

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Epping Forest & Commons	19 November 2018
<b>Subject:</b> Superintendent's Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of 'The Commons'	<b>For Information</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summary</b></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><b>Recommendation</b></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. Some of the hydrology dipwells are showing a few anomalous readings and the possible causes are currently being investigated.
2. Officers attended a meeting with Officers from Natural England (NE) and South Bucks District Council (SBDC) to discuss Local Plan production. The air quality report commissioned by consultants has been received but it was agreed to request further information about some of the findings before discussing further. The mitigation strategy for the impact of recreation pressure on Burnham Beeches was discussed and it was agreed to work with SBDC officers to produce the first draft of this. An outline has subsequently been produced. SBDC are currently aiming to submit their plan in February.
3. Correspondence continues with Slough Borough Council although their Local Plan is progressing much more slowly. There is a plan to create an urban country park using existing green space within the Britwell Estate to offset the recreation pressure on the Beeches, but indications are that NE will not consider this sufficient.
4. Comments have been submitted to SBDC regarding other planning issues including a waste recycling plant, radio mast, and closure of the public amenity tip as well as the usual additional housing applications.
5. The Countryside Stewardship application for Burnham Beeches/Stoke Common was submitted by the deadline at the end of August. All supplementary evidence was submitted by the end of September deadline. The schedule of negotiation was received, checked and returned by the end of

September deadline too. Notes have been circulated to Epping Forest Officers to guide their applications in 2019. A meeting regarding Countryside Stewardship and wood pasture is planned at Windsor Great Park in November to share experiences.

6. Final comments from conservation specialists have been received on the Stoke Common Management Plan, which were also discussed in detail during the visit of your Committee to the Common. The draft plan is presented separately today 'for decision'.
7. Two Berkshire pigs have been turned out to pannage in the Beeches for the first time for several years. Initially in an electric fenced pen, they have now been turned loose into the larger fenced area. Cattle and ponies have continued to graze within both the invisible loops and the fenced area. Our Grazier has now moved his cattle off Stoke Common for the winter.
8. The Ranger team have begun seasonal work on the heathland restoration programme at Stoke Common and Burnham Beeches supported by 14 different Volunteer events as this work involves carefully cutting invasive scrub from around existing heathland areas.
9. The volunteers also had a task removing vegetation in Middle Pond to help the water flow through it, which was a very muddy task!

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Kenley Revival update**

10. The sulphate attack issue affecting the conservation works was discussed at a meeting with the Contractor, Principal Designer, Historic England and City Officers on September 6<sup>th</sup>, where it was resolved that a period of 'on-site trials' was needed to test alternative materials and methods through the winter. A site visit on October 12<sup>th</sup> established the locations and methodology. The 'trial panels' were constructed during the week commencing 29<sup>th</sup> October.
11. An assessment of the trial panels will be carried out in February 2019 to determine if a suitable alternative to the original specification is evident. Assuming it is then rectification work will commence in spring/ summer 2019.
12. Aside from exploring a technical solution to the sulphate issue, the City is seeking expert advice on the contractual liabilities involved, with an assumption that the City as client will not bear the burden of any additional cost.
13. The Project Manager resigned in September to take up a permanent role with the National Trust. Throughout her time on the project she has done a tremendous job and will be missed. With Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) approval, the Head Ranger associated with the project will act as Project Manager for the remainder of the project period.

14. HLF have also accepted a proposal to retain the Learning and Volunteer Officer for an additional six months beyond March 2019. Extending this post to work alongside the soon to be recruited Legacy Officer will enable the project to maintain its profile and community engagement work through the extended period of rectification works. Costs are being met from the Project Manager salary savings.
15. The content, artwork and images for the on-site interpretation is currently being finalised. There will be 23 new signs in total, although several are replacing existing signs. It is now likely that the new signs will be installed in the new year as materials and content need to be examined by the planning authority as part of the consent agreement.
16. Repairs to the RAF Kenley Memorial have been completed ahead of Remembrance Sunday.
17. A series of lectures have been arranged as part of a Remembrance Season series of events. Sixty people attended the first lecture on the war graves at St. Luke's church in Whyteleafe. Also planned for Remembrance Season are school assemblies, handling workshops, pop-up museums and theatre performances of Lillias Barr's memoirs (Kenley Auxiliary Air Force).
18. The project supported the national heritage open days initiative by conducting a series of guided walks that attracted 150 participants.
19. The MOD have commenced work to erect the wooden safety fence, previously reported to this committee, on the airfield perimeter.

### **The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons**

20. The Director, Superintendent and Head Ranger attended a meeting with Natural England and London Borough of Croydon to assess the possibility of creating a new National Nature Reserve encompassing the City's ownership of the Coulsdon Commons and LBC's Happy Valley. There was support for the idea from all parties and it is proposed that the matter will now be formally presented for consideration by Members in the next reporting cycle.
21. Staff from Burnham Beeches, Ashted and the West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons came together for a team building and knowledge-sharing day in early September. The group were given a guided tour of the tunnels under Riddlesdown Common where a company, making use of the constant temperature and environmental conditions, manufactures high tech optical equipment for use in medical, aviation and military applications. The group were then led by the local Rangers on a visit to Riddlesdown Quarry and discussed management for nature conservation as well as methods of community engagement. The day concluded with a staff BBQ in the Quarry.
22. The recently appointed Livestock Ranger has begun working at West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons. She has started getting to know the sites and familiarising herself with our systems, she will be leading on arrangements for the overwintering of the breeding herd.

23. During September, contractors began the removal of young ash trees and scrub to restore a section of Chalk Grassland adjacent to Whyteleafe Bank, Kenley. This work is part of the Higher-Level Stewardship scheme prescribed by Natural England and once completed will conclude the project at this location; it will now be down to the cows and sheep to maintain this rare and fragile habitat.
24. Rangers and the Kenley volunteers widened several woodland paths through and around Tunnel Wood; this work will help keep the Common welcoming and accessible throughout the year.
25. Rangers and the Kenley volunteers fixed a broken kissing gate near Stumps Lane at the Northern end of the runway after a falling tree destroyed it.
26. One of Spring Park's tallest oak trees was struck by lightning during a recent summer storm. The huge bolt of electricity travelled the entire length of the tree. Slabs of bark and shards of timber were thrown several meters from the tree and can be seen scattered amongst the surrounding undergrowth. A continuous scar marks the route that roughly 1 billion Joules of electrical energy too down the tree in its quest to reach the ground. The scar is nearly half a meter wide, in some places.
27. A 'bioblitz' took place on Spring Park; this is an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area over a designated time period. With the help of twenty wildlife explorers, we recorded more than 100 different species within two hours. The highlights were a Brown Argus butterfly flying along the meadow edge and puffballs hidden in the long grass along the woodland edge. The group were treated to an unexpected display by the Red Arrows who were active over the adjacent Biggin Hill.
28. Members of West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons Consultative Group enjoyed an early evening tour around Spring Park in September. The group discussed a range of site management topics including; the growing threat from tree diseases, the small leaved lime and chestnut coppice rotations, management of the wildlife pond and local community engagement.
29. Rangers are now busy preparing for the winter works which will include high-risk tree safety inspections, installing and repairing sections of fencing and woodland management projects identified under our environmental stewardship scheme.

### **Ashted Common**

30. The number of OPM nests found and removed now stands at 244 in 208 trees. Currently the total annual cost associated with OPM stands at £28,255.00, but this will continue to rise through the period of veteran tree works as climbers find previously hidden nests.

31. The Ashtead Common Consultative Group met on September 26<sup>th</sup> for a presentation on several topics, including OPM, vision and management planning, a proposed reed-bed filtration system and grazing expansion.
32. The City Surveyor has strengthened 'Two Bridges' so that they can once again bear the weight of vehicles.

## **Incidents**

### **Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common**

33. There were 12 reported incidents up to the writing of this report
34. There were seven incidents related to dogs: three for dogs not under effective control (one of these involved a visitors' clothing being repeatedly grabbed by the dog). Two regular visitors have received final warning letters for PSPO related offences.
35. Other incidents included, a collision of cyclists resulting in one being taken to local A&E, as was the case for a horse rider who was thrown from their horse.

### **Ashtead Common**

36. Police were called when a man acting irrationally attempted to gain access to the Estate Office.

### **The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons**

37. Farthing Downs – Twenty four plant root balls in containers were dumped into the ditch along the roadside - they were later identified by the Police as being from cannabis plants, grown domestically and locally.
38. Farthing Downs – Two youths were caught and filmed driving recklessly in the grass car park, wheel spinning and endangering members of the public. Information about the incident, including video evidence was passed to the Police who subsequently issued both offenders with Section 59 warnings.

## **Filming, major events and other activities**

### **Burnham Beeches**

39. Events during the period have included Visit to Stoke Common by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee in September to view progress on the new management plan.
40. Licenced events have included weekly outings for a Nordic walking group, orienteering training event for a junior national team and local Herts orienteers. The Bucks Fungal group held a foray at Stoke Common – all records of species found will as always be shared with the team. Various scouts, cubs and beavers have used the sites for events before the evenings get too dark.
41. 'Horrible Histories the film' were on site filming for 4 days based around car free roads and the Main Common at Burnham Beeches.

### **The West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons**

42. 6<sup>th</sup> September – bat walk- Kenley Commons.  
7 September – bat walk – West Wickham Commons  
14<sup>th</sup> September - bat walk – Coulsdon Common  
18<sup>th</sup> September – Caterham Beavers – litter pick – Coulsdon Common  
20<sup>th</sup> September – Talk to Beckenham Trefoil – Beckenham Methodist Church  
22<sup>nd</sup> September - Fungi walk – Kenley Common  
22<sup>nd</sup> September – Guided history walk – Riddlesdown Common  
23<sup>rd</sup> September – Meet the Ranger – Kenley Common  
24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> September – Network Rail – corporate volunteering – Coulsdon Common.

Andy Barnard. Superintendent of The Commons  
[andy.barnard@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:andy.barnard@cityoflondon.gov.uk)  
0207 332 6676