



**Yateley Common Management Committee
HCC Managers Report November 2016 – compiled 26th October
Nicki Paton**

Our new maternity cover Ranger David Wodehouse started with us on 24th October and will be with us until July 2017.

➤ **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.

Ditch clearance has not currently been carried out, but will be monitored and actioned accordingly in the coming weeks.

Hazardous tree inspections.

Maintenance of machinery carried out.

Ongoing depot maintenance and management carried out.

Additional works

Amenity grass areas mown at Gravel Pit, Stroud's and Wyndham's.

Completed the replacement of dragon's teeth at The Cricketers green.

Installation of replacement dragon's teeth at Sunnyside commenced.

Removal of numerous trees reported by members of the public, particularly in the Tudor Drive area.

Removal of fly tipping.

New security pin replaced at Gravel Pit car park.

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

➤ **Conservation Management**

Our scrub clearance programme begins this month with the Yateley Society Conservation Volunteers. Areas of scrub in the Brandy Bottom heath area will be targeted first with other areas around the Common being dealt with after.

(On-going works on other sites within our remit – coppice stool protection, scrub clearance and path strimming.)

➤ **Illegal Activities**

Fly Tipping - There have been several fly tip events across the site over the past four months, including green waste and household items. We also had a load of asbestos dumped on Stroud Lane, which was removed by specialist contractor.

Dumped vehicles - There have been no reports of abandoned vehicles since the last meeting. We did have a dumped bicycle!

Motorbikes – We are aware that the local Police have responded to calls about motorbikes using the old airfield. Staff continue to report any sightings on the Common to the Police and would ask the public to do so too.

Fires – A small fire was reported on the heath up by The Ely pub. HFRS were in attendance and dealt with the fire accordingly.

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

➤ **Tree Inspections**

Ongoing - Tree safety inspections are ongoing across Yateley Common and other sites within our area. Remedial works to deal with any unsafe tree will be actioned over the coming few months.

Several trees on the West End close to Blackbushe Airport were reported as impeding the view from the tower of incoming aircraft. We are currently getting quotes to pollard or remove these trees.

➤ **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.

Fly tipping signage installation has commenced, but the remaining signs still need to be emplaced.

➤ **Wildlife**

The SPA bird surveys were carried out across the Thames Basin Heaths again this year and the initial results show some changes from the previous years surveys. Preliminary results for the total SPA show nightjars about the same as last year, but both woodlarks and Dartford warblers down. On the full Castle Bottom to Yateley & Hawley Commons SSSI, 2016 numbers are NJ 30, WL 12, DW 50. This compares with last year NJ 25, WL 24, DW 55. So NJ up, WL well down and DW slightly down. On the north side of the A30 ignoring Blackbushe, NJs were unchanged from last year but DWs were down from about 25 to 17 territories and WLs from 8 to 4.
(Data source: John Eyre, Two Jays Ecology)

The number of nightjar on HCC Yateley Common and Castle Bottom remain good with several adults being seen and heard. As a BTO licensed bird ringer, Josie Hewitt ringed several individuals across the heaths, so hopefully if these birds are 'caught' on other occasions, we may be able to find out a bit more about where they inhabit and the journeys they make.

The reptile tins dotted around the heaths continue to demonstrate we have a healthy population of four of the native reptile species associated with heaths.

➤ **Community Engagement**

The Natural England SPA Seasonal Wardens have now finished their duties for the summer, but the permanent Wardens remain to assist with on site engagement across the SPA. This includes Castle Bottom and Yateley Common and the Warden assigned to these sites is Jonathan Shevlar. Jono is regularly out and about on the sites imparting information and listening to any visitors he meets.

➤ **Rights of Way (RoW)**

The Rights of Way diversion Order (west of Cricket Hill) is currently being led by Hart District Council as the Planning Authority. Tara Potheary is the recently appointed Network Development Officer

Bridleway Yateley: 23 which traverses Wyndham's dam is now open following repair works to the integrity of the dam. Further works on the bridleway surface itself are scheduled for w/c 14th November. This work will be assisted by the Countryside Service Access Team North.

➤ **Wyndham's Pool**

Repairs to the dam are now complete. It is hoped that the repairs will be long lasting and secure the future of the dam.

➤ **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)**

The Cricketers Green was cut in October as part of our grassland management option under HLS. Removing the cuttings helps improve the quality of the grassland and species within it.

Further stump grinding (mulching) are being planned in several locations on the West and East ends of the Common. This will be to remove the stumps from the previous years felling operations with the intention of being able to follow-up works using our forager to reduce and/or remove invasive grasses and scrub.

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**

Follow up maintenance works to the tracks at Brandy Bottom and Sunnyside were completed with the assistance of the Blackwater Valley Ranger team. Some minor repairs were also made to the entrance to Wyndham's Pool car park off Cricket Hill Lane.

Other tracks and car parks around the common will undergo maintenance in the spring.

➤ **Yateley Common Grazing Consultation**

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

➤ **The Ranger's House**

The Countryside Service has been working with HCC Estates team regarding the sale of the house. A FAQ has been produced and is brought to this meeting for your consideration.

(see 'FAQ's - Land transfer relating to The Rangers House, Cricket Hill Lane, Yateley')

➤ **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 Warden Jono has also started joining us on Thursdays.

Volunteer hours since the last meeting:

Month	YC Hours	Other Sites Hours	All Sites Hours
July	34.25	6.5	40.75
August	33	9	42
September	28	40.5	68.5
October	0	44	44
TOTAL	95.25 (172)	100 (39.5)	195.25 (279.25)

Note: Figures compiled 26th October. Bold figures in brackets are for November 2015.

Special thanks must go to everyone who has spent time volunteering with us over the last few months.

➤ Education

Educational visits seemed steady over the last year, but certainly less than in previous years. Take up for outdoor education sessions has certainly decreased. Whilst we have to be mindful of making sure we are fulfilling our on site management and conservation works, we are also keen to remain serving the local community as an environmental education provider.

Year	2014	2015	2016
Schools	8	7	5
Other Organisations	8	9	3
Students Visiting North Sites	613	588	228
Students Attending Slide Talks/School Visits (in school)	-	-	135
Children Attending Kids Events on Common	92	32	23
Total of students using facilities	705	620	386

➤ Events

We ran a 'Nightjar Walk' at Yateley Common in July which was well attended and visitors got good views and sounds of this elusive bird.

On Sunday 4th December, we will be running our 'Christmas Trees for Conservation' event. We already have a number of bookings and hope the event is as popular as it has been in previous years.

(see poster 'Christmas Trees for Conservation')

➤ Website & Social Media

Facebook – 607 (565) likes
Twitter – 926 (871) followers
(last meetings figures in brackets)

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

[END]

To circulate:

Site Managers Report

'Christmas Trees for Conservation' poster