

**MINUTES of the 586th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 19th October 2019 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. N Cull
Mr. J Mill
Mr. V Broad
Dr. W.S Bellenger
Cllr. N. Moses
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present were;

Mr R Maciejewski Nork RA
Cllr P Harp RBBC

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. D Atkins
Mr. R Mantle

2. Minutes of last Meeting

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

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

a) **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** John Peacock had circulated a paper showing that grazing on Park Downs over the years was having a slow but positive effect on the vegetation and butterflies on the grass downland.

Twenty sheep were presently in Pen 1 on Park Downs and another 5 would arrive this weekend. After Pen 1 they will move to Pen 2 on Park Downs and then to Banstead Downs.

b) **Natural England.** Jane Sevenoaks of Natural England had indicated that she would be visiting Park Downs in the near future and John Peacock had offered to meet her there to assist with her inspection. To date she had not replied to his offer.

ii Travis Perkins – The fence outside Travis Perkins has been re-sited on the original boundary line and no longer extends over the common.

iii) Summer Walks – Further discussion took place on the structure and nature of Conservator's walks resulting in the overriding view that Conservator's Walks should be regarded as 'business walks' and therefore limited to only Conservators.

Unhindered discussion could then take place and such walks could be seasonal or a timely response to a suitable topic. Conservators were invited to submit a subject and date for the first such walk. It was also suggested that, if the business agenda could be limited, consideration could be given to such a walk being held on one of the commons on the date of a Quarterly Meeting.

John Peacock volunteered to lead one or two public walks which would be more of nature trail events. These would be properly advertised through Facebook, local Residents Associations and possibly leafleting.

iv) 125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators – All of the information is now on the website.

4. Professional Dog Walkers

Complaints have been received regarding professional dog walkers, each with a number of dogs sometimes exceeding 6, meeting up on the commons and congregating with in excess of 20 dogs, some on leads but most not, causing obstruction, fear and even threat to other commons users, particularly those walking their family dog and horse riders who were having to move off Bridleways onto areas they should not be using. The increase in such professionals using Banstead Heath has occurred since Epsom & Ewell Council banned dogs not on a lead from Epsom Downs during mornings; it seems they have been displaced to Banstead Heath. On all RBBC open spaces the current number of dogs permitted to be walked at any one time by professional walkers is 6 and there is no requirement to have them on a lead.

It was determined that initially the way forward would be one of education and that leaflets would be handed out to walkers with numbers of dogs informing them of the concern they are causing when they meet up with other such walkers and the dogs act as a pack, the requirement for them to have control of their dogs at all times as well as the need to have third party insurance. The Clerk will forward a list of the salient points to Nick Cull who will prepare a leaflet for handing out to those with numbers of dogs accessing Banstead Heath at The Sportsman and Mill Road and other locations as necessary.

5. Motor Cycles on Commons

A drone has been purchased for use on the commons and may be used for gleaning information on motor cyclists riding on the commons in particular on the vehicles in which they and their motor cycles arrive. It is also hoped that we will soon have a meeting with police to make them directly aware of the problem and seek whatever assistance they can give.

6. Permissive Rides

A horse rider has asked for extra Permissive Rides to be made available on Banstead Heath as the present rides were often blocked by large numbers of dogs (see item 4 above). It was thought inappropriate to consider this at the moment for the reasons shown above.

7. Ash Die Back

This was now a significant problem, especially where ash trees were growing over roads and Rights of Way. At a recent meeting with RBBC Greenspaces Officer and Tree Officer they stated that Surrey County Council had carried out some safety work and they (RBBC) would assist BCC staff with a short closure of the Dorking Road whilst overhanging ash trees were felled. They also promulgated the advice of both the Forestry Commission and SCC that they were generally happy with the safety of the trees in the area and RBBC would carry out another survey in the spring. The chairman, John Peacock, had also looked at 2 ash trees overhanging the carriageway on the A217 between Burgh Heath and the Kingswood roundabout and thought they were a significant risk to motorists, particularly as once infected they never recover and can fall or drop branches at any time.

The Clerk will continue to press RBBC Tree Officer for action in respect of the trees overhanging the A217 and, at the request of Nick Cull, will also write to Surrey County Council and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council expressing the concern of the Conservators regarding the entire situation with Ash Die Back and its inherent risk in general, but especially to motorists should trees or branches fall onto roads.

8. Warden's Report

All was going well with the seasonal work. There had been a large amount of fly tipping on New Road but this had actually been on the road, not the commons. Staff still block off as many accesses as possible for vehicles entering onto the commons to try to counter fly tipping activities.

The remainder of the Warden's Report had been explained during the meeting in relation to Ash Die Back, Motor Cycles, Dogs and Horses and erecting the sheep pens.

Dr Bellenger requested a visit to the depot which the Warden will accommodate.

Nick Cull mentioned an informal discussion he had with a member of Belmont & South Cheam Residents Association. They had previously circulated a plan for a road system which included 2 roads across Banstead Downs. At the moment finances prevented further development of the plan but they were keeping it in abeyance for possible future resurrection.

9. Forthcoming Events

Meeting of the West Weald Fungi Recording Group - 31st October 2019 on Banstead Heath

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business

11. Dates of next meetings

18th January 2020
18th April 2020
18th July 2020
17th October 2020