



**Meeting 598 of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held at The Banstead Centre on Saturday 21 January, 2023**

MINUTES – Part 1

Present:	Mr. V Broad, Chairman	Cllr. P Harp
	Mr. J Mill	Mr. N Mollett
	Mr. D Hatcher	Mrs. L Shea, Clerk
	Mr. D Atkins	Mrs Miriam Maxim, Minutes Secretary
	Cllr. N Moses	

Public Gallery:	Cathy Poole, Alan Higgs, Gillian Hein, Jane Davies, Mike Sawyer, Verity Taylor- Medhurst, Peter Taylor-Medhurst, Catalina Vassello-Bonner, Sean Grufferty
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1. Apologies for absence

Nick Cull

2. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 15 October were confirmed as correct. No matters arising.

3. Quarterly report

Due to one of our Keepers retiring in July our Keeper Gary worked on his own for four months last year. Luckily dry weather enabled him to systematically work through the cut and collecting on the chalk downland sites and topping on Banstead Heath and Burgh Heath.

Following a recruitment drive for a Senior Ranger and Keeper in December we welcomed our new Keeper James Hughes to the team. James comes to us having experience of the volunteering as an Immersive Ranger for 2 years with the National Trust. He is getting to know the ropes and is receiving a mix of inhouse and external training to enable safe use of power tools and agricultural machinery. Despite offering full and part time options, we were not successful in recruiting a Senior Ranger, we will look to fill this post again in 2023.

The sheep are grazing Park Downs. Last week they were introduced to the third and final enclosure. The Downland Partnership are happy to work with us to reintroduce grazing to Banstead Downs and Park Downs next winter.

Winter clearance work commenced in October and we have cleared two areas on Banstead Heath to restore open heathland habitat. This work was carried out sensitively due to the monitoring of the Adder (*Vipera Berus*) in the locations.

The annual inspection of public rights of way has commenced and the team check all permissive and statutory bridleways to ensure they are open for horse riders. The team are currently working on Banstead Downs.

The BCC has requested that Banstead Downs is monitored by Natural England this year.



Surrey Wildlife Trust has started work on the development of the 10 year Site Management Plans and background information related to each site has been submitted.

4. Matters arising

4.1. Encroachments, concerns & legislative duties

There is no progress to report from RBBC regarding the illegal parking along the track at The Green at Tadworth. A Freedom of Information enquiry raised by the local resident association reveals the work undertaken in 2022 cost £78,000.

4.2. The Rascal Club

The Clerk gave a summary of the background of the Rascals Club and confirmed that currently it is not trading from Mill Field through internal works continue.

David Atkins stated most of the activities are currently centred at the premises of a community hall and school.

The Conservators are in dialogue with RBBC Officers regarding the grant of an illegal easement.

4.3. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Conservators made a strong presentation to RBBC Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 9 November, 2022, though there were restrictions from mentioning any financial evidence. This was unfortunate as the Conservators financial value could not be compared with the rest of the Borough's activities. The presentation was received well, there was no further follow up from the Council as a result.

4.4. RBBC request at Burgh Heath

The new gate to allow emergency access to the BMX track at Burgh Heath was installed by the Council on 7 December. Vehicular access across the commons requires authorisation from the Conservators and the Clerk has written to Head of Neighbourhood Services Morag Williams and Play and Projects Officer Daniel Balcombe to clarify responsibilities.

4.5. Public engagement & volunteering

A Walk of Remembrance was held on Tuesday 26 November. Twenty-three walkers joined walk leader and local historian Tim Richardson to find out more about the use of the Commons during the second world war.

Working together with the Downlands Partnership, the BCC hosted their first virtual talk for supporters on Tuesday 17 January entitled 'Conservation Grazing on Banstead Commons'.

The BCC hosted a practical volunteering session on Banstead Heath in October to clear Silver Birch from a Heathland glade. Surrey Hills Society coordinated the support provided by young people from the Leatherhead Youth Project.

5. Finance

5.1. Funding applications

Our grant application to the Community Foundation (£5K) was declined in November.



An application to the Downlands Trust Grant Fund was successful and the BCC has received £1740 to purchase handtools to support conservation volunteer activities on the Commons.

The application to Farming in Protected Landscapes for our new website has not yet been submitted.

5.2. Financial discussions with RBBC, update on meetings

The BCC met with the Leader of the Council and Officers on Tuesday 15 November to confirm funding the following financial year. The Council is not in the position to increase the operational grant but has committed to an additional discretionary grant of £25K confirmed for the next financial year only. This money will come from the Core Grant Scheme. As a result, the BCC will once again be eligible for the 100% Discretionary Business Rate Relief on our Depot, which equates to an expenditure saving of £4K. The total sum of money offered to the BCC to support operations next year is £110,500. This, combined with the saving of £4000 from Business Rate relief, equates to £114,500.

6. Any other business

The Chair raised the subject of the recent serious dog attack and death of dog walker at Caterham. Concern was shared by attendees for the increasing number of professional dog walkers on the commons. Some walkers appear inattentive using a phone whilst walking and concern was raised when two or more walkers walk together, combining their limit of 6 dogs per person. It was discussed that the Conservators will investigate licencing commercial dog walkers.

Mr and Mrs Medhurst raised a concern of horse riders who appear at speed on the Commons, not on bridleways or permissive rides, giving surprised dog owners no opportunity to ensure dogs are restrained. Mr and Mrs Medhurst requested that clearer, colour maps of Bridle Ways and Paths are pinned to the notice boards to which riders can be directed at these incidents.

Mrs J Davies stated that there are few riding stables in the area and the main offenders are private horse owners or those who arrive in horse boxes from out of the area.

Actions:

- Investigate the issue of licences of Commercial Dog Walkers
- Write to local stables advising that horses must use only the Bridle Ways and Path and control their speed when members of the public are also on the Commons.
- Improved signage across Banstead Downs is already under review

Meeting closed at 10.35.

Dates of 2023 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:

- Saturday 22 April, 2023
- Saturday 15 July, 2023
- Saturday 21 October, 2023



**Meeting 599 of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held at The Banstead Centre on Saturday 22 April, 2023**

MINUTES – Part 1

Present:	Mr. V Broad, Chairman	Cllr. N Moses
	Mr. J Mill	Cllr. P Harp
	Mr. D Atkins – via Zoom	Mr. N Mollett
	Mr. B Steele	Mrs. L Shea, Clerk

Public Gallery: Jane Davis, Gillian Hein, Rachel Turner, Fintan O’Toole, Jill Cassidy, Nick Cull

6. Apologies for absence

David Hatcher

7.

Welcome was given to Ben Steel on his appointment and a vote of thanks was given to Nick Cull on his retirement for all of his fifteen years of service as a Conservator.

8. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 21 January were confirmed as correct. No matters arising.

9. Quarterly report

Winter is the busiest period for conservation work on the Commons. Vegetation is largely dormant and clearance work can be carried out with limited impact on the flora and fauna. This winter the team focused on scrub clearance on Banstead Heath and have cleared just over an acre of scrub from three separate compartments.

General site management duties have included the installation of a new memorial bench, signage related to motorised vehicles on Banstead Downs and ground nesting birds on Banstead Heath and footpath/bridleway inspections across all four sites. Unfortunately, since installation, the motorised vehicle notices have already been vandalised at Banstead Downs.

Flytipping, antisocial behaviour and garden waste continues to be a drain on resources across the Commons. Letters related to flytipping have been circulated to houses that abut the common along Commonfield Road and hot spots across Banstead Heath.

The sheep were removed from Park Downs at the beginning of March. We’d like to say thank you to the volunteers who checked on the flock during their time on Park Downs this winter and the Downlands Partnership for their hard work and beautiful flock of hungry wethers.



The Clerk met with Michael Hill and Peter Sykes from the Greenspaces Team on Wednesday 1 March to inspect some of the priority ash trees that are on our inspection list. Some immediate tree work was identified and will be actioned by the Council. Follow up inspections will be arranged when the trees are in leaf.

*Quarterly report in pictures

10. Matters arising

Eastgate Nork – Peter Harp

Cllr. Peter Harp provided details of a concern regarding vehicles parking on the Common at Eastgate Nork. Nork Business Guild would like to apply to the CIL Local Fund to install an earthen bund on the common alongside the problem stretch of road to prevent vehicular access and further damage to the curb. Authorisation was given from the Conservators.

Dogs and commercial dog walkers

The BCC is still receiving reports of dog attacks on Banstead Heath. Additional notices have been displayed on the noticeboards and we are in discussion with the local Dog Warden. The Conservators are exploring the option of introducing licensing to regulate commercial dog walkers operating on Banstead Commons.

The Clerk reported that Reigate and Banstead Borough Council confirmed that unlike the London boroughs, it is not possible for them to licence commercial dog walkers without introducing new byelaws.

It was noted that other Conservator bodies regulate commercial dog walkers and other commercial activities are regulated by the Council.

Action: Clerk to consult with council officers and request further detail on the restrictions in place to prevent the Council's ability to regulate commercial dog walkers and explore options for the BCC to introduce licensing under our Act/byelaws.

Surrey Hills AONB Boundary Review

Banstead Heath has been removed from the revised AONB Boundary Review for the reasons provided on quarterly report in pictures slide. The BCC is in communication with Ian Dunsford who is the Planning Policy Manager at Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and the local resident association to see if we can submit addition information that might suggest greater landscape value and sway the boundary extension in our favour.

Public engagement and volunteering

Our guided walk programme of five walks for the year is currently being publicised and bookings received.

Talks were given to the RAC club (£100 donation received) and Walton Forum (£500 donation received).

Working collaboratively with the Surrey Hills Society, Mole Valley Ramblers and Surrey County Council, the Banstead Commons Conservators have hosted four volunteer task sessions on the



Commons this winter totalling 437 volunteer hours. Volunteer recruitment will commence this summer so that conservation volunteer tasks can be launched in Autumn.

Social media. Facebook has 1.3K followers. 263 followers on Twitter, 111 followers on Instagram

Finance – grants and fundraising

Spring appeal to Resident Associations to help fund hand tools resulted in the following donations:

- £500 Tadworth & Walton Residents Association
- £330 Lower Kingswood Resident Association
- £500 Walton Forum
- £600 Banstead Village Resident Association

The Conservators thanked the local resident associations for their financial support.

£2723.48 grant application for hand tools and on-site posters was submitted to Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) and approved in March. A further application to FiPL for £4,800 to redesign our website has been submitted.

5. Any other business

Request for access onto the Common at Farndon, Withybed Corner

A request has been received from Farndon at Withybed Corner to install an additional access gate within their boundary fence onto the Common. To be discussed in Part 2.

Dog Poo Bins

Two members of the gallery requested dog waste bins to be installed on Banstead Downs. It was explained the existing bins are provided and maintained by the local council. The BCC is restricted under current funding and do not have the resources to provide or maintain the provision of bins.

Actions

- **Action:** Clerk to consult with council officers and request further detail on the restrictions in place to prevent the Council's ability to regulate commercial dog walkers and explore options for the BCC to introduce licensing under our Act/byelaws.

Meeting closed at 10:30

Dates of 2023 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:

- Saturday 15 July, 2023
- Saturday 21 October, 2023



**Meeting 600th of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held at
The Banstead Centre on Saturday 15 July, 2023**

MINUTES – Part 1

Present:	Mr. D Hatcher , Acting Chairman	Cllr. N Moses
	Mr. J Mill	Mr. B Steele
	Mr. D Atkins	Mrs. L Shea, Clerk

Miriam Maxim, Minute Secretary

Public Gillian Hein

Gallery: Sean Grufferty, Downlands Partnership Grazing Team

11. Apologies for absence

Mr. V Broad, Cllr. Peter Harp, Mr. N Mollett

12. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 22 April were confirmed as correct.

13. Quarterly report

Most habitat management ceases during the Spring and Summer months to prevent disturbance during the breeding season.

Verges, footpaths, bridleways and fire breaks are maintained across all four sites.

Bracken management on Banstead Heath and Burgh Heath has commenced.

The BCC is meeting with the Downlands Partnership Grazing Team next week to discuss the grazing regime on Park Downs and Banstead Downs this winter.

As part of the development of our new management plans, Surrey Wildlife Trust have completed their habitat surveys on all four sites. The BCC has met with the ecologists on site to discuss management priorities and ensure objectives are ambitious but achievable within our resources.

The BCC has recruited Arborweald Environmental Planning Consultancy to develop a Tree Inspection Policy for Banstead Commons. We hope this will be implemented before the end of the Summer.

We are continuing to work together with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council on ash dieback. Due to the scale of the problem on Banstead Commons, the BCC would like an agreement drawn up to ensure both parties are aware of responsibilities and recording procedures. Lucy Shea suggested an RBBC appointed Conservator attend the next liaison meeting to finalise the agreement.

The first sighting of OPM has been found on Banstead Heath.



The team continues to be reactive to fly tipping and antisocial behaviour. Working in collaboration with Officers from RBBC including the Dog Warden and Surrey Fire an awareness session was held on Banstead Heath during ASB Awareness Week.

14. Matters arising

Site Management Plans (SMPs)

The BCC is required to carry out a public consultation exercise to get community feedback on the development of the SMPs. See DEFRA guidance [A Common Purpose](#). Since there are no resources (financial or staff) allocated to consult, it was decided that notices will be posted on all the BCC Notice Boards, RA Newsletters and the new BCC website. The public will have one month to respond and comments will be reviewed by the BCC (scheduled for January Quarterly Meeting).

Pollution incidents on Banstead Heath and Banstead Downs

Four significant pollution incidents have been reported this quarter, three of which were on Banstead Heath and the other on Banstead Downs. The effluent leaks from The Sportsman and HMP High Down had the most significant amenity impact. All the incidents were reported to the Environment Agency and Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and clean-up operations are in place. It needs to be established whether The Sportsman pub has authorisation to have an outflow on Banstead Commons. Some of the householders were unaware of their legal duties maintaining septic tanks.

Public engagement and volunteering

The Conservators have hosted four guided walks on Banstead Commons this quarter. A total of 54 walkers have joined us.

We hosted a group of 17 corporate volunteers from Atkins to Banstead Downs in June. The task was to hand pull the invasive Canadian Goldenrod from the chalk grassland. The day was organised in partnership with the Surrey Hills Society and a £250 donation was also received.

Volunteer recruitment has commenced and articles promoting volunteer opportunities on Banstead Commons have been sent to Resident Association (RAs) Newsletters.

The Clerk has written several articles for the RA magazines and hopes to continue raising the profile of the BCC through the various marketing channels.

Irresponsible dog walkers continue to cause concern. RBBC will be reviewing the Dogs Public Space Protection Order this year and are hoping to reduce the number of dogs per walker from six to four in line with other authorities in the area. The on the spot fine is currently £80 for any dog fouling in public spaces in the borough.

Social media. Facebook has 1.3K followers. 284 followers on Twitter, 124 followers on Instagram

Finance – grants and fundraising

Spring Appeal to RAs. Further donations were received, £400 received from Nork RA and £200 received from Chipstead RA. RAs contributed £2,330 for equipment to support the launch of conservation volunteers on Banstead Commons.



Our grant application of £4,800 to Farming in Protected Landscapes for the development of a new website was approved in May.

A CIL application for £8,394 was submitted to purchase a new Spearhead Multi-cut 200.

The BCC received a generous donation of £10,000 in memory of Mr. Richard Jones. The donation was recognised and thanks given from the Conservators.

Meeting with the Leader of the Council

Conservator and Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr. Moses reports Cllr. Richard Biggs has been appointed as Leader of the Council. Cllr. Moses is meeting with Cllr. Biggs on Tues 18 July and will raise BCC funding at the meeting.

Business Rates – Valuation Office

The Valuation Office confirmed that the depot does not fall within the criteria of being able to gain an Agricultural Exemption. Livestock has to be connected to the building for an exemption.

5. Any other business

Request for access onto the Common at Farndon, Withybed Corner

The request from Farndon at Withybed Corner to install an additional access gate within their boundary fence onto the Common was discussed at our recent meeting with Edward Harris, Solicitor. Conservator David Atkins is awaiting the written advice from Edward Harris but expressed his preference for a licence.

Unique Beginnings Childcare & Forest School

The above childcare provider hosts regular, organised activities on Banstead Heath on Wednesday and Thursday each week, from 1.45pm until 3pm. It was agreed the activity requires authorisation from the Conservators. Clerk to follow up.

Actions:

- The Clerk to share printed articles that have appeared in local newsletters/magazines.
- Invite Council appointed Conservator to the RBBC Liaison Meeting
- Cllr. N Moses to update the BCC following her meeting with Cllr. Richard Biggs.
- David Atkins to report on request from Farndon (Withybed Corner) for an access gate to Commons once solicitors' advice has been received.
- Clerk to arrange a meeting with Unique Beginnings Childcare and Forest School activities

Meeting closed at 10:30

Dates of 2023 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:

- Saturday 21 October, 2023



Meeting 601th of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held at
The Banstead Centre on Saturday 21 October, 2023

MINUTES – Part 1

Present:	Mr. V Broad, Chairman	Cllr. P Harp
	Mr. D Hatcher	Mr. B Steele
	Mr. D Atkins	Mrs. L Shea, Clerk

Miriam Maxim – Minute Secretary

Public

Gallery: Gillian Hein, Peter Taylor-Medhurst, Rachel Turner, Jane Davis, Karl Tarratt

15. Apologies for absence

Cllr. N. Moses, Mr. N. Mollett, Mr. J Mill

16. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 15 July were confirmed as correct. No matters arising

17. Quarterly report

This quarter the operational team have been busy with bracken and grassland management, boundary inspections and the introduction of our new visual tree assessment policy. We manage c.168 hectares of grassland with a large percentage under prescriptive management with Natural England under a Higher Level Stewardship grant. In addition to our normal cut and collect regime on the two chalk downland sites, this year we have introduced five new grassland compartments to cut and collect on Banstead Heath.

Two temporary stock enclosures have been installed and livestock introduced to Park Downs (4 sheep & 4 goats) and Banstead Downs (18 sheep). Working together with the Downlands Partnership grazing team we inducted 23 new volunteers who will help us to carry out daily welfare checks on the livestock and a check on the perimeter fence.

The new Tree Inspection Policy has been adopted by the Conservators and staff have received the two days training to introduce the new reporting procedure. Autumn tree safety checks will be carried out in compliance with the new methodology and reporting procedures.

Surrey Wildlife Trust is still finalising our four Site Management Plans and we are hoping to receive the draft documents in the week commencing 23 October.

We have hosted four guided walks (46 walkers) on Banstead Commons this quarter. Two of the walks were part of our Guided Walk Programme and the other two hosted for the Downlands Partnership and the Surrey Hills Society.



Regular volunteer work parties on Banstead Commons were launched in September and in addition to working with corporate groups, we are building a database of volunteers to help carry out conservation tasks across the four sites that make up Banstead Commons.

Our presence on social media continues to grow and we now have 1.3K followers on Facebook, 303 followers on Twitter and 138 followers on Instagram. A new LinkedIn page has been set up to help us to engage with more corporate organisations to deliver group volunteering on the Commons.

Grants have been received from the CIL Local Fund (£8,394 received for a new Spearhead Multicut toppler) and the Downlands Trust (£3,394.60 for stock fencing materials and a contribution to labour). Thank yous were extended to both organisations for their financial support. A donation of £800 was received from INEOS aviation following the authorisation for a private helicopter landing on Banstead Heath.

18. Matters arising

Request for vehicular access Pine Court, Mill Lane

Resident from Pine Court has requested to create a new driveway from Pine Court onto Mill Lane. Authorisation was denied due to Common Land legislation. In order to create a new vehicular access, the land would be required to be deregistered from the Common. Clerk to send out a letter to inform resident of the outcome.

Boundary inspections

During recent tree inspections, the team has discovered prolific flytipping along the length of the Green Curve boundary. The building rubble and green waste has made the area dangerous for staff to access and carry out inspections. Letters were sent to all houses earlier this year and more recently communications have been sent to specific houses. Clerk to arrange meeting with RBBC's Joint Enforcement Team (JET) to discuss possible enforcement measures.

The houses on Chapel Road have planted areas on the Common and installed signage. It was agreed that letters will be sent to the relevant houses giving notice to remove the plants and sign within a specified timeframe.

Pollution incident – The Sportsman on Banstead Heath

Dialogue with the Environment Agency (EA) and the RBBC property and legal teams continues regarding the outflow pipe on Banstead Heath which we believe is associated with cesspit at The Sportsman. Clerk to continue to put pressure on the EA with the intention to get the effluent pipe removed.

Withybed Corner

A legal memo related to the left-hand fork of the Public Right of Way track nearest to Mere Pond was received in August. The memo requested that the Conservators take enforcement measures to any vehicles parked illegally on the Common (byelaw 12). It is the discretion of Banstead Commons Conservators to decide whether they wish to take legal action to enforce byelaws. Clerk to send reply signposting the neighbour to the borough parking enforcement team and Surrey Police (Highways Act).



New website

Thanks to a grant from Farming in Protected Landscapes, our new website was published on Sunday 16 October. The following supporters have been instrumental in supporting the Clerk with the development of the new site: [Peter Taylor-Medhurst](#) for his images and giving his time and expertise to build an image gallery and coordinate the design of the downloadable site maps; Ian Mockford for providing drone images and technical advice; Karl Tarratt for wildlife photos and a number of other individuals have contributed to our image gallery. Recognition and thanks were given to those who have contributed.

Finance discussions with the Leader of the Council

Vic Broad gave an overview of the meeting that was held with the new Leader of the Council on Monday 18 September. Minutes of the meeting are available on request. The next meeting is scheduled for 12 December when a decision will be made regarding the level of funding for a three-year period.

5. Any other business

Victor Broad noted the recent meeting which was held with Cllr. Rebecca Paul who is the Conservative candidate for Reigate at the next General Election.

Gillian Hein raised the update related to the changes to the **Banstead Heath Consultative Group**. Commencing next year, it was agreed the remit of the Consultative Group will be extended to cover the four sites that make up Banstead Commons and the frequency of the meetings will increase from two to four a year to coincide with the Quarterly Meetings.

Actions:

- Clerk to send response to Pine Court.
- Clerk to carry out reinspection of Green Curve boundary and liaise with the JET Enforcement Team regarding concerns from specific houses.
- Clerk to write to properties Rogate, Grove Lodge and Cama Lodge on Chapel Road.

Meeting closed at 10:40

Dates of 2024 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:

- Saturday 27 January, 2024
- Saturday 20 April, 2024
- Saturday 20 July, 2024
- Saturday 19 October, 2024