



**Yateley Common Management Committee
HCC Managers Report March 2017 – compiled 15th February
Nicki Paton**

Our new Assistant Ranger Binz Chapman started with us on 21st November 2016.

➤ **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

Maintenance of machinery carried out.

Ongoing depot maintenance and management carried out.

(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.

Re-siting of several dragon's teeth.

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

➤ **Conservation Management**

Our scrub clearance programme is now nearly complete for the year. Areas of scrub in the Brandy Bottom heath area were completed first staff and volunteers moving on to targeting scrub by Blackbushe Airport. Areas of scrub have also been removed from Castle Bottom, Shortheath Common and Broxhead Common.

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

➤ **Illegal Activities**

Fly Tipping - There have been several fly tip events across the site over the past four months, including numerous tyres, builders waste, soil and asbestos. The asbestos was removed by specialist contractor. Signage to discourage fly tipping on the common have been installed.

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

Motorbikes – We are aware of continuing motorbike activity across the common. Staff continues to report any sightings to the Police on 101 and would urge the public to do so too.

Fires – There have not been any fires over the last four months.

Grazing – There has been no fly grazing since November'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. These have now been removed and further plans are being reviewed to improve the sight lines for incoming aircraft.

➤ **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 was finalised earlier this month, so it is hoped these will have some effect on those seeking to dispose of waste on the site.

➤ **Wildlife**

There has been little surveying carried out during the last period.

The SPA bird surveys will be underway within the next couple of weeks. Surveys take place between March and June for the three key species Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark.

Reptiles will be surveyed from April and other groups throughout the warmer months.

➤ **Community Engagement**

The Natural England SPA Wardens remain on site to assist with on site engagement across the SPA. This includes both Castle Bottom and Yateley Common. Jono is regularly out and about on the sites imparting information and listening to any visitors he meets.

The new seasonal SPA Wardens will be starting their 6 month contracts from 1st March, so there will be more hands on deck to assist with this important aspect of site management.

➤ **Rights of Way (RoW)**

The Rights of Way Diversion Order (west of Cricket Hill) is currently being created and is due to be released in the Hampshire Independent on Friday 17th February. Notices were put up across the common in preparation for the Order being made on Wednesday 15th February. Social media updates have been posted to encourage users of the site to have their say.

The Order notices have to remain on site for 28 days so they will be checked weekly to make sure they are still in place. Should anyone notice that one is missing, please report it to the Rangers Depot and we can arrange to replace it.

➤ **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.

Repairs to the bridleway surface are also now complete with thanks to the Access Team North who assisted us with this big project. The surface of the path will be monitored and any remedial works will be carried out accordingly.

➤ **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)**

Staff and volunteers have been working hard to remove invasive scrub (smaller trees and shrubs) from across several heathland areas around the Common, at Castle Bottom and at the other heathland sites we manage. In total we have spent a total of 848.5 hours clearing scrub across our sites.

Further felling works have taken place on the common at Wyndham's Pool, which have opened up the woodland areas to allow heathland to re-establish in the coming years.

➤ **Track Maintenance**

No work has been completed on tracks since the last meeting, but a programme of works will commence again in late spring.

➤ **Yateley Common Grazing Consultation**

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

➤ **The Ranger's House**

Our Estates team have been arranging for The Rangers House to be repaired and redecorated so that it can be let in the short-term, whilst discussions with Legal Services have commenced to progress the exchange of the common land upon which the house sits.

➤ **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 joining us on Thursdays through the winter months.

Volunteer hours since the last meeting:

Month	YC Hours	Other Sites Hours	All Sites Hours
November	36	84.66	120.66
December	80	61.25	141.25
January	90	67.5	157.5
February	34.75	26.5	61.25
TOTAL	240.75 (95.25)	239.91 (100)	480.66 (195.25)

Note: Figures compiled 13th February. Bold figures in brackets are for February 2016.

This is a huge achievement for the team and shows the increase in volunteer numbers over the last few months. Special thanks must go to everyone who has spent time volunteering with us during this time – long may it continue.

➤ **Education**

Bookings for educational visits have begun to come in and we already have several groups booked in over the early spring months. We are mindful of making sure we are fulfilling our on-site management and conservation priorities, but we are also keen to remain serving the local community as an environmental education provider. This reinforces the importance of learning about nature and in particular the special qualities of Yateley Common.

➤ **Events**

On Sunday 4th December 2016, we ran our 'Christmas Trees for Conservation' event. The event was very popular again as it has been in previous years and we had 56 adults and 33 children in attendance.

We have 'The Big Spring Clean' event running again soon with many local groups, particularly Guide and Scout groups already booked in to lend a hand. The event is being run on Saturday 4th March 10am – 1pm.

We also have the 'Easter Trail' scheduled to take place on Easter Monday 17th April which we will be advertising shortly.

(see poster 'The Big Spring Clean')
(see poster 'Easter Trail')

➤ **Website & Social Media**

Facebook – 634 (607) likes
Twitter – 973 (926) followers
(last meetings figures in brackets)

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

[END]

To circulate:
Team Managers Report
'Easter Trail' poster
'Big Spring Clean' poster