

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Epping Forest & Commons	January 15 <sup>th</sup> 2018
<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 quarry site at East Burnham has continued to operate and the associated monitoring of the ground water hydrology and dust has continued. Dust levels continue to be higher as measured by the sticky pads but lower by the Frisbee gauges. This seems to be due to higher levels of organic material falling on the sticky pads and does not appear to be related to quarry operations. Some hydrology monitoring points are recording water levels outside of their 'envelopes' but again is unlikely to be quarry related.
2. Progress has been made on the South Bucks District Council (SBDC) Local Plan. A company specialising in air quality has been engaged by SBDC to examine the impact of the plan on Burnham Beeches SAC (particularly with regard to potential increases in road traffic). An Officer will attend the inception meeting scheduled for January 2018. It is anticipated that the Local Plan will be in draft form and open for consultation by mid May 2018 and will include various proposal in respect of Burnham Beeches.
3. SBDC have proposed the creation of a new Country Park 3km from Burnham Beeches, on land currently owned by SBDC and used as a golf club. Officers attended the public consultation meeting and subsequently submitted a response. The proposal appears to be entirely unconnected with emerging planning policy and in response to the unprofitability of the golf club.
4. Slough Borough Council (SBC) have produced a proposal document for a 'garden suburb' with the SBDC area to accommodate their need for housing and this has proven to be extremely controversial. Officers submitted a

response and understand that the Department for Communities and Local Government have asked SBC to examine alternative options.

5. The Heathrow extension has been discussed extensively locally and it is understood that the potential impact on Burnham Beeches has featured highly in the discussions. Officers are attending a meeting in January for further detail.
6. Responses to other planning applications including Wycombe District Council as well as adjacent sites to Burnham Beeches have been submitted.
7. Discussions have continued with Natural England and Forestry Commission advisers regarding the Countryside Stewardship applications that will be prepared in 2018.
8. A local company, with a drone, and requisite licences trialled a flight over part of Burnham Beeches and have used software to demonstrate tree canopy heights, 3-D imaging and various analytical tools like assessing vegetation health. Officers are current assessing the potential use of these tools in future management planning.
9. The Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) were made on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2017 extending the effect of the existing Orders, and the preceding Dog Control Orders (DCOs), for a further 3 years.
10. At Burnham Beeches the Rangers completed habitat restoration work on the west and east mires, and 'halo clearance' around 65 ancient pollards ready for restoration work in January and February 2018.
11. At Stoke Common the Rangers supervised contractors carrying out restoration work (approx. 0.5 Ha tree felling) on the north common and 350m fencing replacement on the main common and carried out heathland restoration directly and with volunteers across the site
12. November weekends were particularly busy at times with good weather and autumn colours lasting late into the month. This changed in December with wet and windy weather and a day of snow causing the Beeches be invaded by a variety of snowmen and other icy creatures.
13. Livestock were moved off the Beeches. The cows have gone to their winter quarter with a local grazer. At Stoke Common the ponies were moved onto the north common in November, after the felling works, to graze the re-establishing acid grassland and then were moved again onto the west common for December
14. The Burnham Beeches & Friends of Stoke Common Volunteers carried out an impressive amount of scrub management work at both sites. They have also helped with preparation for the annual pollard restoration work at the Beeches.

15. One individual volunteer has completed over 200 hours in 2017 identifying a collection of specimens from our moth trap.

### **Stoke Common**

16. Work on the new Stoke Common Management Plan is underway. Staff will now develop future work plans and deliver the programme of consultation to the timetable agreed by this Committee in November 2017.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Kenley Revival update**

17. Conservation Works are nearing completion and the last remaining works are in relation to the removal of graffiti from the rifle range. This will be contracted separately. The other works still to be completed by PAYE are the infilling of KC14 (by doorway entrance), KC29 (back wall), KC44 (spine wall) along with the remaining portion of brick and concrete repairs to KC12 (subject to cost).
18. The Learning and Volunteer officer has left the Kenley Revival Project to take up a position with another HLF project. Her final date on the Kenley Revival project is 7<sup>th</sup> January. Recruitment of a replacement in that role has been approved by HLF and submitted to Human Resources with an anticipated end date 15<sup>th</sup> January to allow for sifting and interviews prior to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018.
19. The Website and archive continues to attract new public contributions of stories and photographs of RAF Kenley. A drop in 'antiques roadshow' was held in November along with a visit to the Old Coulsdon Residents Association to encourage even more submissions to the archive. Wartime Christmas craft activities took place on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017.
20. The programme for next year's activities will focus on Women at War (March), Learning Roadshow (June) and Archaeology (July). The programme is flexible and is currently dependent on the appointment of the new Learning & Volunteer Officer.
21. School Assemblies were held on the theme of 'Remembrance' and over 1,400 children were engaged. Schools have already requested bookings for next year.
22. A legacy workshop was held on 7 December 2017 to focus the Kenley Airfield Friends Group and City of London employees. This explored the legacy opportunities for the project and identified activities that could be sustained post-project.
23. The interpretation works, including signage and travelling exhibition, will shortly commence with an aim, at this stage, to install the onsite signage by Easter 2018. A creative workshop was held on 7 December 2017 to explore content and contextual drawings to contribute to the planning application.

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

24. Stites Hill Road/Holmesfield Road is now partly closed until February 2018. This is to enable Sutton and East Surrey Water to replace a large water main and is hoped will be of benefit to the overflow on Coulsdon Common.
25. Transport for London have now completed the installation of the new pedestrian crossing on the A232 Croydon Road.
26. Croydon Council have confirmed ownership and responsibilities in respect of the iron fence and stone wall adjacent to the highway at 'Marlpit', Farthing Downs, and work to replace the fence and repair the wall is expected to follow shortly. Croydon Council had for many years claimed that the fence and associated cost of any maintenance and repair works were the City Corporation's responsibility.
27. Rangers have been carrying out tree safety work which arose from the 'Medium Risk' tree assessments conducted across the Commons. 'High Risk' assessments are now being conducted.
28. Following the departure of the Livestock Ranger the breeding herd of Sussex cattle have been moved to Epping Forest for over wintering and calving. They will return to The Commons in the Spring of 2018.
29. Annual works programme – contractors have repaired and where necessary, replaced new stock and boundary fence lines across the Coulsdon Commons.
30. Car parks on Riddlesdown Common and Spring Park have been refurbished and some footpaths on Kenley Common have been re-surfaced.
31. Volunteer hours for 2017 have totalled more than 6,000 hours and have proved invaluable in assisting with the management of the various sites across the Commons.
32. The recruitment process is currently underway to fill the vacant livestock Ranger and Conservation Ranger roles. These permanent, residential posts will bring the West Wickham and Coulsdon team back up to full strength.

## **Ashted Common**

33. Scrub management work is now well under way with contractors engaged in restoring a 50% scrub to grass balance in Willow Field, Pine Field and the Woodlands Road/Wells Estate areas. Additionally ride scalloping has been undertaken along Concessionary Ride One, Footpath 25 and the gas wayleave behind Broadhurst.
34. For the second year running, work to manage the veteran oak trees is focussed on one area of the common using the 'district base' approach. This method is much more efficient than the previous 'whole site' method and has saved approximately £6,000.00 on the annual contract cost.
35. Volunteers have been working at the north east of the common to widen firebreaks and coppice hazel. One volunteer has raised approximately £400

by manufacturing, using timber from the common, and selling wooden reindeer.

36. A small group of the volunteers won first prize in the Ashtead Community Christmas tree decorating competition.

## **Support Services**

37. The new Administration Assistant for Ashtead and Merlewood, has started with the Division and is currently undergoing the induction programme. This appointment brings the Support Services team back up to full strength.
38. The Support Services Manager and Head Rangers worked in partnership with the Chamberlain to agree and deliver the 2018/19 budget base and associated cuts.
39. The team co-ordinated many of the planned late autumn and Christmas events across The Commons.

## **Incidents**

### **Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common**

40. There were 14 reported incidents during the period of which:
- Four incidents relate to fly tipping around Burnham Beeches.
  - Eight incidents related to dogs: two PSPO incidents requiring follow up action and the rest – all in the off lead area- were either lost dogs or dog on dog 'attacks' and owners being involved in heated exchanges as a result.
41. Storm Aftermath surveys were carried out on Boxing Day following high winds and heavy rain overnight. Several large trees had been blown over but no other structural damage was recorded.

### **Ashtead Common**

42. A blocked pipe led to a leak of sewage onto the Common at Woodfield near Bridleway 33. The Environment Agency and Thames Water were informed/attended and the area secured. The pipe was unblocked and appeared to be caused by a mixture of sanitary products and fatbergs. Water quality samples were taken along the river Rye and impacts were noted, the results of which are awaited. 'Grey water' was removed using a sludge pump and a tanker was used to 'flush the river to reduce the impact of the sewage.

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

43. Coulsdon Common – Off road vehicle driving outside the area of Windmill Farm but the driver has not been identified.
44. Coulsdon Common – used syringe found in ditch adjacent to Stites Hill Road. Object placed in 'sharps box' and disposed of accordingly. Surrey County Council informed.
45. Coulsdon Common – Fly-tipping close to football pitch has been cleared by the Ranger team and disposed of using existing contractors.

46. Riddlesdown Common – Car abandoned outside Keepers Cottage. Police and local authority notified and vehicle later recovered.
47. West Wickham Common – Verbal abuse of a dog walker by a member of the public.

## **Filming, major events and other activities**

### **Burnham Beeches**

48. There were three programmed walks during the reporting period; one was cancelled due to poor weather and there were 30 walkers on the other two.
49. Despite very poor, wet weather throughout the Christmas Carols and Crafts event, it was still well attended with over 100 people braving the conditions.
50. The festive trail was very popular with an estimated 400 people following all or part of the route. Some very good positive and complimentary comments were posted on the local community Facebook page.
51. The Burnham Beeches Rotary Club running event raised approximately £1000 as a donation to the site.

### **The West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons**

52. Twelve events were held across the Coulsdon commons including – 3 'Meet the Ranger' mornings, 2 Halloween activities, a Rudolph making event and a Santa's reindeer trail. .
53. There was also a fire lighting event for Beckenham Cubs at Spring Park, a bat walk for Brownies at West Wickham Common and a hugely successful wreath making event at Spring Park.

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