

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons Committee	8 July 2019
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 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.</p>	

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

1. Dust and hydrology monitoring in relation to the quarry operations continued during the period. Levels of both continue to fluctuate but do not show any major concerns.
2. The Draft South Bucks District Council (SBDC) Local Plan has been published for consultation under Regulation 19. A meeting was held with SBDC and Natural England Officers to discuss this and the resulting mitigation strategies. Generally the plan conforms to expectations although there is further work to be done on the mitigation strategies for recreation pressure and air quality. The former is progressing well and Officers are closely involved in the process. The results of modelling air quality under various mitigation options is still awaited and this remains the area of greatest uncertainty. A response to the consultation has been drafted and will be submitted prior to the deadline once approved.
3. Following the application to Heathrow Airport Officers attended a very positive meeting to discuss the way forward and this is discussed further in a separate report.
4. Staff consultation events regarding the new Burnham Beeches management plan have concluded and the draft plan has been produced. Planning has started for the public consultation event in October.
5. The Cafe in Burnham Beeches is now fully open under the new tenant who has improved the appearance of the seating area.
6. The cattle have returned to Stoke Common and Burnham Beeches. For the first time cattle have grazed on part of the Main Common where they were well received by

visitors. Cattle have also grazed within the virtual fence area and the 'normal' fenced area where they have been joined by the ponies. Checking of livestock when they are within the virtual fences continues to be more frequent to ensure everything is functioning correctly. Fence repairs and maintenance has continued as the cattle are moved between different grazing areas.

7. Work on the trees has continued with the arboricultural team from Hampstead checking the tethers and braces on the old pollards and volunteers topping up the mulch under selected trees. Burnham Beeches staff also visited Hampstead to look at the management for Oak Processionary moth. Squirrels are controlled every year to prevent excessive damage to the beech trees and this year the numbers have been some of the highest we have seen, resulting in time-consuming work by the Rangers.
8. The Lord Mayor's annual visit to the Beeches was made (although the Lady Mayoress attended in his place) and a tree pollarded. Staff were involved in preparations in advance of the visit as well as welcoming the guests on the day.
9. Volunteers completed the annual whole site reptile survey at Stoke Common and have also been busy cleaning signs, tidying up the car parks and starting on the bracken control. They also had a visit to Kenley Common to learn about the history and see some of the glorious chalk grassland flowers. The 'Eco volunteers' have been helping with the annual vegetation monitoring on Burnham Beeches and helping with a spider survey of Stoke Common which is being carried out by a consultant.
10. There have been two different companies filming in Burnham Beeches. Netflix have been on site twice to film 'Cursed', the sixth version of the story of King Arthur filmed in the Beeches in the last 30 years. Sky have been filming for a comedy called 'Hitmen' starring Mel and Sue from 'Bake off'.
11. The site was judged for the Green Flag and Green Heritage awards. The results are not yet known.

PARTNERSHIPS

Kenley Revival update

12. The Buildings Research Establishment's final report on the performance of materials on trial is due imminently. Five different mortars and two brick types, plus waterproofing, have been tested on site since November to determine which combinations are resistant to thaumasite sulphate attack. Final sampling occurred on May 22nd, and visual inspection at the time indicated that only one cement type, a Danish cement called Aarlberg, had survived intact. Colleagues in the City Surveyor's Department are being consulted on how to interpret the report.

13. The City's legal advisors, Beale and Company, advised that proceedings initiated under the Pre-action Protocol for Construction and Engineering Disputes against the Principal Designer should wait until the outcome of the BRE report is established.
14. On-site signage and a travelling exhibition are currently in production. Initially just one example of each of the three sign types is being produced in order to discharge a planning condition to provide samples.
15. A total of 17,969 people have now been engaged directly by the project. This figure includes 232 school students who have attended outreach and on-site activities since March.
16. A guided walk entitled 'Pilots and Pets' attracted media interest and led to the Legacy Officer giving an interview for BBC London's Barking Hour show.
17. Website and social media content has expanded significantly with several articles appearing during this period. An article promoting the forthcoming youth volunteering initiative reached 1,847 people, and a social media post about D-Day reached 1,214 people.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

18. The Kenley Ranger has started her maternity leave. The Conservation Ranger has successfully applied for a post with the Forestry Commission. The Farthing Downs Ranger has resigned to move to a new area with his family. A disciplinary hearing has led to the dismissal of one member of staff subject to appeal.
19. The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons have been assessed by Green Flag and Green Heritage judges.
20. The team at MEO has started to prepare the South London Downs Discovery Day on Thursday 25 July, 1pm-5pm.
21. The Ranger team has started to survey for OPM across Spring Park where a branch overhanging the site showed a nest last year. One nest has been discovered.
22. The fence around the Maze on Coulsdon Common has been finished and the area is now being grazed by Wilf (bull) and a steer. Two broad-leaved helleborines have been found in the field, which are behind an electric fence to avoid grazing.
23. The cattle have moved on to the main grazing area at Farthing Downs. A portable water trough has been built to help managing the grazing across the site.

24. The sheep have been brought in from the Downs for shearing.

Ashtead Common

27. A significant increase in OPM infestation is being recorded. At the time of writing approximately 250 nests have been identified after just three weeks of monitoring. This surpasses last years' total and indicates that there will be over 1,000 nests this year. Nest removal has commenced using a risk-based approach to target areas with higher footfall. Elsewhere the nests will be left, unless they are in an area due to be worked on during the autumn and winter.
28. Phoenix grazing area has been expanded to double in size to 14ha. Cattle now graze up to the western boundary of the common for the first time. Much of the work to install the infrastructure needed was undertaken by volunteers.
29. The site was judged for the Green Flag and Green Heritage awards. The results are not yet known.
30. Lepidoptera species generally appear to have had a good year, with a noticeable degree of defoliation evident on many of the oak trees. Fortunately, the rainfall through June encouraged a growth spurt, enabling the trees to counteract the effect. Green hairstreak was recorded for the first time.

Incidents

Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

31. There were 16 reported incidents during the period
32. A successful prosecution was brought for non-compliance of the PSPOs (dog off lead in an on-lead area).
33. Three incidents related to fires at the Beeches which were all small scale, 2 at site bins and one in woodland, and dealt with by the ranger team
34. The other incidents include 3 fly tipping incidents at the Beeches and Stoke Common and two incidents with dogs not on leads in the on-lead area requiring follow up action – both resulted in final warning letter to the parties involved.

Ashtead Common

35. An injured swan was taken to Wildlife Aid with an injured leg caused by an overly tight leg ring.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

- 36. Coulsdon Common – Damaged gate post, near Windmill paddock, Stites Hill Road – driven into by vehicle/NSH to speak to Windmill kennels and follow up (on-going)
- 37. Coulsdon Common – Overflowing drain on Stites Hill Road – incident has been reported to Thames Water/Caterham Flood action group and the rubbish and sanitary waste has been removed by the ranger team
- 38. Coulsdon Common – Oak branch obstructed Coulsdon Road – branch was cleared, and contractor climbed tree to reduce weight.
- 39. Kenley Common – boat dumped along Hayes Lane – police were involved as boat was obstructing Hayes Lane. Police moved the boat onto our hedge which was removed by Croydon Council. The boat damaged the fence along Hayes Lane which has been reported to City Surveyors.
- 40. Farthing Downs – Two incidents of fly-tipping, the bags with fly-tipping were searched but no evidence of address or name found.
- 41. Spring Park – Fly-tipped party rubbish – bags were collected by the ranger team and no evidence of ownership found.

Filming, major events and other activities

Burnham Beeches

- 42. Events at the Beeches included: Easter half term trail and 4 'simply walk' events, meet the Ranger events – one in march attracting 160 people to look at reptiles and amphibians in a 2 hour period. The Beeches also hosted a number of school events and 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.

The West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons

- 43. The Ranger team delivered guided walks (Breakfast with birds at Coulsdon Common, Spring walk across Riddlesdown), self-guided trails (Enchanted woodland trail on Kenley Common) and talks (talk to U3A Croydon)

44. The Ranger team participated in NHS active aging event to talk to the local community about the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons.

Andy Barnard. Superintendent of The Commons

andy.barnard@cityoflondon.gov.uk

0207 332 6676

07850764592