



Greenham & Crookham Common Commission Meeting
Minutes of Thursday 10th July 2025 @7pm
West Berkshire Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury RG14 5LD
in the Roger Croft Room

Commissioners Present

Sue Ellis (WBHF & Chairman)
Chris Austin (Commoner)
Derek Cutt (Commoner)
John Parker (Conservation Volunteers)
James Field (Commoner)
Judith Curson (Commoner)
Nicole Rorie (Commoner)
Sally-Ann Jay (Greenham PC)
Simon Pike (Thatcham TC Councillor) – Remote attendance
WBDC Appointed Officer: Matthew Hart (rep)
Secretary GPC Clerk:
BBOWT Advisers: Tom Hayward, Julian Cooper

1 Apologies

Billy Drummond (NDC Councillor)
Claudia Sievers (Commoner)
Paul Hendry
Ken Neal (Commoner & Vice Chairman)
Roger Hunneman (NTC)
Tony Ferguson (Greenham Trust)
Max Slater-Nunn (Natural England)
Kim Lloyd (GPC Clerk)

Simon Pike noted that Tony Vickers has now resigned from the Local Access Forum (of which Simon Pike is Chair), and asked the Commission to add the appointment of a new representative to the October agenda. **ACTION** Sue Ellis.

Sue Ellis advised the meeting that Kim Lloyd, who has clerked for the Commission since 2023, would shortly be moving to a new post as Town Clerk at Wallingford, and recorded the Commission's thanks for her work over the past two years. Kim

was unable to attend the meeting owing to other work pressures but will be in touch about her replacement.

Chris Austin advised the meeting that Mel Gatward, a long time Commissioner, had recently died. **ACTION** Sue Ellis will send a card of condolence on behalf of the Commission, and will circulate details of the funeral arrangements.

2 No Declarations of Interest were raised.

3 Public Session

- One grazier attending (Bob Colbourne) but no comments for the public session.

4 Minutes of the last meeting 29th May 2025

The minutes of the meeting held 29th May 2025 were approved.

No matters arising not on the agenda, apart from the issue with the illegal camper on the common. **ACTION** Sue Ellis will check with Paul Hendry when he is back – this matter is with the WBC Rough Sleeper officer.

Matters for Decision and presentation

5 Gorse Monitoring

A copy of BBOWT's Gorse management report covering 2023-25 had been circulated. Julian Cooper explained that while the gorse management plan for 2023-2033 needs no major changes, BBOWT had agreed they needed to manage the gorse differently. Flailing will no longer be used as this left too much litter of leaves and stems on the ground and suppressed natural growth. Instead BBOWT will use the methodology trialled last year, using reciprocating heads to drift gorse cuttings into rows which can be burned off in situ, while the root mass will be scraped off. The intention next year is to re-cut some of the regrowth which will be cut this year, to reduce vigorous growth. The plan for dealing with the gorse has been discussed with Natural England and with the graziers.

In terms of scrub management and encroachment of scrub, the focus this year will be on the grassland sward and the scrub encroaching on the grass. Derek Cutt asked about the growth of hawthorn on the Common, and Julian confirmed that this was what they were hoping to work at removing. BBOWT has spoken to Max Slater-Nunn at Natural England, and funding can be made available for this work. Chris Austin noted that as well as hawthorns there were also dog roses encroaching.

Julian noted that BBOWT now have a tractor – which really didn't break down (laughter).

ACTION: Sue Ellis will circulate the gorse management report to the graziers).

6 BBOWT Meeting with the graziers

Julian Cooper felt that the last meeting with the graziers was largely positive and a chance to discuss gorse management on the common, on which topic they are broadly in line. The meeting also looked at the gorse work done last year, and visited some of the cattle on the common – despite the hot weather the animals are in good condition.

Chris Austin noted that the yearling heifers, which won't be going to the bull, had been taken off the common. Some of the stronger cattle at grazing at Ken Neal's property, he has the new bull (a Limousin). A dozen heifers have been taken to graze at Henwick farm. Around 46 adult cattle remain on the common, with calves.

Over wintering had been raised at the meeting with the graziers. Chris Austin pointed out that a number of years ago, graziers had been asked to put cattle back on the common over winter to control growth, whereas now the Commission was asking for them to be removed between start of January and end of April. Bob Colbourne agreed that this had been the case in the past. Julian Cooper pointed out that there was a need to strike a balance, and Tom Hayward suggested that BBOWT could monitor the impact of removing the grazing over the winter. There was a brief discussion of how the breeding process operated, with the graziers explaining that many larger commercial organisations put cows to the bull when they were much younger – for the local graziers there was a much longer period before they saw financial returns.

7 Diesel spill at Greenham Business Park

The spill occurred on 6th June at the Business Park, Julian Cooper confirmed this was around 3,000-4,000 litres, a significant spill, and the spill occurred above the gully on the Common where some of the cattle graze. BBOWT visited as soon as advised, and also advised the graziers and the Chair. The spill was monitored by the EA. There doesn't appear to have been contamination of the common, but the diesel contaminated soil will need to be removed. The matter is mostly with the EA, and there has been a slight communication issue between the EA, Natural England and BBOWT. BBOWT have been asked to submit a 'lessons learned' report to the EA to clarify issues which arose.

Chris Austin confirmed that one calf had died shortly after the spill took place – it can't be confirmed that this was connected to the spill, but the calf and cow were grazing in the same area, near the fireplane and the gully. Julian Cooper asked to be notified if any graziers noted animal health issues, until the contamination has been cleared.

8 Martin Barden running event 22nd November

The Commission had been unable to make a decision on this event without a map and information on numbers, marshalling etc. There had been no further information from the organisers, so this event will not be given permission.

9 101 Outdoor Arts Events

Information had been circulated by BBOWT regarding events at the start of August, (2nd and 3rd – Take it Outside events) and in September, (13th and 14th September Creative Commons events) which are being organised by 1010 Outdoor Arts. The August events are taking place at the Control Tower. Those in September involve various aspects of performance art, including a possible overnight stay, and the practicalities are being discussed with BBOWT, as these are planned to take place in various locations on the common. Arts Council funding for these was not secured. Sue Ellis counted that it was good to see the common attracting a variety of ideas and that these activities may engage with a different audience to the usual walkers and leisure users. **ACTION** Julian Cooper will keep the Commission updated on what events are agreed and how they will be run.

Additional papers and reports

10 Committee reports

Governance Committee Meetings 27th June 2025

Sue Ellis reported that a number of the actions had been completed. There had been concerns around how the Governance Committee could record rights which had been extinguished because new builds meant these rights were shared between a number of properties – the Committee now have a legislative statement from the gov.uk website to guide our work. Chris Austin suggested that Gadsden offered legal guidance on this. Simon Pike pointed out that rights could not be exercised unless registered, and fractional rights were not exercisable.

Copies of the original Register entries and maps and Sue Ellis and Paul Hendry will get together to sort these and produce clear scans of the information – copies can then be held by WBC, BBOWT and the Commission to ensure the information doesn't get lost again. Sue Ellis and Paul Hendry will also obtain a new map of the common to supply to OS – as required (but not completed) under the Act.

Tom Hayward is now updating the list of encroachments and the Committee is looking at redefining high and low priority encroachments – high priority might, for example, include structures placed on the common – to formulate a process for dealing with the more serious encroachments first.

11 AOB.

- **Crookham Common Pools**

In the absence of Paul Hendry an update on this was held over to the next meeting.

12 **Date of next meeting.** Meeting frequency: normally four times a year. Date confirmed and to be held at WBC meeting room.

o **October 7th, 2025 at WBC**

2026 meetings Sue Ellis will look at possible dates next year – suggested we alternate between Tuesdays and Thursdays (not Tuesday in Jan or Oct).

ACTION circulate possible dates, check room availability with Paul Hendry.