

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	9 July 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>	

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

1. The quarry site at East Burnham is operating and the associated monitoring continues with volunteers playing a key role at the moment.
2. Officers met with the outgoing Senior Planning Policy Officer for South Bucks District Council (SBDC) and their successor and held an awareness raising session that included two other planning officers. SBDC are still awaiting the air quality report and are also exploring the option of repeating some work in relation to where visitors to Burnham Beeches live which they feel needs updating. Officers have some concern that there may be a change of direction with the recent staff changes although this has not been expressed formally. Discussions with the Leader of the Council at the recent visit of the Lord Mayor to Burnham Beeches indicates that he is happy to help should this be necessary. Officers are pressing for a meeting to include Natural England and the County Ecologist (who is also leaving her post in August) to clarify the situation.
3. Following the public meeting held by Farnham Parish Council regarding local planning issues, the Chairman of the Parish Council has expressed an intention to resign and the Clerk has also tendered her resignation. Officers have had a good working relationship with the Chairman and Clerk and so there will inevitably be a period of uncertainty and familiarisation. The Parish seem determined to work towards a Parish Plan which will involve them in undertaking a Habitats Regulations Assessment in relation to Burnham Beeches. Something which Officers are not convinced has been thoroughly understood by the PC.

4. Confirmation has been received that the Countryside Stewardship Grant 'expression of interest for Burnham Beeches/Stoke Common has been accepted and has now progressed to the next stage of the application. Regular site visits are taking place with the Natural England adviser to agree on the best options for us to apply for, to define exactly what evidence we will need to provide and clarify the requirements of the grant. The deadline for the full application is 31 August and the scale of the work required is slowly becoming clearer and field work is being planned.
5. Work has continued for the revision of the Stoke Common Management Plan. Public 'drop in' consultation sessions (local village halls etc.) were held in late afternoons/evenings of 19 and 21 June 2018 and further site visits are planned with various interested stakeholders including the Friends of Stoke Common and the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group. A working draft has been put together and used to guide the content of the public consultation and ongoing Countryside Stewardship application.
6. At Stoke Common – the Friends of Stoke Common and other volunteers completed the whole site reptile survey during April and May. This is now the 6th year this survey has run, and data accumulated is providing very useful information on the spread of species following restoration work at the common. This year results again showed the continued spread of species into areas restored during the last 10 years under the ownership of the common by the City.
7. The Volunteers at both Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common have resurfaced paths, pulled rhododendron re-growth, bashed bracken, dug up invasive species, sorted ecological records onto databases, cleaned site signs and a whole host of other small scale practical tasks in support of the Ranger team – in addition to fence repairs, litter picks and installing waymarks posts.
8. The Ranger team have welcomed back all the livestock to the site. Cows have been grazing in invisible loops throughout May and June. Along with cows and ponies in the 'traditionally fenced' areas as well. Cows have also returned to Stoke Common.
9. The Ranger team have been busy with filming activity, site maintenance work including mowing, livestock movements, boardwalk repairs and improvements and fencing repairs having been undertaken at both sites.

PARTNERSHIPS

Kenley Revival update

10. The conservation works has encountered brick and mortar faults and is currently under investigation by our architects, 'Avanti'. Brick and mortar samples have returned from Sandberg, the testing consultants, and additional testing has been conducted by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to complete a more comprehensive review. Current circumstances have suggested it was an extreme sulphate attack. The outcome of the BRE report

is due at the start of July. PAYE, our contractors, are conducting their own assessment of the works to determine a programme of rectification of works.

11. The 'Learning Roadshow' is underway in lieu of an onsite 'Learning Festival', it will engage over 250 children in WAAF workshops developed by Jenny Lockyer and will be delivered in local libraries. This has created meaningful relationships with local libraries in delivering project activities which will continue after the season.
12. A 'Priorities Pot' application for the role of a Legacy Project Officer to achieve post-project legacy aims has been submitted. If successful it will provide a 21-month part-time post which will focus on delivering school workshops, guided tours, managing volunteers and maintaining the website. The role will also have scope to develop a sustainable education offer with opportunities for income generation.
13. 'Community Archaeology' will be held 16th -18th July 2018 with 15 volunteers. The 19 July will be for Open Spaces staff, as part of the Culture Board schedule of events, with a public day with tours and activities held on 21st July. A further week of community archaeology with more volunteers will take place 23rd – 25th July. This will be led by Museum of London Archaeology (MoLA).
14. A planning application for onsite interpretation signage has been submitted to the local planning authority (Croydon County Council) with an expected outcome due by 19th July. Initial feedback from the Planners stated that the number of signs need to be reduced due to visual clutter and the MoD plans for the fence. A revised plan has more recently been submitted that omits the wayfinding posts and reduced one of the table top signs to reduce the visual impact. The total number of signs has been reduced from 49 to 32 (inclusive of existing byelaw boards).
15. The final formal event will be the Conservation Seminar which will take place in February 2019 at City Livery Hall.
16. The project has successfully achieved all its volunteer targets for the project including the financial contribution with over 990 contributions delivering 296 says of volunteering. Over 14,000 people have been engaged in activities.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

17. The vacant posts for the position of Livestock Ranger and Conservation Ranger have been re-advertised and interviews will be held at the beginning of July with the hope of an appointment shortly thereafter.
18. Spring Park has been surveyed for the presence of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM). Fortunately, no nests were found on trees on the City of London land but there was one overhanging branch on a tree on Bromley Council land that has an OPM nest. This has been reported to the local authority.

19. The Ranger team from Merlewood Estate office attended a practical OPM training event hosted by the Royal parks, at Richmond Park
20. Dormice survey nest tubes have been placed across Coulsdon Common, Riddlesdown and Kenley Common to monitor the presence, if any, of dormice on these sites. Results will be known by the end of the summer.
21. The task of Ragwort pulling across the Coulsdon Commons has started again with several volunteer tasks held on Farthing Downs in June. This will continue throughout the summer months and a large task planned for Farthing Downs next month.
22. The cattle have now been turned out and are grazing across the Coulsdon commons. Cows and their calves are currently grazing Lower Woodplace Farm field and will then move on to graze pasture adjacent to Ditches Lane. The flock of sheep has been moved to Coulsdon common in readiness for foot trimming and shearing at the end of the month.

Ashtead Common

23. Twelve trees that have previously had Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) nests removed were sprayed. Trees surrounding these previously infested trees have not been treated because of the rare lepidoptera species found on site. More nests in new areas have been discovered subsequently and are awaiting removal. An OPM survey has been commissioned for later in the summer.
24. Belted Galloway cattle from Surrey Wildlife Trust grazed a newly extended Birch grazing area before moving on to Phoenix Field. Originally 12 in number, the herd was reduced in size prior to being moved down to the lower slopes to graze the scrub grassland area.
25. Grasshopper Warblers have returned to the common after a long absence. This species likes wet grassland habitat and was spotted in the Woodlands Road scrub/grassland area which has been subject to habitat restoration work over several years. Likewise, cuckoo returned to the common to breed after a period of absence.
26. The Ashtead Common Volunteers won a Service Recognition Award presented by Rotary International at the recent Ashtead Village Day. This recognised the contribution they make to the community through their conservation work.
27. A new vision for Ashtead Common, complete with a newly commissioned illustration, was presented to local people at Ashtead Village Day. This marked the start of a consultation process that will lead up to the introduction of a new management plan in 2021.

Incidents

Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common

28. There were 15 reported incidents during the period
29. There were four incidents related to dogs: One dog not under effective control and three PSPO incidents requiring follow up action. Two Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) have been issued by Rangers, one each for fouling and walking too many dogs to the open Space. The former FPN has been paid. The latter was appealed (dismissed) and the FPN remains outstanding.
30. Other incidents included, site misuse (camping/motorbikes/ 1 x fly tipping) and one where a Ranger helped in the search for a missing person thought to be at risk of committing suicide. – the person was ultimately found alive and well away from Burnham Beeches.
31. The City Surveyor team have aided site Rangers in dealing with two potential issues of encroachment by neighbouring properties to Burnham Beeches. In one case the encroachment (a shed) has been removed and the ground made good. The other matter (a driveway and associated area) is ongoing.

Ashtead Common

32. None

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33. Drain overflowing on Stites Hill Road and rubbish removed by the Coulsdon Common Ranger.
34. Coulsdon Common – Nitrous oxide cannisters found on Coulsdon Common. They were removed, and the matter reported to the local Police teams.
35. Kenley Common – two benches and an interpretation board were vandalised and subsequently repaired.
36. Kenley Common – reports of a motorbike on the perimeter track. Rider was advised that this was not permitted and escorted from the site.
37. Spring Park - Fly tipping – nine bags of rubbish left by the pedestrian gate and cleared away by the onsite Ranger.
38. Spring Park - Motorbikes at Spring Park – Regular dog walker came across a gang with six motorbikes driving through woods at Spring Park. The matter has been reported to the West Wickham Police Safer Neighbourhood Team

Filming, major events and other activities

Burnham Beeches

- 39. The Disney production 'Maleficent 2' used the Beeches for 3 nights of filming during May and June. This was a large film unit and the set up and strike process was effectively managed by the Ranger team over a 2.5-week period.
- 40. Seven events have been directly led and hosted during May and June so far with over 893 participants - including 220 people on a family dog walk run with a local school, 97 participants at a 2 hour meet the Ranger event and 85 joining in the woodland wonder activities during half term.
- 41. On the 11th of June the Beeches welcomed the Lord Mayor on his annual visit to commemorate the City's ownership of the Open Space. After a short walk through the Beeches, in glorious sunshine, The Lord Mayor created a new beech pollard and then he and guests retired to Dorney Wood house for luncheon.

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- 42. Bird spotting events on Riddlesdown and Coulsdon Common.
- 43. Flower walks and talks on Coulsdon Common, Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs with over forty members of public attending.
- 44. Heritage and Conservation walk, and talk, co-hosted by the onsite Ranger and Monuments Inspector Jane Siddell of Historic England and was very well attended.
- 45. Very popular Bat walks and talks were held on Coulsdon Common and Riddlesdown.
- 46. The Ranger for West Wickham and Spring Park delivered a talk on nature conservation which was enjoyed by over 450 pupils at Wickham Common Primary School.
- 47. A further group of students visited West Wickham Common and were led on a walk and talk by the onsite Ranger.

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