

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	12 March 2018
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>	

Consultative Group Terms of Reference

1. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the three Consultative Groups were agreed and adopted with minor amendment, at the various Group meetings across the Division in January and February. The amendment related to the membership time limit of 4 years + 4 years. This restriction could cause specific problems for Ward Councillors, so their membership is now explicitly mentioned within the ToRs.

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

2. The quarry site at East Burnham continues to operate, infilling the cavity with inert waste which is largely clays from basements. A site visit with the Local Authority Enforcement Officer was held with a City of London Officer attending. Dust levels continue to be higher as measured by the sticky pads but lower by the Frisbee gauges. A six-monthly ground water hydrology report has been submitted by the operator. Water table levels have been outside envelopes on several occasions and two wells in the Beeches have levels that are consistently low, but these can be attributed to weather conditions rather than quarry workings.
3. Progress continues with the South Bucks District Council (SBDC) local plan. An Officer attended the air quality inception meeting between SBDC and the contractor engaged. This included a presentation by Natural England (NE) about the latest position regarding SAC sites, air pollution generated by traffic increases and local plans. The draft report is due in April.

4. A very useful meeting was held at Epping Forest between Officers and the respective NE advisers regarding Countryside Stewardship. The application pack for Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common has arrived. Liaison continues between Officers and Natural England advisers regarding this complex grant system and application procedure.
5. Work has started on the new 10-year plan for Stoke Common including presentations to the Burnham Beeches Consultation Group, the Friends of Stoke Common AGM and the local Rotary Club.
6. A 'Pollard open day' was held at Burnham Beeches following discussions during the study tour/conference in Spain. Staff from Hampstead Heath demonstrated cutting techniques on the trees with Burnham Beeches staff on hand to describe the work. Staff from Epping Forest and Ashted attended as well as three independent arborist companies, a total of 21 people not including Burnham Beeches staff. A Spanish arborist spent the entire week working with Burnham Beeches and Hampstead Heath staff, helping with reduction work on the old trees.
7. The Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common consultation group meeting was held at the Beeches office on 16th January and was well attended. Along with the usual updates on activity and progress on projects the evening was dominated by discussion on the forthcoming review of the Stoke Common management plan.
8. At Burnham Beeches the Ranger team has worked on and around 61 ancient pollards, completed all tree safety inspections at both sites and much of work identified in those surveys during January and February 2018.
9. At Stoke Common – the team supervised contractors carrying out restoration work on the West common and carried out heathland restoration directly and with volunteers across the site.
10. Storm procedures were in place on 4 separate occasions in January 2018 – most of the storms caused little damage but 4 large trees were brought down across internal road ways at Burnham Beeches by strong winds in the early hours of the 18th. These were all cleared away by mid- afternoon that day.

PARTNERSHIPS

Kenley Revival update

11. Conservation Works are nearing completion and the last remaining works are in relation to the removal of graffiti from the rifle range and 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) and KC44 (spine wall).

12. The recruitment of the Learning and Volunteer Officer commenced, and the post awarded, subject to satisfactory references. It is anticipated that the person will be in post by late March.
13. A 'Women at War' season will take place in March with the following events:
4th March – Amy Johnson workshop at Croydon Airport, 10th March – Home Front day at Turf projects, 16th March – Amy Johnson: Last Flight Out at Matthew's Yard along with joining screenings of the Darkest Hour and web articles.
14. An archaeology dig will take place 16 – 27th July with a few days for the public to participate, a day for Open Spaces department, a public open day with tours and a second week for professional archaeology groups. The dig will be led by MOLA and Historic England.
15. A legacy workshop was held on 7 December 2017 to focus the Kenley Airfield Friends Group and City of London employees on the legacy opportunities for the project and which activities could be sustained post-project. The next step will be to develop a project proposal for legacy post-project.
16. The interpretation works, including signage and travelling exhibition, will shortly commence with an aim, at this stage, to install the on-site signage by late summer 2018. A further creative workshop will be held on 21 February to allocate content to signage and it is envisaged the planning application will be submitted by 1 April pending completion of the design phase.
17. Targets for volunteer contributions have already been met for the lifetime of the project.
12. At their meeting of February 2018 Project Sub (Policy and Resources) Committee considered a Gateway 6 (Regular) report of the Director of Open Spaces regarding the Kenley Revival Project. Members noted that the project had proved a success to date in terms of engagement. Members authorised the use of £28,000 of the contingency budget to fund changes to the activity programme.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

18. Stites Hill Road, Coulsdon Common is now partly closed until February 12th 2018 to enable Sutton and East Surrey Water to replace a large water main adjacent to City of London land. The Ranger team have taken this opportunity to carry out some remedial tree works along the edge of the highway during this closure.
19. Following two separate storm events tree safety checks were conducted across all sites at the beginning of January and fallen trees and overhanging branches were removed.
20. High risk tree assessments have all now been completed for the West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons.

21. The City of London have successfully challenged a long running dispute over ownership of a section of fencing and a highway retaining wall at the boundary of Farthing Downs. The risk associated with management and maintenance has now been established as being with Croydon Council.
22. Rangers and volunteers have installed a new section of fencing on the boundary of Woodplace Farm, Farthing Downs.
23. Scrub clearance along Bunker Bank on Kenley Common, has been completed by the volunteer team.
24. The vacant post for the Livestock Ranger for West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons was advertised and interviews took place in February. An appointment has not been made and the post will be re-advertised.
25. The cows have now been moved from site to the barn at Merlewood Estate Office to avoid compaction and poaching during the wet season. The breeding herd are overwintering at Epping Forest.
26. The West Wickham and Coulsdon Common Rangers, London Natural History Group and Geological Society for London met at Spring Park to discuss possible interpretation about geology and prepared guided walk for May 2018.
27. A contractor has been appointed to coppice sweet chestnut on Woodland Way, Spring Park.

Ashtead Common

28. The Ashtead Common Consultative Group met in January to consider aspects of the management of the common linked to the development of the management plan.
29. The annual mega task held in conjunction with the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership and Epsom and Ewell Council achieved 372 volunteer hours coppicing hazel. This contributed to over 700 hours of volunteering achieved in January.
30. Rangers and volunteers have been working to extend Birch Grazing Area to double its size, making it approximately 5.5ha. The new extension is more wooded than the existing grazing areas.
31. OPM surveys conducted by the Forestry Commission have identified further nests on the common. These will be removed and the infected trees (only, not the 50m zones as before) will be sprayed if the tree is in a high-risk zone. This reflects the approach taken by nearby Richmond Park.
32. Work on the veteran oak pollards and scrub areas has been completed. There remains some ride/ path management and tree safety work to complete before the cutting season finishes.

Incidents

Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

- 33. There were 16 reported formal incidents during the period
- 34. Thirty-six traveller caravans and over fifty associated vehicles moved on to the car parks at Burnham Beeches late afternoon on Sunday 7 January. They were successfully moved from the site by 11.00pm on Monday 8 January and all clear up operations concluded by 10.00am Tuesday 9 January.
- 35. Two incidents relate to fly tipping around Burnham Beeches.
- 36. There were five incidents related to dogs and PSPO's, four of which required formal follow up action. Rangers also helped reunite two lost dogs with their owner's and helped an owner recover a dog that had injured its leg whilst exercising well away from where the owner had parked her car.
- 37. Rangers also assisted the Police in searching for an elderly missing person and in recovering a young person who had run off from a local school and was found at the Beeches.

Ashted Common

- 38. The remains of local man James Middleton, who had been missing from his Epsom home since July 2nd, were discovered on Ashted Common by a Police led search team on Sunday February 11th. It is suspected that his mobility scooter had become stuck on tree roots in an area surrounded by scrub, off a desire-line path, and that he had tried to walk away for help. Rangers assisted the police for two days by clearing scrub, extricating the mobility scooter and generally facilitating the search for remains.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

- 39. Farthing Downs – Gates have been vandalised and the incident reported to the Metropolitan Police. The Head Ranger is to meet with Police and parents of the offender to discuss compensation or community resolution.
- 40. Farthing Downs – dead Jack Russell puppy discovered in a ditch. The Rangers took to the local vet who, in turn, contacted the owners.
- 41. Coulsdon Common – two fly-tipping incidents during this period. Various items removed and disposed of by the Ranger team.
- 42. Riddlesdown Common – Rangers responded to an out of hours call from an injured man in the car park. Staff liaised with emergency services and coordinated the safe removal of the injured party from site.
- 43. West Wickham Common – Fly tipping incident – garden waste and a wheelbarrow were dumped on site.

Filming, major events and other activities

Burnham Beeches

- 44. The Beeches hosted five local school visits/activity days for around four hundred children.
- 45. Successful half term woodland wonder and a family quiz trail were enjoyed by visitors of all ages.
- 46. The Friends of Stoke Common held their AGM in Stoke Poges supported by the Beeches team – and held two volunteer events.
- 47. The Beeches team hosted another twelve events for volunteers of all ages including Cubs and students from Berkshire College of Agriculture.

The West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons

- 48. A Deer seminar and winter tree identification course was delivered at Merlewood Estate Office.
- 49. A bird box making event was held at Merlewood Estate Office.
- 50. A 'Bumps and lumps' walk conducted by the Senior Ranger to Spring park describing the terrain and features on site.
- 51. A night-time treasure hunt event took place with Bromley cubs at Spring Park.

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