

**MINUTES of the 576th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 22nd April 2017 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J Mill
Cllr. V Broad
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. N Cull
Mr. J McCrae
Mr. J Milner Clerk

Also present were D Gradidge (BVRA), Colin Sutherland (PRRA), Alan Higgs (Banstead Downs Golf Club).

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr. R Mantle
Cllr. J Clarke
Mr. R Knights Warden

2. Appointment of Conservators and Election of Chairman

RBBC had not held their meeting to appoint Conservators until Thursday 20th April so we should be informed of the outcome during the next week. Nick Cull is recommended by the London Borough of Sutton who were reconsidering their policy of appointments to outside bodies the outcome of which will not be known until July 2017. A proposal by John Peacock, seconded by John McCrea that Nick Cull be co-opted onto the Board of Conservators until the permanent situation is clarified was agreed by all present.

A proposal by John Mill that John Peacock be elected chairman for the ensuing year was seconded by John McCrea and agreed by all present.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

4 Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The sheep had grazed three pens on Park Downs and one on Banstead Downs and having completed their task have been removed from the commons. The value of their grazing would become evident during the spring and summer. Cutting and collecting the scrub in the pens before the sheep came on worked well as they were able to graze the top surface better; the remainder of the scrub on Park Downs will be weed wiped this year. Three areas of Peacock's Field had been cut to different regimes; one area three times per year, one twice and the other once. The cutting

three times interfered with the flowering of the orchids and of the others the twice a year cut produced the best results in reducing the overpowering grasses.

- b. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Agreement. The annual application for the continuance of the Higher Level Stewardship has been submitted.

- ii. **Travis Perkins** – There was nothing further to report on this topic and a response will be pursued from RBBC. Cllr. Broad said that the council were not willing to let the matter rest and will push for a satisfactory outcome, even prosecuting if necessary.

- iii. **Summer Walks** – Conservators summer walks have been arranged for the following dates in 2017:
 - Tuesday May 2nd – Banstead Downs
 - Tuesday June 6th – Park Downs
 - Tuesday July 4th – Banstead Heath
 - Tuesday August 1st – Burgh Heath.Catalina Vassellbonner has been asked to circulate these details through the Residents Association Federation and members of the Banstead Heath Consultancy Group also will attend.

- iv. **Blocked Culvert Winkworth Road and Road Drainage onto Commons-** John Peacock was satisfied that we could not refuse to accept SCC's right to discharge road water onto the commons due to highways legislation and the fact that there were pre-existing drains on the commons. He produced maps of the common showing the water flow off Winkworth Road which, in heavy rainfall, reached the SSSI and needed a ditch or bund to stem the flow. There needed to be discussion to see if RBBC will take on this work as land owners. At the Sutton Lane location problems were due to an area of road resurfacing which forms a ridge in the road preventing the flow and, further south, the kerb had disintegrated allowing free flow onto the common. Additionally all of the gulleys were blocked and needed clearing. SCC Highways will be contacted to see if these matters can be put right.

5. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

John Peacock informed the meeting that Ralph Maciejewski had scanned the minutes of Conservators meetings up to 1952 which were in book form and will scan the remainder which are loose. Reading them was interesting but frustrating as a lot of the problems arising today were happening then. He hoped to have the first draft of the book available for the next meeting and would forward the link.

6. **Burgh Heath Pond (and Park Downs)**

Emanuel Flecken had resurrected the issue of letting the fishing rights on Burgh Heath Pond to a fishing club thereby giving them responsibility for stocking it and who fished there, thus teaching the proper etiquette and preventing unauthorised fishing and anti-social behaviour. A similar scheme had been introduced at Earlswood Lakes and seems to be beneficial. Whilst welcoming this suggestion it was thought that as the Burgh Heath Pond is ephemeral and occasionally dries out during summer, and as it has not been fished recently for other reasons, i.e. great crested newts breed there (although there is no evidence of this) and it is regarded as an ecological pond, there are other aspects to consider. There are also the views of local residents to

consider, which is not an issue at Earlswood. As the council have the piscatorial rights Cllr. Broad suggested he asks them to survey the residents of The Green for their views before moving the issue on.

There are other disturbances on Burgh Heath, particularly around the pond area but also with two motor scooters and a motor cycle using the footpaths. Barriers on the footpaths at the entrances were considered not to be the answer and Cllr. Broad said this was exactly what the JETs team should be involved in and their telephone number will be forwarded to the local Resident's Association so they can be contacted as the incidents occur.

Motor cycles were also getting onto Park Downs and sets of Proper steps and use of tree trunks were suggested as possible answers, both of which will be looked at. The footpath at the western end of Park Road has been altered and it will be looked at with a view to re-instating the old path.

7. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that the weather over the winter had been kind and the winter work had gone well. The sheep are off the Downs and the fences are down and back in storage. The only problem had been that one sheep had died from a broken neck and it is thought that it had been startled by a sudden gust of wind and careered into the tree. The strong winds had caused some damage to trees but nothing too serious except that residents fear that trees will fall on their property which is generally not the case; where it is relevant remedial action is taken. Some fields have been rolled and harrowed on a rotational basis and grass cutting has now started. Maintenance work including benches, perimeter posts and banks and ditches has continued and is being completed and the post banger has been put to good use. Litter picking takes up quite a lot of time and fly tipping increases in the spring when people start gardening again and throw their rubbish onto the commons. Commercial fly tipping continues with a lot of broken glass being dumped in New Lane. Apart from anything else it is difficult to remove as it has generally shattered. Time has been spent checking and reinforcing our boundaries due to a large funeral at Epsom bringing in caravans from far and wide but the precautions were worthwhile as there was no breach. The commons are looking good with spring colours coming out and more people are using the commons these days.

Discussion then followed about horse riders using footpaths and not sticking to the Bridle Paths and Permissive Rides. The Clerk will circulate all local stables with a map of the rides on which horses are allowed and ask them to instruct their riders accordingly.

Horses and dogs are having an impact on the wildlife on the commons. Epsom Downs policy of not allowing dogs off the lead onto the Downs during the mornings has the effect of increasing their numbers on Banstead Heath which, together with the growing number of professional dog walkers is interfering with wildlife, for example adders, which have previously been abundant, have not been seen yet this year, which is probably due to their being disturbed in their natural habitat by the increase of dogs.

7. Forthcoming Events

No forthcoming events had been notified.

8. Any Other Business

- I. **Notice Boards** – Nick Cull maintains the notice boards on Banstead Downs, Park Downs and Burgh Heath but since Jeff Harris left the Conservators

there is a need for someone to do the same on Banstead Heath. David Atkins volunteered.

9. Dates of the Next Meetings

15th July 2017

21st October 2017