

**MINUTES of the 587th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 18th January 2020 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J Mill
Mr. V Broad
Dr. W.S Bellenger
Cllr. N. Moses
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. R Mantle
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present were;

Mr R Maciejewski - Nork RA
Cllr P Harp - RBBC
Mr P Ritchie – Brockham
Mr D Gradidge – Banstead Village RA
Gillian Hein – Tadworth & Walton RA
Flip Bakker – Nork RA
Catalina Vassallo-Bonner – RA Federation
Mr A Higgs - Banstead Downs GC
Mr I Mockford - Burgh Heath Resident

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. N Cull

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 have now been moved from Park Downs to Banstead Downs. Although they have been effective on Park Downs there were areas of dogwood coming through and, as the chemicals we previously used have been banned, we should consider using goats to deal with the unwanted shrubs.
- b) **Natural England.** Natural England carried out an inspection in November and although they do not want us to summer graze they will visit again in the spring when further grazing can be discussed.

ii) **Summer Walks** – It was reiterated that walks on the commons will now split into two categories, business walks for Conservators only and those for the public being led by a Conservator. Dates and venues will be notified and the walks will not be limited to the summer months but may cover all seasons.

4. Professional Dog Walkers

Nick Cull is preparing a leaflet to be handed out to professional dog walkers reminding them that the limit is 6 dogs which, though not necessarily on a lead, must be under control at all times; not to meet together to cause an obstruction to other users of the common, not to use Bridle Paths or Permissive Rides and that they need to have third party insurance as BCC insurance will not cover them. It was thought that ultimately it was part of RBBC's Dog Warden responsibilities and we should try to get her more closely involved.

5. Motor Cycles on Commons

The Clerk had met with the local Police Sergeant on who appeared quite positive on what could be done to assist us on her area including introducing the Banstead PCSO to our staff for closer liaison. Unfortunately nothing further has developed from this meeting. Our drone may be helpful in gleaning information on motor cyclists riding on the commons in particular on the vehicles in which they and their motor cycles arrive. Banstead Downs Golf Club is experiencing similar problems on the eastern side of the A217 when quad bikes have been ridden around their greens cutting them up quite badly. We will try to get the matter highlighted to local residents through the Residents Associations with a view to obtaining information on those responsible or stopping the practise by getting them to realise that it could be their children who are causing the damage.

6. Ash Die Back

RBBC Tree Officer assisted us in a planned operation to close off Dorking Road for a few minutes whilst we dropped several diseased and dangerous ash trees that were overgrowing the road. The whole issue went smoothly without danger to staff or vehicles and with only minimal delay to traffic. Unfortunately the same system cannot apply to the A217 where ash trees are similarly overgrowing the road but it will need a full road closure. RBBC seem to be content in leaving it to a further inspection in the spring although at our last liaison meeting they promised to contact SCC to see if anything could be done. Bill Bellinger asked a series of questions enquiring how many ash trees have we on the commons, are they all diseased, how we deal with them, etc. The Warden responded that we have a lot of ash trees and those affecting roads, footpaths or properties are prioritised to ensure the safety of people and property. Providing they were not too large we can generally make them safe or fell them, sometimes with a quick road closure by RBBC. The larger trees and those on the A217 and other busy roads will need a full road closure and are usually dealt with by RBBC or SCC. Trees in out of the way areas will be made safe and returned to later. Once a tree has been infected it will not recover and it is possible that 100% of our trees will be affected; it should become evident in the spring when trees do not come into leaf. To employ contractors would be extremely expensive and is not within our budget.

7. Warden's Report

With the excessive amount of rain over the last two months it has been impossible to get the machinery onto the commons. Staff have been kept busy moving the sheep pens from Park Downs to Banstead Downs, removing those trees that have blown down and are a risk to people or vehicles whilst ensuring that those not requiring urgent removal are safe. They have also been making benches as replacements or for new sites on the commons and disposing of litter, especially Christmas trees.

8. Forthcoming Events

None reported.

9. Any Other Business

- I. Gillian Hein asked if the slip road along The Green at Tadworth was on common land as RBBC intended to carry out road repairs there. BCC are in discussion with RBBC as we believe it to be part of the common but RBBC think it is not.
- II. Catalina Vassallo-Bonner had a copy of plans from the South Sutton group which would entail a land exchange so they could use part of the common, particularly an area at Banstead Station which they would turn into a concrete car park. She will forward a copy of the plans to the Clerk.

10. Dates of next meetings

18th April 2020

18th July 2020

17th October 2020

**MINUTES of the 588th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS
CONSERVATORS** held on Thursday 11 June 2020 at 8pm via Zoom

Part 1

Present: Mr. J Peacock, Chairman
Mr. J Mill
Mr. V Broad
Dr. W Bellenger
Mr N Cull
Mr. D Atkins
Mr R Knight, Warden
Mrs L Shea, Clerk

Apologies: Cllr. N Moses

Note

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Banstead Commons Conservators were not able to host their public meeting in April. This zoom meeting was held to welcome the new Clerk, who commenced the role at the beginning of May, provide an operational update and discuss priorities to be actioned once the new Conservators are elected.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr. N Moses

2. Clerk's update

- a. **Fire alarm** – display unit flashes an error, although alarm itself in full working order. Detectors need to be reset at a cost to BCC. Thoughts gathered on whether BBC should cancel or review existing alarm. The consensus was that we should maintain coverage and the Clerk would investigate alternatives.
- b. **Notice boards and interpretation** – notice boards are looking tired, would like to update notices, re-design seasonal notices and introduce QR codes linking to our website on posts in suitable places on the commons (with phone signal).
- c. **Waitrose Green Coin Collection** – Clerk plans to make an application to the [Community Matters](#) Waitrose Banstead Branch. It was suggested we approach Tesco and Pfizer local community fund.
- d. **Banstead Commons Computer** – PC is surplus to requirements, thoughts on what to do with it were to store at the depot or donate to Tadworth Children's Trust. Hard drive needs to be cleared.

3. Warden's update

- a. **Ash die back** – some of the less affected trees last year look like they are rejuvenating, for now. Trees that were severely affected last year are now looking much worse. Team are felling trees that line roads, footpaths, bridleways and neighbouring properties. We are working together with RBBC to fell trees located next to the A217 and by the Sportsman Pub.
- b. **Grass cutting** – cutting has been sporadic this year due to dry weather. Bracken is thriving and control has been difficult in areas where there are ground nesting birds, such as Mill Field.

- c. **Visitors on the commons** – great increase in visitors due to the pandemic. Heavy wear on paths and concern there could be erosion on slopes. Visitors are also slowing productivity of the team due to H&S and stopping to converse.
 - d. **Fly tipping** – notable increase in garden rubbish being dumped during lockdown. Team photographed perpetrator on Sutton Lane and offered pictures to the JET Team, no action taken as concerns were raised regarding witness statements and attending court proceedings.
 - e. **COVID-19 pandemic** – team are confident to work during the pandemic and social distancing regulations are being adhered to. There will be an increase in fuel costs due to the requirement to run three vehicles.
4. **OPM** – OPM has been reported on Banstead Downs. Trees that are high risk to the public, situated on pathways, bridleways and permission rides are being treated with a blowtorch. PPE is worn.
- 5. Other items**
- a. Cllr Vic Broad commented on increase in cyclists and fly tipping in crater areas on Banstead Heath.
 - b. David Atkins highlighted notices at the Cricket Club. Warden was aware of the notices and is happy to leave them displayed while we update our own notice board.
 - c. John Mill noted the rubbish which accumulates around Blue Bull pub.
6. **Appointment of Vice Chairman** – John Peacock stated that he will be retiring from the role of Chairman at next years AGM and would like to appoint/nominate a Vice Chair who can work together with John and the Clerk in preparation for handover next year. Conservators are to consider the role in time for the next meeting.

Dates of next meetings, location tbc

18th July 2020 – The Banstead Centre or Microsoft Teams
17th October 2020

Meeting of the 589th BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS held on
Saturday 17 October 2020 at 9.30am via ZOOM

Part I

Present: Mr. J Peacock, Chairman
Mr. J Mill
Mr. N Cull
Mr. D Atkins
Cllr. N Moses
Cllr. P Harp
Mrs. L Shea, Clerk
Warden

Apologies Dr. W Bellenger
Mr. V Broad

Also present were:

Ian Mockford – Burgh Heath resident
Gillian Hein – Tadworth and Walton Residents Association
Monica Soto – Tadworth resident

1. **Apologies for absence.** Dr. W Bellenger. Mr V Broad was experiencing technical issues which prevented him joining the meeting.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting.** The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the Chairman.
3. **Clerk's report.**

H&S update the operational team has continued to work in a COVID-safe way and are following government guidance.

Tadworth Cricket Club have submitted their risk assessment and public liability insurance.

Chinthurst School is planning to use the pitch at Tadworth Cricket Club next year. Clerk proposed drawing up an agreement to cover next years activities, plan to introduce a fee for use of the Commons. Clerk liaising with RBBC.

Banstead Downs. Continue to have issue with motorbikes on the downs. A relationship has been formed with the PCSO team (team issued a section 59 on 20 Aug warning).

MP visit On Friday 18 September Crispin Blunt MP joined the Chairman, Warden, Clerk and Conservator W Bellenger for a walk around Banstead Heath to discuss our work and concerns regarding future funding. Crispin called Banstead Heath: "the jewel of our borough".
4. **Warden's report.** Staff are operating well in despite of the unusual working conditions due to COVID. The team kept on top of tasks this summer, bracken control and grass cutting completed. Cut and collect is complete on Banstead Heath, Park Downs and Park Downs, small section left on Banstead Downs. Not sheep grazing this year, for various reasons, will resume next year. Cost of purchasing sheep has been put into the repair of the cut and collect machines, we now have two functioning. Winter tasks have commenced. Ash die back remains a priority and trees that carry an increased risk to users (over bridleway, roadside, pathway etc.) will be dealt with first. RBBC has dealt with some of the trees and we have flagged up

further trees, including the Ash on Park Downs. Warden raised his concern related to cross team working during COVID. Fly-tipping continues to be an issue.

John M. asked if we could make use of the timber from the infected ash? Timber would need to be collected and taken to the roadside – we don't have the right machinery and there'll be no financial gain.

David A. asked whether there is any evidence that trees are showing resistance to ash die back? Weather plays a big part with how they've responded to the infection this year, ash trees have already dropped their leaves due to the dry summer. Suspect trees will deteriorate further next year.

David A. asked whether it was us or the Council who put planings on Hogwood Bottom ascent and descent and the path that goes across the motorway at the side of the golf course? It was the Public Right of Way department and the heavy rain has gullied it out, doubt they'll be back to repair.

Nick C. asked whether any consideration been given to using Ash shavings on muddy pathways. Experience has shown it is a short term gain, long term problem. Try not to spread infected ash to new locations on the Commons. If you have a really boggy area you have to think about putting a membrane down.

5. **Tadworth Cricket Club.**

Three requests for permissions have been made in writing to the Conservators:

- Repositioning of a training net (to the north east corner of the grounds)
- Install a second astroturf pitch
- Install astroturf outside the Clubhouse

This item was followed by a discussion related to our byelaws, the process involved in laying astroturf and the relationship between Tadworth Cricket Club and Chinthurst School.

It was noted that we need to establish what relationship is in place between Tadworth Cricket Club and Chinthurst School. Full details of the planned works would need to be submitted by the Club before the item can be discussed further.

6. **Resurfacing of the footpath leading from Hatch Gardens on to Burgh Heath**

The current path is broken tarmac. It was noted that any solid surface, even repairing is against the Commons Act – however, the [Commonland guidance sheet 1b](#): works and processes that do not need Section 38 consent states 'Resurfacing which consists only of the repair (with a similar surface) of existing lawfully constructed footpaths, roads and car parks.

Two options: BCC can either request the footpath is taken out of the Common or, use wording 'raise no objection, but if any one else does they'd have to remove it at the expense of the Council'.

Before any decision is taken the Clerk will ask for the exact details of the proposed materials the Council plan to use.

7. AOB

RBBC has sent details related to proposal for works at the end of Chetwode Road to be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy, including vegetation removal and maintenance of Lonesome Pond. Warden and Clerk will be meeting with local councillors w/c 19 Oct to discuss work in more detail.

Funding. Over the next 5-6 years we're going to lose approx. half of our income. The Council hasn't been forthcoming with a meeting to discuss future funding. We are not able to apply for a charitable status because we have an act which determines our behaviour.

Planning document 2021. Conservators supportive of the planned public awareness and engagement events.

Ian M. asked who the team met with at Burgh Heath Dirt Track. List of the various officers at RBBC Greenspaces is as follows:

Lee Wilcox – Senior manager for greenspaces, Fleet and engineering

Michael Hill – Greenspaces operations Manager (general grounds maintenance)

Daniel Balcombe – Play and projects officer (play area, multi-use games area, skate and tennis maintenance)

David Watts – Countryside and Woodlands officer

Victoria Bradford – Business development support officer (allotments-sports pitches)

Helen West – Events officer

David Chiverton – Cleansing operations Manager (litter-fly tipping)

Victor Davey – Engineer

Alan Bixby – Cemetery Officer

Peter Sykes – Acting tree officer

Gillian Hein asked if consideration had been given regarding residents and other local organisations to give a financial contribution. Suggest BCC submit an article in RA newsletter. Donations would be appreciated for capital equipment.

Dates of 2021 meetings:

16 January 2021

17 April 2021

17 July 2021

16 October 2021