

**MINUTES of the 581st Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 21st July 2018 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

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

Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present was Alan Higgs.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

None received

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.** The chairman reported that grazing followed by cut and collect on Park Downs was very favourable but there is a problem with scrub which will have to be treated. The grazing is superb for the density of the flowers and butterflies. The butterfly transept on Banstead Downs has also shown good results this year. The cut and collect on Peacock's Field is also beneficial.

He went on to explain why we don't graze during the summer, mainly because Natural England are not in favour of it and the butterflies also need the flowers.

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** – This issue is still being pursued by Steve McLeod, RBBC. The Clerk will liaise further with him. *(24.7.18 – a meeting has now been arranged between Steve McLeod and Travis Perkins surveyor which we also hope to attend).*

iii. **Summer Walks** – Members were reminded that the last planned walk of the summer will be on Burgh Heath on Tuesday 7th August, meeting at the pond at 6.00pm.

4. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

The chairman reported that the draft is almost complete and now includes the chapter by John McRea on 'The Commons at War'. It only needs photographs to be added which he is trying to show as 'then and now', i.e. 100 years ago alongside the same view today. Alan Higgs mentioned that the Banstead Downs Golf Club anniversary book contained old photographs that may be useful.

5. **Warden's Report**

The Warden reported that due to the continued spell of dry weather staff had extended the width of the existing fire breaks and cut grass where there was a high possibility of fires as well as grassed areas close to residential properties. There followed a discussion about posting 'No Smoking' notices and providing fire beaters both of which have been considered previously and thought not useful as smokers tend to ignore such notices and untrained people using beaters tend to fan the flames and spread the fires rather than extinguish them. The Warden will visit the fire station to seek their advice and acquire any 'Fire Risk' posters they have prepared.

The wet spring and dry summer have increased the rate of growth of bracken, particularly in shady areas, so staff have been busy dealing with that issue also repairing and realigning the bridleway barriers on the Dorking Road which appear to have been abandoned by Rights of Ways; they only do this as they are on the common and are a safety issue for horse riders crossing the road and Rights of Ways apparently no longer have the resources or money to do it.

6. **Forthcoming Events**

None reported.

7. **Any Other Business**

- i. **Mere Pond** – David Atkins was aware that we keep our ditches clear but wondered if this was happening around the Mere Pond which was drying up quickly. RBBC took over control of the pond and have been looking at this issue. The pond on the old police training centre is dry and there is a possibility that the water flow has been diverted away from its normal course. There is also a strong possibility of a sink hole in the pond and remedial work to catch the water flow from Dorking Road has come to a temporary halt as a previously blocked road drain has been cleared but there remains a lip around it which requires the involvement of Surrey County Council to remove. When done the flow should increase the amount of water going into the pond.
- ii. **Japanese Knotweed** – The Court of Appeal has ruled that homeowners whose properties had been invaded by Japanese Knotweed were entitled to damages from the owners of the adjacent ground from whence it came; a ruling which could have implications for us. However, new research by a global infrastructure services company together with the University of Leeds found no evidence that Japanese Knotweed causes significant structural damage, even when growing in close proximity. Many trees, climbers and shrubs can inflict greater damage and JK only causes problems where property already has existing structural faults. At the moment this does not change the way it should be dealt with.

- iii. **Fly Tipping** - Alan Higgs mentioned that there are still opportunities for fly tipping on the A217 Mad Mile. The contractors have only blocked off one area.
- iv. **Cllr. Broad** spoke about the operational advantages of having a drone to fly over the commons. This would save time in checking on trees, fly tipping, fires, campers and a host of other issues. It was agreed to purchase a drone and the ancillary equipment.

8.

Date of the Next Meeting

20th October 2018