

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Epping Forest & Commons	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2017
<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>	

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

1. The volunteer hours total for financial year 2016-17 was 4,901, this includes 388.5 hours of volunteering by under 18's, typically Duke of Edinburgh Awards students or Scouts.
2. The consultation process has commenced on the proposal to convert the existing DCOs to Public Space Protection Orders. An update report has been provided as a separate agenda item, for Member's information.
3. During the period staff have held two walks and events from the programme and two requested guided walks for students from Reading University. An Ancient tree and fungi group from Essex were also guided on the site. Children from the local Infant school made use of the Easter trail. The Easter trail continued to be used by members of the public throughout the holiday period
4. The grazing project preparations have started with the team testing virtual fence systems ahead of livestock returning to site. All tests were successful and livestock will return to the site soon.
5. Gravel Extraction and landfill site at East Burnham. Preparation work has been carried out by Summerleaze Ltd on the first cell ready for infilling with inert waste which is imminent. Extraction works are likely to start again in mid-summer.
6. Hydrological monitoring of the gravel and infill workings has continued. No effects have been seen so far. Three additional dust monitoring stations have been set up to record quantitative and directional data.

7. Slough Borough Council (SBC) have consulted on their Local Plan 'Issues and Options' document and a response has been sent by your Officers. SBC need to accommodate an additional 20,000 houses. One of the proposed options is to build a 'garden suburb' within South Bucks District Council (SBDC) land, which is very much opposed by SBDC.
8. Air pollution and recreational pressure on the SAC have been identified by the Habitats Regulations Assessments for both SBC and SBDC plans as being issues needing resolving in relation to Burnham Beeches. Meetings continue to be held between your officers, SBDC Officers, Bucks County Council and Natural England regarding potential methods to mitigate these impacts. A meeting recently took place with Slough Borough Council to discuss this further. The impact of the Housing White Paper may influence the options as well as the third runway at Heathrow Airport.

### **Stoke Common**

9. The annual reptile survey has commenced with 240 survey sheets laid out across the site with volunteers trained for carrying out regular checks.
10. The winter work programme of scrub clearance and heathland restoration was completed on time and on budget.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Kenley Revival update**

11. The Conservation Works re-tender was successful with PAYE appointed; works are due to begin onsite from 24<sup>th</sup> April. A contract for a 'watching brief' for Unexploded Ordinance was successful with 1<sup>st</sup> line Defence appointed.
12. The Interpretation Works tender was successful with AllSigns appointed to deliver the signs and travelling exhibition. A 'kick off' meeting is due on 13<sup>th</sup> April.
13. Stonewest have been appointed to complete the relocation of 'The Tribute. Works commenced 24<sup>th</sup> April and should be completed in early June. Planning consent was recently given for this project i.e. Tribute Relocation and Spine wall restoration.
14. A second Planning application submission is now required to install the new site signage.
15. The Education Resource Designer is working with the Learning & Volunteer Officer to deliver the self-guided walks, quiz trails, World War II display and loan boxes by May. The first iterations of the design concepts have been sent to the project team.

16. The project's website contract has ended with EqTwo and HLF and Project Board have agreed to fund for the website to transition to Community Sites for an overhaul and to build the archive
17. Volunteer hours for financial year 16/17 have been submitted with a total of 117 volunteer's days with 372 volunteers achieved with a financial impact of approximately £27k.
18. The Community Archaeology programme for this year is currently being finalised with a dig to take place 17 – 21<sup>st</sup> July with an Open Day taking place on the Saturday and Sunday for members of the public to see the dig and take part in activities and tours.
19. The Heritage day titled 'Sky Heroes' is to take place on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September 12.00 – 17.00 and will see similar attractions to last year and a larger emphasis on Kenley's Battle of Britain heritage.
20. A meeting was recently organised by the Superintendent with representatives from the Ministry of Defence, Royal Air Force and Surrey Hills Gliding Club. The purpose of the meeting was to ensure the aforementioned remain up to date with progress on the Kenley Revival Project.
22. At this same meeting the RAF informed the Superintendent that the Airfield is now 'active' i.e. military flying (gliding) will recommence in the near future (currently only civilian flying takes place). As such health and safety issues will fall within the scope of Military Aviation Authority after a period of several years being considered 'out of scope'. This change will require the RAF to finally and permanently resolve access and safety issues across the MOD land.
23. To that end the MOD have recently installed new public safety signage on site and made alterations to the main vehicular access point to restrict unnecessary access by car. Any events held by the City that encroach onto MOD land will now require a license from them. This process has been tested recently and works well. The MOD are also considering the replacement of the temporary metal 'crowd control barrier' that has been in use on the site for around 8 years. Any replacement will require planning consent and the City will have the opportunity to comment at that stage. The Superintendent intends to bring a report on the matter to this committee when further information becomes available

### **The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons**

24. Contractors have completed high-risk tree safety work across The Commons. Rangers and contractors have been working across The Commons to clear the paths after storm Doris.
25. The Ranger team attended a bespoke Bat & Arboriculture training session.

26. The WWaSP volunteers have installed a new interpretation panel on West Wickham Common. The panel introduces visitors to the earthworks.
27. The Calving Event at Merlewood Estate Office offered a great opportunity for a behind the scenes tour. We welcomed more than a 100 visitors in the yard, where after seeing the 12 calves, children had the opportunity to join the Rangers for some arts and crafts.

### **Ashtead Common**

28. Interviews were held for the vacant ranger position on February 21<sup>st</sup> and an appointment was made. The appointee comes with a wealth of experience gained with Surrey Wildlife Trust, particularly with regard to grazing and working with volunteers.
29. Planning permission was granted for the property adjacent to Ashtead Estate Office (Station Works, or the former team rooms) to be demolished and replaced by four single-storey houses occupying roughly the footprint of the existing building. The City had objected to an earlier application to build eight houses on the site. In granting the permission, Mole Valley District Council imposed conditions to protect the visual amenity as viewed from Ashtead Common. This was requested by the City in its comment on the proposal.
30. A total of 9,140 volunteer hours were recorded on the Common for the 2016-17 financial year. The local team will be reviewing volunteering during the course of the year to establish if sustaining volunteering at this level is worthwhile.
31. Volunteers and staff recently took part in an academic study organised by the Learning Team in association with De Montfort University looking at the culture surrounding our work with volunteers.
32. A new water pipe has been installed leading from the Kingston Road at the north-western edge of the Common. Currently the supply terminates 100m onto the common, but the pipe is of sufficient diameter and pressure to use as the basis for supplying the majority of the site in the future. This new infrastructure will facilitate the future expansion of conservation grazing and benefit site management for many years to come.

### **Support Services**

33. The PA to the Superintendent of The Commons has tendered her resignation and is to retire. The Superintendent is considering making further savings by reducing the level of support provided by this post
34. The team continues to be extremely busy providing administrative support to ensure the delivery of the Kenley Revival Project.

35. The end of the financial year is traditionally an exceptionally busy period for the Support Services Team. All 2016/17 year end procedures were managed successfully contributing to what currently appears to be very good end of year budget position for the division.

## **INCIDENTS**

### **Burnham Beeches**

36. Three incidents of dogs not under effective control, including one on Stoke Common where the owner became very abusive to another member of the public. The matter was recorded.
37. One incident of a man breaching the DCOs, refusing to give his details and then becoming verbally abusive to the Rangers involved. The matter is being pursued according to the site's Enforcement Protocol.
38. A drone was seen flying over the site – Rangers attended but could not locate the operator.
39. A court date of 11<sup>th</sup> May has been arranged to pursue a dog related by-law incident and Dog Control Order offence at Burnham Beeches.
40. A member of the public reported having been sworn several times at by another dog walker after she had asked him to keep his dog on a lead.
41. Mr Thomas Christopher Connelly appeared in court to face charges of threatening behaviour and verbally abusing staff at Burnham Beeches. He was given a conditional discharge for 6 months with costs against him of £105. The discharge is designed to prevent re-offending and if committed of any other offence during the period of the discharge he can be re-sentenced for the offences of this case.

### **Ashtead Common**

42. A metal detectorist has damaged the Earthworks Scheduled Monument by digging-up and removing a bronze bowl and boat shaped object, probably of Roman or pre-Roman origin. This was then taken to the nearby Bourne Hall Museum, where the Curator took possession of the artefacts and recorded full contact details of the culprit. The matter has been reported to the Police.

### **The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons**

43. A deer was attacked by a dog on Riddlesdown. The Ranger checked the area but couldn't find the injured animal.
44. Arson incident on West Wickham Common, two small patches of brunt bramble and bracken near the far corner of the earthwork area.

Andy Barnard. Superintendent of The Commons

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

02073326676