

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	July 3 rd 2017
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</p> <p>Members are asked to note the contents of this report.</p>	

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

1. The consultation process concerning the extension of Dog Control Orders as Public Space Protection Orders has concluded and a full report is provided to this committee separately for decision.
2. Members will be aware that lodge policy reviews have been undertaken across the Open Spaces Department. This resulted in a number of properties being declared surplus at Hampstead Heath (1), Queen's Park (2), Epping Forest (7 to date) and West Ham Park (2). The Commons Management Team have also now concluded a review of lodges across the division that has been agreed with the Senior HR Manager. The review concluded no change was required to the 'current state'. There are currently 20 lodges within the Division: 13 at City Commons (based on a 3 week rota) and 7 at Burnham Beeches (6 staff one a 3 week call out rota plus the Superintendent). At the time of the review of call outs, it was noted that arrangements could be more effective and equitable if an additional lodge were located near Ashted and a further two across The Commons. This would increase the number of lodges to 23. However this was not felt to be a practical way forward under the current financial conditions.
3. The quarry site at East Burnham has started operation again after a short pause over the winter and is now accepting inert waste to fill the void left by the removal of the first cell of gravel. Monitoring of the ground water hydrology continues to be done by the operator on a fortnightly basis. The quarry site is exceptionally dry so no pumping of water has been necessary. Water levels in the dip wells have all been within the agreed envelopes or within the range that the independent hydrologist considers to be due to weather conditions.

4. Three additional, more sophisticated, dust monitoring stations have been set up to complement the sticky pads. These enable dust levels to be measured more accurately and it is also possible to establish which direction the dust is coming from. We have had only three months of data so far and dust levels have been relatively low in this period. It is anticipated that the additional stations will be in place while the quarry site extracts and infills the cells closest to Burnham Beeches. They will help us establish if dust is coming from the quarry or from other building work locally.
5. Work on the South Bucks Local plan continues and it is still anticipated that the draft plan for public consultation will be ready this autumn. A draft policy relating to the consequences of the plan on Burnham Beeches has been commented on by Officers. The issue of air quality has become much more important following comments by an Inspector on the Wealden District Council Local plan. SBDC have engaged traffic experts in Bucks County Council to evaluate the impact and local motorway improvements on air quality in the Beeches SAC and this has indicated that there is a problem that needs addressing. Staff from Natural England are providing guidance and will present their comments at a meeting early in July.
6. A meeting of planners was held under 'Duty to Co-operate' between South Bucks District Council and Slough Borough Council (SBC) with Natural England and CoL Officers present. SBC have been made aware of the issues relating to visitor pressure and air quality and also that there are some potential solutions. The Slough Local Plan is behind that of South Bucks in terms of timing.
7. Other local plans, such as those for Windsor and Maidenhead and High Wycombe also have the potential to impact on visitor pressure and air quality in Burnham Beeches and these will also be discussed at the meeting in July.
8. The Conservation Officer attended a meeting of the Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) for Bucks. The NEP is pushing for 'biodiversity accounting' to be incorporated into the planning system throughout the County. This supports the work being carried out locally regarding the Local Plans and their impact on Burnham Beeches.
9. Heathrow Expansion is another area of concern regarding air quality locally. Preliminary assessments by Heathrow have indicated that there is a cause for concern with regard to Burnham Beeches. Currently CoL officers do not attend meetings but a consortium of local District Councils are ensuring that this is taken seriously and a way forward is sought. Natural England is also aware of the situation and continues to press for action on our behalf.
10. While work continues on the local plans, CoL Officers continue to comment on planning applications, of which there have been several affecting properties within 500m of the Beeches in recent months.

11. Annual monitoring of the lichen flora has shown no cause for concern, although sadly the one remaining beech pollards with a rare, Red Data Book species of lichen (*Pyrenula nitida*) that has been looking poor in recent years is looking very nearly dead this summer. Officers are exploring the option of attempting translocation to other trees.
12. Annual vegetation monitoring has started for the summer with the eco-volunteers providing extra valuable help.
13. Members may recall that 10 years ago staff from Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches spent some days in the Spanish Basque Country cutting ancient beech pollards that are very similar to those found on the City's sites. Subsequently a small team went back to evaluate the responses of the trees and a paper was published on the results. The Chairman and Director also self-funded a short tour to look at the work carried out. The village where the work was carried out is holding an International Conference in November to celebrate 10 years of the project. Staff from Burnham Beeches and Epping Forest are hoping to attend.
14. A day-long event was held for Reading Geological Group together with a local resident who was a professional geologist and knows the Beeches very well. Examples of work such as the hydrology were demonstrated and the group provided extra insights over the geology of the Beeches.
15. The grazing project has been going to plan. The cattle and ponies are grazing the original fenced paddocks and the areas within the invisible fence loops to cover approximately 72% of the site.
16. The Burnham Beeches volunteers have been concentrating their efforts on footpath re-surfacing. Approximately 300 metres of paths have been re-surfaced with gravel sourced from the quarry on site.
17. There has been regular activity on social media feeds with our post about the travellers on the main common receiving record engagements.
18. Green Flag & Green Heritage judges visited Burnham Beeches in June. The results are awaited.
19. The Head Ranger has returned to work following a protracted period of sickness absence

Stoke Common

20. The Friends of Stoke Common have continued with their monthly tasks to help manage Stoke Common. The reptile survey that commenced in April has now finished and results are being counted.
21. The cattle provided by John Whitby under license to the City have returned to the site.

22. South Bucks District Council has recently completed its public consultation that proposes to introduce Public Space Protection Orders across the District, including Stoke Common. The outcome of this proposal is awaited. If the proposals are confirmed the Superintendent has suggested that SBDC authorise the Rangers from Burnham Beeches to enforce the PSPOs on Stoke Common on their behalf.

Kenley Revival update

23. The Conservation Works are now underway and begun on 2nd May. PAYE are delivering the conservation works with an expected programme of 22 weeks. The sign off of Zone 1 works is expected 20th June.
24. The Tribute Relocation Works is completed, delivered by Stonewest, and was signed off on 13th June. A time capsule was found within the structure and a new one buried in its place to capture the programme and history of the RAF Kenley tribute.
25. 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 July and will be further tested for final launch in autumn to coincide with the start of the school year.
26. Project is now staffed with Learning and Volunteer officer full time with further support provided by two site rangers. A temporary casual member of staff is also assisting with delivery of events in the interim period in lieu of the appointment of an apprentice which is delayed and now expected to begin in September. Staff resourcing remains the biggest risk to the project.
27. The Learning Festival is now fully booked with approximately 856 Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils expected to attend 26 – 30th June. The festival will see a combination of World War II and STEM workshops delivered by experts, staff and volunteers. The original target was 500 attendees but we have had a significant increase in engagement for schools for further activities.
28. The website and archive are due to be launched in July which will see a refresh of the website and the ability for the public to upload pictures and stories and memories they have of Kenley airfield.
29. The project team have established a 'fighter network' with Biggin Hill, RAF Hendon and Uxbridge bunker to share opportunities for collaboration and explore ideas ahead of RAF100 next year.
30. The largest event in the lifetime of the project titled 'Sky Heroes' will be held on Sunday 10th September, the event will encompass the whole of the airfield with a lecture tent, museums quarter, archaeology display, nature and science activities along with guided tours and land train.

31. A Community archaeology dig is to take place in two phases 17 – 23rd July with 30 places available of which 25 are booked already. This is led in partnership with Historic England and will include an archaeology open day 22-23rd July where members of the public can see the dig, undertake tours and participate in activities. This part of the project is also being delivered as part of the National Festival of Archaeology.
32. The planned for members to visit Kenley Airfield on 1st July was cancelled. A new date is being sought in September and more information will follow from the Town Clerk when details are agreed.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

33. Green Flag & Green Heritage judges have been around all of our sites during May and June
34. Hillbillies' volunteers have started ragwort rosette pulling on Farthing Downs and New Hill.
35. The cattle over wintering at Epping Forest have returned to the Commons and along with all other cattle have been turned out and are grazing across the Commons.
36. The Riddlesdown volunteers have installed the Changing History board near the car park on the Common.

Ashted Common

37. A new ranger started in April. She joins us from Surrey Wildlife Trust and brings a wealth of experience, particularly with regard to animal husbandry and conservation grazing.
38. Eight Belted Galloway cattle from Surrey Wildlife Trust arrived in May to graze the wood pasture area. This is the first time that we have grazed in partnership with the Wildlife Trust, and the first time we have been able to start the season with a full complement of eight animals.
39. Staff and volunteers have been working hard on a 'dead or alive survey' of the 1,100 veteran trees. This has been postponed with some areas still to survey due to the number of ticks present.
40. The Head Ranger met with representatives from the River Mole Catchment Partnership to assess the ongoing pollution of the Rye Brook, and consider if a reed bed filtration system could be introduced to limit the impact of pollution entering the brook. The South East Rivers Trust (members of the Partnership) is due to submit a quote for the design of such a system.

Support Services

41. The PA to the Superintendent of The Commons has now left the Division and local adjustments have been made to several existing posts to accommodate the work load and seek savings ahead of future budget cuts.

Incidents

Burnham Beeches

- 42. A group were spoken to about collecting fungi
- 43. There were two Physical Verbal Abuse incidents against staff from the same member of the public who has previously been convicted for using threatening and abusive behaviour. The Police are dealing with the matter and options being reviewed.
- 44. Two small fires were dealt with by staff
- 45. A member of staff gave evidence in a court case regarding a DCO offence which also included threatening behaviour. The defendant was found not guilty of the DCO offence on a technicality but was convicted of assault. He has now appealed against that conviction with the hearing due at Aylesbury Crown Court in the near future.
- 46. Travellers moved onto Burnham Beeches Main Common area Sunday 21st May at 18:00 during normal opening hours. A quick response from the team and Thames Valley Police enabled Section 61 notice to be served quickly and the travellers moved off the site Monday 22 May at 13:00, with no permanent damage caused and leaving very little waste. The Burnham Beeches team kept all neighbouring open spaces up to date with developments as they arose.

Ashted Common

- 47. A metal detectorist was cautioned by the Police for removing two artefacts from the earthworks, without permission. These items are possibly pre-Roman in origin and potentially quite significant. At the request of Historic England, an application for Scheduled Monument consent has been submitted for a limited exploration of the hole dug by the detectorist. This may establish the context of the find and determine if there are any further objects present.

West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

- 48. Youths were reported using the rifle range on Kenley Common as a mountain bike track and had dug up in suit materials to make jumps and hollows. Names were taken and the matter was reported to the police.
- 49. A sewer flooded on Addington Road which left the two car parks on Spring Park covered in toilet waste. Costs associated with the clear up are being sought from Thames Water. It is understood that the London Borough of Bromley are taking a similar approach.

FILMING, MAJOR EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

- 50. Over the past month at Burnham Beeches there have been 6 walks and events with a total of over 160 attendees. One walker on the Burnham Beeches at War walk served at Burnham Beeches in 1944 during the

preparations for the D-Day landings and was the source of much interesting information.

51. Successful events in April /May at the West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons included:

- Clean for the Common on Coulsdon Common – CC Ranger
- Bat walk on Kenley Common – Kenley Ranger
- Easter Trail on Coulsdon Common – CC Ranger
- Easter Trail on Kenley Common – Kenley Ranger
- Egg shell painting at SP – Information Ranger
- Breakfast with birds – CC Ranger
- Dawn Chorus – RD Ranger
- Riddlesdown History Walk – RD Ranger
- Bat walk – CC Ranger
- Pond dipping at Spring Park – Information Ranger
- Nature trail on Kenley Common – Kenley Ranger

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