

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	6 July 2015
Subject: Superintendent's Update	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, Stoke and City Commons.	For Information
Summary	
<p>This report provides a general update on issues across the Burnham Beeches, Stoke and City Commons Division, that may be of interest to members and is supplementary to the monthly, electronic updates.</p>	
Recommendation	
<p>Members are asked to note this report.</p>	

Projects

1. **Kenley Revival Project.** The phase two project bid was formally submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund on 5th June 2015. An announcement is expected in mid September 2015. A report requesting authorisation to proceed to the implementation phase, should the bid be successful, will be submitted to this Committee and Projects Sub-Committee for consideration in September 2015.
2. **Burnham Beeches – expansion of the Conservation Grazing Scheme.** The imminent installation of additional invisible fence enclosures will allow 161ha (73%) of the site to be grazed in 2015. The total grazed area up until this point was 43ha so these latest works represent a significant step towards the ultimate aim to graze across the site. The team at Burnham Beeches continues to work closely with colleagues at Epping Forest to help further test and refine the technology.

Events and activities

3. **Natural England – Regional Team Visit to Burnham Beeches.** This site visit took place in mid June and the opportunity was used to discuss major issues faced by Burnham Beeches SAC. Topics included:
 - a. The local planning system and our joint work to ensure adequate protection for the site via the forthcoming Local Plan.
 - b. Dog Control Orders. Natural England's position concerning the introduction of DCO's on the site was discussed, particularly the impact of its 2014 public statement and subsequent use by opponents to the scheme. This was a positive discussion and several options are now

being considered including widening of the advice network to inform NE's position and associated public statements.

4. A site meeting between staff, Natural England and two regular visitors to Ashtead Common was held to discuss the wood pasture and scrub management work across the site. The two visitors had independently expressed concern about the scale and impact of this work programme on plants and amenity and there had been some local press coverage of their views. The meeting outcome was generally positive with several actions agreed for all parties. This dialogue will continue as and when necessary.

Planning

5. The Conservation Officer is liaising closely with Natural England to arrange a regional conference and workshop concerning the impact of planned developments on sites of high nature conservation value. Speakers and participants with conservation, planning and construction interests will be represented with the aim of raising awareness and understanding of issues and impacts between these often conflicting concerns. Officers from Epping Forest will also attend.
6. A planning application by Vodafone to Croydon County Council to *erect a 15m structure with 6 antennas, a dish antennas, an equipment cabin and associated ancillary development*, has been reviewed by the Support Services Manager and Head Ranger of Kenley Common and comments submitted.

Rural Payments Agency (RPA) Grants.

7. All parts of the Division have worked closely with Epping Forest to prepare their Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) submissions to the RPA. This is a new scheme and replaces the Single Payment Scheme (SPS).

The City Commons element of the Division now sits with Epping Forest as a single, 'unified' agricultural business. Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common remain as an independent agricultural business. It is planned to simplify this matter by merging the latter with the former in the near future.

The introduction of BPS scheme has meant the following changes across the division:

- a. **Ashtead Common.** As a registered common Ashtead can no longer claim the theoretical 'whole site' grazing value of the site and must now precisely map out areas that are grazable. This provides several challenges:
 - i. The mapping process is very complex, subjective and time consuming. It is also costly.
 - ii. The payment for grazable areas will mean a large reduction in income, possibly up to 75% (estimated at £35,000).
 - iii. The grazable area will change over time as the wood-pasture management area expands and matures. These changes must be mapped and submitted each year.

- iv. The number of entitlements (linked to the grazed area) will be greatly reduced and must be sold, transferred, leased or lost over the coming months. Because the mapping process is lagging behind the submission deadline it is not possible at this stage to identify the number of spare entitlements however, they are thought to be at least sufficient to accommodate any increase in entitlement needs at the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons.
 - b. **Burnham Beeches.** As Burnham Beeches is also a registered comment the situation is largely the same as for Ashtead Common. Again the number of entitlements currently held is likely to exceed those required after the mapping exercise has been completed and 50 have been sold (producing a 'one off' income of approximately £1000). Overall the site is likely to have a much reduced annual income from this grant source, perhaps as much as 50% of that previously received. However, the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) grant (payable for managing the land in a prescribed manner such as grazing) is set to increase this year to reflect the expansion of the conservation grazing scheme. The amount of increase from the HLS grant will help to compensate for the loss in BPS grant at least for the next three years.
 - c. **Stoke Common.** This site is also a registered common and must therefore be remapped. However, tree cover is considerably less than at Burnham and Ashtead and will be further reduced as the heathland restoration programme nears the end of the first 10 year management plan. Some loss of income is inevitable however, although it is likely to be in the order of 10-15% of the current value.
 - d. **Kenley Common, Coulsdon Common, Farthing Downs, Riddlesdown and West Wickham and Spring Park.** These sites are not registered commons and are less affected by the changes than Ashtead, Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common as they have always been required to provide the RPA with detailed maps of grazable areas. However, the opportunity has been taken to re map the sites and this has brought more land under the grant scheme. This 'new' land will require extra entitlements under the BPS. As previously stated, these additional entitlements will be met by spare capacity at Ashtead Common. It is hoped that any increase in BPS income from this 'additional land' will help reduce the impact of losses at Ashtead. However, exact figures are not known at the time of writing.
8. **Major incidents.** On 10th June Travellers established a presence on land owned by Bromley Council (Sparrow's Den) directly adjoining Spring Park. They were evicted by Bromley Council on 12th June. Some fly tipping occurred on City owned land in the interim and costs of around £300 have accrued to the division's local risk budget.
9. **Film Activity.**
- a. The BBC has recently used Burnham Beeches to film a pilot episode of a period comedy drama series. This may lead to further income, should the pilot episode be successful.

b. The current Channel 4 serial 'Humans' was filmed in part at Burnham Beeches in 2014 and the site features in several episodes.

- Appendices - None

Andy Barnard - Superintendent

T: 0207 332 6676

Email: andy.barnard@cityoflondon.gov.uk