

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Public</b>
Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultative Group - Minutes of 22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2019	
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>For Information</b>
Superintendent of The Commons	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>This report provides your committee with the draft minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019 meeting of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultative Group (BB&amp;SC CG).</p> <p>The main topic's covered at the meeting were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Events Policy</li> <li>• Financial issues</li> <li>• Provision of new car park charge infrastructure and related issues</li> <li>• Stoke Common Management Plan</li> <li>• Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Countryside Stewardship Grant applications</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p> <p>Note the draft minutes of the meeting of the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultative Group held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019.</p>	

**BURNHAM BEECHES AND STOKE COMMON CONSULTATIVE GROUP**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019 - Burnham Beeches Estate Office**  
**Draft minutes**

**Present**

**Members:**

Philip Woodhouse	Chairman	Epping Forest and Commons Committee
Graeme Smith	Deputy Chairman	Epping Forest and Commons Committee
Sylvia Moys	Member	Epping Forest and Commons Committee

**Officers:**

Andy Barnard	Superintendent, The Commons
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Hadyn Robson	Open Spaces Department
Deb Harris	Open Spaces Department
Helen Read	Open Spaces Department
Martin Hartup	Open Spaces Department

**Attendees:**

Andy Booth	Volunteer Representative Stoke Common
Joy Winyard	Local Bird Representative
Mark Frater	Local Business Representative
Mary Kolhase	The Avenue Residents Association
Adrian Sutton	Nightingale Park Residents Association
Caroline Spicer	Nightingale Park Residents Association

Heather Smith	Member of the Public
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**New Representatives of existing groups:**

Stephen Knight	Nordic Walkers, Local Visitor Site User Rep
Peter Harding	Farnham's and Hedgerley Community Church
Keith Greenough	Burnham Beeches Rotary Club
James Slade/ Les Davies	Scouting Representative

**Apologies - (snow caused several late apologies):**

Colin Buttery	Director of Open Spaces City of London
Shereen Ansari	Planning Officer South Bucks District Council
Mark Franklin	Woodland Trust
Doug Wallace	Natural England
David Banks	Site Volunteer Ecological Representative
Vivienne Ely	Joggers and Wheelers Society
Katy Ayers	Burnham Beeches Volunteer Representative
Christopher Mitchell	Site representative

**1. The Chairman opened the meeting at 19.00 hours and welcomed new members**

Keith Greenough – Rotary Club  
Peter Harding – Community Church  
Stephen Knight – Local Site representative  
Les Davies Scouting Representative

**2. Minutes of last meeting – Agreed and signed**

**Actions: SBDC Planning issues:** Attendance at local meetings by local officers continues. Planning applications are investigated and commented on according to local protocol. Officers remain heavily engaged with SBDC and others re the development of SBDC's Local Plan.

**3. Superintendents Update**

- i. Terms of Reference - now in place
- ii. Open Spaces Bill – received Royal Assent in 2018. The Open Spaces Events Policy and associated local policy for The Commons were introduced and discussed.

- Q)** a) No mention of sustainable Travel Policy?  
b) Effect on existing scheduled events currently licenced?

- A) a) All event organisers are requested to consider how participants travel to site. Car park charges are a useful tool to encourage car sharing.  
 b) Existing events and current licences will continue with new conditions as required. Time required to allow this to bed in.
- iii. Budgets – 2018/2019 to 2023/2024. Forecasts shown to the meeting, considerable savings required of the Division in recent years, but further cuts are predicted. The Superintendent highlighted areas where savings can still be made including the management of dog waste, which is to be investigated. Income across all 3 sites to increase especially across Merlewood and Ashtead.

Budgets will need to be prioritised with a focus on services that carry legal obligations (environmental and charitable), grant funding commitments and income generation.

A Group Member suggested that Sponsorship should also be an option. The Chairman welcomed this idea and suggested that Local Vets and pet shops could be approached to assist with projects such as dog-waste management costs. The Superintendent acknowledged that this and other income opportunities, needs to be considered as part of the longer-term savings programme.

#### 4. 2018 Head Rangers Update

##### i. Beeches Café

- Closed 03.11.2018
- Re-tendering advertised. Deadline 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019.
- Independent consultant assisting with this process.
- New operator/tenant anticipated in April 2019.
- Temporary catering facility on site continuing until new business starts.
- Repair and maintenance on buildings will commence shortly.

**Q.** Outdoor seating would help. Has an awning/additional cover been considered?

**A.** A possible way forward but there are cost implications and the business case needs exploring and is likely to be tight. Planning restrictions also limit what can be done.

##### ii Car Parking

Long history of rationalisation of car parking at the Beeches including the car fee zone introduction almost 20 years ago. Current Pay and Display facilities introduced as donation scheme in 2007. Charges of £2/day introduced in 2011 and raised to £3.00 in 2016. Car parking income is now an essential part of budgets to deliver visitor services and conservation works.

A new parking charge system is required to replace the aging machines. New technology allows several options, but each has its challenges and associated costs. ANPR (Automatic Number plate Recognition), phone payment, cash, card payments are all being considered. In reality, a variety of new payment methods across the site may be required.

New technology may allow a more flexible approach to charging, but we need to increase income over the coming years and keep our car park operating costs low and this will be reflected in our charging policy. Enforcement is also an issue and impacts on the work of the ranger team. Running costs must be minimised.

Each car park is used differently e.g. The Stag Car Park is a very useful car park

for filming revenue, though weekend car park charging income is low. The final Car Park charge strategy needs to reflect this different usage.

- Q)** Could the Annual Donation Badge be used as an incentive?
- A)** Annual donation badge is VAT free and we will continue to encourage its uptake. Season tickets and incentives are to be part of the general parking package and we need to consider wider VAT implications.
- Q)** Are car parks locked?
- A)** All car parks are locked every evening, reducing overnight issues and additional management, thus keeping the site secure and keeping costs down.
- Q)** Is variable rate charging being considered?
- A)** This will be considered as an option, although management and enforcement costs could quickly remove any additional income raised.
- Q)** Is ANPR the most expensive system?
- A)** ANPR is the most expensive option to set up but perhaps the most future proof.
- Q)** Will 7 day a week car park charges be introduced i.e. charges Mon - Fri rather than donations only on weekdays?
- A)** BB is one of the only sites in the area that is free weekdays, though this is a 'nice to do', budget challenges might mean we have no choice but to introduce 7 day a week charging. The City is aware of the potential impact on the local community and the various pros and cons including the loss of VAT free donations via the car park machines, Monday to Friday, that currently make a significant contribution to local risk budgets
- Q)** Suggestion to let site users know the actual cost of running the site and main areas of expenditure and where the money comes from?
- A)** We will continue to promote the site's finances and the pressures they will be under for many years to come. We will feature these issues on the site newsletters and at the forthcoming management plan consultation exercise due later this year

## **5. Management Plans**

### **i. Stoke Common – 2019 to 2028**

The Conservation Officer introduced the review of the new Stoke Common Management Plan and thanked all for their input. The plan was recently approved by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and Natural England.

The Conservation Officer also reported on the work to submit a Countryside Stewardship Grant application for both Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common. This application was recently approved by Natural England and commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019. The obligations and conditions of use under this new grant scheme are very stringent and will require extensive monitoring and reporting of all grant aided activity.

### **ii. The Burnham Beeches Management Plan 2020 - 2029**

Work to be revise this plan commences in March and runs through 2019 for a January 2020 completion deadline.

Some of the achievements toward the Beeches long-term vision from the last 10-year Management plan were highlighted including:

- Grazing increased to almost 80% of the site including the introduction of invisible fencing – an increase in area grazed of almost 400%!
- Protection of the Beeches – Local plan
- Visitor issues – Trampler /sensory trail and path improvements
- Introduction of DCO/PSPOs
- Car Park charges and donations introduced.
- Events public participation – large increase in educational visits
- Volunteers – huge increase in support in many and various roles.
- Old pollards – 50 trees cut each year
- Young Pollards 1000 created
- Heathland/Wood pasture restoration
- Path improvements – several kilometres

ii. New 10 Year Plan. Will include a review of:

- 500 Year Vision
- All Habitats
- Linking the NNR to the wider landscape, looking outwards to connect with other local commons and green spaces
- Ensure that Burnham Beeches remains a place of quiet, responsible recreation that is sympathetic to its status as an SSSI, NNR and SAC.

iii. Schedule: -

March 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> Management Plan draft to be devised
July 2019	BBSCCG Site visit – consultation
July 2019	Epping Forest and Commons Committee site visit
Oct 2019	Public Consultation for BB site users/general public
Nov 2019	Final Draft
Jan 2020	Presented to EFCC for approval prior to Natural England consent.

BB&SC Consultative Group members are asked to encourage the site users they represent to attend the Autumn Public Consultation – October 2019 (possibly Half Term week). If any meeting attendees have photos of the Beeches with members of the public on site and have consent for CoL to use them, please forward them plus any views or ideas concerning the management plan to [Burnham.Beeches@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:Burnham.Beeches@cityoflondon.gov.uk).

iv. Key Projects 2019 - Stoke Common and Burnham Beeches

- Grazing Extension
- Car Parking
- Management Plan
- Veteran Pollard work 60+ trees
- Hillforts project – HLS grant to the Chilterns Conservation Board of which Seven Ways Plain Hillfort in Burnham has been included. Many varied means of involvement through volunteering, please contact Helen Read if you would like further information with regards this project for volunteering or look on the website/sign up to the newsletter.

## 6. Planning Issues:

### i. SBDC:

- Local Plan should be ready for public consultation in early summer 2019 and should include a Policy that sets out how Burnham Beeches will be protected. It would be helpful if BBCG members could look at this and send comments in to SBDC.
  - BB Air quality issues, specialist consultants have been employed by SBDC to look in more detail at the impacts on BB.
  - Recent planning application to level some land at Beeches Golf Course requires the importation of soil via HGV and the favoured route at present is through the Beeches. A Habitats Regulations Assessment will be required.
- Q) Does the City of London Burnham Beeches also liaise with Slough Borough Council with regards Local Plans and planning issues?
- A) Burnham Beeches team is liaising with Slough Borough Council. Each LA will have its own Local Plan. Slough's approach is somewhat different to SBDC's because of the impact of the third runway at Heathrow Airport.
- Q) Have Burnham Beeches Management team opposed the lorry movements from the Beeches Golf Course?
- A) The City has commented on the applications and requested that a Habitat Regulation Assessment be carried out. Although the actual work to be undertaken at the golf club location may not directly impact the Beeches the lorry movements will.

### ii. Landscape Project

This potential project is at an early stage of its development and currently being led by the Conservation Officer. Heathrow Airport are providing grants to achieve a net gain in biodiversity to offset the long-term impacts of Runway 3 and we are looking at this to help fund this project.

Additional funds have been provided by the City to develop the grant submission. The project strives to link Burnham Beeches with the wider landscape by working with a variety of landowners in the area and thereby achieve a net gain in biodiversity. This project could bring very long-term benefits to Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common and their surrounding communities.

## 7. A.O.B

No further questions from the meeting.

The Chairman thanked everyone at the meeting for attending.

**Summer site visit date** - to be confirmed and forwarded to the group.

The Superintendent thanked the Chairman for his commitment to these important meetings and work in general across Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common and informed the meeting that the Chairman had served three years on the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and will, as policy dictates, step down in May 2019.

The meeting closed at 20.40 hours