habitats promoted by NCC on 2 September 2022.

ML00/03 CONCESSION

2. The concession location at Britannia Road has now had the improvement works completed to secure the area for trading.
3. The concession holder for Britannia Road has resigned his position from 15 August 2022, a new application is being processed.

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

AI30/02 TREE SAFETY INSPECTION

4. One windblown tree and three broken branches overhanging public access pathways were made safe, along the Long Valley, path to pitch

and putt course and a pathway adjacent to the Bandstand on the Fountain Ground, by the Mousehold wardens.

ML60/01 NORFOLK CONSTABULARY

5. The Mousehold wardens liaised with police officers regarding anti-social behaviour.
6. On Friday 5 August 2022 travellers gained access onto the Wingfield Open Space. They were removed by Sunday afternoon. The access point that was breached was secure at the time, it is thought a bollard was uprooted to gain access onto the area, this is now secured into place with a more robust replacement.

MP00/01 SITE PRESENCE

7. Increased patrols were undertaken by the Mousehold wardens, due to the exceptionally dry conditions and risk of fires.

ML60/02 NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

8. Three fires have been reported and attended to by the Fire Brigade the first one in July adjacent to Hill Farm Track, one large fire at St. James Hill in the middle of August. Mousehold wardens have undertaken extra fire patrols and spotted a number of 'hot spots' (where heat trapped underground after a fire resurfaces - initialling in the form of smoke – during subsequent hot, dry weather. The Fire Brigade were called three times to dampen down hot spots and a Sprinkler unit was used to dampen down the area on the Sunday, two days after the initial fire.
9. A smaller fire was also attended to in the grassland area adjacent to Britannia Road public car park at the beginning of September.
10. The Mousehold wardens have liaised with Norfolk Fire Service to ensure that the fire crews have keys for access gates and bollards, allowing quick access to the site.

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

ME04/01 LITTER PICKING

11. 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.
12. Assist Trust volunteers have carried out a number of litter picks in the Gilman Road area.

ME04/02 LITTER BINS

13. A number of plastic litter bins have been burnt out across the site. The Wardens have been liaising with a Parks and Open Spaces Officers to replace them with cast iron metal bins to mitigate any future damage. Two have already been installed.

14. As part of a refurbishment programme to address burnt out plastic litter bins two cast iron bins have been installed as a more robust alternative, this will be an ongoing project with the aim to eventually replace all plastic litter bins across the site.

15. All cast iron bins used are recycled from the City Centre.

ME04/03 FLY TIPPING

16. A number of fly tipping 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

17. Two separate incidents of graffiti were removed from the band stand on

ME41/01 MAIN PATHS

18. Vegetation encroaching onto fourteen paths, including paths across Gilman Road Open Spaces and up to the Pavilion, have been cut back to allow easy access to the site, by the Mousehold wardens and volunteers.

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

MH60/01 VINEGAR POND

19. Due to the extreme hot and dry weather conditions the Vinegar pond water level has been very low, there has been evidence of algal blooms and bacteria build ups 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.

A private contractor was procured to remove the fish (as many as possible) by electrofishing, this method introduces an electrical current through the water stunning the fish so as they can be caught in a net and transferred into large water tanks on a trailer pumped with oxygen, they were then taken off site and released into an isolated ornamental pond, a large amount of fish were removed, mainly goldfish unofficially introduced some years ago, there were no fatalities.

One frog and several common newts were captured at the time and released back into the pond as they are more adept at surviving these conditions.

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.

RA12/01 COMMON BIRD CENSUS

20. Weekly B.T.O. Common Bird Census breeding bird surveys have been undertaken by the Mousehold wardens with support from volunteers.

RA42/01 BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SURVEY

21. 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

22. Community Moth Survey evenings took place in July and August. Two new species for the site have been identified, bringing the site list up to 270 species.

RA82/01 ST JAMES' HILL BUMBLEBEE SURVEY

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

RA92/01 NATIONAL BAT MONITORING PROGRAMME

24. Two, Bat Conservation Trust, National Bat Monitoring Programme Transect Field Surveys were undertaken in July, by a Mousehold warden and volunteers.

RF22/01 MUSTARD POND GLADE FLOWER SURVEY

25. 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

26. 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

27. A total of 1167 community volunteer hours have been undertaken on the site between 1 June – 05 September by the following groups;

- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- Norwich High School for Girls
- Mousehold Heath Musketeers'
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

- Goodgym Norwich
- Natwest Corporate Group
- Assist Trust
- Many individual volunteers from the community

28. 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.

RC30/01 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

29. Local historians, involved with the research and restoration of the WW2 RAF/USAF Air Base at Newman Road, Rackheath, have been researching war activity on the heath with a Mousehold warden.

MI60/01 EVENTS

30. One ROOTS environmental education and play activity session, for young people, organised through Norwich City Council Events Team, has taken place on the heath.

31. One Enchanted Woods Forest School environmental activity group have taken place increasing knowledge, interest and enjoyment of nature for young people.

32. On Thursday 21st July and Thursday 25th August, two community moth survey evenings took place. Two new species for the site were identified bringing the site list up to 270 species.

33. A Community Wildlife Workshop, focusing on an introduction to Butterflies and other biodiversity, was led by a local expert and a Mousehold warden on Friday 12th August. Southern Emerald dragonflies were spotted next to the Mustard Pond. This was a new record on the heath for this scarce, attractive damselfly.

MI60/02 GUIDED WALKS PROGRAMME

34. The 'Mousehold Guided Walks and Surveys Programme 2022', has been implemented by the wardens, inviting members of the community to learn more about, and enjoy, the sites biodiversity and natural features. A Site Management and Biodiversity Walk, along with Wildlife Workshops and moth surveys took place in July. All the walks and wildlife surveys are advertised on local community neighbourhood boards and Norwich City Council website

Consultation

35. 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.

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

Legal

None

Statutory Considerations

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

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Financial	Failure to adequately plan and monitor activities could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
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

37. To provide an update to the Mousehold Heath Conservators on the activities on the Heath.

Background papers: None

Appendices: None

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