



**Meeting 610th of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held at
Banstead Community Centre on Saturday 17th January, 2026**

MINUTES - Part 1

Present: Mr. V. Broad, Chairman (VB) Mr. B. Steele (BS)
Mr. D. Hatcher (DH) Mr. D Atkins (DA)
Mr. J Mill (JM) Ms. L Shea (LS), Clerk
Cllr. P. Harp (PH) Mrs L. Traynor (LT) - Minute Secretary
Cllr. N. Moses

Public gallery: Rachel Turner, Gillian Hein TWRA, Margaret Zietz, Robert Zietz, Sean Grufferty, Jamie Bullard, Linda Mount, Lisa Salmon, Ian Mockford

1. Apologies for absence

Mr E. Isaacs (EI)

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on Saturday 18th October were confirmed as correct.

No matters arising.

3. Quarterly report

Our autumn–winter work programme commenced with grassland management and has since focused on visitor access, tree safety, and open space management.

Visitor access

Widening and improving the permissive ride adjacent to the railway on Banstead Downs, as well as Footpath 7a, which links Banstead railway station to Nork shops.

A new surface to the track and marker posts have been installed at Withybed Corner through a collaborative project involving Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and local residents. The project was funded by RBBC and led by Vic Davey, Project Engineer for the Greenspaces Team. BCC installed the posts along the track, and our team will return in the coming weeks to replace the chestnut posts at all entrances to the commons at Withybed Corner.

Tree safety

Recent storms have required significant staff resources to clear fallen trees from pathways across the Commons.

We are also experiencing an increase in the number of diseased ash trees failing due to ash dieback. We are working closely with RBBC to establish a clear and coordinated



action plan for managing the disease. Tree felling licence for Burgh Heath has been obtained.

Pond management

A dedicated volunteer task group was organised to assist with the removal of willow from Priest Mere Pond, aiding pond management and habitat condition.

Managing anti-social behaviour

The team assisted with the removal of a burnt-out vehicle from Banstead Downs. Ongoing issues have been identified at Burgh Heath, where young people are constructing bike ramps on public footpaths. These structures present a significant safety risk, as they are being built directly within active pedestrian routes.

BCC and Natural England have given consent for Banstead Downs Golf Club (BDGC) to resurface their carpark. Work was set to commence on January 12 and be completed by February 7.

BDGC has also advised us that they have a charity 'Night Golf' event planned for Friday 20th March 2026.

Fundraising and Grants

Thank you to the Downlands Trust for their recent donation of £2,350.92 for additional volunteer hand tools to support our growing team.

Thank you to the RBBC CIL Local Fund for a new log grab and pick up truck - £41,623.

Pending applications:

CIL Local Fund – application made to improve welfare facilities for our staff at the yard. £50,940 - application pending.

SES Water Better Futures Fund – Total Application £4,385 – shortlisted, application pending.

4. Public engagement and volunteering

We welcomed the return of Leatherhead Youth Project to Banstead Heath during the October half-term. This year, the group supported us for two days of hard work. The young people showed great commitment and effort, clearly demonstrated by the amount of clearance achieved.

Our skilled volunteers continue to make a significant impact on local habitats. Over the past quarter, their efforts have focused on restoring areas of chalk grassland on Banstead Downs, improving a pocket of lowland heath habitat on Banstead Heath, and clearing cherry laurel at Withybed Corner. Their work is making a real and visible difference, and it is a pleasure to work with such a dedicated and growing volunteer team.



Led by David Hatcher, our Winter Bird Walk was held on 12 November at Park Downs. 14 walkers joined the party and 20 different species of birds were recorded.

Finally, we would like to thank and recognise our team of livestock checkers, who cared for the animals on our sites throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

Our public engagement programme for 2026 is almost ready to be published. We have a programme of guided walks planned to include the addition of a Butterfly Walk. We charge a small fee of £5 and the details of these walks are shared on our website and social media. We will also run Nature Detective Day in August. We are planning to run a public information evening regarding wildlife monitoring on the Commons in April.

5. Planning

Raven housing trust – we continue to monitor the plans for the Preston Park redevelopment namely the Southwark and Merton redevelopment. One of our priorities is the protection of locations where we have Great Crested Newts.

PH - had a 3 hour meeting with Raven this week and was able to inform them of the presence of Great Crested Newt to their representatives. Their current proposal is to increase the footprint of the buildings so PH is maintaining lines of communication regarding the Commons.

4. Any other business

RT - queried an update regarding off-road bikes on the Downs

LS - bike presence has reduced although increased for short period over Christmas holidays. We will continue to monitor.

RT – outlined antisocial behaviour at Burgh Heath. A wheel chair had been thrown on to the frozen pond.

VB – with the formation of the unitary council pending our grant needs to be sufficient and secure before we go forward to the next stage of the unitary. BCC is in formal discussions with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council senior management team.

RT – Cllr. Richard Biggs has informed residents that a three year grant is in progression.

PH – has had conversation with Cllr. Biggs and does not foresee any issues in BCC obtaining a grant. The unitary council will become the landowner so it will be up to new East Surrey authority to liaise with BCC.

RT – TWRA have submitted a formal proposal – if BCC is not issued with a council grant, a precept from the proposed parish council is a possibility. Residents expressed their support to BCC.

PH – Horley Parish Council have their recreation grounds and greenspaces maintained to a higher standard as a result of their precept.



PH - Many parish councils do not have party representation but there's no legal requirement so if you want to stand under the banner of a political party you can do so. You will either have to live, work or own land within the area of the jurisdiction.

Actions:

Public engagement events programme to be published.

Part 1 and public gallery closed at 10.10

Part 2 - Statutory Duties

Introducing cattle conservation on Banstead Heath - in line with the Site Management Plan and increase in allocation under the Higher Level Stewardship grant, a project to develop a grazing plan for Banstead Heath was unanimously approved by the Conservators. DH will support the development of the project.

Pedals and Paws request - LT explained the request for a coffee hut/pod and seating to be introduced on Banstead Commons. Concerns related to suitable location, power, running water, litter and corporate risk were expressed.

It was agreed that it is not a decision BCC are inclined to consider whilst The Rat is still trading.

6 Mogador Cottages

Staff have not been able to carry out preliminary assessment on area of Common directly adjacent to the above property. Resurfacing work is scheduled for March. Conservator or enforcement officer will be present at the assessment to manage any queries. Notice of works will be provided to resident prior to the resurface work.

The Sportsman

Outstanding items remain unresolved. Discussions related to each concern and enforcement continue.

Meeting closed at 12:00