

Report to	Mousehold Heath Conservators 21 September 2018	Item
Report of	Head of citywide services	7
Subject	Mousehold Heath quarterly management update 7 June to 10 September 2018.	

Purpose

To provide a quarterly update for the period 7 June to 10 September 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
Will Stewart, Mousehold Heath warden	01603 213310
Nigel Hales, Mousehold Heath warden	01603 213310

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 made safe and another removed by the Mousehold Heath wardens.
3. Completion of the replacement of a number of sections of wooden hand rails, along with two hardwood posts and boarding on the fire exit stairs, has been undertaken on the Pavilion.
4. Repairs to a loose hand rail at the Fountain Ground Changing Rooms were undertaken to ensure public health and safety.
5. Three bollards have been re-installed in Britannia Road car park by wardens.
6. Deep holes around benches which could have potentially been trip hazards have been filled in by the wardens.
7. A wasp nest was removed and a leaking tap repaired in the Pavilion toilets.

Tree safety

8. A tree safety inspection of all roads and car parks, carried out by a Norwich City Council Arboricultural officer, located 21 tree safety works that need to be undertaken. The wardens, with the help of volunteers, carried out the works during the summer.
9. A further 6 dead, dying, windblown or dangerous trees and/or branches, adjacent to, or blocking paths, have been cut down and removed by the Mousehold wardens, with the help of volunteer.

Management for nature

10. 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 cutting/pulling invasive bracken and burnt gorse and brushcutting/raking grassland areas.

Woodland management:

11. 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.

12. 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

13. This period is one of the busiest times of the year with habitat work undertaken to remove encroaching bracken. Also, a number of ecological surveys have taken place.
14. Seedlings and saplings in heathland and grassland areas have been pulled out using the new tree popper tools.
15. The process of clearing burnt vegetation, such as a large gorse area adjacent to the Vinegar Pond, has started. 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.
16. The Mousehold Heath Defenders have undertaken wild flower surveys on the 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.
17. Bird, bat and butterfly surveys have also been undertaken by the Mousehold wardens assisted by volunteers

Path maintenance.

18. Three footpaths which have been encroached upon by vegetation, such as those leading to Gertrude Road and around St James Hill, have been cut back by the Mousehold wardens, with the help of individual volunteers and volunteer groups, to maintain access to the site.
19. 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

20. 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.
21. A member of the Mousehold Defenders has continued to carry out weekly litter picks.

Misuse and antisocial behaviour

22. Seven separate campers, one group of five and one of four were found on the heath. The wardens verbally advised them about camping on the heath being against the bylaws and they were advised to leave.
23. Four claimed to be homeless. The Norwich City Council single homeless and rough sleeper coordinator was informed that contact could be made with the persons to secure temporary accommodation until a more permanent solution could be found.
24. Due to the extremely hot and long dry summer period, over thirty fires occurred within the open heathland areas across the site, mostly affecting large stands of gorse and small areas of heather.
25. The majority of the fires appeared to have been lit deliberately. The wardens undertook targeted patrols in specific areas, at specific times of the day, working closely with local police officers. Local schools were approached to explain to them seriousness of the act and the impact this has on wildlife, the environment and potentially human life.
26. The Fire Brigade were at times called back to fires that had re-ignited due to spreading underground through a layer of dead organic matter/humus layer build up.
27. A warden met with the Watch manager from Sprowston fire station to discuss the fire related issues on the heath, to provide keys for access. They fully supported the aims and objectives of the new management plan, project ref code MH35/01, to remove this layer of dead organic material by humus stripping, with a small excavator, resulting in an areas of bare ground. Along with other managed fire breaks they mitigate the risk of future large-scale problems, whilst also encouraging the regeneration of heather and acid grassland in those habitat areas.

Volunteers

28. A total of 2254 volunteer work hours were undertaken on site in the last quarter by the following groups:

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- The Assist Trust.
- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- Mousehold Heath Mousketeers
- George White, Lion Wood, Magdalen Gates School students
- 8th Norwich Sea Scouts
- Geological Society of Norfolk
- Norwich High School for Girls
- RBS/Natwest Corporate Groups
- Aviva Corporate Group
- Many volunteers from the community

29. 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

30. There have been a range of events to increase the opportunities for understanding, enjoying and getting involved with the heath. Attendance at events and activities was 792.

- The wardens organised and led environmental education activities students from five local schools over two days. The activities included, insect identification by sweep netting on the wildflower meadow and surveying species hidden under logs in woodland. (108)
- Conservation management activities have been undertaken by George White School students, working with the wardens to restore a woodland glade near Zaks. (23)
- Two Norwich High School for Girls, Conservation Activity Days, have cleared invasive bracken and cleared burnt gorse stems. (90)
- 8th Norwich Sea Scouts have undertaken two bracken clearing sessions (53)
- The Geological Society of Norfolk has undertaken a work day, to maintain the Earth Heritage Trail Interest Points before the Heritage Open Day Geodiversity Walk. (11)
- 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. (150)
- Four community moth survey evenings have recorded 15 new moth species, which now brings the site total to 250 species! (27)
- A butterfly walk and workshop, in July, led by the Norfolk County Recorder and warden recorded 14 species of butterfly. (17)
- A management walk has been led by the wardens offering the opportunity for members of the community to see the habitat management work that is being carried out to improve the site for people and wildlife. (7)
- Three brass band concerts were organised during the summer which were enjoyed by all involved. (200)
- A History walk was led by a local historian and warden, which was part of the Norfolk Heritage Open Day Events programme (24)
- Aviva, RBS and Natwest Corporate Community tasks have taken place, involving cutting back paths, cutting bracken and clearing burnt gorse. (82).