

**MINUTES of the 571st Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 16th January 2016 at Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr D Atkins
Cllr. V Broad
Cllr. R Mantle
Mr. J Mill
Mr. J Milner Clerk

Also present were David Gradidge – Banstead Village RA., Linda Mount – Birds & Flowers, Patricia & Alan Sherren – Burgh Heath RA., Ralph Maciejewski – Nork RA., Peter Matthey – Belmont & South Cheam RA., Adam Fowler – The Cutting, Banstead.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. J Harris, Mr. N Cull, Cllr. J Clarke, Mr. R Knights (Warden).

2. Minutes of last Meeting

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

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- i. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** Two pens on Park Downs have been grazed and the sheep now moved to graze a pen on Banstead Downs. Another pen on Park Downs was being prepared for them to graze before the end of winter. The benefits of grazing, type of sheep used, costs etc. will be considered after the sheep have been removed from the commons.

It was pointed out that the notices regarding control of dogs at the Banstead Downs site are flimsy and blow away easily. They need to be more secure.

- ii. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months.

- ii. **Travis Perkins** – The issue of Travis Perkins building over part of the common and part of RBBC land is being progressed by Jane Kostelnyk RBBC. Travis Perkins has requested formal determination of the boundary by Land Registry and Jane has submitted the papers and we await further developments.

- iii. **Summer Walks** – Conservators Walks will commence at 6.30pm on the first Tuesday of the months June, July, August and September and member of local RA's and similar groups are invited to join them. The dates and locations will be:

Tuesday 7th June 2016 – Banstead Downs. Meet halfway along High Down Road.

Tuesday 5th July 2016 – Park Downs. Meet at Holly Lane Car Park.

Tuesday 2nd August 2016 – Banstead Heath. Meet at Mill Road Notice Board.

Tuesday 6th September 2016 – Burgh Heath. Meet at the Notice Board by the pond.

Details to be passed to Catalina-Vassallobonner for circulation to RA's.

- iv. **Personal Cameras** – Codes of Conduct as used by RBBC have been adapted and cameras are now in use by BCC staff.

- v. **Intrusion onto Burgh Heath** - As a response to our complaint regarding the inaction of Surrey Police at the time of the travellers incursion onto Burgh Heath the Chairman and Clerk had met with Chief Superintendent Twiss at Reigate Police Station. He apparently had not been fully apprised and thought it was only our bye-laws that empowered positive action when, in fact, it was our primary legislation. Having taken legal advice his response had been limited to the application of the bye-laws and he would now take further legal advice with respect to the primary legislation.

The Clerk will enquire if there is any progress on the issue.

Cllr. Broad had attended a meeting with other local authorities in Surrey where the issue of illegal encampments was discussed and it appears that the police response across the county has been for local Inspectors to determine with the general strategy being one of 'softly-softly'.

John Peacock had enquired of three other commons governed by legislation similar to ours, two of which rely on court orders to remove illegal camping travellers from their commons.

4. **Wardens Report** – The staff have been busy with the sheep, as mentioned above and although clearance of additional parts of Banstead Downs and Park Downs has commenced it has had to stop due to the very wet weather not allowing machinery onto the Downs without causing damage. It has, however, provided an opportunity for banks and ditches to be built or reinforced to prevent unlawful intrusions. Several trees have come down in the windy conditions which combine with the wet ground to blow them out by the root. Where urgent these are removed quickly but where not urgent will be dealt with in drier conditions to prevent further damage to the ground. Some new notice boards will go out when conditions are drier but some horse riders are currently riding off bridle paths which are very muddy, much to the annoyance of dog walkers.

5. **Use of Sports Field**

Reverted to Part 2.

6. **Forthcoming Events**

There were no events scheduled for the next three months.

7. **Any Other Business**

- i. A request had been received for Banstead Commons Conservators to be involved in the proposed North Downs National Park. The Clerk will circulate the relevant papers for further discussion by the Conservators.
- ii. The Conservators had previously given reasons why a land exchange at premises known as The Cutting, A217 Brighton Road, Banstead, should not go ahead. It was made clear at the meeting that as it was of no added value to the Conservators and had not been requested by Highways Department despite it being promoted as a safety factor, it was unlikely to succeed under the Commons Act, 2006, without the consent of the Secretary of State. After further discussion the Conservators agreed to a site visit.
- iii. There was a suggestion that Downs Road at Belmont would need to be widened as it was a bus route and provided an entrance to the Royal Marsden Hospital. It was thought that the way forward was for a case to be made by Highways Department but, if completed, land of the same area would have to be provided for the commons.
- iv. Since the Blue Ball public house has re-opened it appears that there is insufficient parking in the area for both the pub and the Spaghetti Tree restaurant and their customers are parking on the entrance track to the common at Withybed. A local resident, Mr Justice, has suggested that if we authorised him in writing he would be prepared to speak to the drivers of such vehicles and try to prevent them parking there. The Conservators declined such a request but would look to resolve the problem by other means.

- v. David Atkins was corresponding with a local man regarding the flooding of Winkworth Road where there was a blocked culvert causing a build-up of road and other noxious substances where it exits onto the common which is designated SSSI. There was also a tree down blocking the exit of the culvert so the water is not running away. Discussion centred on the fact that the drains are not regularly cleared by SCC which is the main problem and the Clerk will write to them with a view to clearing the drains and providing proper drainage.
- vi. David Gradidge said there was a finger post down on Park Downs at the bottom of Park Road which had been down for over 2 years. The chairman thought that it was not one of ours. *It belongs to the Downland Trust and was there to point out the Downland Walk. Downland Trust is aware that it has fallen over.*
- vii. Gillian Hein asked if the Coal Tax Posts could be spruced up. She had done some research and found the body responsible for them is The City of London Corporation Heritage Estate and had received their colour codes and instructions for cleaning and repainting. Cllr. Mantle reminded the meeting that he had £500 set aside for this purpose and thought the Warden would ensure the task was completed in the spring. Gillian thought that if extra money was required to complete the task the City of London Corporation could be approached.
- viii. Patricia Sherren said there was a lot of litter on Burgh Heath, particularly around the footpath. The meeting was reminded that during the Preston Regeneration planning RBBC accepted responsibility for clearing away litter in the area of the footpath.
- ix. Belmont Festival will be held on Sunday 3rd July 2016 and John Peacock thought the Conservators could man a stand and assist in a walk across the Downs. Nick Cull would probably be the best contact.
- x. Walton Heath Forum wish to reintroduce swans back onto the Mere Pond and may make contact as they wish to be clear on ownership and boundaries.

8.

Date of the Next Meetings

16th April 2016

16th July 2016

15th October 2016