



5. Quarterly Report

LS - Rainfall this past quarter was significantly above average across much of the UK, resulting in an exceptionally wet start to the year. These conditions created operational challenges for the team, with wet clothing and equipment becoming routine. Additional care was required in planning and delivering the work programme, particularly to avoid damage to footpaths and soils caused by vehicles in saturated ground conditions. Despite these challenges, staff and volunteers have continued to work extremely hard to deliver management priorities, enhancing biodiversity across sites and improving visitor access.

Tree Safety and Access Management

The wet and windy conditions resulted in a higher than usual number of fallen trees across the Commons. These were dealt with promptly by the team to ensure public access routes remained safe and clear.

Habitat Management - Banstead Downs

At the beginning of the year, areas of woody scrub were cut back on Banstead Downs to encourage ecological succession and improve biodiversity value. We then moved across the Banstead Heath to focus on open space management to enhance our pockets of lowland heath for the benefit of reptiles and other species.

Invasive Species Control

Cherry laurel removal at Withybed Corner has continued, supported by strong local community involvement. The impact of this work has been significant, and what was originally anticipated as a 10-year programme is now expected to be completed within approximately three years. We are very grateful to John Darter of Treemasters, who generously donated a full day with his small digger to assist with the removal of large laurel root balls. John has committed to returning next winter to support further clearance. Work has also commenced on Cherry laurel removal at Mogador, following earlier Ash tree removal. The shrubs are substantial in size and will require herbicide treatment to ensure successful eradication. Further works at Withybed Corner are planned for September to complete the current phase. In the meantime, the team is monitoring regeneration, and we look forward to observing early pioneer species establishing in the increased light conditions.

Access Improvements

The team continues to focus on widening rides across the four Banstead Commons sites. This quarter's work included widening Bridleway 87 (along the edge of Walton Heath Golf Club) and Bridleway 3 (running from Downs Road across Sutton Lane). Ride management enhances biodiversity by creating structural diversity within the woodland, enabling sunlight to penetrate the canopy and creating 'edge' habitats (ecotones) for a wide range of species. These areas become hotspots for plants, insects, birds, and small mammals that thrive in warm, sheltered environments.

Tree Disease and Forestry Operations

In partnership with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council Green Spaces Team and the Forestry Commission, we continue to actively manage ash dieback across the sites. Five felling licence applications have been submitted, of which two have been approved without conditions. Priority is being given to dead and dangerous trees along highways and site boundaries.

Grazing Management

In collaboration with the Downlands Partnership and volunteers, livestock grazing continues to be rotated across the grazing compartments to support habitat management objectives. We



have moved the stock twice this quarter. Our volunteer team continue to be committed to their roles.

Hay Baling Costs

The cost of hay baling was £240 higher than previous cut and drop arrangements. This additional cost will be budgeted for next year.

Banstead Commons Consultative Group

The Clerk highlighted the efforts Lisa T and David H have made to recruit new members to contribute to this group and all the volunteers who kindly donate their knowledge, skills and time to support nature conservation and our work.

JM - An excellent report and the pictures really help bring it to life for everyone here. The volunteers have done a fantastic job with the Cherry laurel clearance. The extra volunteering is tremendous and promotes our organisation positively within the local community.

Rachel Turner - query about our tree safety procedures in light of the tree that killed a 12 y/o girl in Banstead.

LS - The tree in question had a rope swing which we do not allow on the commons. We have a tree inspection and methodology policy. Our areas are Zoned into A and B.

DH - All obstructions on the commons are removed including bike jumps.

Rachel Turner - Query over safety mitigation at Burgh Heath pond. In light of a child who was killed after entering water, is it not necessary to have some water safety equipment adjacent to the pond? This is especially important for neurodiverse children.

JM - Our act prevents us from fencing our ponds and there must also be a question of supervision. As an organisation, we might be limited in our ability to provide such resources.

DH - As regards to signage, furniture on the commons is discouraged.

LS - land is designated as Common Land so visitors are expected to appreciate they are visiting a natural landscape and extra precautions should be taken into consideration.

Rachel Turner - the pond that has been restored on Banstead Heath is fabulous and ducks are now there so thank you.

LS - that's lovely to hear and we must also thank our volunteers who have spent a lot of time on clearance.

6. Horse riding concerns on the Commons

We continue to receive reports of horse riding away from the bridleways and permissive rides.

MM - we do see horse boxes arriving so not all riders are local.

DH - those on Banstead Downs tend to be the same individuals. The importance of sticking to Bridleways and Permissive Rides is that horse activity compacts the soil and creates conflict with other users alongside introducing nutrients to the soil.



7. Green Flag Award – possible application 2027

It was raised that Epsom & Ashted commons have this accreditation. Discussion associated with the pros and cons for the BCC to apply. There is a cost attached and benefits to the BCC, if there are any, need consideration.

BS – I support it because I think we should receive recognition for all the fantastic work we do.

DH – Suggestion to ask within the Commons Therapy Group (forum made up of 5 Conservator bodies) to find out the benefits and drawbacks from other similar organisations.

8. Future Funding and Local Government Reorganisation

JM - It has been confirmed that Reigate and Banstead Borough Council will form part of [East Surrey Council](#) – BCC may have to start from scratch in relation to our funding agreement but this could present new opportunities.

We continue to negotiate with RBBC over our funding. £115k/year isn't acceptable to facilitate our statutory duties. Thankfully we have attained some CIL funding to enable us to update our assets. We have received a draft Service Level Agreement from the council but the breadth of responsibilities was enormous considering the level of funding. BCC made changes to the original document, and it has been sent back to the Executive Team at RBBC.

DH and LS have spent some time with Vicky Wise who is the new Head of Greenspaces. Vicky has visited two of our sites and gave some time to understand and consider the scope of our operations.

BCC is considerable under resourced considered responsibility with only 2 FT and 2 PT staff and with the statutory duty for H&S on Banstead Commons.

JM- It is encouraging that Vicky Wise took such an interest in finding out more about the work we do.

LS – We need to ensure the BCC is adequately resourced so that any agreement is continued into the new unitary.

DH – BCC has legal obligations to our staff which are currently non-compliant due to the level of underfunding.

9. AOB

Peter Matthey – Chair of Belmont and Sutton Cheam RA (2.5k households) Also chair of government funded development in South Sutton and Safer Neighbourhood Team.

Peter promoted the Belmont Festival on 5 July within Belmont village – 60/70 stalls. Suggested BCC might like to have a stand at the event.

Query of a land swap – Area to the north of Royal Marsden to be redeveloped into London Cancer Hub (funded by Aviva). The implication is that there will be 3k extra staff on site daily. This was initially raised in 2016 but stalled because there was no money to do it but now there is some money for this.



It seems that the planning application has been granted without the need to do any road improvement whatsoever mainly because the developer has suggested that the employees will all be using public transport, which in reality is not going to be the case.

Peter is liaising with Sarah Rye from Sutton/Kingston Highway Department.

What we are proposing is the removal of approximately 4m x 600m strip off the edge of the common (Banstead Downs) - 2400 square meters. How would we progress this forward?

JM - We would need to see plans and then discuss further.

DH - We need to wait to see what happens with the local government reorganisation

Gillian Hein - Walton Tree wardens would like to help on Burgh Heath with Cherry Laurel.

Action: LS arrange a meeting.

Biodiversity Net Gain - could the commons be registered as a recipient?

LS - to our knowledge, national designations (SSSI) and funding from DEFRA precludes us from attaining funding for our chalk downland sites under BNG. However, Burgh Heath and Banstead Heath habitats may be able to attain it. Andrew Benson Head of Planning at RBBC did not consult with the BCC when they were considering their 'land banks'.

Meeting closed 10:42am

Date of next meeting:

- Saturday 18 July, 2026
- Saturday 3 October, 2026