

<b>Report to</b>	Mousehold Heath Conservators 19 January 2018	<b>Item</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Head of citywide services	<b>8</b>
<b>Subject</b>	Mousehold Heath quarterly management update	

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## **Purpose**

To provide a quarterly update on 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:** Multiple Wards

## **Contact officer**

Simon Meek, parks and open spaces manager	01603 212403
Will Stewart, Mousehold Heath warden	01603 213310
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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 wooden bench has been removed and replaced by the Mousehold Heath wardens and a volunteer.
3. Two wooden bollards have been re-installed by the Mousehold Heath wardens to prevent cars from encroaching onto St James Hill.

### **Tree safety**

4. Through observations during patrols and following ad hoc reports from members of the community, the wardens have undertaken a range of tree work across the site, to unblock paths and make 11 mainly wind-blown trees and branches safe. 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.
5. The latest six monthly tree inspections of all the well-used paths and other high amenity areas of the heath, has been undertaken by the Mousehold Wardens in September. The survey identified 18 wind-blown, dead, dying and dangerous trees within distance of footpaths. All these trees have been made safe on or before 15 December 2017, by the Mousehold Heath wardens with the help of volunteers.

### **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 on the and the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement priorities relating to heathland.

### **Woodland management:**

7. Work to restore a section of woodland adjacent to Gilman Road by clearing dead and overgrown vegetation has continued. This work has been carried out to 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.
8. Mustard Pond Glade has had its autumn cut using brushcutters, rakes and pitch forks to cut and remove old vegetation, by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and a Mousehold Heath warden, increasing the amount of space and light for wild flowers next year.

9. 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**

10. 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.
11. Large areas of old and leggy gorse that had encroached over footpaths, (especially adjacent to the Vinegar Pond) and onto heather covered areas has been cut back, increasing biodiversity and reducing the risk of large fires.
12. The Anthills acid grassland had been cut with a brush cutter and the arisings removed, to conserve and enhance biodiversity
13. 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.

### **St. William's Chapel**

14. Vegetation was cleared at the site of St. William's Chapel to make the landforms more visible in preparation for the Norwich HEART heritage walks. Access has also been improved by clearing pathways around the boundaries of the site.
15. These works will be followed up with further vegetation clearing, over the autumn-winter period, in line with the objectives set out in the management plan.

### **Path maintenance.**

16. Over 10 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 improve access to the site.

### **Litter management**

17. 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.

### **Misuse and antisocial behaviour**

18. Eight 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.

19. Two homeless people found camping in the Long Valley area of the Heath were assisted by the Norwich City Council homeless and rough sleeper co- coordinator who arranged accommodation for them
20. Three motorcyclists have been spoken to and asked to leave the site by the Mousehold Wardens. If they persisted in breaking the byelaws, the police were contacted and asked to speak to the participants and deal with the incident.

## **Volunteers**

21. A total of 1432 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
- 17<sup>th</sup> Sprowston Scout group
- RBS Corporate Community Action Day Group
- The Ecological Consultancy
- Ethical Investments Corporate Group
- Mousehold Heath Mousketeers
- City College Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme group
- East Coast College group
- George White School students
- Norwich High School for Girls
- Many volunteers from the community

22. The opportunity to work closely with the Friends of Ketts Heights and share equipment and skills across both sides of Ketts Hill has been explored. Subsequently, two joint work parties, supervised by a Mousehold warden, have taken place to conserve and increase biodiversity on Spitalfields open space and improve access to St James Hill. These were a success, with 15 volunteers in attendance and a significant amount of work delivered. Further joint work parties are planned for this winter.
23. Volunteers have helped to carry out bee, butterfly, plant and moth surveys.
24. 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**

25. 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:

- A Fungi walk, led by the Norfolk County Recorder, took place in October recording over 50 species and adding 5 to the Mousehold Heath site list.
- A bird identification and ecology workshop and walk took place in December, viewing over 20 species of bird.
- Two moth surveys have taken place resulting in the site species list rising to 235 moths to date. The nationally rare Box Tree Moth was recorded during one of the surveys and the record sent to the County Recorder and Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS).
- A team from the Ecological Consultancy and a Mousehold Heath warden recently checked and repaired the sites 40 bat boxes which are now 8 years old. Some of the boxes are rotting and there are plans to replace them next year. One bat box was found to be regularly being used by bats. The team, consisting of members with bat handling licence's, used the day as an end of year team building exercise.
- The Mousehold Heath Defenders organised an Armistice ceremony on Armistice Day.
- 17<sup>th</sup> Sprowston Scout group community action day took place on 11 November 2017.
- Large groups of George White School students have been helping the wardens to cut back encroaching woodland glade vegetation.
- 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.
- The Mousehold Heath Defenders organised an event to mark the winter solstice.