

**MINUTES of the 563rd Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 18th January 2014 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Cllr. R Mantle
Mr J Mill
Mr J Harris
Mr. N Cull
Mr D Atkins
Mr. J Milner Clerk

There were also present six members of the public, including four Residents Association members, whose names are recorded.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Mr. R Knights Warden

3. Minutes of last Meeting

The Minutes were agreed as circulated.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- i. Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The Clerk had tried to negotiate better terms for the use of DCMP sheep with Rod Edbrooke SCC but had met with a stock answer that reduction in costs was not possible. Twelve sheep are now grazing an area to the north of Banstead Downs and seem to be doing very well. Grateful thanks were extended to David Gradidge, who, with his son, had erected the fences and maintained them during the difficulties caused by the wet weather.
- ii. Reduction of Scrub.** As part of our agreement with Natural England we are required to greatly reduce the scrub on Banstead Downs and to that end had purchased a 'Jungle Buster' which has been put to good use. Three fairly large areas of the Downs had been cleared to good effect and further efforts will be made to clear the resulting brash. The plan will now be to cut one of these three areas each year on a three year cycle.
- ii. Notice Boards** – A determined effort will be made to update both the boards themselves and the information they carry before the next meeting together with the sign posts for which we are responsible. Using the current locations as a starting point Nick Cull and Jeff Harris will draw up a list of where they believe boards should be sited and those that are so dilapidated as to make replacement essential. Each Conservator will then be allocated a number of boards, dependant on location, for which he will be responsible for maintenance of information but for uniformity there will be only one source of information. Enquiries will be made to cost replacement boards or if they could be constructed by our staff. Jeff Harris circulated the front page of a four page seasonal Newsletter which could be placed on notice boards at the beginning of each season.
- iii. Depot** –In the recent downpours the depot had flooded to a few inches but as nothing was on the floor that could be damaged there were no issues arising. Discussion then centred on toilet facilities and the present hired facility should be replaced with a permanent structure as soon as possible.
- iv. Friends and Fundraising** – The Chairman reported that he had found someone who was willing to start organising a 'Friends of Banstead Commons' group and thought that she would bring several volunteers with her. A general discussion followed regarding ground rules and the fact that 7th Banstead Scouts would assist on the Downs where possible, probably in such jobs as helping to clear the brash mentioned in i(ii) above.

- v. **Preston Regeneration** – The Warden and Clerk had met Justine Chatfield and representatives of Land Securities and walked Burgh Heath common to provide information for a Management Plan, not only for the area of the footpath but for the all of the common to the south of Reigate Road. RBBC have made application to the Secretary of State for the exchange of land relevant to the proposed foot path. A question of litter around the footpath after completion was raised and it was pointed out that RBBC will assume responsibility for the footpath and its immediate surrounds. There is a local volunteer who regularly clears litter from the common and our staff will also do so bearing in mind their other commitments.
- vi. **Licences for The Bell and Sportsman** – Both licensees have now paid for their licences for the current year.
- vii. **Park Downs - Water Dispersal from Park Road** – SCC had submitted further plans to displace water from Park Road onto the common but these were not acceptable to us or Natural England. At the moment no further proposal has been received. Cllr. Mantle thought that SCC was continuing with the proposal to build a lagoon at the bottom of the hill which could be the answer to the problem.
Another answer was for SCC to clear the drains regularly. Since this had been done at the Belmont end of the A217 the road around the roundabout, which had been notorious for flooding, had not flooded at all during the recent heavy rains. David Gradidge stated that there was a similar situation in Sutton Lane where blocked drains caused huge pools of water on the road which was being splashed onto the common over both sides and ruining the eastern bank or verge. His local R.A is to meet with the local councillor to try to achieve clearing of the drains.
- viii. **Withybed Corner Track** – Cllr. Broad advises that the licensee of The Bell and the other residents would be asked to make a financial contribution towards any possible solution to the road surface. An email has been received from a resident on the southernmost track complaining that they also had pot holes that required constant attention and as RBBC were attending to the adjacent track residents on their track were feeling like poor relations. Cllr. Broad recommends that the current complainant should write to Graham Cook, RBBC, outlining his complaint.

4. **Warden's Report**

The recent stormy weather has been a major factor with trees falling in several places, particularly Mogador where a tree had to be removed from a track late on Christmas Eve to allow residents access and egress. Fallen trees that were obstructing vehicles and pedestrians have been dealt with and those further onto the commons have been made safe until such times as ground conditions allow the use of machinery. Good progress has been made in clearing scrub on Banstead Downs, which, being on chalk drains well and allows the use of machinery. There is still a lot of clearing up required, particularly of the brash and burning of the brush, but already the vista has improved immensely which is being commented on by users of the common. Sites have been identified for drainage work which will improve some of the rides and pathways and more cut and collect will be done when the grass dries out. The agreement to remove weed from Burgh Heath pond has had to be delayed due to the water level and, rather than put our machinery into the pond it may be better to pay a contractor who will have far superior equipment which will be less of a risk. A padlock had been cut at the entrance to Banstead Downs on Sutton Lane for no apparent reason. As this is a ploy of those wishing to illegally bring vehicles and caravans onto the common the members of Residents Associations were asked if they would report any locks they find to be cut or broken.

5. **Forthcoming Events**

None notified.

6. Any Other Business

None

7. Dates of the Next Meetings

26th April 2014 – change of date due to Easter falling on the previous week end.

19th July 2014

18th October 2014

**MINUTES of the 564th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 26th April 2014 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Cllr. R Mantle
Cllr. V Broad
Cllr A Kay
Mr J Mill
Mr J Harris
Mr. N Cull
Mr D Atkins
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Mr. R Knights Warden

There were also present five members of the public, namely;

Alan Higgs – Reigate, Prof Garth Swanson – Burgh Heath, J Barlow – Tadworth, L Rowles – Tadworth, David Gradidge – Banstead Village R.A.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Appointment of Conservators and Election of Chairman

Cllr Richard Mantle, Mr Nick Cull and Mr David Atkins had all been re-elected as Conservators for three years commencing on from 31st March 2014.

Cllr A J Kay had been appointed to replace Cllr M Miller for the last year of the three year tenure.

Cllr V Broad proposed and Nick Cull seconded the nomination of John Peacock as chairman for the forthcoming year which was duly confirmed.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

The Minutes were agreed as circulated.

4. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- i. **Reduction of Scrub.** During the extremely wet January and February Banstead Downs, which drains more readily than the other commons had remained accessible to heavy machinery so the staff had spent considerable time there clearing large areas of scrub in support of our agreement with Natural England. This had opened up several new views and would assist the regrowth of flora and provide a butterfly transept leaving sufficient scrub to support birds and other animals. It also enhanced perceptions of safety as there were less narrow paths surrounded by shrubs. The result had been described as 'striking' and the majority of users of the common thought it was a great improvement but this view was not shared by all.
- ii. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** Grazing had cost over £1,300 for ten weeks this winter and the debate on the benefits of grazing over cut and collect still continues. It was thought that there are advantages from using both means. A working group of the Chairman, Clerk,

Warden and Nick Cull would meet to try to determine the issues and report back to all members.

- ii. **Notice Boards** – Nick Cull and Jeff Harris had reviewed all of the boards and found some to be missing but, apart from a few, those in place appeared to be in good condition. The information on them is being regularly updated and we should consider if we need all Bye-laws displayed or just a selection as now. New boards cost about £500 each and we probably need six or seven but not all at the same time. Siting of boards has also been considered and Nick will liaise with John Peacock to map all locations of boards. Nick also circulated a ‘Seasonal Notice’ on what to look for at this time of year indicating the type of information available for display. Nick Cull to submit recommendations to the Clerk for action.
- iii. **Friends and Fundraising** – John Peacock circulated the final results of the survey which were promising but mostly without any commitment to be involved in a ‘friends’ group. It was evident that whereas residents near to the four commons had a great interest in their local common there was no such interest across the commons as a whole. It was suggested that if the lady who volunteered to be chairperson of a group of friends was inclined to continue to try to develop such a group then she should continue but at this stage members should be volunteers and not required to pay a subscription. In the meantime we should encourage more volunteer groups and Residents Association participation in such activities as litter picking which currently occurs at Banstead Downs and Burgh Heath.
- iv. **Preston Regeneration & Burgh Heath Pond** – The draft Burgh Heath Management Plan commissioned by RBBC in connection with the Preston Regeneration Plan has been received and circulated to all members. While there are many good points certain aspects will be labour intensive and therefore costly while others may have the tendency to turn it into a local amenity rather than a heathland common. The Chairman, Clerk and Warden will attend a meeting with RBBC to discuss the draft and members views on the plan would be appreciated before 12th May.
- v. **Park Downs - Water Dispersal from Park Road** – Nothing further had been heard from SCC so this item will be removed from the agenda until further notified.
- vi. **Withybed Corner Tracks** – RBBC had written to all residents of both tracks ‘to seek to regularise vehicular use of the track by offering a deed of easement granting a formal right of way with a requirement to contribute to the maintenance costs to ensure that all future works are paid for by contributions based on fair and reasonable proportions according to use’. The letters had been posted at the end of March and responses are slowly trickling in but all will be required before progress can be made.
- vii. **Use of Sports Field** – RBBC had enquired into this issue and determined, in summary, that ‘we can not charge the club for use of the ground or enter into a licence. However we can stop them letting out the ground to other users, i.e. the school either in totality or without the council being party to and/or agreeing terms upon which the cricket club allow the school to use the area and maintain it for them. It appears we can also licence the ground to other users (provided this doesn’t conflict with its use by any clubs authorised by the Conservators under the Scheme).
Additionally they state ‘As such we can’t insist on the Club entering into a licence nor revoke the consent previously given. It is only the Conservators who have a right to revoke or alter the regulations’.
Not wishing to revoke the Cricket Club’s use of the ground a discussion on charging them for a licence ensued. All members thought it was fair to do so and thought that the fee could be based on either the same amount Banstead Cricket Club pay to RBBC for the use of their ground (or the amount we might expect to receive from Natural England if the land was available to enter into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. John Peacock will measure the area and enquiries on the above fees will be made and presented to the next meeting.

5. Warden’s Report

Due to the extremely wet weather and being unable to get machines onto the saturated ground spring arrived before the winter work was completed. Staff have been busy removing the extra trees which have fallen due to the extreme weather but the positive side of this is that ten benches have been replaced using the fallen timber and processing it with the use of the saw bench. The saw

bench is a great advantage and saves on not having to buy in expensive timber. Wood from the fallen trees is also used for chipping for use on paths as well as some being left for wild life. A lot of tree inspections have taken place but with leaves now coming out and making them heavier, and with the wind and water weakening their roots, there may be more trees to come down. Drainage has been put into some Bridle Paths where a need has been identified and fly tipping continues to be a problem. It is usually worse in the spring with people tidying their homes and gardens and despite our closing off access points to the commons vehicles still manage to get through. (Jeff Harris mentioned an initiative between RBBC and Surrey Police where fly tipping was high on the operational agenda). On a positive note the commons are looking greener, the birds are nesting and animals breeding which tends to encourage more users of the commons. Sporadic grass cutting has commenced and in the next few weeks regular grass cutting routines will be in full flow.

6. Forthcoming Events

None notified on the commons but Walton on the Hill May Pageant will take place on Saturday 17th May 2014.

7. Any Other Business

- i. John Mill suggested that although the names of the public attending the meeting were recorded in the Attendance Book it would be helpful if they were also included on the minutes. It was further suggested that the minutes and forthcoming agenda could be published on the website and after further discussion it was agreed that this would apply to the minutes only.
- ii. Jeff Harris requested that Conservators Walks on the commons be planned again this year. The Clerk will circulate lists for Conservators to show their avoid dates to assist maximum attendance.
- iii. Cllr Kay requested details of permissions for the public to take firewood from the commons. The Warden advised that if it is loose and not sawn or chopped by that person, and if it can be carried by one person without the use of a wheel barrow or vehicle, it is an acceptable practice but at their own risk. On other occasions cut logs will be left on verges for the public to take, but not those stacked on the common which are for the use of invertebrates.
- iv. The situation whereby Travis Perkins have built a wall and fence on common owned by them and possibly extended a short way on to Burgh Heath common was discussed. The Clerk had contacted Travis Perkins as well as RBBC and RBBC were investigating and would inform us when there was something to report.

8. Dates of the Next Meetings

19th July 2014

18th October 2014

**MINUTES of the 565th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 19th July 2014 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Cllr. R Mantle
Cllr. V Broad
Cllr A Kay
Mr J Mill
Mr D Atkins
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Mr. R Knights Warden

There were also present two members of the public, namely;

J Barlow – Tadworth, L Rowles – Tadworth.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr J Harris
Mr. N Cull

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The Minutes were agreed as circulated.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- i. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The collation of the necessary prior information is almost complete allowing the meeting of the working group to take place to report back on whether we should continue grazing.
- ii. **Natural England.** Jane Sevenoaks of Natural England visited Park Downs and Banstead Downs on Thursday and Friday of last week on 'rapid' visits and will let us know her findings.
- ii. **Notice Boards** – Nick Cull and Jeff Harris were both absent but it had been noticed that the information on the boards had been refreshed. Jeff Harris requested Conservators submit items to him for inclusion in the Autumn Newsletter. (See also item iii below).
- iii. **Preston Regeneration & Burgh Heath Pond** – Justine Chatfield had advised that the Planning Inspector has granted the deregistration for the Burgh Heath path and they are looking to start clearance work in October in line with seasonal windows. She will also arrange the adjustment on the replacement land at Peacock's field.
County Councillor Michael Gosling had allocated some of his allowance to Burgh Heath Residents Association who had requested another bench to the south of the pond and back and arm rests to the two recently renovated benches. They would also pay half the cost of a new notice board with one side being used by BCC and the other by the Residents association. The Conservators agreed these propositions.
- iv. **Withybed Corner Tracks** – Not all of the residents along the track to the Bell had responded to a letter from RBBC who were now considering the next step forward.

A request has been received from the residents of Rudry and Withybed along the southern track at Withybed Corner for them to place removable posts on the verge alongside their properties. The track is very narrow and turns a right angle with no vision afforded of approaching traffic. Quite often one vehicle has to reverse, usually onto the verge, and in doing so is in great danger of falling over the sharp drop on the verge to the ditch below. Posts would mean that vehicles have to reverse further but would be in less danger of falling down the drop. The posts would be removable to allow cutting of the grass verge, which, although belonging to BCC, the residents choose to do. They had also requested that the ditch channel under the track be unblocked to enable the free flow of water and the name board of houses be reinstated. After due consideration the Conservators agreed that the replacement of the name board was a matter for the residents and that they could unblock the water channel under the road which had occasionally been undertaken by previous residents. In agreeing to the placing of removable posts the Conservators stressed that the decision was made for traffic management purposes arising from a duty of care to users of the track. The posts should not, either now or in the future, form a demarcation of the commons and the area of verge to the centre of the ditch always remains as commons with no rights inferred to the residents.

- v. **Use of Sports Field** – RBBC have confirmed that that Banstead Cricket Club is fully self-managed and they have no involvement other than as managing trustee for the charitable trust that owns the ground. BCC therefore cannot use it as a basis for charging Tadworth Cricket Club rent.

The other option explored was how much we might receive if the Tadworth ground fell within our Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England, and the answer is £200 per annum, this being the rate for 1 hectare of restoration of semi-natural grassland. It was determined that further enquiries be made in respect of the rate per hectare charged on Reigate Heath and Banstead Golf Clubs and how much £1.00 in 1931, the date of the original agreement, would be worth now. John Peacock will measure the area of Banstead Downs Golf Club.

- vi. **Travis Perkins** –Judith Shephard, RBBC Property Solicitor, has written to Travis Perkins and the owners of the property regarding unlawful works undertaken at their Burgh Heath site, namely:

- i. The fence and wall along the front boundary have been erected on Council owned land with the works encroaching by at least 1 metre; and
- ii. ‘Restricted works’ have been carried out on common land.

The Council requires the following action be taken to resolve the current unsatisfactory situation:

- i. Remove the fence, wall and advertising sign from the Council owned area of land, restoring the boundary to its correct position; and
- ii. Either remove the works in their entirety from the common land, and restore the land to its former condition, or apply to deregister the remaining area of common land that is within the revised boundary of the Travis Perkins site.

We await further developments.

4. **Warden’s Report**

The majority of work at the moment is seasonal grass cutting which takes up a lot of time and, with the recent hot temperatures, to ensure fire breaks are kept open. Gypsies were recently in the Kingswood area and further preventative action was taken to block off access to the commons.

Fly tipping was again prevalent, not only on the commons but also on Walton Heath and Headley Heath and one local builder was suspected but not leaving any evidence. Cllr. Broad drew attention to the recently formed JET team of police and RBBC enforcement officers working together to combat local issues such as this and thought they could be of assistance.

5. **Forthcoming Events**

Burgh Heath Dog Show – 27th July

(Also – 17th June – Chinthurst School Cross Country Run; 5th & 6th July _ Mid-Surrey Pony Club TREC;
7th July – Reigate school Charity Run).

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Dates of the Next Meetings

18th October 2014

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held on Saturday 18th October 2014 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

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 Mr D Atkins
 Mr. J Milner Clerk

There were also present two members of the public, namely;

Alan Higgs – Reigate; David Gradidge – Banstead RA.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr J Harris
Mr. R Knights Warden

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The Minutes were agreed as circulated.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- i. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** A local farmer had been approached about grazing Park Downs but it appeared that he was not keen to do so leaving us with the options of buying in sheep ourselves or hiring them the Downland Partnership at £7.25 each per week; the sub-committee will determine the best option.
- ii. **Natural England.** Jane Sevenoaks of Natural England had visited Park Downs and Banstead Downs (SSSI's), but not on the notified dates, and we await a report on her findings. Georgina Terry will visit the commons in respect of our Higher Level Stewardship agreement on 31st October 2014.

Notice Boards – Having considered the report from Jeff Harris and Nick Cull the Conservators authorised notice boards to be placed or renewed at:

- i. Mill Road – the beginning of the footpath from New Road to the north side of the cricket pitch (the old school walk),
- ii. The Sportsman (replacement),
- iii. The edge of the field/footpath from Mogador to the north of Banstead Heath – at the entrance to the Heath,
- iv. The corner of Banstead Heath/Walton Heath Golf Course where the footpath across the golf course meets the Heath,
- v. Dorking Road, opposite Chapel Road,
- vi. On Burgh Heath at both ends of the footpath from the new development to the A240.
- vii. On Banstead Downs at the bus terminus entrance to the downs,
- viii. Resite the board at the extinct car park to 'near the gate on the bridle path'.

- ii. **Preston Regeneration & Burgh Heath Pond** – Work is due to start on the track during October. Richard Knights had made a bench for the south end of the pond and had renovated the two benches on the eastern side and installed arm and backrests. For which the Burgh Heath RA had paid £650.00.
- iii. **Withybed Corner Tracks** – Not all of the residents along the track to the Bell had responded to a letter from RBBC who were now considering the next step forward.
Residents along the southern track thought the responsibility for unblocking the drain under the roads should fall on the Conservators but we have not accepted responsibility and put the onus back on them. A meeting has been arranged with Ian Wright, RBBC, who may take on this task. The Conservators agreed to a request from the residents for them to place a sign near to the junction of the tracks showing which houses were down the southern track so delivery drivers were aware which track to take. It was suggested that the sign might also point the way to The Bell. The Clerk will determine exactly where the sign is to be placed.
- iv. **Use of Sports Field** – Craig Stephenson, Chairman of Tadworth Cricket Club, wishes to resume regular meetings with RBBC Clerk, which can only be good. They were impressed with the manner in which the intruding gypsies were moved off the cricket field and permission was given for them to erect two key posts behind the current barrier as an extra security measure.
Discussion then centred on what amount the Cricket Club should be charged for use of the Sports Field and, after considering what other sports clubs in the area pay, what we could receive if the area formed part of our Higher Level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England, and other pertinent issues, it was decided to settle on a figure of £1,000 per annum commencing 1st April 2015.
- v. **Travis Perkins** –Judith Shephard is no longer RBBC Property Solicitor, and no action appears to have been taken regarding the letter she wrote to Travis Perkins. The Clerk will speak to Steve McLeod, RBBC Surveyor, who also has an interest in this matter.
- vi. **St Andrew’s Church** – There had been several fly tippings in the area of the overflow car park which the churchwarden felt we should be responsible for moving. Our response would be to close off that area to prevent further tippings but they wished for it to remain open for overflow parking. They now requested that a locked gate be placed across the entrance but that would contravene our legislation and create a precedent we would wish to avoid. They were also considering a land swap for the area of common around the church to be exchanged for Glebe land on the Heath but thought the cost of the exchange would be more than they could afford.
After discussion it was determined that, for the reasons stated above, there would be no gate and if necessary the area would be blocked off. The Councillors suggested that they may be able to get RBBC to assist with removal of tippings.
It was also agreed that as the suggested land exchange was advantageous to us as well as to the church we would offer to contribute towards the legal costs to secure such a deal which would leave them free to erect their gate without encumbrance.
- vii. **SCC – Brighton Road Flood Alleviation** – SCC Highways have submitted a proposal to build a soakaway on the small area of common between the A217 and the B2230 roads. It was considered that by cleaning the drains last year a great deal had been achieved in alleviating the floods at the roundabout and continual drain clearance should be their first priority. Secondly, there could be a knock on effect with flood water involving local residents and the London Borough of Sutton, in which we would not wish to be involved. Thirdly, if that area of land was essential to their plans SCC could initiate an exchange and negotiate land for BCC elsewhere.

4. **Warden’s Report**

Staff have now started cutting areas that are cut only once per year, which is quite a big task. Some areas are cut and collected whilst others are cut and left. Contractors, with much larger machines, are engaged to cut the larger fields as it is much more economical. The summer went as planned with extra fire breaks being cut to prevent the spread of fires but, fortunately, there were no significant fires. We don’t put fire beaters out on Fire Service advice that untrained people could be

severely injured and it is much better to call in the professionals. Bracken control has been carried out in numerous areas which seems to be working well but is a continuous task, as is ragwort control. Several new benches, made from timber from the commons and sawn at our depot, have been installed. These have been very well received by people walking on the commons using them for rest. Security is a constant consideration and some posts have been replaced and banks and ditches reinforced. Further shaping of banks and ditches is planned. A recent incursion by gypsies was promptly dealt with by local police ably assisted by our staff and a good number of local people but it shows that we must continue to be vigilant if we are to prevent vehicles from entering onto the commons unlawfully.

Cllr. Broad asked if we could have an indication of what is going to happen as well as what has already taken place.

A question from David Gradidge regarding myxomatosis on Banstead Downs was answered by John Peacock.

5. Forthcoming Events

None reported

6. Any Other Business

Extension of Permissive Ride - John Peacock proposed that now we had a good part of Peacock Field there was an opportunity to extend the Permissive Ride from Park Road to Holly Lane and across to Banstead Woods. This would make it much safer for riders to cross directly across Holly Lane rather than having to travel along the road to access the commencement of the ride on the opposite side. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Mantle and unanimously agreed.

7. Dates of the Next Meetings

17th January 2015

18th April 2015

18th July 2015

17th October 2015