



Minutes of the Burnham Beeches & Stoke Common Consultative Group

Thursday 27th January 2022, 21.00

Chairman Graeme Doshi-Smith

Officers: Andy Barnard, Martin Hartup, Helen Read, Deb Harris, Richard Holt, James Gibson

Attendees: Benjamin Murphy (CoL), Robert Hughes-Penny (CoL), Andy Booth, Katie Ayers, Adrian Sutton, Joy Winyard, James Gibson, Les Davies, Carol Linton, Keith Greenough, Peter Harding, Jenny Quilter, Mary Kolhase.

Apologies: Caroline Spicer, Andy McVeigh, Nick Naylor, Vivienne Ely

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Chairman greeted the meeting.

Apologies given

2. **Minutes / Actions Undertaken** Minutes of the last meeting agreed.

3. **The 4 yearly Group Membership Review**

The Superintendent explained the Membership Review process and summarised the Consultative Group's Terms of Reference. The Membership list was reviewed, led by the Head Ranger:

Statutory Members: To be determined following City of London Ward elections.

Government Members: No change

Local Authority Councillor: Nick Naylor, Councillor, Buckinghamshire Council – filling current vacancies.

Local Authority Officer: Julia Carey, Officer, Buckinghamshire Council

Local Business Representatives: No change

Neighbours: Nightingale Park - Caroline Spicer and Adrian Sutton are leaving the group and were thanked for their support and contribution. Replaced by Jonathan Hartley and Jim Haran

Local Community Groups/Organisations: Thank you (in absence) to the following:

Burnham Beeches Volunteer - Judy Tipping

Bird Representative - Joy Winyard. Replaced by Jim Rose, Bucks Bird Club.

Ecological Representative – David Banks. Replaced by Jonathon Jones.

Vacancy - Ecological Volunteer – replacement Don Tallon

Vacancy - Local Disability Group. Further suggestions required.

Vacancy - Woodland Trust. Further suggestions required.

Vacancy - SUSTRANS Cycling Group. Further suggestions required.

New Members – Proposed: - Laura Jordan – Farnham Common Junior School.
- Sue Saville – Dorneywood Trust.

Outcome - All replacement nominees were agreed by the Group.

Outcome - All new members were agreed by the Group.

Action – Group Members to make further suggestions, where shown above – **All**

Action - Invitations to be sent to new members. **Superintendent**

The Chairman thanked all those members leaving, looking forward to welcoming new members. **Action.** Formal thank you to be sent to all leavers. **Superintendent**

4. **Superintendent's update**

Target Operating Model (TOM) is a review of the structure and governance across the City of London Corporation.

Changes to the Open Spaces Dept.

Director Colin Buttery retired in Autumn 2021. An interim Director has been appointed. The Open Spaces Department has joined with other City Departments to become the Environment Department - Executive Director Environment Juliemma McLoughlin. The Open Spaces Dept is now the '**Natural Environment Division**'.

A two phased approach is underway to set the structure of the new Natural Environment Division. The Commons is in Phase 1 and some relatively minor changes are now at the staff consultation stage including the deletion of vacant posts, amendments to Line Manager responsibilities and the strengthening of Ranger and Ecological teams. Savings accrued will help support recent budget cuts.

Five Year Development Plan

A 5-year plan is being produced by the Natural Environment Division and will be finalised once all divisional changes under Phase 2 have taken place later in 2022. Reviews of charitable governance and activities will also form an important part of the 5-year plan.

Section 106 income.

Income from planned funding through building development mitigation is currently sufficient to recruit two Outreach Rangers at Burnham Beeches to support the current team. One post is funded for 80 years as part of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) as agreed between Buckinghamshire County Council, Natural England and the City of London Corporation. The second is a 5-year post, funded in temporary mitigation of the development of the Horlicks factory to residential use until such time as Slough Borough Council complete their Local Plan.

Both posts will help mitigate the impact of increasing housing/population density around the Special Area of Conservation.

City of London Apprenticeship Scheme

Two additional Apprentice Rangers currently in place for 18 months at Burnham Beeches and Coulsdon Common. Other apprenticeships are being considered to support the fulltime teams and encourage new careers in environmental management.

5. Head Ranger's Annual Review of Projects undertaken in 2021

The Covid Pandemic period has seen a significant increase in visitor numbers on site with litter and serious path erosion remain two major issues and were a focus of work at both BB and SC in 2021.

The Events programme was 'limited' up to September 2021, but the team started to manage small events onsite through the Autumn.

Volunteers have returned in a managed way, individually, then small groups (6 individuals max) established. Now returned to more normal larger groups with certain Covid controls still in place.

Grazing. The Main Common is now included in the grazing schedule with cows grazing in May and June. Invisible fencing has now been in place for 10 years and the Boviguard system has worked well. However, technology is now advancing, and we are currently experimenting with 'No Fence', a new system that uses satellite and an app instead of 'underground wires' (as currently used). The trials are going very well. Soke Common was again successfully grazed with cows provided by our grazier and by the ponies.

Hillforts Project. The public dig for 2 weeks planned for 2020, cancelled due to pandemic, returned to site in November 2021 when a narrow trench was excavated across a wartime disturbed area of the monument bank – finds included wartime coins but also a flint cutting flake and most excitingly, wattle and daub and charcoal found at the bottom of the ditch. Carbon dating to occur on these finds but may take a while, 6 months +, to get a result.

Car Park charges 2021: First year of operation – financial targets set as part of the 12% budget reductions are now being supported by this additional income. Over 77,000 transactions have taken place and 97 Annual season tickets purchased. This income is used directly to fund the work carried out at Burnham Beeches.

Filming Year: The film industry is very active now and has provided £53,000 this financial year to date. This income is used directly to fund the work carried out at Burnham Beeches.

Oak Processionary Moth – Stoke Common. 6 nests found in 2020. Forestry Commission informed; nests removed. 90 nests found in 2021. Surveys conducted, nests removed. This is causing significant additional work for the ranger team.

Project Plans for 2022

Middle Pond leaking. Central funding has been found to repair the leak in the dam. Repairs now underway. Work to improve the habitat and biodiversity of the ponds will be scheduled to take place either in 2022/23 or 2023/24 using legacy/donation funding.

Introduction of Bylaws at Stoke Common. A Department wide review of bylaws is underway – introduction of bylaws can assist management of sites. No bylaws currently for Stoke Common so this is a likely area of activity although the process is complex and lengthy and likely to take a couple of years to deliver.

Annual Old Pollard Programme. 60 trees currently being worked on this winter. Young pollards programme due to commence in February.

Boardwalk replacement - project to be undertaken with the help of the volunteers' team.

Events Diary. Full programme now available online and onsite including events linked to the hillforts project – iron age day and archaeological digs and development of augmented reality interpretation.

6. Planning issues and Project Updates

Buckinghamshire Council

Mitigation strategy. No new dwellings are now permitted within 500m of the Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation boundary. Mitigation for developments within 500m to 5.6km of the SAC, can take the form of a standard payment from the developer (via a Section 106 agreement to Buckinghamshire Council) to Burnham Beeches to fund a Ranger post and other projects.

A visitor Carrying Capacity survey is underway – investigating visitor impact on trees, vegetation, birds, reptiles, historical monuments etc. Should help define how many visitors Burnham Beeches can cope with annually without causing permanent harm to the site

Slough Borough Council. SBC's Local plan is making slow progress. The Development of the Horlicks site was approved and impacts of additional visitors to Burnham Beeches will be mitigated by funding of a second Outreach Ranger post

Thames Water and foul water flooding in Farnham Common

Heavy rain is leading to sewage overflow in the village with many properties suffering serious and regular issues. Surplus sewage now regularly flows into the Beeches potentially harming the biodiversity of the Nile stream. Thames Water met the BB team on site and it is clear that many factors are causing this flooding will be very difficult to solve. Thames water have agreed to pay to carry out an invertebrate biodiversity survey of the Nile and the CoL are funding one on the lower plants. Burnham Beeches will continue to work closely with concerned bodies and individuals to help resolve flooding issues in the village.

Countryside Stewardship Grant

Payment changes to the national grant received by Burnham Beeches for work carried out on veteran pollards has led to a £35,000/annum shortfall in anticipated income. Officers continue to work closely with DEFRA to resolve this issue, but a successful outcome seems unlikely.

Carbon Sequestration Project

City of London has committed to a net zero carbon emission target and is exploring options for the Open Spaces to increase their carbon sequestration. There are only limited opportunities in Burnham Beeches due to the designated status e.g. planting of trees is not appropriate.

Other Conservation Work

National Vegetation Classification survey undertaken in 2021; regular monitoring such as butterfly transects, vegetation plots and grazing impact assessments were carried out.

Bucks Fungus Group

City of London central grant funding was awarded to this group in 2021. They have been visiting regularly and continue to find interesting species.

Stoke Common – Biological Survey

Bog Brush cricket was surveyed and has increased in numbers from the last survey Heteroptera (True Bugs) – a survey report is awaited.

Star Fruit – flowered this year which is very encouraging as this is not an annual occurrence.

7. **Any other business.** Nothing raised please email any queries to the Burnham Beeches team if required.
8. **Date of Next Meeting.** Week commencing 11th July 2022 – **Action** Superintendent to advise members of the Group.