

Report to	Mousehold Heath Conservators 15 June 2018	Item
Report of	Head of citywide services	8
Subject	Mousehold Heath quarterly management update 6 March to 7 June 2018	

Purpose

To provide a quarterly update for the period 6 March to 7 June 2018, reporting activities on and relating to Mousehold Heath which contribute to the delivery of the management plan objectives.

Recommendation

To note the content of the report.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority a safe, clean and low carbon city.

Financial implications

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

Ward/s: Crome

Cabinet member: Councillor Packer – Health and wellbeing

Contact officer

Simon Meek, parks and open spaces manager	01603 212403
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Background documents

None

Report

Background

1. The report details the work, activities and issues arising on, and relating to, Mousehold Heath.

Infrastructure management

2. A vandalised and rotting wooden bench has been repaired by the Mousehold Heath wardens.

Tree safety

3. Following a stormy winter, the six monthly tree safety inspection of all well used paths, tracks and car parks, carried out by the Mousehold wardens, located 30 dead, dying or dangerous trees and/or branches. A further 18 windblown trees and branches adjacent to or blocking paths, have been cut down and removed by the Mousehold wardens, with the help of volunteers. There are still low risk trees which require further remedial work. These works will be prioritised and completed so as not to disturb hibernating insects and nesting birds.

Management for nature

4. A range of habitat and site management tasks have been carried out by the Mousehold wardens, volunteers and contractors, to help deliver the management plan objectives relating to habitats on the and the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement priorities relating to heathland. These have included scrub clearing, cutting invasive bracken and gorse, humus stripping and brushcutting/raking grassland areas.

Woodland management:

5. Work to maintain paths and clear windblown branches, through a section of woodland adjacent to Gilman Road and the Long Valley has continued. This work has been carried out to reduce anti-social behaviour and 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.
6. Encroaching bracken and scrub has been cut back in other woodland glades to allow a diversity of plants to grow and flower.

Heathland and Grassland management

7. As this period fell in the bird nesting season, there has been a limited amount of habitat work undertaken, however a number of ecological surveys have taken place.

8. Seedlings and saplings in heathland and grassland areas have been pulled out using the new tree poppers tools.
9. There has been a large gorse fire adjacent to the Vinegar Pond. Large areas of old and leggy burnt gorse has been cut back, to aid natural regeneration and reduce the visual impact of the burnt material.
10. The labour intensive work facilitates community access to many areas of the heath. It also produces large swathes of land covered in a carpet of blues and purples when the heather flowers in August and September. The flowering heather is an important source of nectar for the large number of bees, butterflies and other insects.
11. The Mousehold Heath Defenders have undertaken wild flower surveys on Mustard Pond Glade, the wildflower meadow and St James Hill. A member of the Defenders has been working with a Mousehold warden to survey Bumblebees on St James Hill.
12. Bird and butterfly surveys have also been undertaken by the Mousehold wardens assisted by volunteers

Path maintenance.

13. Three footpaths which have been encroached upon by vegetation, such as those behind the Vinegar Pond, have been cut back by the Mousehold wardens, with the help of individual volunteers and volunteer groups, to maintain access to the site.
14. Fifteen paths have been cut on Gilman Road Open Space and the wildflower meadow by the Mousehold wardens with the help of a volunteers.

Litter management

15. A number of areas formerly used for camping have been cleared and rubbish removed by the wardens with assistance from the NorwichNorse Environmental litter picker, as part of his daily work.
16. A member of the Mousehold Defenders has continued to carry out weekly litter picks.

Misuse and antisocial behaviour

17. Patrols by the Mousehold Wardens have been stepped up in the cold conditions, to locate homeless people so that accommodation can be found for them. Two separate campers have been found on the heath. The wardens verbally advised them about camping on the heath being against the bylaws and they were advised to leave. If they claimed to be homeless, the Norwich City Council single homeless and rough sleeper coordinator was contacted so that she could make contact with the persons.
18. The Mousehold Heath wardens have been working with Norfolk Police and Area Management Officers, to report and remove a burnt-out van, damaged bollards and paint spillage in Britannia Road car park, St James Hill.

Volunteers

19. A total of 665 volunteer work hours have been undertaken on site in the last quarter by the following groups:

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- The Assist Trust.
- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- Mousehold Heath Mousketeers
- City College Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme group
- George White School students
- Norwich High School for Girls
- DEVELOP
- Talent Match Employment Group
- Many volunteers from the community

20. Ongoing support provided by the volunteer groups 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.

Events

21. There has been a range of events to increase understanding, involvement and enjoyment of the site have been organised or hosted on the heath in the last quarter:

- Four tasks involving one hundred and one George White School students have been helping the wardens to cut back encroaching woodland glade vegetation behind the Pavilion.
- ROOTS environmental education activities - reconnect with Nature – took place on the second Sunday in the month which involved young people's stay and play wildlife activities. For children aged 3-11 years organised by Norwich City Council Events and overseen by the wardens.
- Two moth survey evenings have recorded 9 new moth species for the site.
- A guided history and wildlife walk was organised for a Norfolk Wellbeing Group led by a Mousehold warden.
- To celebrate International Dawn Chorus Day, a community survey walk was undertaken on 08.05.18 at 4.15am.