

Greenham & Crookham Common Conservation Management Committee

Monday 25th September 2023 at Estovers @ 9:30

Present: Tom Hayward (TH - Chair Conservation Committee), Andy Coulsdon Phillips (ACP); Derek Cutt (DC - GCCV and commoner), Frank Huxtable (FH - Commoner).

Apologies: Roger Stace (RS) (BBOWT), Nicole Rorie (NR - Commoner)

Not present: Ken Neale (Grazier, Vice Chair Commission), John Thorogood (JT - Governance Committee Chair).

Agenda and Minutes

- Actions from last meeting not on agenda

<u>Date of meeting</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Actions</u>
20/2/21	Himalayan balsam	<i>liaise with highways maintenance (Mike Pearce) about potential of cutting this verge.</i>	RS	Done but Follow up again in spring.
14/11/22	Adders	<i>share adder maps & check whether a report being produced</i>	ACP	Send summary to TH for circulation
14/11/22	Ponds	BBOWT to put forward a proposal with rationale to fence off a couple of the ponds for Commission approval.	TH/RS	Ongoing – not completed
14/11/23	Gorse	Carry out full review of gorse in 2025 using original monitoring methodology.	BBOWT	On going
14/11/23	Gorse	Gorse paper to be updated alongside management plan review, including an appraisal of gorse management works undertaken to date.	BBOWT	Completed
14/11/23	Gorse	Ask New Forest burning expert what impact does gorse burning have on heather growth?	RS	Completed - See outline below (provided after meeting)

14/11/23	Italian Alder	Look at potential areas where additional alder clearance and control is required.	RS/DC	Completed
13/3/23	Striking the Balance report (2022)	Update Report to remove reference to removing heathland from the monitoring programme, as BBOWT are committed to still monitoring grazing impact on heathland/heather on an annual basis.	ACP	Completed
13/3/23	Striking the Balance report (2022)	Produce summary document highlighting the findings of the Striking the Balance reports to date and share with CMC prior to submission at next Commission meeting.	TH	Completed
13/3/23	Grazing	Update from GCCC required on where they are with finding out which graziers lease rights from which commoners. Raise at next Commission meeting in April.	TH	Completed but GCCC not actioned. Re-raise issue
13/3/23	Gorse	BBOWT to review gorse management contract for 23/24, and investigate further options for control and eradication.	TH/RS	On going
13/3/23	Gorse	Update what area of gorse burnt over winter.	RS	Completed
13/3/33	HEMP	Update group on findings from HEMP / local archeological society to identify priority works going forward.	TH	Not completed.

- Update from Dave Morris (Forestry England burning expert in New Forest) about what impact does gorse burning have on heather growth?

"In any one season, our prescribed burning programme is undertaken on sites with a range of habitat composition; some areas are 100% gorse cover, some are 100% heather cover, some are a blend of gorse and heather and some are a blend of gorse, heather and bracken. I think, by and large, that sites that comprise heather respond well to burning, even if heather is only a minor component of

that site. There are several factors that determine whether heather will successfully regenerate post burn. I'm sure there are other factors to consider, but if the 4 points below are your start point when looking at prescribed burns that contain heather, the successful regeneration will be greatly increased."

1. *The intensity of the burn. Obviously, gorse will burn with greater intensity and that increases the severity. And as heather is a relatively shallow rooted plant, there is a risk that roots and seed bank will perish.*
2. *The topography and aspect upon which the heather is growing. We have had pure heather burns upon a sloping site where the heather regeneration has had varied success. The lower section of the site where soils are deeper and probably have better moisture retention saw far better heather regeneration than that of the upper slope where the soils are thinner and drier, barely cover the gravels beneath.*
3. *Linked to point 2 is also timing of burning. I think that the success of regeneration of gorse and heather that has been burned earlier in the season is greater than when burned later in the season. This is probably down to moisture levels in the soil reducing severity of a burn earlier in the season. We have had burns that were undertaken late in March where the heather has all but failed to regenerate. The impact of 'deep' severe burns can result in damage to the root system of individual heather plants and also damage the seed bank around those plants.*
4. *The age and structure of the heather stand. Although we burn heather on a longer cycle than for gorse – typically 20 to 25 years, heather probably responds better to a shorter cycle. But the structure of the heather stand and canopy should also be considered. Old, woody plants can struggle to regenerate after a prescribed burn. Whereas, the younger heather that has a more foliar structure tends to respond better to a burn.*

- DRAFT Management plan summary (see attached report)

- BBOWT have updated all the targets in the summary management plan to ensure there is consistency between various schemes (SSSSI, BBOWT & CS). Updates include addressing the gorse limits so they align with those outlined in the gorse report produced for the Commission at the July 2023 meeting.
- DC asked whether Natural England would be consulted on management plan, despite having no representative. Natural England have been consulted on the gorse report, plus BBOWT have the most up to date FCT tables, and CS agreement that informs the summary management plan. Therefore it was felt that there probably isn't the need to get NE to sign off documents, however, it will be sent to them for comment, as per the circulation of the CMC minutes. Additional changes include some slight mapping updated to better reflect those found on the ground.
- **ACTION:** TH recirculate with updated maps (inc. NE). Comments required from CMC by next meeting.

- Gorse report (see attached report)

- The group agreed it was important to set out in simple terms what are BBOWT's plans for gorse management, and this document does so. Gorse report was well received by Commission at meeting in July. It is helpful to define which new areas are being cut and which existing areas are being managed.

- **ACTION:** arrange next meeting out on site to check burnt areas (and RS to review burnt areas)
 - **ACTION:** BBOWT apply for capital funds for gorse control, and work up plans for winter 2024 and beyond.
- Firebreak footpaths
- Ground nesting bird maps produced by Adrian Hickman as part of annual survey were reviewed at the meeting.
 - Upon reviewing the data, the CMC agreed to keep GNB measures as they were implemented in 2023, and not to open up any additional paths across the firebreaks.
 - DC highlighted that BBOWT need to re-emphasize that on Greenham there is a relaxation of national restrictions (public have more access to the common than in wider countryside due to for example CROW restrictions on dogs).
 - The request to be submitted to the Commission should include a zoomed in map of the firebreaks highlighting all the bird breeding areas and the reason why CMC decided not to opening up these firebreaks (southern bit of firebreak open and control tower fire breaks).
 - **ACTION:** BBOWT to request implementing access control measures at next Commission meeting.
- Waymarked paths
- The seasonal wardens report recommended to install 2 way marked routes around the Roam Zone, and area outside of Estovers to provide alternative short distance walks from the Control Tower car park. The CMC discussed the merits of installing built infrastructure on the Common, and its visual impact. The Greenham Common Vision document doesn't preclude the installation of visitor furniture on the common but it does highlight the need for minimal intrusion from site infrastructure.
 - The CMC agreed that installing a couple of waymarked routes would be positive and a good opportunity to encourage public use of the site away from main GNB areas.
 - **ACTION:** BBOWT to put forward proposal to Commission for approval.
- Winter work priorities
- RS was absent from discussions. TH updated on plans to carry out majority of scrub management budget on gorse control this winter. No contractor works are planned for wilder heathlands, with staff and volunteer focusing on these areas. Scrapes are planned for the fire plane area to benefit little ringed plover, and possibly in Crookham pools area. The group discussed the need to remove any tree /predator perches that may be in and around the area if trying to benefit LRP.
 - DC requested that the BBOWT Wednesday group focus some time on Italian alder control, and if machinery availability to try digging out some of the alder stumps with an excavator whilst working on site.
 - **Action:** RS to review requests and incorporate into winter work plan

- Wardens report and request to commission for access (see attached report)
 - o The CMC reviewed the recommendations from the Wardens report and no further comments were made. Members were happy with content provided, including agreeing to implement the Greenham recommendations.

- Adder proposals (see attached report)
 - o TH outlined details of the adder project. CMC were very supportive of project and happy with the proposals as is. Group highlighted the need to monitor project through trail cameras and tagging to help inform benefits of the tunnels.
 - o Section 38 Consent will be required for fencing installation. Timeline requires getting full Commission approval for project at the October meeting, and then submitting consent soon after meeting, hopefully allowing enough time to get fencing approval by Feb/March.
 - o **ACTION:** please can CMC send comments through to help inform consultation document required for Section 38 consent application.

Date of Next Meeting February 2pm 5th February

Outstanding actions

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13/3/23	Grazing	Update from GCCC required on where they are with finding out which graziers lease rights from which commoners. Raise at next Commission meeting in April.	TH
13/3/23	Gorse	BBOWT to review gorse management contract for 23/24, and investigate further options for control and eradication.	TH/RS

13/3/23	HEMP	Update group on findings from HEMP / local archeological society to identify priority works going forward.	TH
25/9/23	MP	Circulate summary plan, with updated maps, for comment.	ACP
25/9/23	Gorse	BBOWT seek capital funding to deliver gorse management plan	TH/RS
25/9/23	Gorse	Review gorse burning monitoring in advance of site visit in February '24	RS
25/9/23	Access	Request permission from GCCC to implement access control measures as they were implemented in 2023 at next Commission meeting.	TH
25/9/23	Access	Produce a proposal to install 2 waymarked routes on the common for Commission approval	TH / RS
25/9/23	Conservation	Incorporate requests into winter work plan, where possible	RS
25/9/23	Adders	Send through comments on adder project proposals to help inform sec38 application.	All