



**Yateley Common Management Committee  
HCC Managers Report July 2018 – compiled 22<sup>nd</sup> June  
Nicki Paton**

*Our new Assistant Ranger Sam Bowman joined us at the end of May. She has previously worked as a trainee with Berkshire, Bucks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.*

➤ **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

Maintenance of machinery carried out

Ongoing depot maintenance and management carried out

Cutting back and mowing of bridleways and pathways

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

*Additional works*

Removal of numerous trees as part of the ongoing tree safety inspections (all sites)

Removal of fly tipping

Replacement of dragon's teeth at various locations

Replacement of security pins at several locations

Mowing of amenity areas

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

➤ **Conservation Management**

*Yateley Common*

Completed scrub clearance

Checked and removed Pennywort from Wyndham's (main) pond

Ragwort pulling on West End near Airport

Removal of holly understorey in several locations to allow light to the ground

*Other sites*

Oversee ponies grazing at Castle Bottom

Ragwort pulling on East Hants sites

Field cricket surveys at Shortheath Common

SPA bird surveys at Shortheath and Broxhead Commons

➤ **Illegal Activities**

*Fly Tipping* – Slight let up in fly tip incidents over last few months. Part of the new HCC Fly Tipping Strategy has been to run a local operation to catch potential fly tippers -

outcome currently unknown. A pilot scheme with cameras is still in the pipeline for Yateley Common.

*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* – There have been no reported fires since the last meeting.

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

### ➤ **Tree Inspections**

We are continuing to organise and carry out remedial works to trees identified as medium risk in the tree safety surveys. Further ad hoc tree inspections are ongoing.

The Countryside Service is due to adopt a new tree policy which will incorporate further survey work and any subsequent works to manage any hazardous trees.

### ➤ **Signage & Interpretation**

The noticeboards have been kept up to date with news and information. The noticeboard at the Gravel Pit car park has been fixed and is now back in situ. Maintenance and cleaning of all site signage is on-going as and when necessary.

'Ground nesting birds' signs have gone up (1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> July/15<sup>th</sup> September) asking dog walkers to keep dogs under close control/on leads during the bird nesting season.

As new branding has been adopted for the Countryside Service, new uniform is now being worn by all staff and shortly by volunteers. Site signage around all HCC Countryside sites is scheduled for replacement over the next few months. We are currently waiting for the new signage production to be completed at which time the signs will be replaced.

The Yateley Society approached us with some funding and after discussion it was decided to spend it on a 'nature trail' for the common. A trail leaflet is currently being designed which will navigate visitors around the common, collecting brass rubbings along the way. We hope to have the trail up and running within the next couple of months.

### ➤ **Wildlife**

The SPA bird surveys are well underway, in fact nearly complete for this year and it is hoped that numbers continue to grow this season. Results will be submitted at the end of August and draft population statistics should be available for the SPA at the next meeting.

Reptile surveys will be carried out across the summer months.

Rapid Habitat Assessments are underway for key habitats; these help us assess the condition of the habitats across our sites and to make decisions about future management. We have been out with the Thursday Volunteers doing a dragonfly survey, checking the dragonfly population. The Thursday Volunteers also helped us complete a wildflower survey of The Cricketers green.

Rangers carried out great crested newt surveys on Stroud and Gravel Pit ponds back in April. The results were very encouraging with 32 GC newts being found (23 female and 9 male) and 23 Palmate newts (7 female and 16 male) all found in Stroud Pond. The Gravel Pit pond was positively checked for GC newt eggs, but no further surveying was done to minimise disturbance to surrounding invasive vegetation.

➤ **Community Engagement**

The Natural England SPA Wardens have taken on another team of seasonal wardens to assist them with their work across the SPA. The TBH wardens 'pit stops' on sites across the SPA, including Yateley Common, are up and running again, educating all users of the SPA about the importance of the heaths and what makes them special.

➤ **Rights of Way (RoW)**

The Rights of Way Diversion Order (west of Cricket Hill) is still currently being reviewed.

➤ **Wyndham's Pool**

The angling lease with Hartley Wintney Angling Society has now been renewed. Their management of the ponds over the past five years have been good and we hope that a good working relationship can be continued.

➤ **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)**

It is a quiet time of year regarding practical habitat management, but much work is being carried out surveying our landholding in terms of habitats and species.

We had a visit from our Natural England land advisor back at the end of May. He was very impressed with the team and our level of commitment to managing the sites. We have much work to do on scrub management and it is hoped that NE will be able to provide some additional financial assistance next winter to help us undertake such work.

➤ **Track Maintenance**

Remedial works to Stroud Lane were carried out back at the end of March. The final finish was agreed with Natural England and it is hoped that the surface will hold up.

Repairs to tracks leading to public car parks were carried out in May. Minor repairs were also made to tracks leading to Brandy Bottom and Hayward's Cottage near the Gravel Pit.

➤ **Yateley Common Grazing Consultation**

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

➤ **The Ranger's House**

HCC's Estates team applied to the Planning Inspectorate to exchange land at The Ranger's House with land at Cricketer's green. There were a couple of questions raised to which responses were given and we are now awaiting further instruction, due at the end of June.

➤ **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 6.

We also receive help from our dedicated volunteer pony lookers who help us keep an eye on the ponies at Castle Bottom throughout the week. We also now have help from Shirley, a volunteer who assists with admin/office tasks every Friday.

We were joined by many local groups for our Big Spring Clean at the end of March. Unfortunately numbers weren't as good as expected due to having to postpone the original event due to the snow.

Volunteer hours since the last meeting:

<b>Month</b>	<b>YC Hours</b>	<b>Other Sites Hours</b>	<b>All Sites Hours</b>
March	242.5	31	273.5
April	125.75	30.75	156.5
May	120.5	24.5	145
June	72	40	112
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>560.75 (320)</b>	<b>126.25 (107.2)</b>	<b>687 (381.8)</b>

*Note: Figures compiled 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Bold figures in brackets are for June 2017*

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

➤ **Education**

We have run many educational sessions for Girl Guiding / Scout groups. They continue to support us by visiting the common for an evening event.

We visited Heatherside Juniors in Church Crookham and delivered environmental education sessions to over 90 children throughout the day.

➤ **Events**

The Big Spring Clean eventually went ahead after being postponed due to the snow. We were joined by 22 adults and 24 children who all helped us clean up the common in this now popular annual event.

The Easter Trail proved quite popular again this year. Despite the horrendous weather, many families braved the weather to look for clues and earn their Easter egg.

We assisted BVCT by marshalling for Beat the Bounds walk back in April.

We also hosted the Shortheath Common 'Secrets of the Heath' event in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority's (SDNPA) Heathlands Reunited project team. Again, the weather was not kind to us, but many local families and visitors came to enjoy the event and learn about the local heathlands.

We are busy preparing to host Chris Packham's UK Bioblitz on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, with Chris visiting on the morning of Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Exact times and further details of the day will be advertised on Facebook and Twitter in due course.

➤ **Website & Social Media**

Facebook – 770 (728) likes

Twitter – 1223 (1182) followers

(last meetings figures in brackets)

We now also have an Instagram page which people can follow - @rangerjean

**[END]**

To circulate:

Team Managers Report