



Meeting 602nd of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held at
The Banstead Centre on Saturday 27th January, 2024

MINUTES – Part 1

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

Lisa Taylor – Minute Secretary

Public	Gillian Hein, Rachel Turner, Jane Davis, Karl Tarratt, Ann Dobson, Miriam Maxim,
Gallery:	Catalina Vassallo-Bonner, Jackie Sexton, Rob Sexton, Charles Harvey

1. Apologies for absence

Mr. D Atkins

2. Minutes of last meeting

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

3. Quarterly report

Due to the reduced staff team this quarter, grassland and woodland glade management took slightly longer to complete than in earlier years and cut and collect continued throughout October and November.

Livestock are grazing on Banstead Downs and Park Downs. The dedicated team of volunteer livestock checkers have been checking on the sheep on Banstead Downs twice a day and once a day on Park Downs. The flock on Banstead Downs increased from 17 to 27 sheep in January.

A large area of scrub has been cleared with machinery on Park Downs. This has improved the vista at the top of the site and over time will transition to chalk grassland.

In line with our management plan, two large scrapes were created on Banstead Heath to increase lowland heath habitat. Heather seed was collected from the adjacent glade and spread on the scrapes.

Following on from last winter's clearance work on Banstead Heath, we have removed vegetation from south/western edge of the small pond located in the middle of the gallops. Desilting of the pond is scheduled for later this year.

Two meetings have been held with the [Newt Conservation Partnership](#) and plans are underway to restore Sheepwash Pond on Burgh Heath and create a new pond – following the recommendations made in Kevin Morgan's 'Management of Burgh Heath Ponds for Great Crested



Newt' report (2021). The partnership is keen to explore the possibility of restoring the puddle/pond in the middle of the gallops on Banstead Heath and a biological survey of the pond is planned for Spring. County Councillor, Cllr Rebecca Paul, has expressed an interest in supporting pond restoration work on Banstead Heath and a meeting is scheduled for 29/1.

Working in collaboration with Butterfly Conservation, Seven Elm trees (three *Ulmus minor* 'Ademuz' and one *Ulmus Lutece*) and three European White Elms (*Ulmus laevis*) were planted on Banstead Heath to increase suitable habitat for the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly.

The unauthorised bike track on Banstead Heath has been inspected. The BCC has put up notices to inform visitors that the trees' structural integrity has been compromised and the area should be used with care. Media work to raise awareness of the concern is being considered.

Conservator David Hatcher and the Clerk Lucy Shea have both been disappointed at the quality of the Site Management Plans produced by Surrey Wildlife Trust. Seven pages of amendments have been compiled to be sent to Surrey Wildlife Trust. We are hoping to receive revised documents back in time for us to hold a four-week public consultation in March.

Our walk of remembrance was held on Friday 10 November. This walk is led by local historian Timothy Richardson and 13 walkers attended. Cllr. Peter Harp laid the BCC wreath at the Remembrance Service in Banstead.

Five volunteer work parties, three corporate volunteer events and two events with Leatherhead Youth Project (120 volunteers in total) have been held on the Commons this quarter.

Our presence on social media continues to grow and we now have 1,422 followers on Facebook, 334 followers on Twitter and 168 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.

Conservator David Hatcher attended the Surrey Hills November Symposium at the University of Guildford and sits on the regular board meetings.

Grants have been received from: Your Fund Surrey (£1,500) to host 'Wildlife Detective Days' on the Commons; Farming in Protected Landscapes to purchase 8 scythes (£1,812.00) and the Downlands Trust are sponsoring a staff and volunteer day (£492).

4. Matters arising

Pollution incident – The Sportsman on Banstead Heath

The clerk shared a letter from the Environment Agency and the Stonegate Group regarding an unauthorised effluent pipe on Banstead Heath. BCC to liaise with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and an letter will be issued to The Sportsman informing them that the pipe is in breach of our Byelaws.

Horse riders on Banstead Downs

We continue to receive regular reports of horse riders riding away from the permitted routes on Banstead Downs. BCC has increased the amount of finger posts on site, maps of the site are



currently with the printers and will be installed on noticeboards and we have posted on our social media pages. Another letter has been issued to the stables in the local area.

Planning application: 23/01516/F

Conservator and Cllr Peter Harp provided update regarding the drainage works planned at Lucas Park Drive and proposed outflow that may impact on the pond situated on the Common. The council have agreed a holding pond but eventually could overflow into the main pond. The council believe levels of pollution should be very low.

Banstead Commons Consultative Group

The Banstead Heath Consultative Group was established in 1998 to provide a valuable two-way conduit for information and exchange of views between the Banstead Commons Conservators (BCC) and the various user groups of Banstead Heath. In 2023 a review of the group was carried out with its existing members and it was suggested the group expand its remit to include representation from all four sites and include participation from volunteers who are collecting biological data for us. The new terms of reference for the group were formally adopted by the Conservators.

Finance discussions with the Leader of the Council

Meeting was held with Cllr. Richard Biggs on 13 November, 2023. Draft budget has been submitted to Council (balanced budget). Cllr. Biggs was keen to give the BCC financial security on a three year deal up until 2027. Funding has been proposed at £110,000 each year for the three-year period.

5. Any other business

Downs Road / Cotswold Road junction improvements

Without the authorisation of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Banstead Commons Conservators, Sutton Council commenced works to install a hard standing by the bus stop (Stop N) on Downs Road. Six Ash trees were felled before the work was stopped by the Clerk. In addition to authorisation from the Council and the Conservators, hard standings on Common Land requires consent from the Secretary of State.

Sutton Council have since submitted a request to install traffic bollards to protect the Commons from proposed junction improvements at the junction of Downs Road / Cotswold Road. The Conservators agreed that timber bollards could be installed. Final plans and specification of the bollards will require formal authorisation before any work on the Commons can proceed.

Jackie Sexton raised a query related to the Surrey Hills Natural Landscape Boundary review – the BCC is awaiting to hear if boundary is being extended to include any of the Commons.

Ian Mockford emailed to request the support of Banstead Commons Conservators to remove the vandalised bench on the Chetwode Road / Reigate Road footpath (not part of the Commons). The Conservators are aware of the antisocial behaviour and littering in this area and would support the removal of the bench. Cllr Nadean Moses will take this item forward with the Greenspaces Team.



Jane Davis mentioned that Jean Clew who is the local historian on the Banstead Commons Consultative Group is in ill health.

Actions:

- BCC to work with the Council and issue a letter to The Sportsman to remove the effluent pipe. Clerk and Mr John Mill to draft letter.
- Clerk to inform Sutton Council of the Conservators decision to authorise timber bollards at the Downs Road / Cotswold Road junction.
- Clerk to send email to Jean Clew sending best wishes from the Conservators.

Meeting closed at 10:45

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

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