



Meeting 604th of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held at
The Banstead Centre on Saturday 20th July, 2024

MINUTES – Part 1

Present:	Mr. V. Broad, Chairman (VB)	Cllr. P. Harp (PH)
	Mr. D. Hatcher (DH)	Mr. B. Steele (BS)
	Cllr. N. Moses (NMos)	Mr. D Atkins (DA)
	Mr. N. Mollett (NM)	Mrs. L Shea (LS), Clerk
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	Lisa Taylor (LT) – Minute Secretary	

Public gallery:	Rachel Turner (RT), Chris Hanson (CH), Miriam Maxim (MM), Bob Ferris (BF)
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1. Apologies for absence

Mr. J Mill (JM)

2. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 20th April were confirmed as correct. No matters arising.

3. Quarterly report

Visitor accessibility on the Commons is a priority during the summer months when vegetation growth could restrict public access if not managed. The frequency of the mowing of Public Rights of Ways, fire breaks and verge management are dependent on seasonal growth. Paths on Banstead Heath are cut more regularly than other sites to encourage visitors to stick to the footpaths to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds (Skylarks).

Natural England has given permission for us to conservation graze during the Spring and Summer months for compartments that are in 'restoration'. Sheep remain on Banstead Downs and Park Downs. The Downlands Partnership Grazing Team continue to monitor the sites and give expert advice to ensure stocking densities are optimal for each enclosure to meet the management objectives set under our Higher Level Stewardship.

BCC has received a donation of £1,806 from the Downlands Trust donation to purchase new straining posts so that we can expand our grazing regime on Park Downs. Thank you.

Japanese Knotweed sites were treated in June. The process will be repeated in September.

Invasive Cherry Laurel has been removed from Bridleway 81 on Banstead Heath. This is the start of a sweep that we plan to carry out on this section of the Heath to eradicate Cherry Laurel from the site. To prevent regrowth, stumps are being treated with herbicide in accordance with the recommendations in our Site Management Plan.

Tree inspections have commenced in line with our Tree Inspection Policy which includes the re-inspections associated with Ash dieback. As a result of the tree inspections, some tree safety



work was carried out on Banstead Heath in June which included limb reductions on two large Oaks and the removal of dead Ash trees.

More rubbish was removed from Burgh Heath and relatively large amounts of green waste and plantings were discovered during a recent inspection. Letters have been issued to all residents.

'No horse riding' signs have been counter sunk into straining posts on Banstead Downs.

Volunteer work parties continue to address woody scrub on our sites. The scythes that were bought earlier this year with thanks for funding from FiPL and the Downlands Trust are now in use. This traditional method of countryside management is particularly useful in sensitively enhancing selected lowland heath glades on Banstead Heath where we know we have reptiles present.

Surveying and research into the pond improvements on Burgh Heath and Banstead Heath continue. Coincidentally, two adult Great Crested Newts were found on Burgh Heath by our Keeper Gary which confirms their presence on the site. The Newt Conservation Partnership has also recorded GCN eggs on Burgh Heath and Banstead Heath.

Surrey Bat Group has kindly supplied us with two bat detectors which have gone up on various locations on Banstead Heath. Species recorded so far have included Barbastelle, Daubenton, Natterer's and Brown Long-eared (Myotis). A findings report will be submitted to the Conservators at the end of the year.

We held our Volunteer Summer Social – attended by 17 people - on Thursday 6 June and first [Nature Detective Day](#) on Saturday 8 June. Our Nature Detective Days are all fully subscribed. Conservator David Hatcher has also led five Guided Walks this season (32 walkers) - a special thank you to David for giving his time and knowledge so generously.

The staff team also attended a Common Therapy meeting hosting at Wimbledon and Putney Conservators at the beginning of June. This network is proving to be invaluable with regards to sharing best practice and legal opinions on Common Land legislation.

4. Matters arising

Site Management Plans

The Public Consultation associated with the development of the plans was held in June and useful comments have been received from local Resident Associations, visitors and partners. It was hoped the documents would be ready to be approved for adoption at our July Quarterly Meeting however this will be pushed back to October to incorporate the edits and further mistakes in the text that have been identified.

Banstead Downs Golf Club (BDGC)

LS continues dialogue with the Chair of BDGC regarding the areas of concern that were highlighted at our April Quarterly Meeting. Natural England (NE) and Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) are being consulted. A meeting has been arranged for Thursday 22 August. Representations from BDGC, BCC, RBBC and NE will be present.



The Sportsman

LS is still corresponding with Gosschalks who are the solicitors representing Stonegate regarding the pollution spill and unauthorised effluent pipe that is placed on the Common. We are awaiting further correspondence following a litigation meeting that was held between Gosschalks and their client on 15/7.

At present, The Sportsman has not returned its completed bench licence. The benches will be removed from the Common if The Sportsman no longer wishes to accept the licence.

1 The Green, Burgh Heath – encroachment

The resident at the above property has erected fence on the Common. Land registry documents have been obtained and a letter was issued requesting that the fence is removed by the end of July. It was agreed the fencing should be removed by BCC staff if the resident has not removed the fencing.

Scattering of ashes on Banstead Commons

A request was received to scatter ashes on Banstead Downs. It was recognised that we do not have a statement/policy in place. As the landowner of the Commons, PH has requested RBBC's policy/position. It was agreed to defer any decision until RBBC's position is clear.

Annual Report 2024

Financial accounts have been returned from the auditor and the Annual Report 2024 has been published.

5. Any other business

RT – raised concerns whether the BCC funding from RBBC is agreed and confirmed in writing. LS confirmed there is not a signed agreement in place. VB suggested an agreement/terms of reference should be drawn up. LS to take forward.

RT – made BCC aware of a recent dog attack towards a horse on Epsom Downs. RT is concerned the number of dogs attacking horses are on the increase.

RT – made BCC aware that a Canadian Goose was rescued at Burgh Heath Pond, it had been caught in fishing wire. The bird was taken to Leatherhead Wildlife Aid and has been since released back to Burgh Heath Pond. LS confirmed fishing is not permitted at Burgh Heath Pond.

MM – raised her concerns regarding the removal of scrub around the base of a tree on Chapel Road. LS confirmed the area was strimmed by BCC staff to help assist with tree inspections.

Actions:

- LT to write letter to The Sportsman asking if they would like to renew bench subscription. The benches will be removed from the Common if the licence is not renewed.
- Scattering of Ashes, it was agreed to refer this item to the next Quarterly Meeting once PH had obtained and shared RBBC policy.



Meeting closed at 10:20

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

- Saturday 19 October, 2024