

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Epping Forest & Commons	9 <sup>th</sup> May 2016
<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>	

## **PLANNING CONTROL**

### **Local Development Plans.**

#### **Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common**

1. A liaison meeting is to be held with Buckinghamshire County Council to finalise the hydrology protocol for the neighbouring gravel extraction site that has been recently reactivated.
2. The annual dust report has been received which shows some high levels of dust which seems to correlate with gravel workings. This is being followed up with the consultants.
3. A meeting has been arranged with Natural England, South Bucks District Council and Summerleaze (gravel site owners/operative) to discuss the restoration of the gravel site once operations have permanently ceased.

### **Planning applications.**

#### **Ashtead Common**

4. The land immediately adjacent to the Ashtead Estate Office is subject to a planning application to demolish the former tea room building and erect eight houses. This is essentially a re-submission of an application submitted in 2004, which the City objected to at the time. Officers are working with the Surveyors Department to draft a suitable response.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Kenley Revival update**

5. **Kenley Revival Project Manager** - starts in her new post on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016.
6. **Kenley Revival Learning and Volunteers Officer** - started in her new post on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2016.
7. **Web site developer.** The Revival Project places a strong emphasis on the creation of a bespoke website. This will be an essential tool particularly for schools and the archiving and publishing of digitised material. 14 Tenders were received and 4 companies asked to present their proposals. The successful tender was submitted by EQtwo who were felt to offer the greatest understanding of the project's requirements and best blend of design, innovation and 'usability'. The web site should be live in early summer 2016.
8. A group of 12 volunteers were trained in 'gathering oral histories on May 4<sup>th</sup>. On May 11<sup>th</sup> an open day event is being held to encourage more volunteers to get involved in the project.
9. Contractors contributed to the Kenley Revival Project by cutting and removing vegetation growing on the blast pens and air raid shelters.

## **WORK PROGRAMME – HIGHLIGHTS.**

### **The Coulsdon Commons**

10. A project to install a new 'sheep race' on Riddlesdown is underway thanks to the tremendous effort of volunteers. Over three days, 35 children from Riddlesdown Collegiate cleared young scrub off the intended 'drove route' which will facilitate movement of stock around the site.
11. Mature Oak trees on Coulsdon Common have been protected thanks to the work of corporate volunteers. 14 employees from the Pension Protection Fund, based in East Croydon, cleared bramble and scrub from around trees, footpaths and bridleways.

### **The West Wickham Commons**

12. Ten local residents spent the day installing a new gateway and filling gaps in the young hedgerows on the 'Good Friday task'. Their efforts should ensure Spring Park is protected from any unauthorised vehicles venturing across the grasslands.

### **Burnham Beeches**

13. Car park charges were increased at weekends and bank holiday from 1<sup>st</sup> April from £2.00/day to £3.00/day. The change was widely advertised for 6 weeks and all site signs altered and machines re-programmed to reflect the new charging arrangements. The new charges went live as planned on the 1<sup>st</sup> April.
14. Successful events at the Beeches included an Easter trail enjoyed by around 500 visitors, even with poor weather over the Easter Weekend.

### **Stoke Common.**

15. Volunteers from Friends of Stoke Common/Burnham Beeches are helping to deliver a whole site reptile survey at Stoke Common during April and May. 10 areas are being surveyed each requiring a minimum of 7 visits and each visit taking on average 2 hrs. This is a huge commitment from our volunteers (and staff) and we could not achieve this work without their fantastic support. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year this survey has taken place and is indicating species recovery and expansion into areas restored to heathland over the last 8 years of the management plan.
16. Habitat works finished in March and projects have now switched focus to fence repairs and improvements ahead of the grazing season that will commence in May/June.

### **Ashtead Common.**

17. Volunteers have replaced the wooden footbridge that spans the flow control structure on the Rye Brook. This project has contributed to a contribution of nearly 1,000 volunteer hours in April alone.
18. Approximately £2,000 worth of oak timber was milled on site from trees felled as part of the conservation management programme. This timber (mainly oak) is to be used to fence the western boundary of the common and provide edging timber for a new surfaced path.

### **Storm Katie.**

19. Burnham Beeches car parks were closed for nearly ½ the day on Easter Monday and started to re-open following site inspections from 11am and were fully open by 1pm. The storm brought down 2 large mature trees close to or across pathways (1 oak and one beech) along with lots of small branches. At Stoke Common a small group of young pines were blown over in an area where they had been left after restoration works.
20. Ashtead Common. 18 separate incidences of damage were recorded. None of the veteran trees were affected, but a number of smaller trees were blown over and some tree limbs were lost. A sign board was flattened and some small footbridges belonging to holders of wayleave agreements were dislodged.
21. West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons. There were 48 separate tree related issues across the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons which were mostly dealt with at the time by the team. The majority of incidents concerned the blocking of footpaths and neighbours boundaries. One kissing gate on Kenley common was damaged.
22. In all instances following high winds the Division's Operations Teams conduct visual inspections of High and Medium Risk routes and locations. Any dangerous, fallen trees or debris is identified, mapped and subsequently made safe.

## **Support Services.**

23. Interviews for the post of PA to the Superintendent were held in April and the post has now been filled on a part time, permanent basis based at Burnham Beeches (previously a full time post based at Merlewood). The salary savings will be used to bring in temporary support to The Commons team as required.
24. The Support Services Officer at Merlewood has taken up a new post in the Department of Built Environment. The vacant position will be advertised in the near future. Local adjustments have been made to accommodate the vacant post in the short term
25. The Senior Ranger at Merlewood Estate Office has returned to work on light duties, part time, after breaking his ankle whilst working on Kenley Common.
26. A member of the Ashted Common team member has returned to light duties after a series of surgical procedures.
27. The Ranger for Kenley Common is taking up a position with the National Trust in Dorset. The post is currently being advertised.
28. The Information Ranger at Coulsdon Commons is taking up a voluntary position overseas. The post is currently being advertised.

## **INCIDENTS**

### **Burnham Beeches**

#### **DCO's.**

29. Final warning letters have been issued to offenders for:
  - a. Persistent failure to comply with Schedule 2 (Dogs on leads). An FPN will now be issued should there be a further occurrence.
  - b. Failure to put dogs on a lead in the Schedule 2 area - not carrying the means to do so.

### **Car Parking**

30. Two complaints have been received following the recent increase in car park charges.
31. A regular dog walker failed to pay the parking charge and was issued with a PCN. This was later found stuck to the car park machine. The PCN is being pursued.

### **Ashted Common.**

32. A member of the public was found removing timber from the common. The timber was returned.

### **West Wickham and Coulson Commons**

33. Reports of both motorcycles and quad bikes operating on Coulsdon and Kenley Common have been followed up by the rangers. Photographic evidence has been collected and details passed on to the local police for further investigation.

34. A temporary camp was found in woodland on Kenley Common. The camp was dismantled.
35. Rangers came to the assistance of a female dog walker on Riddlesdown after she had twisted her ankle whilst playing with her dog. The two rangers provided physical support for the lady enabling her to return to the car where her husband was waiting.

#### **FILMING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

36. A film unit has been at Burnham Beeches for 1 days filming and 4 days 'preparation and strike' generating an income of £15,100 to the site.

#### **Andy Barnard - Superintendent 'The Commons'**

T: 0207 332 6676

Email: [andy.barnard@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:andy.barnard@cityoflondon.gov.uk)