



NORWICH City Council

Committee Name: Mousehold Heath Conservators

Committee Date: 19/01/2024

Report Title: Mousehold Heath Management Update – 29 August 2023 to 4 January 2024

Portfolio: Councillor Giles, Cabinet member for communities and social inclusion

Report from: Head of Environment Services

Wards: Catton Grove and Crome

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To provide an 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. The itinerant meeting was held on Friday 1 September. A Mousehold warden and Conservators discussed the management of the site regarding aims and objectives set out in the Mousehold Heath Management Plan and Higher Level Stewardship Agreement (HLS). Potential opportunities to improve the site for visitors and wildlife were discussed at points around the heath, including the upgrading of the toilet block adjacent to the Pavilion. The outcomes of the meeting will be revisited and discussed at the 2024 itinerant meeting later in the year.

AI00/01 GREEN FLAG AWARD

2. An application for a Green Flag award was completed for 2024-25, Keep Britain Tidy will confirm the result in the middle part of the new year.

MC81/03 CAVALRY TRACK

3. The historic Cavalry Track, initially opened-up and restored by the Mousehold Defenders sixteen years ago, has been maintained by Mousehold volunteers working with a Mousehold warden.

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

AI30/02 TREE SAFETY INSPECTION

4. The second, six monthly tree safety inspection was undertaken by the Mousehold wardens in early October, identifying twenty-five dead, dying, dangerous trees and branches. Many of these were damaged by high winds and adverse weather conditions, especially the extremely dry conditions of summer 2022. Most of the works identified have been carried out by a Mousehold warden and Easton College work placement student.
5. Twelve additional 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.
6. A site meeting between a Norwich City Council Arboricultural Officer and Mousehold warden took place in December to assess several trees across the site.

ML60/01 NORFOLK CONSTABULARLY

7. The Mousehold Wardens continue to liaise with police officers to reduce anti-social behaviour.

MP00/01 SITE PRESENCE

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

RH35/01 ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES CRIME

10. Mousehold wardens liaised with the police and citywide services officers to arrange for the removal of an abandoned caravan parked on the verge of Mousehold Avenue. The caravan has now been removed from site by the owner

A trailer chained to a lamp post at the slip road linking Britannia Road and Gurney Road has also been removed from site.

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

ME02 01 BENCHES/SEATS/PICNIC BENCHES

11. Two new benches, kindly paid for by the Mousehold Heath Defenders, have been installed on the Old Tram Track and near Hairstreak Hollow, to replace old, damaged benches, by a member of the Mousehold Defenders working with a Mousehold warden.

ME04/01 LITTER PICKING

12. Volunteer groups and Mousehold wardens have been carrying out litter picking tasks across the site.

ME04/03 FLY TIPPING

13. Fly tipped household items were removed by our permanent litter picker employed by NCSL from the Pitch and Putt car park. There was no evidence to pursue a conviction.

ME12/01 REMOVE GRAFFITI

14. Graffiti was removed from the Fountain Ground changing rooms and several lamp posts along Gurney Road by NCSL.

ME41/01 MAIN PATHS

15. Seventeen paths across the site have been maintained by brush cutting, raking and removing vegetation to allow easy access to the heath. This work has been undertaken by the Mousehold warden and volunteers.
16. Annual tree work has been carried out to allow emergency vehicles and NCSL leaf sweepers to travel along Gilman Road cycle path.
17. Overhanging branches were cut back by a Mousehold warden and work placement student using his new NPTC polesaw qualification skills and knowledge. The knowledge gained on the NPTC polesaw course and assessment will benefit the student during further power tool assessments at Easton College and when looking for employment in the environmental management sector.

ME01/01 GATES, FENCING AND BARRIERS

18. A stolen vehicle was driven through the wooden access gate at Beech Drive. A new metal gate with metal supporting posts has been installed to mitigate any future site security compromises.

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

MH04/01 GLADE MANAGEMENT, MAINTAIN

19. The Mustard Pond Woodland Glade has been given an end of season conservation cut and arisings removing to increase flower diversity and abundance in the Spring.

MH/01 MAINTAIN ACID GRASSLAND

20. The Anthills meadow, adjacent to Gurney Road, has been given an Autumn conservation hay cut, using scythes and battery brush cutters, by volunteers and Mousehold warden.
21. Gilman Road and the Desert biodiversity meadows were cut as part of a 'Using a Scythe' course, which was undertaken by seven volunteers, in September. The course was a success with all the volunteers gaining certification and now able to safely complete meadow and bracken

cutting under the supervision of a Mousehold warden. These are transferable skills which could be used on other green spaces across the city and county. The use of scythes is a more sensitive way to cut important habitats, with many benefits to local biodiversity and volunteer health and well-being.

MH39/01 BRACKEN REMOVAL

22. Large areas of bracken have been pulled, raked and removed from heathland, grassland and woodland glade habitats by volunteers and warden. Habitat piles, which could be used for nesting and as hibernacula (hibernation shelter), have been created in adjacent woodland for birds, reptiles, mammals and invertebrates. This Summer and Autumn task is also crucial to conserving nectar rich heather species, grasses and other wildflowers, and complying with the Mousehold Heath HLS Agreement.

MH39/03 COMMON GORSE REMOVAL

23. Invasive and leggy common gorse has been cut and cleared from heathland / grassland areas to conserve biodiversity, through creating diversity in age / height structure, combined with a mosaic of heather, grasses, western gorse and other dwarf shrub species. This gorse management also reduces fire risk across the site.

MH60/01 VINEGAR POND

24. Litter and large branches have been removed from the Vinegar and Mustard ponds by the Mousehold wardens.

RA42/01 BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SURVEY

25. Two, weekly Butterfly Conservation, Butterfly Monitoring Scheme transect surveys have been carried out by a Mousehold warden, joined by volunteers. These surveys also include the recording of day-flying moths and dragonflies.

RA82/01 ST JAMES' HILL BUMBLEBEE SURVEY

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

RF22/01 MUSTARD POND GLADE FLOWER SURVEY

27. 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

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

Objective F: To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.

ML40/02 NCC AREA MANAGEMENT TEAM

29. Due to high levels of leaf fall the contracts team was approached to resolve the buildup of leaf litter along Gilman Road, Valley drive and Gurney Road causing a public health and safety concerns, these are all designated cycle routes and pathways. After much negotiation, NCSL agreed to include these areas into the leaf cleaning schedule including health and safety inspections undertake on a regular basis.

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

AT50/01 VOLUNTEERS GENERAL

30. A total of 1125 community volunteer hours have been undertaken on the site between 29 August and 4 January by the following groups;

- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- Assist Trust
- Easton College Work Placement student
- GoodGym Norwich
- Norwich High School for Girls
- Mousehold Heath Monday and Tuesday volunteer groups.
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- WSP Civil Engineers corporate group.
- Many individual volunteers from the community

31. 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.

ME06/02 GATE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

32. A new no parking sign (access needed at all times) was installed onto the new vehicle access gate at Beech drive.
33. Two (Disabled Parking Only) signs were installed at Britannia Road public car park, updating old ones.

MI60/01 EVENTS

34. The Mousehold Heath Guided Walks programme and poster was produced with support from the Communications Team. The Mousehold wardens have implemented the programme increasing involvement, understanding and enjoyment of the site. The last event of the programme was a Fungi Foray held on Tuesday 10 October. Twenty-one people were in attendance. A wide variety of fungi species recorded, including a number of new species to the site.
35. The final one (of the three) Community Wildlife Workshops this year took place on Tuesday 5 December. The title was an Introduction to Winter Birds with thirteen members of the community in attendance. Redwings, Tree Creepers, Goldcrests, Sparrowhawks were viewed during the walk and a Peregrin Falcon was spotted near the Cathedral from St James Hill.
36. A Forest School event focused on environmental play and education was held on Tuesday 24 October organised through the Norwich C.C. Events Team.
37. 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. These walks took place on Friday 8 and Sunday 10 September.
38. Tri-Anglia organised another community cross country run this year taking place on Wednesday 15 of November, 150 competitors took part in a three-lap route through the Heath. The start and finish line controlled from Gilman Road Open Space.

Consultation

39. None required

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.

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

Legal

41. 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 have carried out a number of interventions to the last 2 years. 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 program
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 program
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 program

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

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

Background papers: None

Appendices: None

Contact officer: Norwich Fringe Project Officer

Name: Matthew Davies

Telephone number: 01603 989311

Email address: MatthewDavies1@norwich.gov.uk