Vision for Ashtead Common

Viewed from Woodfield Road, Ashtead Common rises gently to the north with a mosaic of trees, scrub and grassland covering the sides of the slope. Woodfield is a glorious flowery and varied hay meadow, on the edge of which willow pollards and other trees mark the point where the land starts to rise and where grazing livestock can be found. These lower slopes are an intricate mosaic of grassland and scrub, with the trees and bushes varying in density, some tightly packed and some scattered, this area is a haven for birds and rarer plants. Progressing up the hill the famous ancient pollarded oak trees are found within a wood pasture system. Cattle graze under the trees, in slightly lower densities than within the scrub, ensuring a varied structure to the vegetation. Tree density across the common is hugely variable, in some areas the woodland is dense, with abundant hazel, in other areas the pollarded trees stand in open conditions but all is grazed with livestock. In addition to the old trees there are plenty of oaks of all ages to act as replacements for the ancients, which are managed to keep them alive as long as possible. The ground vegetation is dominated by grasses and herbs with bracken frequent but not dominating large areas. The Rye is a focal point for the eastern part of the Common with its meanders and wet marshy areas providing an important reserve for wetland plants and animals.

People are an integral part of the Ashtead Common and the Common is a central part of the local community. Walkers and horse riders visit daily to make use of both formal surfaced tracks and the informal network of paths. Local people are involved in the management of the Common, playing a crucial role in the important activities during the year and celebrating the successes.

The financial future of the Common is secure, with sufficient funding for annual needs. The Common is still productive, with local people benefitting from products such as wood and hay where this does not compromise the other management objectives.