

Chilterns Commons Network

Autumn 2009

Welcome..

..to the second of our new look 'e-bulletins'

Our first e-bulletin seems to have been well received AND it saved us money, which has gone into the Commons Budget pot! Remember - it's your bulletin so send us information, photographs or just a few lines advertising an event and we'll try and put them in the next edition.

Chilterns Commons Project HLF bid - update

The project's aims include:

- encouraging / equipping local people to play a greater role in understanding, conserving and enhancing their commons including skills training and support / advice.
- celebrating the common's cultural heritage. The Chiltern commons are a gold mine of local history and there is a need for a more structured study / report approach to this subject.
- supporting the sustainable management and restoration of the common's natural heritage and associated features.

A questionnaire was sent to a cross-section of commons owners, managers and conservation groups to gain an insight into their specific needs.

The responses, to date, are very interesting!

- 1st - Wildlife surveying and research training.
- 2nd - Site Interpretation training, Social History surveying and research training.
- 3rd - Volunteer recruitment / retention training, archaeology training, Fact Sheets availability.
- 4th - Bracken and scrub control training.
- 5th - Commons legislation information, Access improvement information, Habitat management training.

The Community Engagement and Survey and Research categories feature most strongly with Practical Management issues next.

Our next step is to 'work up' some of the identified projects and submit a Phase 1 bid by November, for a decision in March 2010. Watch this space!

The major Commons event of the year

CHILTERN COMMONS DAY - Thursday 24 Sept 2009 - Ashridge Estate, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 1LT. 09.30am - 3.45pm.
Delegate Fee: £12.00

The day will consist of a mix of site visits and presentations including visits to some of the commons on the National Trust's Ashridge Estate. Learn about their long and turbulent history, current management and future aspirations.

Features of interest include: archaeology, pits and ponds, holloways, WW2 remains, veteran trees, wood pasture and acid grassland.

Find out more about the Chilterns Commons Project and hear presentations on topics ranging from wildlife surveys and creative interpretation to social history and commons management.

Over a local produce lunch, network with others involved in commons management.

BOOKING ESSENTIAL - contact Donna Hunter on 01844 355504 or dhunter@chilternsaonb.org

Chilterns Countryside Festival

Sunday 20th September - National Trust Ashridge Estate, Bridgewater Monument, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 1LT. 11.00am - 4.00pm.

Discover the activities, crafts and industries linked with our local countryside. Masses to see and do and lots of craft products to buy and refreshments to eat. Dogs welcome.

For more information please contact:

Cathy Rose on 01844 355506 (mobile 07788 491140) or the National Trust's Visitor Centre on 01442 851227



Have money - Must spend

A reminder that funding is still available from the Conservation Board for commons - related projects either via the Commons Budget - £2500 still unallocated and must be spent by March 31 2010 - or from the Sustainable Development Fund. It's last call on the SDF, the next and FINAL meeting in mid-November.

Put in your applications now because future funding is very uncertain. Contact KD for more information.

Japanese Knotweed

Beware the scourge

How many of us have been faced with this scourge and fought a losing battle? Help is at hand. For detailed Fact Sheets on Control and Disposal see the Chesham Council website at

www.chesham.gov.uk/Environment/Japanese_Knotweed.aspx They have an equally informative sheet on Himalayan Balsam. Both these sheets were produced with the help of the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project, part of the CCB. Some of the contact details may not be totally relevant - Chilterns wide - but the facts are!

Other sources of help:

The Environment Agency www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homesandleisure/wildlife/31364.aspx has a great deal of technical information which is also worth reading.

Contact Ross Osborn ross.osborn@virgin.net (Moorend Common, formerly volunteer warden) for details of a specialist weed control contractor who has worked on management of Japanese Knotweed and bracken on some of the Lane End Commons to great effect.



Cows came to Chorleywood..

..and what a success!

In April 2009, Chorleywood Parish Council began a grazing trial on their Common with six local Aberdeen Angus cattle on the chalk meadow known as Lark Field. A 'Meet the Cattle Day', in May, was visited by some 300 visitors with a very positive response especially from children.

After the cattle were removed, the Parish Council asked its parishioners for their views on the trial and on returning grazing to the Common on a more permanent basis. **Of the 809 people who responded - 732 (90.5%) were in favour! What a success!** There is little doubt that grazing, in some form or another, is the best form of long-term sustainable management for many of the habitats found on the Commons.

Grazing made easy

Robin Harman currently has a small herd of Dexter cattle and a flock of Jacob and Jacob cross sheep and manages the most significant parts of Turville Heath together with four private



conservation areas in the same locality - making his own hay and grazing his herd / flock.

He is looking to expand his business by offering a conservation grazier / contractor service across the Chilterns including the provision of stock,

electric fencing, water, daily welfare checks, transport and insurance - many of the hurdles that seem to stand in the way when considering introducing grazing to our Commons.

To contact Robin - ring 07701 063303 or email him on woodcut.robin@tesco.net

Footnote: Robin has come out to Moorend Common and is putting together a detailed grazing strategy for discussion with Natural England and the Parish Council.



Friends of Naphill Common

Come and learn about Naphill's Junipers; enjoy a Fungi Walk on the Common or come and have your say at the AGM with some interesting speakers to follow. For fuller information, contact Trevor Hussey on trevorhussey@trevorhussey.plus.com or see the website <http://www.naphillcommon.org.uk/activities.html>

Incidental notes from the Commons Forum meeting - Monday 6 July 2009

Environmental Stewardship on Commons

James Warne from Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) provided an overview of Environmental Stewardship, the Government funded scheme open to farmers and other land managers who deliver environmental benefits on their land. The scheme includes Entry Level (ELS) and Higher Level (HLS) options. James highlighted the pros and cons of each. For more information on this complicated subject, contact FWAG on 02476 696699 or www.fwag.org.uk



'Lost Commons' and new village greens

Nicola Hodgson from The Open Spaces Society (OSS) gave a brief report on the progress of the seven pilot areas trailing Part 1 of the 2006 Common Act that relates to Registration of Common Land. At present, in the pilot areas, there is some limited re-opening of the registers to rectify mistakes, and register land that was missed in 1965. The OSS has also produced fact sheets on 'lost commons' and registration of new village greens. For more details contact the OSS on 01491 573535 or email: hq@oss.org.uk



Signing Open Access land

A meeting between the CCB, The Chiltern Society, Bucks CC and Ramblers Association was recently held to discuss issues of signage on Open Access Commons and other land in the Chilterns which is, currently, both confusing and patchy. Numerous views and ideas were expressed and there was general agreement that a more 'unified policy' towards signage would be beneficial. It was agreed that a number of different signage ideas would be developed for further discussion among the interested parties. For more information, contact Annette Venters at the CCB.



Don't forget - Next copy date is Friday 27 November

To find out more about the Commons Network and Forum and the Chilterns Conservation Board, contact: Kath Daly, Countryside Officer. T: 01844 355524. Email: kdaly@chilternsaonb.org

The opinions expressed, in this Newsletter, do not necessarily reflect the views of the Chilterns Conservation Board.

Dates for October to December 2009

TRAINING COURSES

Flora locale is running training courses, with the help of the Grazing Advice Partnership on "Pigs for Land Management" (7 Oct / Bewdley, Worcestershire) and with the Ancient Tree Forum on "Good practice in managing ancient trees" (22 Oct / Burnham Beeches, Slough). The last event is on "Habitat management for lower plants and fungi" (10 Nov / Chew Valley, Somerset).

For further information, email info@floralocale.org or see www.floralocale.org

SPECIAL TREES AND WOODS PROJECT'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 14 Nov 2009 - Berkshire College of Agriculture, Burchetts Green, nr Marlow. 10.00 - 14.00

Over the past four years, volunteers have been recording what makes the trees and woods of the Chilterns special. Come to the Conference to discover more and hear some of the stories researched by the volunteers.

The guest speaker will be Stuart King - a local man from Holmer Green - who will talk about the trades and traditions of those who have shaped the Chilterns countryside over the centuries, especially the bodgers.



Booking for this free event is essential so book early to confirm your place. Go to <http://www.chilternsaonb.org/special> or contact Rachel on 01844 355525 or rsanderson@chilternsaonb.org for more information.

NEXT COMMONS FORUM DAY - 7 Dec at Coleshill Village Hall.

Meet at 11.30 for walk over Coleshill Common (nr Amersham). 13.00 Lunch in pub (at own cost) followed, at 14.00, by the Forum meeting for those who would like to attend. For more information, contact Kath Daly.

Chalk and Trees

The Autumn / Winter 2009 edition out at the beginning of October has articles on Chalk grassland projects, the 2009 Buildings Design Awards and lots more. Pick up a free copy in local libraries or call the Board on 01844 355504 to request one.'