



**Yateley Common Management Committee
HCC Managers Report November 2017 – compiled 18th October
Nicki Paton**

Jean Cheadle returned from maternity leave in August on a part-time basis. Jo Armson, ranger for Castle Bottom, has got a new job and will be leaving the team mid November. Maintaining staffing levels over the coming months will be a priority.

➤ **Site Maintenance**

Regular works

There have been regular site checks and litter patrols across Yateley Common and all other sites.

Safety inspections of site infrastructure on-going

Ongoing site signage maintenance and replacement

Monitoring of culverts and ditch clearance has been carried out

Hazardous tree inspections and related tree works across all sites

Maintenance of machinery carried out

Ongoing depot maintenance and management carried out

Cutting back and mowing of bridleways and pathways

Mowing of amenity areas ongoing

Clear up at Old Welmore and site investigations

(On-going works on other sites within our remit)

Additional works

Removal of numerous trees as part of the ongoing tree safety inspections

Removal of fly tipping

Replacement posts at Sunnyside all but complete!

(On-going works on other sites within our remit)

➤ **Conservation Management**

The Cricketers green was cut at the end of September.

Our scrub clearance programme commenced at the end of September. This will continue throughout the autumn/winter.

➤ **Illegal Activities**

Fly Tipping - There have been numerous fly tip events across the site over the past four months, including builders waste, garden waste and hazardous waste. The hazardous waste was removed by specialist contractor. Any evidence contained within the waste has been passed on. The HCC Fly Tipping strategy continues to progress and it is hoped that Yateley will be used as a pilot study for the scheme.

Dumped vehicles - There have been no reports of abandoned vehicles since the last meeting.

Motorbikes – Please report any sightings to the Police on 101.

Fires – No fires have been reported/evident in the last four months.

Grazing – There has been no fly grazing since July's meeting.

➤ **Tree Inspections**

Remedial works to deal with any trees identified in the tree safety inspections are now finalised on Yateley Common and are almost complete on other sites. These works targeted 'high risk' trees specifically, so we will now revisit the survey to look at any other trees requiring attention.

We have met with staff from Blackbushe Airport to discuss groups of trees on the West End impeding sight lines from the taxiway and in flight approach to the active runway. These further plans for tree removal are still being reviewed and where deemed appropriate will be actioned in the coming months in line with site management plans.

➤ **Signage & Interpretation**

The noticeboards have been kept up to date with news and information. Maintenance and cleaning of all site signage is on-going as and when necessary.

As new branding has been adopted for the Countryside Service, new uniform will shortly be ordered for all staff and volunteers. Site signage around all HCC Countryside sites is scheduled for replacement over the next year, most likely to commence in March/April 2018.

➤ **Wildlife**

The SPA bird surveys were completed in July. John Eyre from Hampshire Ornithological Society collates the results and had this to say;

"I must stress these are preliminary and could still change. Numbers for the Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI are:

NJ 39 (30)

WL 14 (12)

DW 52 (50)

The numbers in brackets are last year's so there are increases in all species. The NJ increase is particularly big but this could possibly include some double counting.

For the SPA as a whole, it appears that all three Annex 1 species are up on 2016 but I can't provide final numbers as yet. John Clark is off on another far flung birding trip so I can't confirm numbers across all the sites.

It appears that 2017 was a good year on the SPA, particularly for WLs."

These bird survey results are preliminary at this stage, but it is hoped more information will be forthcoming in the coming months.

Reptile numbers continue to be good with many individuals being recorded in several locations around the site. Slow worms and adders in particular have been well recorded. A survey for dragonflies was conducted in July and showed that the small ponds created in the Hospital Pond valley are well used, so we may well create further new ponds in the coming years. Rapid Habitat Assessments are underway for key habitats; these help us assess the condition of the habitats across our sites.

➤ **Community Engagement**

The Natural England SPA Wardens remain on site to assist with on site engagement across the SPA and at this time of the year they also assist with scrub cutting. This includes both Castle Bottom and Yateley Common. Jono, has now left, so Jo Wilshere is now the warden allocated to assist us at these sites. Jo and the other wardens are regularly out and about on the sites imparting information and listening to any visitors enquiries.

The TBH wardens have been running their 'pit stops' on sites across the SPA, including Yateley Common, educating all users of the SPA, but dog walkers in particular, about the importance of the heaths and what makes them special. The most popular spot appears to be the Red Cross Centre on Monteagle Lane. More pit stops are planned for the spring.

We attended a couple of events as part of the 'Heathland's Reunited' HLF project, a project which covers the Wealden Heaths in the Hampshire/Surrey/Sussex area (covering Shortheath and Broxhead Commons).

➤ **Rights of Way (RoW)**

The Rights of Way Diversion Order (west of Cricket Hill) is still currently being reviewed. Concerns have been raised about the visibility at all crossing points within the order, so a survey report has been commissioned to look this. A site meeting is due to take place on 23rd October to look at this specific issue.

➤ **Wyndham's Pool**

The angling lease with Hartley Wintney Angling Society is due for renewal so we are liaising with the club to establish any new terms. Their management of the ponds over the past five years have been good and we hope that a good working relationship can be maintained into the future.

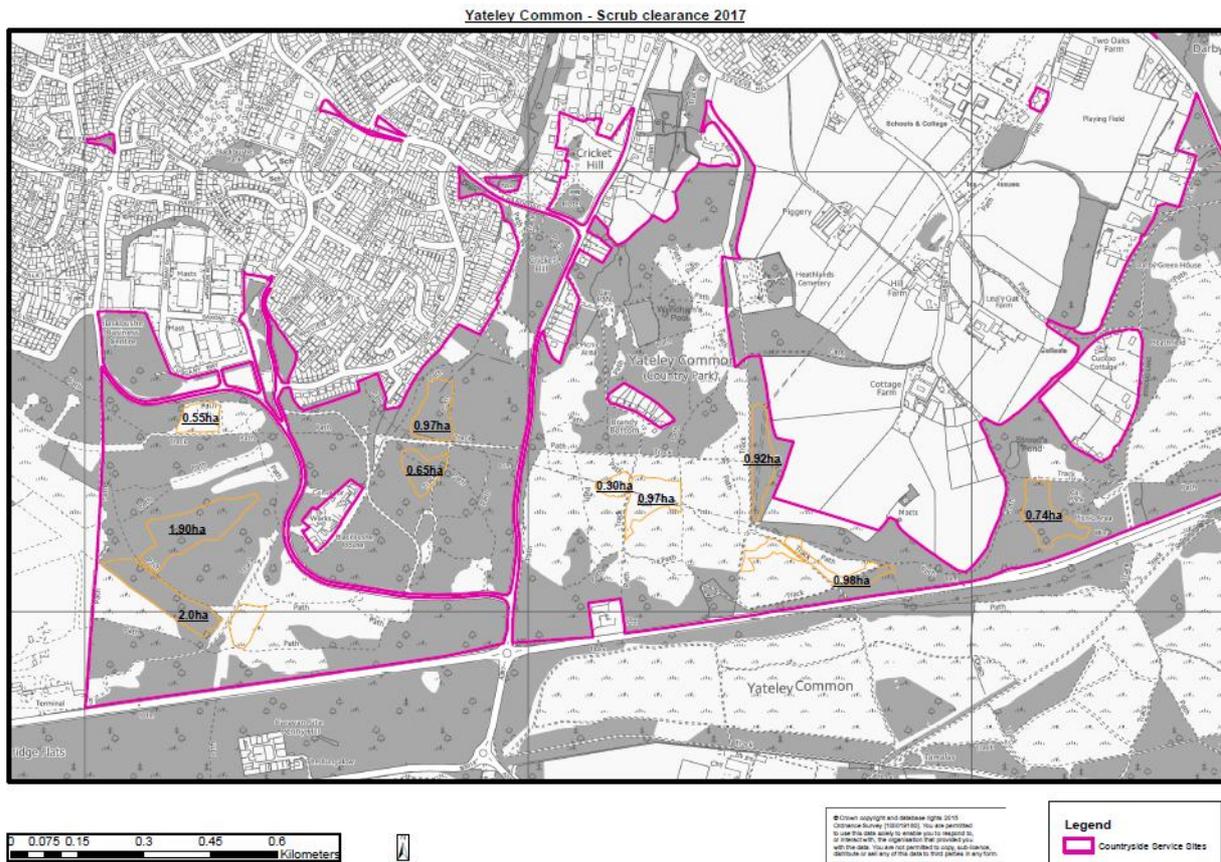
➤ **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)**

Bracken spraying was carried out in July and ragwort was removed from areas adjoining grazing land as per HCC policy. Japanese knotweed was treated and will be monitored for any regrowth. An area of scrub near Heathlands Cemetery was weed wiped using herbicide.

Staff and volunteers worked hard to remove some reed mace from Stroud's Pond. Reed mace is a great marginal plant for ponds, but can take over on smaller ponds such as Stoud's.

Much work is being planned for the coming autumn/winter months, where further heathland restoration will be undertaken. Scrub clearance carried out by staff and volunteers is now underway. We have been awarded some additional funding from the Countryside Service and plan to use this to accelerate our scrub clearance programme across the heathland sites this winter. This work will be carried out by contractor, staff and volunteers.

The map overleaf shows scrub clearance due to be completed by contractor.



We will also be carrying out some mowing on the East and West Ends to target areas of purple moor grass.

Previously planned stump grinding (mulching) will take place in several locations on the West and East ends of the Common. Some outstanding felling works will also be completed near Wyndhams and by The Flats.

Staff and volunteers will be working to remove invasive scrub (smaller trees and shrubs) from across several heathland areas around the Common and at Castle Bottom.

➤ **Track Maintenance**

Nothing to report at this time.

➤ **Yateley Common Grazing Consultation**

No further developments from HCC in this area of work at this time.

➤ **The Ranger's House**

Nothing to report at this time.

➤ **Archaeology**

Nothing to report at this time.

➤ **Volunteers**

We continue to receive much needed support from our dedicated team of volunteers.

This is primarily from the Yateley Society Conservation Volunteers (YSCV) and our regular 'Thursday' volunteers, of whom we regularly have 5. Natural England SPA Wardens have also been assisting us with bird surveys and running education sessions.

Volunteer hours since the last meeting:

Month	YC Hours	Other Sites Hours	All Sites Hours
July	49.5	153.5	203
August	105.75	61.5	167
September	80.25	25.75	106
October	28.25	53.5	82
TOTAL	263.75 (95.25)	294.25 (100.0)	558.0 (195.25)

Note: Figures compiled 18th October. Bold figures in brackets are for November 2016

This shows the commitment to volunteering across the area for which we are very grateful. Special thanks to volunteers old and new, we truly appreciate all your help.

➤ Education

Educational visits went well this year with a couple of groups attending the Common over the past few months. These sessions help to reinforce the importance of learning about nature and in particular the special qualities of Yateley Common. Some schools prefer to have us visit them as they are developing their school grounds and our work supports this. Our sessions remain very popular with other young people such as the Girl Guiding and Scout groups, with bat walks proving very popular this autumn.

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017
Schools	8	7	5	4
Other Organisations	8	9	3	9 (13 visits)
Students visiting North Sites	613	588	228	69
Others visiting North Sites				279
Students visited in school	-	-	135	191
Children Attending Kids Events on Common	92	32	23	-
Total of students using facilities	705	620	386	539

Due to lack of numbers booking last year, we decided not to run the summer events this year. We are looking at how we can change these events for the future and relaunch them in a bid to get more interest.

➤ Events

Our 'Twilight Walk's' on Castle Bottom and Yateley Common went well back in July. We limit places on these walks to 15, but were fully booked on both, with participants getting great views and sounds of the elusive nightjar. We were also asked to run a bug hunting birthday party in July.

Preparation for our upcoming 'Christmas Trees for Conservation' event is underway. We already have a number of bookings for this popular event, where those helping to

conserve the common by cutting scrub get a Christmas tree in return for their hard work. This is a great community event at a special time of year.

(Visit the **Hantsweb Online Shop** for booking:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/shop/product.php?productid=50649&cat=356&page=1>

Places are limited)

➤ **Website & Social Media**

Facebook – 710 (682) likes

Twitter – 1143 (1082) followers

(last meetings figures in brackets)

The Hantsweb Shop is used for booking events and renewing 'Friends' membership. Places on our upcoming 'Christmas Trees for Conservation' event can be booked through the online shop.

[END]

To circulate:

Team Managers Report