

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons Committee	11 th March 2019
Subject: Superintendent's Update	Public
Report of: Superintendent of 'The Commons'	For Information
Summary	
<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>	
Recommendation	
Members are asked to note the contents of this report.	

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

1. The quarry site at East Burnham continues to operate as has the associated monitoring. Dust levels from the sticky pads remain quite high but the Frisbee gauges indicate that this is probably due to organic matter and not dust from the quarry. Water levels are generally within envelopes or within historic ranges.
2. Visitor information (absolute numbers, post codes, frequency etc) has been provided to a consultant working for South Bucks District Council (SBDC) in relation to the provision of a mitigation strategy for the impact of recreation pressure.
3. A meeting was recently held with SBDC and Buckinghamshire County Council Highways Dept regarding the mitigation strategy in relation to transport and air quality. Several transport related options were discussed to reduce air quality issues. Draft proposals are expected for comment in the near future.
4. The final agreement for the Countryside Stewardship grant has been received, signed and returned by Natural England. Grant funded work has now started.
5. Feedback has been received from Wood, consultants for Heathrow Airport, on the draft application for funding biodiversity net gain around Burnham Beeches. A job specification and person specification for the post to help deliver the full application have been drawn up and the job is currently being evaluated. This post is being funded from the City's Priorities Investment Pot
5. A meeting was held between Natural England, Historic England and the Chilterns Hillforts Project to discuss the management of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments on

Burnham Beeches. As a result, some small-scale archaeological excavation of a wood bank is planned for September. The Hillforts project has some funding to help with interpretation and the Senior Ranger (Interpretation) has been assisting by exploring virtual reality options.

6. Work has started on the Burnham Beeches management plan with the first of a series of staff consultation days focussing on wood pasture management.
7. A temporary mobile refreshment van is out at Burnham Beeches on weekends, school holidays and peak times. Tenders for the café have been received and evaluated. Interviews took place on 28th February and the recommended tender approved under delegated authority. While the café is closed the opportunity has been taken to undertake the necessary cyclical maintenance works.
8. 82 young pollards have been cut as part of the winter work programme under the Countryside Stewardship grant. An access platform was hired to reach some of the taller trees and to cut back larger trees that were over shading them.
9. Nine old pollards have also been 'reduced' during the time the access platform was on hire. Arborists from Hampstead Heath once again came to Burnham Beeches to work on those requiring climbing.
10. Volunteers and staff have carried out scrub control and wood pasture restoration along the southern boundary of Burnham Beeches including around the 'pigloo' area and on Pumpkin Hill.
11. Contractors have been doing tree safety works on Stoke Common adjacent to the Gerrards Cross Road.
12. Ponies are continuing to graze the West Commons at Stoke Common. The cows are in their winter quarters with a local farmer.
13. The Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultative Group met on the evening of January 22. Members received presentations on the Events Policy, Management Planning, café feasibility report and installation of car park infrastructure and introduction charges.

PARTNERSHIPS

Kenley Revival update

13. The City's legal advisors, Beale and Company, have written to Avanti, the project's Principal Designer and Contract Administrator, under the term of the Pre-Action Protocol for Construction and Engineering Disputes, claiming that Avanti is

responsible for the defects that have occurred to the works. Avanti have 28 days to respond to the letter.

14. Interviews for the PIP funded post of Legacy Officer were held on January 29 and an active volunteer for the project was appointed. She is available to start as soon as the pre-employment process is completed.
15. A series of school workshops held during January engaged 445 primary school students in WWII related topics.
16. Designs and artwork for the interpretative on-site signage are now with the primary contractor Allsigns, having been produced by their sub-contractor Imagemakers. They are currently assessing manufacturing options and have been instructed to produce one of each of the three sign types to be used to discharge a planning condition to provide samples prior to installation.
17. The project's events apprentice, Josie Evans, has left the organisation to pursue a career in insurance.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

18. Following a minor rock fall in Riddlesdown quarry we are working with the City Surveyor to establish a long-term solution to safety issues and management of this part of the estate. There is a direct impact on the car parking arrangement for our tenant, Optical Surfaces, who use the tunnels under Riddlesdown for the manufacture of high-tech optical equipment. This has not led to them being denied access to the site, but we are working closely with the City Surveyor to properly assess the risks and provide a long-term solution to mitigate them.
19. The Information Ranger position remains vacant after the recruitment campaign. The post has been re-advertised and second round interviews was held in late February.
20. A series of management Plan 'visioning' meetings have been organised to discuss the future management of Farthing Downs and New Hill. These meetings have focused on the vision, habitat management, Ranger tasks, onsite issues and communications.
21. Calving – we have 10 healthy calves – 6 heifers and 4 steers. Most of the cows have given birth unassisted and are taking good care of their calves, but some have required intervention. The cows and calves will remain in barns at Merlewood Estate Yard until the calves are 3 months old.
22. The Ranger team have started to clear vegetation around the Maze on Coulsdon Common in order to be able to install a new livestock fence in April.

23. High and medium risk tree safety inspections have been carried out across all sites and the resulting work specification submitted to City Procurement and a contractor appointed. The work will be carried out over the next few weeks.
24. In 2018 Dormice nest tubes were placed at various locations across Kenley and Coulsdon Commons to see whether these endearing mammals were present. When surveyed this month there appears to be some evidence that dormice are present and have utilised some of the tubes.
25. A contractor has worked to remove some of the silt from the pond at Spring Park to create a more favourable environment for aquatic species to flourish.
26. The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons Consultative Group met on the evening of January 24. Members received presentations on the Events Policy, Management Planning, café feasibility report and installation of car park infrastructure and introduction charges.

Ashtead Common

27. The Ashtead Common Consultative Group met on the evening of February 7. Members received presentations on the Events Policy, Management Planning, café feasibility report and reed bed design.
28. This years' veteran tree work is nearing completion, with 75 trees treated in a part of the common called District 10, located near to the Roman Villa. Scrub and ride management projects have also progressed well.
29. The bronze artefacts illegally removed from the Earthworks in March 2017 are now at the British Museum for dating and conservation, having been reported under the Treasure Act.
30. Invitations to tender for OPM work have been issued in two lots, with lot one covering the Commons. Currently, Ashtead is the only site in the division to have been infested, although it is likely to spread to more sites this year, and eventually all in due course. Ashtead spent £30,000 on OPM related activity this year.

Incidents

Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

31. There were 7 reported incidents during the period
32. Three incidents related to dogs not under effective control.

33. The other incidents were: one car break-in, one case of dumped rubbish, a possible camp site and an incident where some sheep had strayed onto an adjoining public highway and the Rangers helped to get them back in their field.

Ashtead Common

34. Incidents involving illegal metal detecting (but not on the Scheduled Monuments) and motorcycles were recorded during this period.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

35. Metal detecting on Farthing Downs – Dr Jane Sidell, English Heritage, attended a site. The local Senior Neighbourhood Team (SNT) of the Metropolitan Police are aware of the situation.

36. Farthing Downs – Deer dispatched as critically injured by possible dog attack.

37. Kenley Common – Den behind the rifle range has been dismantled by the Ranger team as suspected used for drug abuse – SNT are aware

38. Kenley Common – Verbal abuse – concerned site user was advised to call the Police.

39. Riddlesdown – Ranger team assisted an injured woman back to the car park after being knocked over by her dogs.

40. West Wickham Common – Car crashed on West Wickham Common, but occupants were uninjured. The car has been recovered and no significant damage to the common.

Filming, major events and other activities

Burnham Beeches

41. Events at the Beeches included a winter tree identification walk, a half term trail and two 'simply walk' events. The Beeches also hosted a day for the Ancient Tree Forum attended by 25 delegates, from a variety of organisations including CoL staff, to promote the VETcert certification for specialists working on veteran trees and which included a walk to show case some of the recent work on the veteran trees.

42. The West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons

43. The Ranger team delivered 3 guided walks – Two Ramble with the Farthing Downs Ranger events and a Healthy Hearts walk on Coulsdon Common Coulsdon.

44. Caterham Scouts visited Coulsdon common and supported the Ranger to clear the pond.

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