

**MINUTES of the 575th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 21st January 2017 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

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

Also present were G Hein (TWRA), R Maciejewski (NRA), D Gradidge (BVRA).

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr. J Clarke and P P Sherrin (Burgh Heath RA)

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

a. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The sheep had grazed three pens on Park Downs and were now grazing a pen on Banstead Heath. The chairman commented that this spring and summer we should be able to see if they are making a difference or not.

b. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Agreement although we have received the second tranche of the grant.

ii. **Travis Perkins** – Having been served with a Community Protection Notice Travis Perkins have now formally agreed to cooperate in resolving the issues. They have now instructed a boundary surveyor to prepare a report on the encroachment. RBBC will let us know the outcome.

iii. **Summer Walks** – It was agreed that summer walks for 2017 would take place on the first Tuesdays in May, June, July and August:

Tuesday May 2nd – Banstead Downs

Tuesday June 6th – Park Downs

Tuesday July 4th – Banstead Heath

Tuesday August 1st – Burgh Heath.

Catalina Vassellbonner will be asked to circulate these details through the Residents association federation.

- iv. **Blocked Culvert Winkworth Road** - John Peacock and Richard Knights had attended the site with SCC Highways and identified and unblocked culverts. The ditches were cleared with the result that water and the rubbish it brings is now flowing onto the common. There is a free flow of water which is downhill and is spreading out towards the SSI and leaving a trail of sludge. There has not been a real rain storm since the culverts and ditches were cleared so the full effect is not yet known. Highways say maintenance of these areas is the landowner's responsibility but there may be an argument against that view. We could try to contain it with a small bank or a filter lagoon and there will be a need to clear debris from the traps, but whose responsibility is it? Richard Knights mentioned a similar issue where water drains off the A217 near the Pobjoy Mint and then ran downhill into buildings and SCC wish to investigate the A217 just south of Burgh Heath traffic lights, so they are probably looking to drain water onto the common from there. There are also issues with road water draining onto commons at Sutton Lane and Park Road. It was considered that we should identify and list all similar areas of the commons onto which road water is drained. Assess the problem and possible solutions and implement solutions through RBBC and/or SCC Highways. We also need to check our insurance to see if BCC are covered for claims by third parties in such instances and write to local SCC Councillor Ken GULATI with a copy to John FURY apprising them of the situation and involving them in possible solutions.

- v. **Pedestrian & Cycle Connection from Banstead High Street to Railway Station** – Our request that if this plan goes ahead the area around the footpaths near Banstead Railway Station be taken out of the commons and replaced elsewhere had been passed to Justin Chatfield. An acknowledgement has been received but nothing further.

- vi. **SCC Highway Works on A217** – The first phase has been completed inasmuch as the trees have been cut back on both sides of the road and the path by the side of the southbound carriageway reinstated. Two different drains have been inserted to see which is more efficient and the next steps will be to put in the chosen drains and then resurface the road.

4. SCC Drainage of Roads onto Commons

Included in item 3(iv) above.

5. 125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators

As the intention is to document our history John Peacock and John McCrean had visited the archives at Woking and collated a lot of material. They had already photographed the first ten years of our history and assistance was offered by Ralph Maciejewski in digitising these and other records. Work will continue along these lines to collect information and photographs for inclusion in an historical document.

6. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that there had been vehicles illegally driving on the commons. Despite the banks being in good order one had found its way on but had failed to get off and had now been removed.

The sheep had grazed Park Downs and were now on Banstead Downs and there had been no problems whatsoever this time.

Fly tipping still continues but it is not as serious as on past occasions.

Shrub clearance this winter has been across all four commons rather than concentrating on one as we did when clearing Banstead Downs. There were a couple of trees brought down by the weight of snow but our policy of cutting ivy from trees,

particularly at roadsides, is paying dividends as there were far more trees down on other sites.

Despite not being paid by English Heritage work had continued on the monument sites and some trees taken down but there is still a hedge barrier to try to prevent horse riders from getting in.

In answer to a question the Warden confirmed that Body Cameras are worn but not all of the time. They can get in the way and be damaged during some manual work but are fitted when there is a possibility of confrontation.

Another question was raised as a result of the work we do on the World War I and II trenches; should we be seeking suitable PR for our maintenance of them?

7. **Forthcoming Events**

No forthcoming events had been notified.

8. **Any Other Business**

- I. **Chinthurst School** – A request had been received that the school be allowed to put a gate in their hedge near the swimming pool so that children did not have to use the main entrance which was used for vehicles. Inevitably that would mean crossing the common on foot. No objection was raised to them doing so but it was noted that any future suggestion to lay a track may not be approved.
- II. **Pfizers Voluntary Service** - Gillian Hein mentioned this group who were looking for suitable tasks and might be useful to BCC. We have previously been approached by them but their requirements are generally too great inasmuch as they require toilets near the site on which they are working, they do not have tools, we cannot afford the time to supervise them and we do not carry insurance for them to work on the commons. Richard Knights had previously suggested to them that Surrey County Council might employ them on Rights of Way tracks as they were a much bigger organisation who could cover insurance, supervision etc.
- III. **Burgh Heath Track** – Gillian also mentioned that people using the track across Burgh Heath were crossing the Reigate Road at the point the track emerged onto the road rather than using the crossing further up. Some were mothers with pushchairs and it is a very dangerous practise. This had been foreseen and pointed out at the planning stage but no heed had been taken. The Clerk will write to SCC and RBBC.
- IV. **Path to Banstead Station** – Ralph Maciejewski said that the footpath was in need of the vegetation trimming back and trees taken down. This location was different from others as there was a lot of fly tipping in the area and to open it up is likely to encourage more tipping. Consideration will be given to what might be done in this area.

9. **Date of the Next Meetings**

22nd April 2017 (Easter intervenes on 3rd Saturday).

15th July 2017

21st October 2017

**MINUTES of the 576th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 22nd April 2017 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J Mill
Cllr. V Broad
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. N Cull
Mr. J McCrae
Mr. J Milner Clerk

Also present were D Gradidge (BVRA), Colin Sutherland (PRRA), Alan Higgs (Banstead Downs Golf Club).

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr. R Mantle
Cllr. J Clarke
Mr. R Knights Warden

2. Appointment of Conservators and Election of Chairman

RBBC had not held their meeting to appoint Conservators until Thursday 20th April so we should be informed of the outcome during the next week. Nick Cull is recommended by the London Borough of Sutton who were reconsidering their policy of appointments to outside bodies the outcome of which will not be known until July 2017. A proposal by John Peacock, seconded by John McCrea that Nick Cull be co-opted onto the Board of Conservators until the permanent situation is clarified was agreed by all present.

A proposal by John Mill that John Peacock be elected chairman for the ensuing year was seconded by John McCrea and agreed by all present.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

4 Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The sheep had grazed three pens on Park Downs and one on Banstead Downs and having completed their task have been removed from the commons. The value of their grazing would become evident during the spring and summer. Cutting and collecting the scrub in the pens before the sheep came on worked well as they were able to graze the top surface better; the remainder of the scrub on Park Downs will be weed wiped this year. Three areas of Peacock's Field had been cut to different regimes; one area three times per year, one twice and the other once. The cutting

three times interfered with the flowering of the orchids and of the others the twice a year cut produced the best results in reducing the overpowering grasses.

- b. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Agreement. The annual application for the continuance of the Higher Level Stewardship has been submitted.
- ii. **Travis Perkins** – There was nothing further to report on this topic and a response will be pursued from RBBC. Cllr. Broad said that the council were not willing to let the matter rest and will push for a satisfactory outcome, even prosecuting if necessary.
- iii. **Summer Walks** – Conservators summer walks have been arranged for the following dates in 2017:
 - Tuesday May 2nd – Banstead Downs
 - Tuesday June 6th – Park Downs
 - Tuesday July 4th – Banstead Heath
 - Tuesday August 1st – Burgh Heath.Catalina Vassellbonner has been asked to circulate these details through the Residents Association Federation and members of the Banstead Heath Consultancy Group also will attend.
- iv. **Blocked Culvert Winkworth Road and Road Drainage onto Commons-** John Peacock was satisfied that we could not refuse to accept SCC's right to discharge road water onto the commons due to highways legislation and the fact that there were pre-existing drains on the commons. He produced maps of the common showing the water flow off Winkworth Road which, in heavy rainfall, reached the SSSI and needed a ditch or bund to stem the flow. There needed to be discussion to see if RBBC will take on this work as land owners. At the Sutton Lane location problems were due to an area of road resurfacing which forms a ridge in the road preventing the flow and, further south, the kerb had disintegrated allowing free flow onto the common. Additionally all of the gulleys were blocked and needed clearing. SCC Highways will be contacted to see if these matters can be put right.

5. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

John Peacock informed the meeting that Ralph Maciejewski had scanned the minutes of Conservators meetings up to 1952 which were in book form and will scan the remainder which are loose. Reading them was interesting but frustrating as a lot of the problems arising today were happening then. He hoped to have the first draft of the book available for the next meeting and would forward the link.

6. **Burgh Heath Pond (and Park Downs)**

Emanuel Flecken had resurrected the issue of letting the fishing rights on Burgh Heath Pond to a fishing club thereby giving them responsibility for stocking it and who fished there, thus teaching the proper etiquette and preventing unauthorised fishing and anti-social behaviour. A similar scheme had been introduced at Earlswood Lakes and seems to be beneficial. Whilst welcoming this suggestion it was thought that as the Burgh Heath Pond is ephemeral and occasionally dries out during summer, and as it has not been fished recently for other reasons, i.e. great crested newts breed there (although there is no evidence of this) and it is regarded as an ecological pond, there are other aspects to consider. There are also the views of local residents to

consider, which is not an issue at Earlswood. As the council have the piscatorial rights Cllr. Broad suggested he asks them to survey the residents of The Green for their views before moving the issue on.

There are other disturbances on Burgh Heath, particularly around the pond area but also with two motor scooters and a motor cycle using the footpaths. Barriers on the footpaths at the entrances were considered not to be the answer and Cllr. Broad said this was exactly what the JETs team should be involved in and their telephone number will be forwarded to the local Resident's Association so they can be contacted as the incidents occur.

Motor cycles were also getting onto Park Downs and sets of Proper steps and use of tree trunks were suggested as possible answers, both of which will be looked at. The footpath at the western end of Park Road has been altered and it will be looked at with a view to re-instating the old path.

7. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that the weather over the winter had been kind and the winter work had gone well. The sheep are off the Downs and the fences are down and back in storage. The only problem had been that one sheep had died from a broken neck and it is thought that it had been startled by a sudden gust of wind and careered into the tree. The strong winds had caused some damage to trees but nothing too serious except that residents fear that trees will fall on their property which is generally not the case; where it is relevant remedial action is taken. Some fields have been rolled and harrowed on a rotational basis and grass cutting has now started. Maintenance work including benches, perimeter posts and banks and ditches has continued and is being completed and the post banger has been put to good use. Litter picking takes up quite a lot of time and fly tipping increases in the spring when people start gardening again and throw their rubbish onto the commons. Commercial fly tipping continues with a lot of broken glass being dumped in New Lane. Apart from anything else it is difficult to remove as it has generally shattered. Time has been spent checking and reinforcing our boundaries due to a large funeral at Epsom bringing in caravans from far and wide but the precautions were worthwhile as there was no breach. The commons are looking good with spring colours coming out and more people are using the commons these days.

Discussion then followed about horse riders using footpaths and not sticking to the Bridle Paths and Permissive Rides. The Clerk will circulate all local stables with a map of the rides on which horses are allowed and ask them to instruct their riders accordingly.

Horses and dogs are having an impact on the wildlife on the commons. Epsom Downs policy of not allowing dogs off the lead onto the Downs during the mornings has the effect of increasing their numbers on Banstead Heath which, together with the growing number of professional dog walkers is interfering with wildlife, for example adders, which have previously been abundant, have not been seen yet this year, which is probably due to their being disturbed in their natural habitat by the increase of dogs.

7. Forthcoming Events

No forthcoming events had been notified.

8. Any Other Business

- I. **Notice Boards** – Nick Cull maintains the notice boards on Banstead Downs, Park Downs and Burgh Heath but since Jeff Harris left the Conservators

there is a need for someone to do the same on Banstead Heath. David Atkins volunteered.

9. Dates of the Next Meetings

15th July 2017

21st October 2017

**MINUTES of the 577th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 15th July 2017 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J McCrae
Cllr. R Mantle
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Mr. R Knights Warden

Also present were Colin Sutherland (PRRA) and Alan Higgs (Banstead Downs Golf Club).

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. J Mill, Cllr. V Broad, Mr. D Atkins and Mr. N Cull.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

4 Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** John Peacock reported an astonishing difference on areas cut and grazed on Park Downs this year. Areas that had been cut and collected and then grazed by the sheep were definitely proving to be better. The cutting to different regimes on Peacock's Field is continuing and one area of Park Downs which had previously received attention from Surrey Wildlife Trust is now a bit of a jungle and needs re-thinking.
- b. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

ii. **Travis Perkins** – There was nothing further to report on this topic and a response will be pursued from RBBC.

iii. **Summer Walks** – The Conservators summer walk on Banstead Heath had taken place on Tuesday 4th July by 4 Conservators along with 5 members of the public. This had been quite successful with several areas being looked at. The remaining walk is on Burgh Heath on Tuesday 1st August.

iv. **Blocked Culvert Winkworth Road and Road Drainage onto Commons-** We still need to determine if we are going to insert a ditch or a bund on Banstead Downs to prevent any overflow from Winkworth Road from reaching SSSI during exceptional wet periods. Mark Howarth, the SCC Highways Engineer has been assigned a different area so we will be dealing with his replacement in respect of Sutton Land drainage. (SCC Cllr. Harrison could possibly be of assistance in this matter).

5. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

John Peacock has researched the minutes up to 1954 and has drafted two chapters together with an outline plan for a third. John McCrea would like to produce a chapter on the commons during the wars. John Peacock will now need another visit to the archives at Woking. John McCrea will also attend if available and Ralph Maciejewski will also be invited with a view to scanning the minutes for future reference.

6. **Warden's Report**

The Warden reported that the bracken is growing prolifically this year. This is for no particular reason except, perhaps, that the weather conditions are favourable for it. It has already been rolled and this will continue. Similarly there is no obvious reason for the appearance of Giant Hogweed but this has been dealt with and has now abated. Japanese Knotweed is not particularly bad but is growing in known locations and will be treated in September. Ragwort is also quite prevalent this year.

Staff have been busy making new benches and installing roadside posts to prevent unlawful vehicular access. There is wear and tear on and alongside paths where the grass is thin but overall the machinery is holding up well.

A discussion on coppicing followed with the Warden explaining that when some trees are cut down some will grow from the base, such as hazel, and others will die off. The intention is always for some to grow and others to die off.

7. **Forthcoming Events**

Burgh Heath Dog Show – Sunday 30th July 2017

8. **Any Other Business**

- i. **RBBC** have asked if we have any objection to their seeking sponsorship of the Belmont roundabout which would consist of a small sign showing the name of the sponsoring company being in partnership with RBBC. The roundabout was taken out of the commons several years ago, although for reasons suiting RBBC it was agreed to leave it nominally as part of the commons. We therefore have no objection to the proposal.
- ii. **Trees on the Common alongside Downs Road** are beginning to interfere with large vehicles travelling down the road. London Borough of Sutton are asking when we will trim them (even though they no longer pay us a small grant). As we are not equipped for dealing with trees along main roads, particularly where they would require a road closure as in this instance, the Clerk has asked RBBC if they would be willing to take on the task as they have done on previous occasions. Mark Jolley has agreed to get someone to look at the situation and report back.
- iii. **A217 Drainage Improvements on the Mad Mile** are nearing completion and there was a thought that SCC have done more than they had planned. The Clerk had spoken to Dave Piercy, the SCC Highways Engineer in charge of the project and such is not the case. However, the Clerk and Warden will visit the site next week with a view to ensuring compliance with the original plans and reporting any aspects that need further attention.

- iv. **Greenacre School** is merging with two other schools and will be known as Banstead Prep School. They have requested permission to use the triangle of common at the rear of the school for Level Three Forest School Leader Training. No extra charge was being levied on pupils taking the course in addition to their usual school fees.

After discussion it was determined that they could use the commons anyway providing they complied with our Byelaws but not to the exclusion of other users of the commons. A copy of the Byelaws will be forwarded to them and they will also be advised that unlawful drugs paraphernalia have been found in the area from time to time so extreme care should be taken not to expose children to such dangers.

9.

Date of the Next Meetings

21st October 2017

**MINUTES of the 578th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 21st October 2017 at Banstead Library, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

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

Also present were Alan Higgs (Banstead Downs Golf Club) and David Gradidge, BVRA.

The Banstead Centre not being open Cllr Mantle quickly arranged for the meeting to be held at Banstead Library.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Warden

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** Having previously reported good results on Park Downs by cutting & collecting and then grazing it was now evident that plant species were much more abundant within the penned areas than without. With this in mind sheep were already in the pens for the forthcoming winter. There are 2 pens on Park Downs and then the sheep will be moved to Banstead Downs where the 2 pens next to Sutton Lane will be combined into one for grazing. The experiment of cutting strips of Peacock's Field once, twice or three times would continue. The strips cut three times are showing better surface results but would also benefit from grazing.
- b. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

- ii. **Travis Perkins** – Steve Mcleod, RBBC, had been pursuing this with Travis Perkins and reported that whereas Travis Perkins accepted that they had gone over the boundary they did not accept that they had entered onto the Common. It was not known what view the council might take of an intrusion onto their land but further maps were being sought to further identify the extent of the common at this location. It was also thought

that Travis Perkins should provide evidence to support their claim rather than the other way round. The Clerk will try to find details of an agreement with Travis Perkins for them to use the turning circle on the Common, which may also be relevant.

- iii. **Summer Walks** – The process for the Conservators summer walks appeared to work well last year with good numbers of the public accompanying the Conservators on the walks. The dates and locations for walks next year will be published at the January meeting so they are available to RA representatives at an early stage. The practise of submitting a written report for the information of members unable to attend should be resurrected and one member will volunteer to write up each walk. The Warden did not attend the walks as when he did so previously there was a spurious suggestion that he may direct them to more favourable parts of the common rather than the not so good areas.

4. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

John Peacock is due another visit to the archives, hopefully with Ralph Maciejewski who will photograph the remaining minutes and items of interest.

5. **Warden's Report**

The Warden reported that seasonal grass cutting has taken place and is now slowly coming to an end. The sheep are back on Park Downs and, although we have not experienced problems with dog attacks, other sites have, so, for the short time the sheep are there we will not have gates allowing the public to cross the pens. Tree inspections have revealed 3 trees near roads that need to come down and will be felled by a contractor whilst others, away from roads, will be dealt with by our staff. Fly tipping, mainly garden refuse, is on the increase and may be the dumpings of a particular garden contractor. Cut and collect is well under way. In the short term small area clearance work will take place on Park Downs together with some coppicing on both Park Downs and Banstead Heath. Brian Thomas, a contractor, has been instructed to again spray areas of Japanese Knotweed on the commons. He is well into a long term programme which is showing continually improved results.

6. **Forthcoming Events**

None reported.

7. **Any Other Business**

- i. **A footpath** has been cut out of the common by Chinthurst School staff. It consists of a membrane covered with wood chippings and no authority had been given for it. The common will be re-instated by the school removing the footpath and laying turf and, where necessary, grass seed, during the week commencing 6th November.
- ii. **The Siting of Walton Heath Golf Club new club house** was a topic under discussion around the village and there was a thought that we should object to it being built on Green Belt land. After lengthy discussion it was determined that we should remain neutral at this stage but pay attention to proceedings as we may wish to resurrect the issue at a later stage.

- iii. **Relaxation of section 38 of the Commons Act** has been mooted by a Guildford Borough Councillor who had written to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs requesting relaxation of section 38, in particular to Newlands Corner. Following the same rationale as the above item it was decided that we would wait until the 'Consultation' stage before becoming involved but that the Clerk will write to the Secretary of State to note our request to be involved if the matter reaches consultation.
- iv. **Burgh Heath had been the home of Diana Garner** who had moved away from the area in 1963. She had recently returned for a visit and had written her thoughts on the heath, some good, some not so good. Inevitably an area will change over a 50 year period and trees will grow on heathland if it is not used as a working heath and not grazed. John Peacock will write to Diana thanking her for her comments and explaining the change in the heath over 50 years.
- v. **John McRea had been interviewed on a BBC Radio Surrey** roadshow in Banstead and John Peacock thanked him for representing the Conservators on that occasion.
- vi. **The Mere Pond** was low on water and did not seem to have the flow of previous years. Cllr Broad said some work was being done in the area which may affect the flow through the ditch which was part of the common. The gullies towards The Bell and the old BT Police Training School appeared to be blocked and the areas around them sodden with water. It was hoped that by cleaning out the gullies the flow to the pond would be increased to everyone's benefit.
- vii. **Notice Boards on Banstead Downs** required attention. David Gradidge said that there were no notices on one and another (the one closest to Royal Marsden Hospital) was surrounded by large weeds and no-one could get near it. Nick Cull will deal with the first matter and The Warden with the second.

8.

Date of the Next Meetings

20th January 2018

21st April 2018

21st July 2018

20th October 2018