



Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:30 to 15:45

13 September 2024

Present: Councillors Kidman (Chair), Kendrick (Vice-Chair), Caine, Carrington, Champion, Fox, Willem Buttinger (The Norwich Society) and Marion Maxwell (Mousehold Heath Defenders)

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Matt Davies, Fringe Project Manager
Will Stewart, Mousehold Heath Warden

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public Questions and Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2024.

4. Mousehold Heath Itinerant Review

The Chair introduced the report.

The Fringe Project Manager highlighted how the Itinerant had enabled the Conservators to see the hard work of the Wardens. The Conservators had been able to see the progress of the refurbishment of the toilets on Gurney Road, the contractor Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) were undertaking the works. The refurbishment of the toilets was due to be completed by October 2024. During the itinerant the possibility of a crossing at Fountain car park and the Pavilion car park had been discussed.

A member commented that it had been positive to be able to see the work. He discussed whether signage across the Heath could be explored as it could be confusing to members of the public that were not familiar with the Heath. He also highlighted that not all paths were named on the maps which could make it difficult to navigate.

The Mousehold Heath Warden confirmed that there were two routes that walkers could use, one which looped the Vinegar Pond. Both routes were waymarked at regular intervals of around 50 metres. Previously posts had been vandalised which the Wardens have tried to combat. The Wardens also provided copies of the Earth Heritage Trails to volunteers and corporate groups visiting the Heath. A balance was required to ensure that this did not impede on the natural environment. A member commented that they agreed with the need to balance this and that the forthcoming Biodiversity Trail would provide further details and that the way markers should have more information on the biodiversity of the Heath.

The Conservators discussed the way markers and agreed that these should be considered, including information on the former site of St Williams Chapel and that the recent examples from Ketts Heights could be considered.

During the itinerary the Conservators had also considered the band stand and the repainting of it. The Wardens had spoken with Property Services for quotes for the work. They had also been engaged with the events team to understand the budget required for bands and any events that were planned.

In response to a question the Fringe Project Manager confirmed that if there was an incident that the response time by the Police was around 10 to 15 minutes.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to note the update.

5. Mousehold Heath Conservators budget monitoring to 31 July 2024

The Chair introduced the report. The budget monitoring report highlighted the forecast outturn for the financial year 2024-2025.

RESOLVED to note the budget monitoring and reserves positions.

6. Mousehold Heath Management Update – 17 May to 13 August 2024

The Mousehold Heath Warden presented the report. He highlighted that summer was always a busy period on the Heath due to the number of surveys undertaken and guided walks. Bracken management had been key as this was invasive within the area and grew over paths and could damage the native heather.

A significant number of volunteer hours had been completed in the period of the report, which was 1101 community volunteer hours. A number of projects had been supported by the Mousehold Heath Defenders. The Wardens had also been working closely with the Assist Trust who had taken over management of an area of the Heath. The work placement student from Easton College was starting his final year, he had provided significant help the Wardens on a number of tasks. Another volunteer session had been from GoodGym Norwich who would complete a community project and then run back to the city. A group of around 70 students from Norwich High School for Girls had completed several projects. A total of seven volunteers had now been trained on the use of scythes.

Due to the rain fall over the spring a significant amount of work had been required to ensure that paths were cleared to enable visitors to use the paths. More work would be done in the winter to cut back gorse. A final guided walk was planned for the winter, which was the winter bird walk. Mousehold Heath would again be taking part in

the National Heritage Open Days and two works had been organised, both of these had been fully booked. The site of the former St Williams Chapel had been cleared of bracken, as this was a Scheduled Ancient Monument the management of the site was agreed with English Heritage.

The Chair thanked the Wardens and the volunteers for their work on Mousehold Heath.

In response to a question from a member the Warden confirmed that the number of fly-tipping instances was decreasing. Incidents tended to be small scale and commonly in laybys and car parks. It was an ongoing issue that was being monitored.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

7. Report from the Mousehold Heath Management Subgroup

The Fringe Project Manager presented the report. The concession policy would be brought to a future meeting.

The sub-group had discussed the condition survey of the Pavilion, a contractor would be required to understand the condition of the Pavilion which would enable the planning of any works and repairs to the Pavilion over a five year period. Once the report had been received from the contractor then quotes for the works could be considered.

A member asked for an update to the installation of a defibrillator. The Fringe Project Manager said that he would confirm this and report back to the Conservators.

Discussions were ongoing with Zak's about the former ladies' toilets. The building had decayed significantly and would require a significant amount of investment to bring these to a level that they could be reopened. The Conservators were asked to consider the options for the building. The sub-group had made recommendations as outlined at paragraph 13 of the report.

In response to a request for clarification the Fringe Project Manager confirmed that the land would continue to be owned by the Conservators and the changes would be around the fencing of the land if Zak's placed a concession. The Conservators were assured that the concession on St James Hill would continue to be supported and Zak's were focussed on the Pavilion area and were not seeking to move elsewhere. The Conservators agreed that an options analysis should be undertaken as in the report.

The Fringe Project Manager confirmed that the work to remove the fish from the Vinegar Pond would be starting on Monday 16 September 2024.

The Conservators discussed the feasibility study for a pedestrian crossing on Gurney Road. Due to the costs associated with this it was agreed that the Fringe Project Manager should contact the County Councillors for the divisions bordering the Heath to understand whether they would be willing to use their allowance for transport projects in their areas. If this was not possible this would need to be considered in the following financial year due to the costs of a feasibility study. Members were assured that a feasibility study would consider the seasonality of a crossing.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the contents of the report and
- 2) agree the following recommendations made by the management subgroup
 - a. Ask Property Services to negotiate on behalf of the Conservators regarding the rental income from Zaks
 - b. Ask Property Services to conduct a cost analysis of the options
 - c. Identify sources of funding to pay for the demolition of the building by the Conservators/Norwich City Council
 - d. Explore the planning consent and associated conditions in more detail
 - e. Undertake a feasibility study regarding the installation of a pedestrian and cycle crossing on Gurney Road
 - f. Ask officers to reach out to the relevant county councillors to request the use of the allowance available for transport issues in their division to pay for the feasibility study.

CHAIR



Mousehold Heath Conservators

14:30 to 15:45

17 January 2025

Present: Kendrick (Vice-Chair), Carrington, Champion and Lubbock. Marion Maxwell (Mousehold Heath Defenders) and Willem Buttinger (Norwich Society).

Apologies: Councillors Fox and Kidman

In Attendance: Matthew Davies – Fringe Project Officer
Neil Wright – Service Accountant
Nigel Hales – Mousehold Heath Warden

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public Questions and Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to defer consideration of the minutes from 13 September 2024 to the next meeting of the Mousehold Heath Conservators.

4. Way Marker Signage Discussion

The Mousehold Warden gave a verbal update on the provision of the signage at the Vinegar Pond. A red marker had been placed at the Vinegar Pond and this would be seen from the slope approaching the pond. This post had been made out of hardwood, specifically oak from trees that had been felled by the wind. A finger post had been considered but due to the area being susceptible to vandalism a hardwood post had been deemed a more suitable choice.

Feedback from members of the public had highlighted that while they preferred the “wildness” of Mousehold Heath it was easy to get lost. The Mousehold Heath Warden clarified that due to the layout of the Heath if a person continued in one direction they would find a pathway or road.

There were two routes on the Heath: the red route and the blue route. The red route was the shorter route which looped around the Vinegar Pond before returning to the Pavilion.

In response to a question from a member the Mousehold Heath Warden explained that people using the routes started from the same point following the red route, if they wished to extend their work this could be done by picking up the blue route at the Vinegar Pond.

RESOLVED to note the update.

5. Mousehold Heath Conservators Budget Monitoring to 30 November 2024

Members noted an underspend of £4261. This was due to budget savings on staff costs and additional income from Football. This underspend would be moved into the reserves.

A member queried the reduction in rental income, and it was explained that this was because tenants were not billed until the end of the financial year.

The Conservators asked what the capital reserve would be used for. Officers explained that the capital reserve had been from the income from the sale of the Ranger's House and the interest accrued on the balance. The current amount in the capital reserve was £115,613 some of the reserve would be drawn down to fund the refurbishment of the toilets.

RESOLVED to note the work, activities and issues arising on, and relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives.

6. Mousehold Heath Conservators Budget and Precept 2025-26

The service accountant presented the report outlining the Budget and precept for 2025/26.

Members noted that, to fund the expenditure for 2025/26, the precept was proposed to rise by £6,579 to £284,190.

In response to a request for clarification the officers explained that the "specific" Government Grant was in relation to the Rural Payments Agency for managing the heathland for conservation

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the forecast balances position
- 2) Note the risk management arrangements and prudent minimum reserve levels
- 3) Note and approve the budget proposals
- 4) To place a precept on Norwich City Council for the relevant amount for the financial year 2025/26

7. Mousehold Heath Management update – 13 August 2024 to 16 December 2024

The Household Heath Warden presented a report giving details of the progress of the work plan between August and December 2024.

The warden was pleased to report they had received a Green Flag award following a site visit from the judges.

The Conservators noted the work of the volunteers who had undertaken 997 volunteer hours. This was carried out by the various volunteer groups and also the Easton College work placement student.

The second 6 monthly tree inspection had taken place there was an unprecedented amount of tree work undertaken, partly due to the storms in November and December 2024. A large amount of the trees that were dead were birch trees and the wardens and volunteers had picked up 64 dead trees. They also noted the number of trees that would need to be inspected in the next six monthly review.

The clearing of vegetation around the war memorial was on track to be completed before birds started nesting. Three benches had been vandalised; two had been replaced and the third was due to be replaced shortly. Savings had been made by the wardens installing them themselves.

The main path had been narrowed by the overgrowth of the gorse and broom and this was also on track to be completed before the nesting season. Volunteers were also clearing gorse from the heather habitats and vegetation had been cleared from around the pavilion to reduce the risk of fire.

There had been a high level of leaf fall, and the contractors had been asked to clear the buildup of leaves. There would be no additional costs as this was included in the contract. Volunteers had also removed overgrown vegetation from the area surrounding St William's Chapel.

The programmed events were proving very popular and the two forthcoming, Heritage walks were fully booked.

The Conservators congratulated the Wardens on their hard work and attracting so many volunteers.

One member then asked about the student from Easton College and whether there was a formal arrangement in place. The warden confirmed that the position was by invite. The current placement was coming to an end so wardens would approach the college to secure another placement.

Members then asked about the HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) funding agreement and were informed that this had been extended to 2028. The Wardens were awaiting confirmation from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) of the replacement funding stream.

The Conservators sought clarification on the two benches that they understood had been stolen. The Warden clarified that none of the benches were stolen they had been vandalised.

When considering the list of projects, the Conservators were concerned that the butterfly species list was considered a “should”. In response the Wardens confirmed that they were able to undertake both actions that were considered “musts” and “should” within the management plan.

With regards to the Volunteers, section G outlined several objectives relating to the volunteers, most of which were “musts”. However, they also noted that regarding the Volunteer strategy in section A this was only a should and the committee felt this should also be a “must”.

A member asked whether the reason that some trees were brown at the top and green at the bottom was due to climate change. The Warden explained that during dry spells a tree would reduce its size in order to survive. Any sections that were dead would only be removed if it was over a path and therefore created a hazard for visitors to the Heath.

The Vice-chair then thanked the Mousehold Heath defenders and all the volunteers. He was pleased to note the increase in the number of volunteers.

RESOLVED to

- 1. note the contents of the report.**
- 2. to change the Volunteer strategy in section A to a “must”.**

8. QR code provision for the Mottram Memorial

Members were presented with a report regarding placing a QR code at the Mottram Memorial. The memorial had recently been repaired and members had requested that a QR code was attached to the plinth. This would link to information for visitors relating to the history of Ralph Hale Mottram.

Members agreed the wording, highlighting one typo. The wording would also contain a link to the Norwich City Council Earth Heritage Trail which provided a wider interpretation of the Heath.

It was agreed that option 1, within the report, was best placement for the QR Code, front of the memorial, top right.

RESOLVED to agree the proposed wording and siting of the QR code on the Mottram Memorial, subject to the correction of any typographical errors

9. Report from the Mousehold Heath Conservators management sub-group

Wardens presented a report providing an update on items discussed at the meeting subgroup meeting held on 15 November 2024.

The issues relating to the refurbished toilets had all been resolved. A new directional sign to the toilets would be installed in the next financial year.

Wardens were working with property services, on behalf of the Conservators, to negotiate terms with Zaks for the lease and rent of the former ladies' toilets.

The Vinegar Pond had been drained, and all the fish had been relocated to Eaton Park Ornamental Pond. Since the completion of the work wardens had inspected the pond and there had been no signs of any remaining fish.

In relation to the Gurney Road crossing, wardens had sent a funding request, on behalf of the Conservators, to Norfolk County Council Division councillors whose divisions bordered the Heath, asking if they would match fund the cost of undertaking a feasibility study for the Gurney Road pedestrian and cycle crossing.

One councillor had replied stating they had already committed funding elsewhere. A member of the committee asked if the project would be funded from the £115,000 reserves. This was a possibility but a report to the subgroup would be needed. The cost of the survey would be approximately £7000.

Officers had been considering the refurbishment of the fountains Band Stand, they were waiting for a quote for the work which would include scraping off, sanding down and repainting the band stand.

The defibrillator at Zaks was now operational.

RESOLVED to note the update from the Mousehold Heath Management sub-group.

11. Any other business

Councillor Champion highlighted that he had been in discussions for a fair to take place on Mousehold Heath after a theatre production by The Garage. To ensure that this did not impact on resources he would investigate what would be required. The final production would take place in the second week of July so the fair could take place between 10 and 13 July. It was agreed that the matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the management sub-group for consideration before an update was provided to a future meeting of the Mousehold Heath Conservators.

Chair

