

**MINUTES of the 585th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 20th July 2019 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. N Cull
Mr. J Mill
Mr. R Mantle
Dr. W.S Bellenger
Cllr. N. Moses
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present were;

There were no members of the public present.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. V Broad

2. Appointment/Election of New Conservators

Dr WS (Bill) Bellenger had been elected to replace Mr J McCrea and Cllr Nadean Moses appointed to replace Cllr George Curry. John Peacock had also been re-elected for a further 3 years.

3. Election of Chairman

Richard Mantle proposed John Peacock as chairman for the coming year which was seconded by John Mill. There were no other nominations and John Peacock was duly elected.

4. Minutes of last Meeting

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

5. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a) **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The benefits of Grazing and Cut & Collect were explained for the information of the new members. Grazing was completed on time and Cut & Collect will start at the end of the summer.
- b) **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

ii) **Travis Perkins** – There has been no further movement on this issue and the Clerk will continue to liaise with Steve McLeod (RBBC) for an update on when the work may be completed.

iii) **Summer Walks** – The chairman stressed that it was important that, whenever possible, Conservators attended the walks, particularly now that several members of the public were attending. Following discussion it was suggested that rather than have organised walks only in the summer they are held in each of the four seasons to appreciate how they change and their appeal at different times of the year. For full discussion at the next meeting.

The next walk will be on Burgh Heath commencing at 6.00pm on Tuesday 6th August, meeting at the notice board near the pond; John Peacock agreed to lead it.

iv) **Golf Club Issues** - During a walk on Banstead Downs it became evident that the Golf Club were dumping large amounts of waste, grass and tree cuttings and suchlike, in the woods just off the path at the rear of The Drive when they were supposed to take it to their depot for disposal. Some residents of The Drive were also disposing of garden waste by throwing it over the fences at the rear of their gardens onto the commons. The Clerk and Warden had spoken to representatives of the Residents Association when visiting on a different matter and they would circulate their members to try to stop this practise. The Secretary, Chair of Greens and Ground Staff were also spoken to and would take steps to prevent recurrences. They were also spoken to regarding the cutting of fairways tight up to the tree line when their agreement specifically instructed them not to. They would also look at changing this practise. The major problem at the Golf Club however was an invasion of the Oak Processionary Moth which is affecting almost every oak on the golf course to the west of the A217. They have reported it to the Forestry Commission and were in touch with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Tree Officer and were making a joint approach to deal with the issue. As yet it has not crossed the A217 to the eastern side and our Warden will continue to check our oaks. OPM is spreading across the south of England and undoubtedly will affect the commons at some stage.

v) **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators** – the chairman will continue updating Maurice Thompson's book and when complete will put it on the website which is now up and running again.

vi) **Access to Burgh Heath Common** – Ian Mockford had emailed thanking the Conservators for allowing him to re-open the gate at Burgh Heath and in particular to the Warden for moving an amount of earth that was blocking the gate. The gate itself has been rebuilt and is working but needs further structural attention which he will do. Access through the gate will be restricted to those who need it.

6. Meeting of the West Weald Fungi Recording Group

This group had submitted a request to hold one of their meetings on Banstead Heath on 31st October 2019. The area covered would broadly be a circle of woodland both sides of Mill Road and taking about 3 hours during which time they would record details of fungi found which would form part of the British Mycological Society database; we would also receive a copy. This was considered worthwhile and an invitation should be extended to them to return periodically and provide us with further information.

7. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that routine summer matters were going ahead as planned. The Oak Processionary Moth invasion at Banstead Downs Golf Club, although serious, might just have to be one of those things that we learn how to live with as it is unlikely to be

quickly eradicated. We should be mindful that as the golf club is part of the commons we may have to bear some of the cost of dealing with it.

We also have Ash Die-Back across the commons. We have 100's of ash trees and almost all of them are affected. When they get it it affects the roots and they die more quickly. They do not recover from it so have to be removed. Staff have commenced felling those they can but those alongside roads and paths, or adjoining properties need to be removed with some urgency as they will be a potential danger to life or property. On our own we do not have the capability of closing the roads to take them down and some of the larger ones are too large to climb. Others in less prominent locations can be dealt with with less urgency. Discussions have been held with RBBC and maps showing the location of ash trees near roads returned to the Tree Officer to see if he can involve Surrey CC and determine what RBBC can do to assist. We now await a further meeting with RBBC but again, the cost could be immense and beyond our budget to cope.

8. Forthcoming Event

- I. The Sportsman are holding a Community Farmer's Market in their side garden on the last Saturday of every month with the idea of bringing the local community together to support local businesses and produce. Stalls will sell plants, fruit & vegetables, flowers, local cheeses, honey, smoked meats, jams, chutney and pastries. They also hope to include bread and fish stalls and involve local charities, schools and scout groups. They will ask non-charity stalls for a minimum donation of £10.00 which will be donated to The Friends of East Surrey Hospital. They now request the Conservators to consider allowing them to have some of the stalls on the common. After full and lengthy discussion the application was refused on the basis that it appeared to be a commercial event to attract custom to the public house rather than a straightforward charitable fund raising event.
- II. Keith Robertshaw of Chapel Road, Tadworth would like to plan a Tadworth Country Fair/Festival on an annual basis commencing in August 2020. This would be purely a charitable event with the likely beneficiary for the first year being the Tadworth Trust. He requests consideration to hold this event on a small part of the common. Although details are sketchy at the moment he would form a committee to develop the idea and envisages a programme of local artists and groups from local choirs to musical ensembles and bands. There could also be fancy dress competitions, pet competitions and a race around the commons; there would need to be refreshment stalls and perhaps, craft stalls. Although at the moment it is just an idea for the future, he would like the agreement of the Conservators to a possible location to continue with the project. After discussion the Conservators agreed that this was entirely charitable and, without nominating an area of land, agreed in principle to his request. Mr Robertshaw is to keep us in touch with progress.

9. Any Other Business

- i) **Benches on Park Downs** – John Peacock asked how much we would charge if someone paid for the replacement of benches on Park Downs and the response was 'a suitable donation'.
- ii) **Spoil Heap Damage** – John Peacock raised the issue of damage being caused to the 'Spoil Heaps' on Banstead Downs by mountain bikers and motor

cycles generally on the common. Although little now grows on the spoil heaps, and plants that do grow seem to thrive when the heaps are disturbed, the building of tracks and jumps is changing the whole aspect of the area. Police are not responding and we are getting several calls a day from concerned individuals. John Peacock had spoken to some of them but they are difficult people to deal with. They come and go at various times and durations, often as short as 20 minutes, but are usually there on a Sunday. We have previously spoken about purchasing a drone and it would perhaps be an advantage in this situation. It would give the impression that they are being visually recorded and could possibly track them back to the location of a road vehicle from which details could be recorded. It might also be useful to put copies of the Bye-laws on Track 40.

10. Dates of next meetings

19th October 2019

18th January 2020