

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	7 th September 2015
Subject: Superintendent's Update	Public
Report of: Superintendent of 'The Commons'	For Information
Summary	
<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>	
Recommendation	
<p>Members are asked to note the contents of this report.</p>	

Planning

1. The Conservation Officer continues to liaise closely with Natural England to arrange a conference and workshop concerning the impact of planned developments on sites of high nature conservation value. Speakers and participants are now attending from across England with the disciplines of conservation, planning and construction, well represented. The anticipated audience has grown from 20-30 to 30-40 participants. The conference takes place on 23rd September 2015
2. Phase 2 of the plan to extract gravel in close proximity to Burnham Beeches has started. Soil stripping operations have recently been completed and extraction is imminent. Monitoring of the impacts of this work is now underway and dust pads have been reinstated on and within the boundary of City ownership. The Conservation Officer continues to liaise with the operator, Summerleaze and Buckinghamshire County Council as the Mineral Consents Authority.

Kenley Airfield

3. The Superintendent and Head Rangers of Coulsdon and Ashted Commons met with Defence Estates and the RAF to discuss visitor safety at Kenley aerodrome on days when gliding activities are in operation. This issue first arose in 2006 since when a number of temporary solutions have been trialled albeit no permanent solution has been found to date. Defence Estates and the RAF now appear more receptive to advice it had previously received from the City Corporation and Croydon Council (as the planning authority) and now seems able to provide resources to resolve this long standing issue. This matter may next come before this committee as a formal report.

The meeting culminated in a letter of support being received from the Royal Air Force for the Kenley Revival Project (previously little support had been expressed).

Burnham Beeches. Income Generation since the introduction of DCO's

4. **Cafe earnings** – Café income remains buoyant since the introduction of Dog Control Orders on 1st December 2014. In the period 1/12/14 – 31/3/15 net profit is up 2% on the previous year. When compared to the average takings for these 4 months over last 6 years, turnover is up 6.8%.
5. Weekend and bank holiday car park income remains buoyant and within normal expectations. Weekday car park donations have seen the second highest recorded income in June since donation via car park machines was introduced on site in 2007. April 2015 saw the highest ever monthly donations via the car park machines exceeding the previous monthly record by £500.00.
6. From the above it can be reasonably assumed that the introduction of DCO's is currently having a neutral impact on weekend/bank holiday car park income and a beneficial impact on café and donation income streams. At Burnham Beeches, as with many open spaces, weather conditions remain the single biggest influence on car park and café income streams.

Development of the new Division

7. **Division Plan:** - The Division's management team are making good progress with the development of the Division Plan. When completed in December 2015, this document will describe how the new Division will operate and communicate internally and externally as a 'geographically spread series of sites and charities'. One immediate and unifying change will be the use of 'The Commons' as a new, collective, name for the division. This fits well with the governance of the sites provided by the Epping Forest and 'Commons' Committee. The four charitable identities will continue to be used locally on uniforms and vehicle liveries i.e. 'Coulsdon Commons', 'West Wickham and Spring Park', 'Ashted Common' and 'Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common'.

Customer Services

8. The Support Services Manager has reviewed the 'visitor offer and welcome' at the Merlewood & Ashted Estate offices and taken appropriate steps to improve public accessibility and the availability of visitor information.
9. The division's Information Team have implemented the first part of a communications plan to unify the provision of newsletters and other site based information so that they share the same style and are published to a similar timescale. This work has reduced duplication and will lead to modest resource savings.

Personnel

10. An Assistant Ranger has now left the Beeches to join the Surrey Wildlife Trust as their grazing Officer. A replacement is currently being recruited. A similar post also under recruitment at Coulsdon Commons.

11. A member of the Ashtead Common has contracted Lyme disease and continues at work on reduced hours. This matter has been reported to the HSE and the risk of tick borne disease highlighted across the Department.

Incidents.

12. Several small fires have occurred at West Wickham. Staff have responded quickly to these incidents but some minor damage to ground and site signage has occurred. The Police have been informed on each occasion.
13. A 2013 fly tipping incident at Burnham Beeches has recently been through the courts and the offender jailed for 18 months
15. The Kennel Club have recently contacted District Enforcement who administers the enforcement of car parking at Burnham Beeches. The Kennel Club are:
 - Querying the City's right to enforce Penalty Charge Notices where the exact width of highway is undefined (and by implication, the start of City ownership).
 - Indirectly alleging that the Dell Car Park is public highway and by implication the improper enforcement of parking controls by the City Corporation.

District Enforcement have explained the technical position in both instances and suggested that the Kennel Club now contact the Superintendent and Buckinghamshire County Council concerning any specific landownership and highways issues. The matters raised by the Kennel Club are thought to be reasonably straightforward to evidence and defend but the motive for such a challenge i.e. from an organisation concerned primarily with the welfare of dogs, is uncertain.

This matter may be brought to committee as a formal report once the outcome of the issues raised has been clarified.

Filming Activity.

14. During the Autumn of 2015 the BBC may use Burnham Beeches to film the entirety of a new production of 'A Mid Summer Nights Dream'. David Tennant is the Director. Earnings from this project would help to meet 2015/16 income targets.
15. A local student film used the BB café as a location. No income is charged for student productions.

Awards.

16. The Commons were awarded 8 Green Flag and 5 Green Heritage Awards as follows:
 - Ashtead Common: Green Flag
 - Ashtead Common: Green Heritage
 - Burnham Beeches: Green Flag
 - Burnham Beeches: Green Heritage

- Farthing Downs: Green Flag
- Farthing Downs: Green Heritage
- Coulsdon Common: Green Flag
- Kenley Common: Green Flag
- Kenley Common: Green Heritage
- Riddlesdown: Green Flag
- Spring Park: Green Flag
- West Wickham Common: Green Flag
- West Wickham Common: Green Heritage

Judges' comments and scores are awaited.

17. **Disabled Parking Award (DPA).** Following a recent assessment by the charity 'Disabled Motoring UK' (DMUK) the car park on Lord Mayors Drive at Burnham Beeches has been awarded a DPA for its excellent disabled parking facilities. This is the first time a nature reserve has been awarded a DPA for its parking facilities. Helen Dolphin, Director of Policy and Campaigns for the charity Disabled Motoring UK, said: "It gives me great pleasure, to commend Burnham Beeches Car Park on this achievement and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all personnel involved. When you have a disability it can be a struggle finding a car park that meets your needs and so it is fantastic to know that users of these facilities can be confident that they will be able to park. DMUK has a lot of complaints about the abuse of the Blue Badge scheme and we hope the DPA will ensure that car park operators are recognised for their efforts in tackling the issue."

- Appendices - None

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