

**Report to** Mousehold Heath Conservators  
17 March 2017  
**Report of** Head of citywide services  
**Subject** Mousehold Heath update

**Item**

**8**

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### **Purpose**

To provide an update on recent activities on Mousehold Heath.

### **Recommendation**

To note the work undertaken in the last quarter to meet the management plan objectives.

### **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

### **Contact officer**

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### **Background documents**

None

# **Report**

## **Infrastructure management**

1. Encroaching vegetation on parts of the disabled access route leading to the Mottram Memorial has been cleared and encroaching scrub and bramble was removed with volunteer help. The surrounding grassland was cut by a cut and collect machine to continue to reduce soil nutrient levels.

## **Tree management**

2. Major tree works were undertaken by NorwichNorse Environment to remove overhanging branches from the telegraph cables running from Mousehold Avenue to the pavilion. Inspections of trees along Gurney Road, around the boundary of the pavilion and the toilets identified a number of trees that needed work carrying out in accordance with the tree safety policy.
3. Work to clear the cycle route from the junction of Mousehold Avenue to the entrance of Gilman Road was carried out by the Mousehold Wardens and the new Mousehold Heath volunteer group. Overhanging branches were removed from Elm and Lime trees bordering the cycle/pathway.
4. Improvements were made to open up the area adjacent to the public car park on Gurney Road. Scrub was removed with volunteer help, improving the view of the pavilion, enhancing the habitat for biodiversity and improving access for the public.
5. Storm 'Doris' resulted in the city council's 'storm procedure' being put in place to co-ordinate with NorwichNorse Environment to collate incoming damage reports and prioritise the deployment of tree teams based on risk prioritisation.
6. In excess of 65 trees on the heath were sustained structural damage by the storm. NorwichNorse Environmental dealt with any priority work out of hours when it directly affected a public highway, property or electricity supplies. Two large Beech trees came down at the top of Beech drive, resulting in properties along Mons Avenue being without power and incurring some damage to garden fencing.
7. The Mousehold Wardens have undertaken work across the site, to unblock paths and make trees and branches safe. To date emergency work has been completed on 15 windblown and damaged trees that posed an unacceptable level of risk, to make them safe. There are still in excess of 50 low risk trees which require further clean up and remedial work to be completed.

## **Natural Area Management**

8. A range of habitat and site management tasks carried out by Mousehold wardens, volunteers and contractors have been undertaken in the last quarter, to help deliver the management plan priorities.

### **Woodland management:**

9. Work to restore a section of woodland adjacent to Gilman Road by clearing dead and overgrown vegetation was continued. This work has been carried out to increase community access to a formally impenetrable area and improve biodiversity.

### **Heathland management**

10. Bracken, gorse and saplings invading areas of heathland not in good condition have been removed to enable dwarf heathland plants such as heather to flourish.
11. Humus stripping, using a small digger, in bracken covered areas has continued, to encourage heather seeds in the dormant seedbank to germinate. This work is required by the Higher Level Stewardship agreement that is in place with Natural England.

### **Grassland management**

12. Areas of grassland have been cut, raked and grass removed. Encroaching scrub was removed by volunteers using bow saws, loppers and brushcutters.

### **Emergency vehicle access**

13. Vegetation that encroached onto access tracks around the heath has been cut back by volunteers, wardens and a contractor using a tractor-mounted Rytec mower.

### **Litter management**

14. A number of areas formerly used for camping have been cleaned and rubbish removed by the Mousehold wardens with the assistance from the Norwich Norse Environmental litter picker as part of his daily work. Litter management was also supported on a voluntary basis by a member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders.

### **Access works**

15. Pathway maintenance works have been undertaken by the Mousehold Heath Defenders, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Assist Trust, City College group and other volunteers from the Gilman Road and Wingfield area.
16. Improvements for public access to the site of St. Williams Chapel have been undertaken by the Mousehold Defenders, including the removal of vegetation from the soil mounds marking its boundary, revealing all four corner stones. These works were followed up with the TCV clearing vegetation with brush cutters opening up the areas within the external and internal boundaries of the site as set out in the management plan objectives.

### **Volunteers**

17. A total of 1184 volunteer work hours has been undertaken on site in the last quarter by the following groups:

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- The Assist Trust
- An Easton College and City College work placement students.
- City College Duke of Edinburgh award scheme group.
- George White School students
- Amey corporate community action day
- Many volunteers from the community.

18. In late 2016 The Green Gym volunteer group disbanded. The group have provided an opportunity for local people to get involved in conservation management work on a number of sites in the city. Mousehold Heath is one of the sites the group worked on regularly.
19. The loss of the group removed an opportunity for people to be active in the natural environment and along with the associated health benefits. There was also an impact on the delivery of management works through the loss of the group.
20. The Mousehold wardens identified an opportunity to support the development of a new volunteer group, to enable local people to become involved with the work on the heath, increase their understanding and enjoyment of the site, to benefit from getting outdoors and active and to contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the management plan.
21. In January 2017 the Mousehold Heath Volunteer Group was formed. The group undertake two practical tasks a month, supervised by the Mousehold wardens.
22. Since the group were formed they have made significant contribution to woodland and grassland management work. Debris left by Storm Doris has been cleared and vegetation cleared.
23. The opportunity to work closely with the Friends of Ketts Heights and share equipment and skills across both sites will be explored. If both groups feel there is a worthwhile benefit to be gained from such an arrangement a report will be brought to the Conservators for approval setting out the basis on which the partnership will work.
24. The Mousehold Wardens have organised and supervised over 31,000 hours of volunteer work on the heath in the past 9 years. These works have significantly contributed to meeting objectives set out in the management plan and Higher Level Stewardship agreement.
25. It has also provided an opportunity for the community to become involved with the management of the heath, to increase their understanding of the work of the conservators, the importance of the heath and to engender a sense of ownership and pride in the space.

## **Events**

26. A range of events to increase understanding, involvement and enjoyment of the site, have been organised or hosted on the heath in the last period.

- A number of practical environmental education sessions for George White School student groups, involving over 40 children, were supervised by the Mousehold Wardens.
- A number of Forest School activities have taken place on the site.
- The Mousehold Heath Defenders have organised a Winter Solstice celebration and an event to mark the changing seasons.
- Amey corporate community action did heathland and path management work.