

**MINUTES of the 587th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 18th January 2020 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

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

Also present were;

Mr R Maciejewski - Nork RA
Cllr P Harp - RBBC
Mr P Ritchie – Brockham
Mr D Gradidge – Banstead Village RA
Gillian Hein – Tadworth & Walton RA
Flip Bakker – Nork RA
Catalina Vassallo-Bonner – RA Federation
Mr A Higgs - Banstead Downs GC
Mr I Mockford - Burgh Heath Resident

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. N Cull

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 sheep have now been moved from Park Downs to Banstead Downs. Although they have been effective on Park Downs there were areas of dogwood coming through and, as the chemicals we previously used have been banned, we should consider using goats to deal with the unwanted shrubs.
- b) **Natural England.** Natural England carried out an inspection in November and although they do not want us to summer graze they will visit again in the spring when further grazing can be discussed.

ii) **Summer Walks** – It was reiterated that walks on the commons will now split into two categories, business walks for Conservators only and those for the public being led by a Conservator. Dates and venues will be notified and the walks will not be limited to the summer months but may cover all seasons.

4. Professional Dog Walkers

Nick Cull is preparing a leaflet to be handed out to professional dog walkers reminding them that the limit is 6 dogs which, though not necessarily on a lead, must be under control at all times; not to meet together to cause an obstruction to other users of the common, not to use Bridle Paths or Permissive Rides and that they need to have third party insurance as BCC insurance will not cover them. It was thought that ultimately it was part of RBBC's Dog Warden responsibilities and we should try to get her more closely involved.

5. Motor Cycles on Commons

The Clerk had met with the local Police Sergeant on who appeared quite positive on what could be done to assist us on her area including introducing the Banstead PCSO to our staff for closer liaison. Unfortunately nothing further has developed from this meeting. Our drone may be helpful in gleaning information on motor cyclists riding on the commons in particular on the vehicles in which they and their motor cycles arrive. Banstead Downs Golf Club is experiencing similar problems on the eastern side of the A217 when quad bikes have been ridden around their greens cutting them up quite badly. We will try to get the matter highlighted to local residents through the Residents Associations with a view to obtaining information on those responsible or stopping the practise by getting them to realise that it could be their children who are causing the damage.

6. Ash Die Back

RBBC Tree Officer assisted us in a planned operation to close off Dorking Road for a few minutes whilst we dropped several diseased and dangerous ash trees that were overgrowing the road. The whole issue went smoothly without danger to staff or vehicles and with only minimal delay to traffic. Unfortunately the same system cannot apply to the A217 where ash trees are similarly overgrowing the road but it will need a full road closure. RBBC seem to be content in leaving it to a further inspection in the spring although at our last liaison meeting they promised to contact SCC to see if anything could be done. Bill Bellinger asked a series of questions enquiring how many ash trees have we on the commons, are they all diseased, how we deal with them, etc. The Warden responded that we have a lot of ash trees and those affecting roads, footpaths or properties are prioritised to ensure the safety of people and property. Providing they were not too large we can generally make them safe or fell them, sometimes with a quick road closure by RBBC. The larger trees and those on the A217 and other busy roads will need a full road closure and are usually dealt with by RBBC or SCC. Trees in out of the way areas will be made safe and returned to later. Once a tree has been infected it will not recover and it is possible that 100% of our trees will be affected; it should become evident in the spring when trees do not come into leaf. To employ contractors would be extremely expensive and is not within our budget.

7. Warden's Report

With the excessive amount of rain over the last two months it has been impossible to get the machinery onto the commons. Staff have been kept busy moving the sheep pens from Park Downs to Banstead Downs, removing those trees that have blown down and are a risk to people or vehicles whilst ensuring that those not requiring urgent removal are safe. They have also been making benches as replacements or for new sites on the commons and disposing of litter, especially Christmas trees.

8. Forthcoming Events

None reported.

9. Any Other Business

- I. Gillian Hein asked if the slip road along The Green at Tadworth was on common land as RBBC intended to carry out road repairs there. BCC are in discussion with RBBC as we believe it to be part of the common but RBBC think it is not.
- II. Catalina Vassallo-Bonner had a copy of plans from the South Sutton group which would entail a land exchange so they could use part of the common, particularly an area at Banstead Station which they would turn into a concrete car park. She will forward a copy of the plans to the Clerk.

10. Dates of next meetings

18th April 2020

18th July 2020

17th October 2020