

Report to Mousehold Heath Conservators
22 January 2016
Report of Head of local neighbourhood services
Subject Annual work programme 2014-15

Item

9

Purpose

To propose the Mousehold Heath draft work programme for 2016-17

Recommendation

To approve the draft work programme for 2016-17

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority a clean and safe city

Financial implications

Any costs that arise from this report will be met from the approved Mousehold budget or from external funding.

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Review of 2015-16 work programme

1. All main objectives set out in the 2015-16 works programme for biodiversity improvements will have been met by the end of the financial year, including heathland and grassland habitat improvements that form part of the site's Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement.
2. Infrastructure improvements programme of installation of interpretation panels and their upkeep, renewing furnishings, clearing and keeping open access on pathways (including removing windblown trees) and levelling car park surfaces is providing improved access to visitors and local users alike; this was carried out through the year.
3. The events in the guided walk programme have been very well attended with full attendance on nearly all public walks.
4. A large number of flora and fauna surveys have increased biological records, as well as increasing community involvement, understanding and enjoyment of the site.
5. A new six monthly tree inspection survey, to cover all well used paths, was designed and implemented by the Mousehold wardens to address dangerous and windblown trees and branches being made safe.
6. In line with the management plan objectives the maintenance of all public car parks, particularly Britannia Road, are now managed on an annual inspection basis with the support of a civil engineer from our contractor to assess what works need to be ordered. This will help in providing a safe surface condition mitigating any severe pot holes developing, drops near the kerb and water collection. Minor repairs will be arranged by the Mousehold Heath wardens with volunteer help where possible.

Proposed work programme 2016-17

7. The Conservators have in more recent years, approved the annual work programme for the following financial year at the same meeting that the budget and precept is approved. This is to ensure that activity is aligned with the budget setting process.

Rationale

8. Many of the proposed actions in the work programme consist of ongoing site management works and activities such as the annual programme of events. It is intended to at least maintain, and where possible expand, the levels of habitat management activity, infrastructure improvement and services to the public undertaken in previous years, subject to the availability of resources. This should be possible for the following reasons:
 - New ways of working, especially the greater availability and involvement of volunteer time, have reduced costs and enabled an increase in the amount of management work undertaken. It should be noted that organising and supervising volunteer work parties requires staff time and this is possible through the efforts and good work of the Mousehold wardens.

- The use of contractors with specialist machinery has been increased, especially for heathland management. Also, the increased use of machine tools e.g. chainsaw and brush-cutter for use by the Mousehold wardens and the training of volunteers, has enabled many smaller tasks, such as, tree safety works, path maintenance, habitat management, etc., to be undertaken at lower cost and more efficiently.

Type	Priority	Location Name	Item	Action	Management Plan Map 5 Aerial Map Location	Management plan Obj.	Estimated cost £	Lead	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
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There are two ponds on site that are fed by surface water run off these play host to breeding frogs and newts throughout Winter, Spring and summer and provide good habitats for aquatic invertebrates and plant life. Objectives are to retain water levels throughout the year and avoid introduction of unsuitable plant and animal species, remove any unauthorised introductions should they occur.

Habitat Management - Water	1	Vinegar Pond	Pond	Monitor condition	E4	4.8	0	D/MW	MW	MW	MW									MW	
	1	Long Valley	Wildlife Pond	Monitor condition	E6	4.8	0	MW									MW	MW			MW

Mousehold Heath covers 184 acres of which less than 10% is attributed to Heathland the rest is primary and secondary woodland with small areas of open grassland, open spaces and sports pitches. Objectives are to maintain, enhance and increase biodiversity of areas of heather and lowland heath vegetation, joining up of existing areas of heathland in line with the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme with the aim of extending open Heathland areas to 30% or more.

Habitat Management - Heath	1	Heathland areas	Gorse management	Cut/collect gorse areas on rotation Conservation. Contractor	Annual rotation	4.5	2,000	MW/C									MW/C	MW/C	MW/C	MW/C	
	1	Heathland areas	Scrub clearance	Heathland restoration and cut scrub. Community Green Gym	E13-14/F13-14/G13-14/H14	4.5	1,500	MW/C	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	GG/MW	
	1	Heathland areas	Humus stripping	Remove topsoil from selected areas to encourage heathland regeneration. Contractor	Annual rotation	4.5	1,000	MW/C									MW/C	MW/C	MW/C	MW/C	
	1	St. James' Hill	Scrub clearance	Cut back scrub	E13-14/F13-14/ G12-14/H13-14	4.5	0	MW									TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	
	1	All Heathland areas	Control scrub regrowth	Control regrowth from previously cut scrub. TCV work parties	D3-4/E3-5/F3-5/G3-5&7/H4-5&7/I4-5/J6-7/K6-7/L6	4.5	4,500	MW	TCV/MW	TCV/ MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW	
	1	Heathland areas	Bracken control	Cut/bruise bracken in open areas TCV work parties	G4-5/H5/I5	4.5	0	MW			TCV/MW	TCV/MW	TCV/MW								
	3	Playing field adj pitch & putt	GNDP project	Monitor/manage heathland project area	K6/L6/M6	4.5	0	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW								

Grasses and wild flower species favouring acid soil conditions are an integral component of heathland vegetation providing a diverse habitat for a multitude of insects, these areas will be rapidly lost without appropriate management. Objectives are to cut vegetation once per year and remove arisings ensuring nutrient levels are kept to a minimum, periodically remove encroaching scrub and trees.

Habitat Management - Acid Grassland and Wild Flower Meadow	1	The Desert	Wild Flower management	Cut areas & remove arisings (Cons.Cut 5) Contractor	C5-6/D5-6	4.6	0	MW/C							C						
	1	The Anthills	Grassland management	Cut areas & remove arisings (Cons.Cut 5) TCV GG MW	G8/H8	4.6	0	MW/TCV							TCV/GG MW						
	1	The Anthills	Grassland management	Control any encroaching scrub TCV GG MW	G8/H8	4.6	0	MW/TCV								TCV/GG MW	TCV/GG MW	TCV/GG MW	TCV/GG MW		
	2	St James' Hill/Cav Track area	Scrub management	Control, or coppice areas on rotation	E14/F12-14/G14	4.6	0	MW								TCV/GG MW	TCV/GG MW	TCV/GG MW			

Mousehold Heath now mainly consists of dense woodland with little understory or ground flora. To increase and improve its ecological value, objectives are to create a network of rides and glades by widening existing tracks and pathways, works include thinning, coppicing and pollarding allowing in more light for ground flora to flourish while retaining standing and fallen dead wood.

[illegible]

Ensure that the importance of Mousehold Heath as a historic landscape is protected. Objectives are to retain and conserve key landscape elements such as open heathland, hills and hollows, archaeological and historical features along with historical buildings, memorials and protected scheduled ancient monuments.

[illegible]

Promote the use of Mousehold Heath through publicity, local press, guided walks and other public events including schools and local community groups.

[illegible]

Ensure that main pathway networks are maintained and repaired for public health and safety and emergency vehicle access including disable access routes, trails, courses, signs, furnishings, interpretation panels, on site car parks, toilet and sports facilities.

[illegible]

Review management on a regular basis

Review & monitoring	1	Off site	Management Plan	Review & revise plan		5.1	0	MW			MW			MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW
		Off site	Conservators Meeting			5.1	0	CO	MHC			MHC		MW	MHC		MHC		
		Off site	Cons Working Group Mtg			5.1	0	CO			MHC			MHC			MHC		MHC
	2	Whole site	Itinerant	Organise site visit to review work plan progress & priorities for next financial year		5.1	0	CO/MW											
	1	Off site	Annual Work Programme	Drafted and agreed by Conservators		5.1	0	MW									MW	MW	
	2	Heathland Areas	Heathland Regeneration	Monitor heathland regeneration	Selected Sqs	5.1	0	MW				MW	MW	MW					

In order to determine whether management is having an appropriate affect on the site's biodiversity, it is important that the site is monitored on an ongoing basis.

Surveying & recording	2	All	Common Bird Census	Carry out weekly during season		5.1	0	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW							
	2	All	Butterfly transect	Complete 26 week transect		5.1	0	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW					
	2	All	Biological surveys	Survey & record Fauna and Flora		5.1	0	MW/D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D				D
	2	All	Miscellaneous species	Collate records		5.1	0	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW
	2	All	Dragonfly survey	Monitor weekly throughout season		5.1	0	MW		MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW				
	2	All	Annual report	Collate information & produce report		5.1	0	MW	MW	PH									
	1	Heathland areas	Heathland Management	Implement Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement		4.5	0	MW	MW	MW	MW								

Supplies and Seviles

Equipment and Tools Repairs 3371	1	All	Site management works	Purchasing	NA	All	450	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW
Equipment and Tools Purchase 3370	1	All	Site management works	Repairs and maintenance	NA	All	450	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW
Advertising and Promotion (3910)	1	All	Service	leaflets/guided walks/reports	N/A	All	960	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW
Protective clothing 3550	1	All	Service	Health and Safety clothing. Training of volunteers, purchasing new tools and equipment.	NA	All	1,195	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW	MW

33,104

KEY;	MHC	Mousehold Heath Conservators
	D	Mousehold Defenders
	C	Contractor
	ARB	Arboriculture section
	CO	Committee Officer
	GG	Green Gym
	TCV	The Conservation Volunteers
	NGP	Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership
	A&CM	Asset & City Management
	MW	Mousehold Wardens