

Report to Mousehold Heath conservators
18 October 2013
Report of Head of local neighbourhood services
Subject Mousehold heath update

Item

7

Purpose

To provide an update on issues and recent activities at Mousehold Heath

Recommendation

That Conservators comment on current activities that have been undertaken on Mousehold Heath

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority City of character and culture

Financial implications

Any financial implications arising from this report will have or will be met from approved budgetary provision

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

All general day-to-day work is on schedule with no issues to report to this meeting.

1. Safety

A number of tree jobs have been completed by the Mousehold wardens around the network of paths that cover the site, making the area a safer place to visit.

2. Ecological Surveys

A number of surveys have been carried out on the site including:

A number of butterfly, dragonfly and bird surveys have been carried out with the help of volunteers from the community. A bee and plant survey has taken place on St. James' Hill by a member of the Mousehold Heath Defenders and a Mousehold Heath warden, resulting in a record number of bee species being recorded.

Weekly Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) transects by a Mousehold Warden supported by volunteers. The BMS is the oldest and largest ecological survey in the country, starting in 1976 and providing the government with data on climate change and the health of Britain's ecosystems.

3. Path Maintenance

Mousehold Wardens and volunteers have cut back vegetation growing over paths, to allow full access to the network of footpaths across the site.

4. Anti-social behaviour

During the hot dry summer period there were a number of fires on the heath which appear to have been started deliberately. Patrols were been increased in these areas to reduce this destructive activity. Norfolk Fire and Rescue service have joined other organisations and council officers to forward plan targeting resources before the next summer period, to visits schools and work with wardens to minimise the threat.

Local neighbourhood police and Mousehold wardens organised and carried out (with the help of volunteers) clearance of scrub from around the base of the Lime trees surrounding Gilman Road playing field. The car park is more visible and safer for parking. This work will also allow the contractor to cut the overgrown areas of the field.

5. Conservation Management:

Volunteer groups have undertaken site management tasks including, footpath maintenance, bracken bruising, clearing burnt gorse, sapling pulling/cutting.

Last summer aquatic plants were introduced to the new “mustard” pond, along with frogs, tadpoles, water snails and water beetles which are now colonising the new habitat. The condition and population of the pond will be monitored to identify the numbers and types of insects, frogs and snails visiting the pond.

A number of tree management tasks have taken place to remove damaged/fallen trees around the network of path, making the heath more accessible and a safer place to visit.

6. Volunteer activity

A total of 1090 volunteer work hours have been completed on Mousehold in the last quarter.

These have been completed by:

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV),
- Norwich Community Green Gym,
- Easton College work placement,
- Assist Trust,
- UEA students
- Norwich School
- A number of volunteers from the community.

These works have significantly contributed to the implementation of objectives set out in the Management Plan, along with increasing local resident involvement in the projects.

7. Events

- Twelve guided walks have taken place to date, with the fungal foray taking place on 17/10/13. All the walks have been successful involving 129 members of the public, increasing understanding and enjoyment of the site.
- A concert on the Bandstand attracted over 70 people to the Fountain ground
- A Play-days event organised by the Norwich City Council events team attracted over 200 people to the Fountain Ground on 29th July

8. Rangers House

The Mousehold Wardens continue to liaise with the new owner of the Ranger's House to ensure that works to the building has minimal impact on the heath.

9. Asset management

The wardens continue to ensure sufficient work is carried out to maintain the public toilets and ensure they are usable. A visit to the area was included in the recent Itinerant meeting on the heath for members to clarify to the level of work needed to be completed.

Works to meet the Conservators responsibilities for the up-keep of the Pavilion are in hand and a start date is expected to be agreed shortly.

Further discussions are required with the agent to explore how the associated assets can be improved and a meeting is planned for November to involve the management sub-group, NPS Norwich and agent.