

Blindley Heath Local Nature Reserve

Liaison Group - Annual Report 2018/19

Blindley Heath Common is owned by Godstone Parish Council; it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is managed as a Local Nature Reserve. The Liaison Group which comprises representatives of the Parish Council, Tandridge District Council, Natural England, local graziers, local residents and the Surrey Wildlife Trust oversees the management of the Common. Since 2012 the practical management of the site has been carried out by the Surrey Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Parish Council.

As a SSSI the site must be managed in the correct way to ensure that over time its condition improves and that its special habitats are protected. Since 2012 when the Surrey Wildlife Trust took on the management of the site there has been a significant improvement in the condition of the site resulting from the extensive removal of the encroaching scrub and trees. This has been in accordance with the Management Plan that was prepared by the Wildlife Trust and approved by Natural England.

Now that there has been this significant improvement in the condition of the site, a less intensive management regime has been possible, primarily by the grazing of cattle over the summer months, grazing is vital to help to keep down the regrowth of unwanted species. Scrub cutting has continued over the winter months. Blackthorn management has been undertaken and a nightingale was heard on the site (blackthorn thickets being a good habitat for these birds).

Work was undertaken on the fence around the northern section of the site to strengthen and repair it, as after 20 years it had begun to deteriorate particularly with posts rotting in the very wet ground.

The power company has carried out clearance under the power lines that cross the site, this has been done well as they were given clear guidance on how to avoid damaging the site.

Local residents with properties on the site were assisted in obtaining Natural England's consent to allow them to manage trees and scrub that has begun encroaching on the access tracks.

The Liaison Group met on two occasions during 2018. The group received reports on the progress being made to meet the requirements of the Management Plan, discussed future work programmes and dealt with any particular problems that had arisen on site.

As always the Group wishes to thank the Surrey Wildlife Trust, its staff and volunteers for their work over the past year, and to express particular thanks to John and Pamela Mills who graze their cattle on the site. Thanks are also due to the Parish Council for its continued commitment to manage the site for the benefit of wildlife and public enjoyment.

As common land the site is open to the public and visitors, and the group encourages local people to discover and enjoy this special place. Access is easiest either from Ray Lane (opposite Tandridge Lane) or from gates/stiles on the southern boundary.

I have recently stood down as Chairman of the Liaison Group as I am moving away from the area. By the time this report is published I hope that a new Chairman will have been elected.

Paul Newdick

Chairman of the Blindley Heath Liaison Group (until 15th May 2019)