



NORWICH City Council

Committee Name: Mousehold Heath Conservators

Committee Date: 15/03/2024

Report Title: Mousehold Heath Management Update - 4 January to 26 February 2024

Portfolio: Councillor Giles, Cabinet Member for Communities and Social Inclusion

Report from: Head of Environment Services

Wards: Catton Grove and Crome

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To provide a quarterly update on activities on Mousehold Heath relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Conservators note the contents of the report.

Policy Framework

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the sustainable and healthy city corporate priority.

This report addresses Deliver a Capital Investment Programme in our parks that will improve visitor experience, maintain our heritage assets and improve community cohesion. strategic action in the Corporate Plan.

The report helps to meet the Mousehold Heath management plan objective(s):

A: To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.

Report Details

1. The report details the work, activities and issues arising on, and relating to the delivery of the Mousehold Heath management plan objectives.
2. The objectives are:
 - A) To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.
 - B) To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.
 - C) To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.
 - D) To manage Mousehold Heath in a way that has a positive impact on the environment.
 - E) To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.
 - F) To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.
 - G) To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.
 - H) To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

Objective B: To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.

AI30/02 TREE SAFETY INSPECTION

1. Seven dead, dying, dangerous and windblown trees and branches, spotted during patrols and reported by members of the community, have been made safe and cleared by the Mousehold wardens.

MC81/01 VIEW FROM MOTTRAM MEMORIAL

2. Scrub has been cleared to retain historic views of the city and conserve open habitat biodiversity.

ML60/01 NORFOLK CONSTABULARY

3. The Mousehold Wardens liaised with police officers regarding anti-social behaviour.

MP00/01 SITE PRESENCE

4. Mousehold wardens have continued to patrol the heath, focusing on areas with anti-social behaviour issues.
5. When found during patrols and work parties, litter has been removed on an ad hoc basis, to keep the site safe and clean.

Objective C: To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.

ME04/01 LITTER PICKING

6. Large amounts of litter have been removed from areas where scrub and leggy gorse have been cleared.

ME01/02 BOLLARDS

7. One wooden bollard in the Pavilion car park, has been re-installed by Mousehold warden and a work placement student.
8. Four old decaying wooden bollards were replaced on Britannia Road public car park and one at the Pitch and Putt public car park to ensure protection of the site regarding vehicle encroachment.

ME04/03 FLY TIPPING

9. A number of fly tipping items were removed from the Pitch and Putt car park and the slip road at Britannia Road, including garden waste and building materials. Items found are removed and disposed of by NCSL's EPA crew.

ME12/01 REMOVE GRAFFITI

10. An attempt has been made by the Mousehold wardens to remove a large amount of graffiti on trees in the Gurney Road area. Further attempts to remove the graffiti will be made by the Mousehold wardens.

ME41/01 MAIN PATHS

11. Five paths have been maintained by brush cutting and raking vegetation to allow easy access to the site.
12. A repair was needed caused by erosion along Silver Birch Walk. The pathway was made safe by infilling with local materials from the site. The task was undertaken by Hamish Muirden, Volunteer Coordinator Norwich Fringe Project and a Mousehold warden, working in partnership with the Norwich Fringe Project volunteers.

Objective E: To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.

MH04/01 GLADE MANAGEMENT MAINTAIN

13. The Mustard Pond glade has been conserved by cutting and raking encroaching vegetation.

MH31/01 SCRUB AND TREE REMOVAL

14. Invasive scrub has been cut and cleared to restore and conserve important heathland and grassland habitat, in line with the Natural England, Higher Level Stewardship Agreement (HLS) and Mousehold Heath Management Plan.
15. The Mousehold Heath Higher Level Stewardship agreement has been extended for five years until 2028 and now concludes at the same time as the Mousehold Heath Management Plan 2018 - 2028. This will

provide funding to support important Acid Grassland and Heathland habitat and biodiversity works, set out in the management plan objectives. Many HLS agreements have been extended with potential for current agreements to enter the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) in the future.

16. In an update from the Conservators meeting in winter 2023, over two hundred saplings have been moved from heathland and grassland habitat and re-planted in a developing woodland adjacent to Gilman Road by volunteers, under the supervision of a Mousehold warden.
17. The tree saplings will take over on the heathland areas, quickly out-competing the heather and other heathland plants, turning the heathland into a pioneering birch woodland.
18. The wardens use a tree popper tool to remove the tree saplings, leaving the tree roots intact. This means that they can be replanted elsewhere on Mousehold. In the past the saplings would have been cut, burnt and the remaining stumps treated with glyphosate.
19. Work had previously been undertaken to manage and control the leggy gorse and bracken, which had been encroaching into the existing woodland on Gilman Road. A gap had been left and the tree saplings removed from the heathland habitat were planted to fill in the gap.

MH39/01 BRACKEN REMOVAL

20. Large areas of bracken were cut, pulled, raked and removed from heathland, grassland and woodland glade habitats by volunteers and the wardens. This task is crucial to conserving nectar rich heather species and complying with the Mousehold Heath HLS Agreement.

MH39/03 COMMON GORSE REMOVAL

21. Old and leggy common gorse have been cut and removed to make habitat piles, from the Gilman Road and heathland/grassland areas, to conserve heather, grasses, western gorse and other dwarf shrub species and reduce fire risk
22. Mousehold Heath Defenders have cleared old, leggy gorse, on heathland areas during volunteer work parties. This has reduced the fire risk and created a mosaic of vegetation types in open areas.
23. A woodchipper has been hired for use by trained Mousehold Heath wardens, volunteers and the Norwich Fringe Project Volunteer Co-ordinator. The old, leggy gorse which was chipped was previously cut and stacked in the St. James Hill area. Managing and chipping this old material reduces fire risk across the site.

MH60/01 VINEGAR POND

24. An attempt to control the levels of fish in the Vinegar Pond was undertaken by electro-fishing. A large number of fish were removed and transported to a safe location.

It was recommended by the contractor, FishTrack, and the Environmental Agency that the best way forward was to drain the pond when conditions were favourable and remove all the fish at once for a more cost effective and best practice way of realistically mitigating the fish population.

This is in line with aims and objectives within the management plan to encourage and protect frog and newt populations along with any other aquatic fauna and flora.

As and when the right conditions arise, i.e., low water levels due to hot dry conditions in the summer period, this task will be undertaken.

Objective G: To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.

AT50/01 VOLUNTEERS GENERAL

25. A total of 756 community volunteer hours has been undertaken on the site between 04 January and 26 February by the following groups;

- Mousehold Heath Defenders
- Assist Trust
- Norwich High School for Girls
- Mousehold Heath Monday and Tuesday Volunteer Groups
- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Fringe Project Volunteers
- Easton College Work Placement student
- Crown Commercial corporate group.
- Many individual volunteers from the community

26. Volunteering 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.

Objective H: To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

MI60/01 EVENTS

27. A cross country run for the Norwich School was arranged through our Events Team. Forty competitors completed the course.

28. A Mousehold warden gave an illustrated talk about the history and biodiversity of Mousehold Heath to a Sprowston community group at St Cuthbert's Church.

Consultation

29. None

Implications

Financial and Resources

Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and Budget.

30. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources at this time

Legal

31. None

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	None
Health, Social and Economic Impact	None
Crime and Disorder	The Mousehold Wardens will continue to work with Norfolk Constabulary to ensure that the Heath is a safe place to visit.
Children and Adults Safeguarding	Safeguarding is a priority for the Mousehold Wardens, and they will continue to signpost vulnerable individuals to the services that they require.
Environmental Impact	The Mousehold Wardens will continue to improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Financial	Failure to adequately plan and monitor activities could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme
Operational	Failure to adequately plan and monitor activities could result in insufficient resources being available to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme
Legal	The Council cannot comply with its legal duty to ensure that buildings are safe for users to access	Ensure that sufficient management information is available to continue management and maintenance programme

Reasons for the decision/recommendation


32. Review of current budget will ensure that there are adequate resources to carry out required work.

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