

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest and Commons	8 th May 2017
Subject: A review of the condition of Stoke Common SSSI by Natural England.	Public/Public
Report of: The Superintendent of The Commons	For Information
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary</p> <p>Stoke Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was transferred for nil consideration, by South Bucks District Council (SBDC) into the ownership of the City of London in 2007 and is now protected in perpetuity according to the requirements of the City of London Corporation Open Spaces Act, 1878.</p> <p>At that time this former heathland was largely encroached upon by very dense secondary woodland and for that reason the Superintendent and his team produced a 10 year management plan for its restoration to heathland.</p> <p>Natural England has recently reassessed Stoke Common and have concluded that the City has achieved very substantial improvements in restoring the valuable heathland habitats since the site came into its ownership.</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note this report 	

Main Report

Background

1. Stoke Common SSSI was transferred by South Bucks District Council (SBDC) into the ownership of the City of London in 2007. The freehold acquisition was for nil consideration and an endowment of £125,000 provided to the City of London by SBDC. The site is now protected in perpetuity according to the requirements of the Open Spaces Act, 1878.
2. At that time this former heathland was largely encroached upon by very dense secondary woodland and for that reason the Superintendent and his team produced a 10 year Management Plan for its restoration.
3. Natural England carried out a condition assessment of the site in 2008 prior to the commencement of the restoration programme and found it to be in 'unfavourable condition'.
4. Natural England also agreed a 'Higher Level Stewardship' grant to support the restoration programme. This grant provides £262,223 to support the necessary restoration works over the 10 year management plan period.

Current Position

5. Natural England has recently reassessed the condition of Stoke Common to review progress of the nature conservation objectives for the SSSI.

Appendix 1.

6. In their recent report on the matter Natural England's Inspectors have responded very positively to the progress of the restoration and have concluded that the City has achieved very substantial improvements in restoring the valuable habitats since Stoke Common came into its ownership.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

7. This report supports the following Community Strategy Themes:
- CV3. Working in Partnership
 - SA3. To provide valued services to London and the nation
8. This report supports the following Open Spaces Business Plan Objectives
- OSD1. Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites
 - OSD2. Embed financial sustainability across our activities by delivering identified programmes and projects
 - OSD3. Enrich the lives of Londoners by providing high quality and engaging, educational and volunteering opportunities
 - OSD4. Improve the health and wellbeing of the community through access to greenspace and recreation

Implications

9. The current Management Plan and HLS grant expire on 31 October 2018. The outcome of Natural England's recent assessment should help guide the development of the new management plan and subsequent grant application under the new 'Countryside Stewardship Scheme' that has replaced 'HLS'.

Conclusion

10. The City's extensive heathland restoration programme on Stoke Common has been assessed and commended by Natural England. Natural England has also provided helpful recommendations for inclusion in the next management plan.

Appendices

- **Appendix 1** – A review of the condition of Stoke Common SSSI, South Bucks. Natural England. March 2017.

Background Papers:

Epping Forest and Commons Finance Committee	12th March 2007 27 th March 2007	
Subject: Stoke Common - Freehold Acquisition		

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