

Report to	Mousehold Heath Conservators 16 March 2018	Item
Report of	Head of citywide services	8
Subject	Mousehold Heath quarterly management update 6 January to 5 March 2018	

Purpose

To provide a quarterly update for the period 6 January to 5 March 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. This 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 removed and replaced by the Mousehold Heath wardens.
3. Two wooden bollards have been re-installed by the Mousehold Heath wardens to prevent cars from encroaching onto St James' Hill from Britannia Road and more require attention.
4. One wooden bollard was cemented in to prevent cars from driving onto the Wingfield from Mousehold Lane by the Mousehold Wardens and a volunteer.

Tree safety

5. Following the storm on 18 January 2018, with winds of over 70mph, the Mousehold wardens immediately surveyed the site recording over 40 windblown trees and branches, along with ad hoc reports from members of the community. Three trees were found to be blocking pavements and access to car parks which were removed by the wardens on the morning of the storm. A further 37 windblown trees and branches have been removed by the Mousehold wardens with the help of volunteers. One particularly challenging tree was a large windblown pine blocking paths behind the Mustard Pond. 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

6. 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 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:

7. Work to coppice and thin a section of overgrown woodland adjacent to Gilman Road and the Long Valley, by clearing dead and overgrown vegetation has continued. This has increased 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, as well as reducing anti-social behaviour in the area.

8. 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

9. With species dormant and birds not nesting, the autumn/winter months are one of the busiest times on the heath, with practical tasks focusing on path maintenance and the cutting back encroaching vegetation and clearing scrub, which rapidly out-competes and smothers important heathland and grassland plant species.
10. Large areas of old and leggy gorse that had encroached over footpaths, (especially adjacent to the Vinegar Pond) and onto heather covered areas have been cut back, increasing biodiversity and reducing the risk of large fires.
11. Areas of St James' Hill and Spitalfield's grassland had been cut with a brush cutter and the arisings removed, to improve biodiversity and to conserve historic views over the city.

Path maintenance.

12. Six footpaths which have been encroached upon by vegetation, such as those behind the Vinegar Pond, have been cut back by the Mousehold wardens, Mousehold Heath Defenders, TCV, with the help of individual volunteers, to improve access to the site.
13. The Cavalry Track has been maintained by cutting back encroaching vegetation and clearing out gullies, by the Mousehold Mousketeers and Norwich High School for Girls groups under the supervision of a Mousehold Warden.

Litter management

14. 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.
15. The first substantial snow cover for four years resulted in St James' Hill being used for sledging. Large amounts of debris (broken sledges etc.) have been removed from the area by the Mousehold Wardens working in partnership with Norwich Norse, Mousehold Mousketeers and members of the community.

The increase activity on the slopes creates bare ground, disturbance and suppresses scrub growth which increases flower and grass biodiversity.

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. Four 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. A homeless man was found camping in woodland near the Pavilion. The Mousehold Wardens were assisted by the Norwich City Council homeless and rough sleeper co-coordinator and a member of the CAPS outreach team, who arranged accommodation for them in Bishops Bridge House.

19. One motorcyclist had been spoken to and asked to leave the site.

Volunteers

20. A total of 904 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
- Amey Corporate Community Action Day Group
- Mousehold Heath Mousketeers
- City College Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme group
- George White School students
- Norwich High School for Girls
- Many volunteers from the local community

21. 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

22. Although this was the quietest period for events on the site, 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. This included a very successful Christmas volunteer meal, attended by 60 volunteers and organised by the Mousehold wardens.