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| Committee(s): | Date(s): |
| Epping Forest & Commons | 10 September 2018 |
| Subject: Superintendent's Update | Public |
| Report of: Superintendent of 'The Commons' | For Information |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Summary</p> <p>This report provides a general update on issues across the nine sites within 'The Commons' division that may be of interest to members and is supplementary to the monthly email updates.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to note the contents of this report.</p> | |

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

1. The quarry site at East Burnham and associated monitoring continues as normal.
2. Officers attended a meeting with Officers from Natural England (NE), South Bucks District Council (SBDC), Slough Borough Council and Bucks County Council to discuss local plan production. NE gave an update on related issues and recent court judgements. SBDC are still awaiting the results of some air quality modelling and considering commissioning an updated review regarding visitor numbers to Burnham Beeches. Options for mitigating the impact of increased housing on Burnham Beeches were discussed. SBDC proposed a joint mitigation scheme with SBC but it is clear SBC are some way behind in plan production and are proposing, at the moment, not to include any such mitigation regarding Burnham Beeches and let the plan be found 'unsound' because of this. SBC have commissioned a Western Area Growth Study to review housing need across a larger area than SBC, which will include SBDC and Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council too. A recent sustainability appraisal is still favouring the northern extension of Slough into SBDC area.
3. Work on the Countryside Stewardship application for Burnham Beeches/Stoke Common continues. Extensive discussions have taken place between Officers and NE and several queries have been passed to National experts on the scheme for clarity and guidance. Associated fieldwork has almost been completed but there is still considerable paperwork to complete to justify work to be done, produce detailed work programmes for some

elements and to label photographs used as evidence correctly. Our adviser has drafted prescriptions for work and these need checking to ensure that we can deliver as requested. Some quotes for work which will be carried out by contractors have been received and the remainder are due soon. The deadline for the full application is 31 August 2018, although some evidence can be submitted after this deadline.

4. The production of the plan remains on schedule as previously agreed by this Committee. A draft report on the Stoke Common Management Plan public consultation exercise, has recently been received. Comments from the consultation and the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group have also been fed into the plan. Comments remain due from various specialists and at that point the draft will be sent to the editor and the design process can start. An information pack will be sent to members prior to the visit to Stoke Common on 8th September which will look in detail at the proposals within the draft plan. The Superintendent will seek final approval for the plan at the November 2018 meeting of this committee.
5. Cattle and ponies have continued to graze within the invisible loops and the fenced area, although the dry weather has required additional movements to ensure that they had sufficient to eat. Some cattle have recently been moved to the offsite fields such as the nature reserve at Hedgerley. Cows continue to graze on Stoke Common.
6. The Ranger team have focussed on patrolling duties, especially in relation to PSPO and byelaw enforcement, and have also been helping with the fieldwork element of the Countryside Stewardship application.
7. Volunteers have carried out path surfacing on both Stoke Common and Burnham Beeches. They have also replaced signs, carried out bracken control, removed ragwort and cleared around some of the larger juniper bushes in the Beeches that were getting smothered in brambles.
8. The eco volunteers have been involved in a project with a researcher from Manchester Metropolitan University carrying out chlorophyll analysis on young beech pollards. In addition, they have carried out butterfly transects, and regular moth, ground running invertebrate and dust monitoring and helped with vegetation monitoring.
9. Burnham Beeches was awarded both the Green Flag and Green Heritage awards for the coming year.

Kenley Revival update

10. The mortar faults to the blast pens continue to be investigated by the architects, 'Avanti'. Brick and mortar samples testing has been conducted by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). Current circumstances have suggested it was an extreme sulphate attack in combination with the materials, soil and rain. The Superintendent and Project Team have met with the City Corporation's Commercial Contracts team to review the City's position. A

meeting with Avanti, PAYE, Historic England and Officers, including the Commercial Contracts team is scheduled for 6th September. This meeting will determine the programme of rectification works and responsibilities for associated costs.

11. The 'Learning Roadshow' engaged over 350 schoolchildren in workshops. The roadshow was held in local libraries and all schools which took part had not previously engaged with the Kenley Revival Project.
12. A 'priorities pot' application for the role of a Legacy Project Officer to achieve post-project legacy aims has been awarded and will be for 21 months beginning in January 2019.
13. 'Community Archaeology' was held 16 – 25th July with 30 volunteers taking part and 30 Open Spaces staff joining in from across the Department. The dig will also be included in a future episode of the BBC4 production 'Digging for Britain'. The finds are currently being rationalised in discussion with Museum of London who have selected three pieces to go into their collections.
14. A planning application for onsite interpretation signage has been granted. Planners indicated that the signs need to be reduced further due to visual clutter and the MoD plans for the fence which was reached through compromise with the planners. The timetable for the works has been revised with the 'small and large wings' expected to be installed by mid-November along with the production of the travelling exhibition. The 'table top signs' will be designed, manufactured and installed a few weeks later.
15. Remembrance season is planned for November consisting of; school assemblies, handling workshops, pop-up museums, theatre performance, showcase at other museums. The Superintendent will represent the City at the annual Remembrance Day service at Kenley Tribute
16. The project has successfully achieved all its volunteer contributions for the project including the financial contribution with over 1,100 contributions delivering 317 days of volunteering. Over 14,500 people have been engaged in physical activities on and offsite.
17. The Kenley Revival Project Manager is moving to a new post with the National Trust from mid-September. Negotiations are to ensue with HLF to resolve how best to fill the post given that only 9 months remain of the contract.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

18. A new Livestock Ranger has been appointed and is due to start in early September.
19. The site Rangers have raised their new Green Flags across all Coulsdon and West Wickham Commons. Farthing Downs & New Hill, Kenley Common,

Riddlesdown and West Wickham Common also received their Green Heritage Flags.

20. The Ranger team have been busy with site maintenance work including ragwort pulling, mowing, livestock movements, infrastructure repairs and fencing repairs across the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons. Work has started to replace the fence around the Maze on Coulsdon Common which will allow grazing in this area with cows for the first time.
21. Volunteer groups across all sites have been supporting the Ranger team pulling ragwort on Farthing Downs, Riddlesdown and Kenley Common, repairing fences on Coulsdon Common and Farthing Downs and maintaining the pond on Spring Park.
22. A contractor has started the annual hay cut across the Coulsdon Commons and will have cut the meadows at Spring Park by the end of August.
23. The vet came to examine the cows. 19 are expecting calves early in 2019. The herd is currently grazing on Farthing Downs with a few grazing on Riddlesdown and Kenley Common (Whyteleafe Bank). The sheep have been moved to Whyteleafe Bank on Kenley Common and the goats are continuing their work attacking the scrub on Riddlesdown Common.

Ashtead Common

24. Oak Processionary Moth has transitioned from the infestation stage to colonisation. This year 169 nests have been recorded in 140 trees. In 2017-18 just 14 trees were infested. These nests were removed, and the trees were sprayed in early summer. This year's 169 nests will be removed by hand, but it is unlikely, given the conservation status of the site, that all 140 trees will be sprayed next year. Consequently, the response is moving towards a risk-based approach focusing on areas such as entrances, boundaries and paths. The total cost of dealing with OPM this year is £21,425.00.
25. Ashtead Common retained its Green Flag and Green Heritage awards. The site was mystery shopped this year, so there are no new scores.
26. Herbicide treatment of bracken was reintroduced this summer for the first time in many years. Asulox was used to treat small areas inaccessible to mowing, which remains the primary control method. However, bracken mowing was postponed during the dry conditions to avoid leaving a thatch of cut material as a potential fuel source.

Incidents

Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

27. There were 10 reported incidents during the period

28. There were three incidents related to dogs: two for dogs not under effective control (one of these involved a visitor being knocked over by the dog). The third was a lost dog. An unpaid Fixed Penalty Notice has now been paid. Two more regular visitors have received final warning letters for PSPO related offences.

29. Other incidents included, two incidents of Physical and Verbal Abuse against staff which were reported to the police, a car break-in, a male sunbathing nude, un-licensed filming, a loose pony, fly tipping and a small fire.

Ashted Common

30. None

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

31. Coulsdon Common – broken barrier post outside Merlewood Estate Office and it is suspected was hit by a vehicle – now repaired.

32. Coulsdon Common – A dead dog was found in a wooden box and has been disposed of safely by the onsite ranger.

33. Coulsdon Common – Loose horse was hit by a car at the junction of Stites Hill Road and Rydons Lane. Ranger assisted with incident management. Horse had to be put to sleep.

34. Kenley Common – Broken entrance gate on Whyteleafe Hill which will be repaired by site ranger.

35. Riddlesdown – Three fire incidents occurred in Coombes Wood in the last four weeks. The ranger team have dealt with the fires accordingly and increased patrols.

36. Spring Park – Dead dog left in a plastic box at the car park close to the Ranger lodge. The dead dog was transported to Bromley Park Vets who arranged safe disposal.

37. West Wickham Common – Two fire incidents across the Earthworks – fire brigade attended site and ranger team increased patrols. The most recent fire incident is suspected to be caused by arson. A local resident claims to have seen three suspicious individuals in the vicinity and reported this to the Police.

Filming, major events and other activities

Burnham Beeches

38. Events during the period have included The Big Community Picnic which attracted around 450 people despite extremely hot conditions and summer woodland wonders activity sessions which have attracted just over 50 participants.

39. Licenced events have included weekly outings for a Nordic walking group with 29 participants and, during July, a daily free Tai Cho session which attracted 91 people over the period.

40. There have been two slide talks to local groups.

The West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons

41. Children's activities were held on Spring Park (pond dipping), Coulsdon Common – bug hunt and Kenley Common woodland adventure trail.

42. Rangers delivered well attended talks to the local community (Ben Curtis Care Home and U3A Croydon)

43. Brownies attended Spring Park to join the Ranger for a woodland walk.

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