

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	11 th September 2017
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>	

HLF Project - Kenley Revival update

1. Zone 2 works programme has been extended with additional costs to the PAYE contract increasing to £260k as approved by Project sub-committee to allow for all additional works to rifle range, KC12, KC29 and KC34 being complete. This increase is funded by the under spend in the conservation/repair, inflation and contingency budgets and will extend this element of the works programme by approximately 6 weeks. The increase is due to additional works being required to remove the Scheduled Monument from the Heritage at Risk Register following further inspections of each individual pen and is based upon learning gained during the lifetime of the project.
2. The Tribute Relocation Works are complete and the spine wall in KC12 has now been restored.
3. An 'Events Apprentice' has recently been appointed to join the project delivery team commencing mid-September for an 18 month term. Salary requirements will be met centrally via the City's Apprenticeship Scheme. Training is also being provided via the City of London.
4. The 2017 Learning Festival is now complete with 856 schoolchildren attending. Press coverage was good and the event also received 100% satisfaction feedback from volunteers and schools.
5. The 'refreshed' Website and Archive has recently been launched with members of the public better able to contribute stories and photographs of RAF Kenley. We have also seen a significant increase in the project through social media channels. The project has had a significant increase in press coverage. Blog posts being written by Project Manager to cover the conservation works.

6. The largest event in the lifetime of the project titled 'Sky Heroes' will be held on Sunday 10th September, the event will encompass the whole of the airfield with a lecture tent, museums quarter, archaeology display, nature and science activities along with guided tours and land train. It is possible that a Hurricane fighter plane will undertake a flypast during the event. Details of the event including a map of the site are available online. Such is the anticipated scale of the event that the Project Board decided to employ an Events Management Company to handle the traffic management and stewarding rather than rely on volunteers as has been the case in the past.
7. The Community Archaeology Dig took place 17 – 21st July with activities over the weekend delivered as part of the National Festival of Archaeology. The dig was very successful and a last minute decision to engage MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) to deliver the event increased the benefits in training volunteers. Many buried features were uncovered including the location of several platforms to which Spitfires and Hurricanes were secured during the Battle of Britain period. All artefacts will now be cleaned and photographed for the website with East Surrey Museum and Wings Museum already requesting objects for display. The weekend tours saw 150 people take part with several press articles published.
8. Film screening of 'Reach for the Sky' was held at the David Lean Cinema on Saturday 19th August with a pre-screening talk given by the Project Manager.
9. The latest HLF report covered the period June – August and included a cost provision of approximately £27k for contributions from volunteer time, this is equal to the total of previous HLF reports submitted to date and indicates the significance of volunteer involvement in the project and exceeding targets to date.

Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common

10. The quarry site at East Burnham has continued to operate and the associated monitoring of the ground water hydrology and dust has continued. No issues have arisen. The additional dust monitoring stations have recorded low level of dust since their installation while the sticky pads are recording higher levels. This suggests that, at the moment, the dust is probably not coming from the quarry but may be due to other local building work. The sticky pads also pick up more organic matter due to their locations. Volunteers continue to do the bulk of the work in servicing the dust monitoring.
11. A further meeting of planners was held under 'Duty to Co-operate' between South Bucks District Council (SBDC), Slough Borough Council (SBC) and Bucks County Council (BCC) with Natural England and CoL Officers present. Work continues on the South Bucks and Slough local plans although air quality issues in relation to traffic dominated the meeting. Modelling work on projected vehicle numbers has been carried out by Bucks County Council to help the process and the issue has an impact on the development of other plans such as the Minerals and Waste Plan, the Freight Policy, development of SMART motorways in the area and the expansion of Heathrow Airport.

12. Comments have been submitted on the following plans or projects: Windsor & Maidenhead Borough Draft plan (particularly the Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment), the Bucks County Council Minerals & Waste Plan, Windsor & Maidenhead Minerals & Waste options, planning applications for a new gravel quarry site locally and the construction of a Beaconsfield relief road and four other planning applications for additional dwellings within 500m of Burnham Beeches..
13. The annual vegetation monitoring is almost completed with the eco-volunteers providing extra valuable help, the data gathered provides information on how the management is impacting of the target plant communities.
14. A meeting was held with project officers and associated experts regarding the Heritage Lottery Funded project 'Back from the Brink' in particular the element 'Ancients of the Future'. 'Back from the Brink' is being delivered by Plantlife, Buglife, RSPB, Natural England and others. It focuses on species associated with ancient trees and many of the target species are found in Burnham Beeches, including several species of fungi, a moss, lichen and birds. Burnham Beeches is proposed as a location to carry out several small projects, or parts of projects, including finding out more about the ecological requirements of Forster's knot-hole moss and attempting the translocation of the Red Data Book lichen *Pyrenula nitida* from a beech pollard that is almost dead to some similar trees in the same locality. There are no cost implications to local risk budgets although some staff time will be required if the project includes research at Burnham Beeches.
15. A second/new location has been found for the nationally rare bracket fungus, Oak Polypore this summer. In the same area as it has been found previously but on a different tree. A toadstool found during inventory work on Stoke Common in 2011 has finally been identified using genetic studies as *Hebeloma laetitiae*. This is the only British record and it is one of just three worldwide, the other two being in Italy.
16. The Ranger team has been working on the young pollards, cutting this year's batch of trees in the work programme, many for a 3rd time. Bench and summer tree safety surveys have been completed with replacement benches being made from on-site timber and installed by staff and volunteers.
17. The grazing project continued with animals grazing all the 120Ha invisible fenced area until the end of July. They will return to some areas for a second time in September.
18. The Burnham Beeches volunteers have continued to carry out tasks to improve visitor facilities – including footpath surfacing and installing replacement benches along with the usual summer tasks of bracken bashing & wildlife surveys.

19. Following the traveller incursion on the Mian Common in May site boundary protection was improved at various points around the site by the ranger team and volunteers.
20. Burnham Beeches received Green Flag and Green Heritage award again this year in July

Stoke Common

21. The Friends of Stoke Common have continued with their monthly tasks to help manage Stoke Common. The two month long reptile survey finished in early June.
22. The local fire service have supported the ranger team by reviewing fire plans for Stoke Common and are planning a major 'familiarisation exercise' for local crews at the Common again for the summer of 2018.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

23. All sites have been successful in this year's round Green Flag judging. Green Heritage Award have been granted to Farthing Downs & New Hill, Riddlesdown, West Wickham Common and Kenley Common.
24. The vet has confirmed that 18 cows are in calf this year and can be expected to make an appearance in January 2018.
25. Ragwort pulling on Farthing Downs continued and several local community groups supported the rangers onsite such as Hillbillies, TCV's, CCV's and Skanska. They contributed 11 days within the last two weeks.
26. Hay making has started across the Commons including Coulsdon Common and Kenley Common.
27. Contractors have dug a trench around a section of Coulsdon Common (along Fox Lane and Coulsdon Road) following the recent spate of traveller incursions to the site.
28. The Head Ranger and Information Ranger attended a working group event on Happy Valley (adjacent to Farthing Downs) with the Downlands Project to look at grazing successes and good practice.
29. The West Wickham & Coulsdon Common Consultative Committee had a successful site visit to Riddlesdown Common in July. The group looked at recent tree safety works that had been completed earlier in the year and viewed/discussed new heritage interpretation panel.

Ashted Common

30. The arrangement with Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) for the supply of eight Belted Galloway cattle is working well. It currently seems unlikely that SWT will be in a position to offer us invisible fencing as an option for next year, pending DEFRA's consideration of the Best Practice Manual.

31. An Oak Processionary Moth site survey discovered four new nests in three locations, two of which were new. A sample survey of predicted high risk areas was undertaken, with a resulting estimate of the rate of infestation of 1%-2% of the oak trees. This means that several hundred nests could now be present on site. Currently whenever nests are discovered they are removed.
32. Staff and volunteers have been working hard on a dead or alive survey of the 1,100 veteran trees. This has been postponed with some areas still to survey due to the number of ticks present.
33. The Head Ranger met with representatives from the River Mole Catchment Partnership to assess the ongoing pollution of the Rye Brook, and consider if a reed bed filtration system could be introduced to limit the impact of pollution entering the brook. The South East Rivers Trust (members of the Partnership) is due to submit a quote for the design of such a system.
34. Ashtead Common was awarded both Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards.

Support Services

35. The Administration Assistant at Ashtead Common has now reduced her working week to four days. The P/T Administration Assistant at the Merlewood Estate Office will now work at Ashtead, when required, as cover.
36. The team is currently focussed on the arrangements for the Sky Heroes day, the biggest date in The Common's event calendar with an expected 5,000 visitors.

INCIDENTS

Burnham Beeches

37. A group of youths were captured on CCTV vandalising two gates at the café – the footage has been passed to the police
38. There were six incidents related to dogs, mostly DCO offences although one involved a visitor being bitten on the face. The latter was reported to the police.
39. There were two incidents of lost/missing people – in both cases they were found
40. Four incidents of fly tipping – several were of security tags from retail outlets.
41. One incident was reported by a lady with young children complaining about language being used during a dispute between two regular visitors
42. A man delivering goods to the café had his briefcase stolen from the van – this was also captured on CCTV and the footage has been passed to the police

43. An incident at each site of vehicles driving off road
44. Two Rangers attended an attempted suicide and assisted the emergency services. The lady was taken to hospital but we have had no updates of her subsequent health.
45. One incident of verbal abuse towards a Ranger who dealt with a visitor refusing to leave the site at the advertised closing time.
46. Some youths parked in front of a gateway, blocking access to their home for two elderly residents. The youths were found and asked to move.
47. One incident of vandalism to a public toilet.

Ashtead Common

48. An exploratory archaeological investigation was conducted on the Earthworks Scheduled Monument on the 17th and 18th of August. This was in response to the illegal removal of two bronze objects by a metal detectorist in March. Several interesting finds were made that prove that the Monument was the site of an Iron Age settlement, (as opposed a stock enclosure). However, nothing was discovered to put the two bronze artefacts into context. We await the final report.
49. A person that went missing from the Wells Estate near to Ashtead Common on July 2nd still has not been found. The Common was intensively searched by the police, the local community and our staff and volunteers. This case is unusual in the fact that the missing person relied on a mobility scooter to get around. The scooter had a range of 30 miles, and the police have now extended the search to areas beyond Epsom and Ashtead Commons.

The West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons

50. Coulsdon Common - A group of youths were reported chasing cows and sheep on several occasions in the Grove/Maze and rangers found a vandalised kissing gate. The group were spoken to by Rangers and they soon dispersed. There was also evidence of drugs being smoked. The East Coulsdon Safer Neighbourhood Team has been informed.
51. Farthing Downs & New Hill – Large amount of nitrous oxide canisters have been dumped – the rubbish has been removed and Safer Neighbourhood Team informed.
52. Farthing Downs & New Hill – Motorbikes across the common on several occasions – Police and Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been informed.

FILMING, MAJOR EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

53. During the reporting period there were six events from the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common event diary including –
54. Two well attended Simply Walks.

55. Burnham Beeches at War – this was attended by a veteran who had served at the Beeches during the WWII period.
56. The big community picnic was very successful with around 600 attendees.
57. The summer trail started in July as did the weekly nature based craft activities at the information point.
58. In addition: Burnham Beeches Radio Club held an event on the main common over the weekend of 24 and 25 June; and two Rangers attended an exhibition event based on outdoor learning at Burnham Beeches at the local infant and junior schools.

The West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons

Successful events at the WW&CCs included -

59. Flower walks across Riddlesdown and Coulsdon Commons – CC and RD Ranger.
60. Hidden History Walk on WWC – Senior Ranger .
61. Quarry in bloom walk – RD Ranger.
62. Enchanted Forest self-guided walk – KC Ranger.
63. Bat walk and moth night event on FD – FD Ranger & Information Ranger
64. Bat Walk – KC Ranger.
65. Bioblitz at Spring Park – Information Ranger.
66. Talk to Addiscombe and Shirley Rotary Club – Information Ranger.

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