

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, February 2010

Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 8 February 2010 at 5pm in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.

Present: Mr A Simon (Vice-Chairman)
Sir Ian Andrews
Mrs D de Coverly Veale
Mr D Frampton
Dr S Frank
Mr J Horrocks
Mr N Plastow MBE

In attendance: Clerk & Ranger, Chief Executive (Mr G Vincent)
Deputy Clerk & Ranger (Ms P Graystone)
PA to the Clerk & Ranger (Miss A Evans)

3 members of the public were present.

02.10.1 Apologies

Mr D Devons (Chairman)

02.10.2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved subject to one minor amendment.

02.10.3 Matters Arising

Cycling Signs – The Clerk & Ranger reported that work on installing the new no-cycling signs had been completed.

Dog-Walkers – Putney Lower Common – Mr Horrocks reported that he had as yet not written to Richmond Council as he wished to address his letter to a named person. Mr Simon once again recommended that he contacted Mr Mike Hildesley of the Friends of Barnes Common who would know the best person to contact.

Memorial Bench, Mr Ron Ribbins – The Clerk & Ranger reported that he was still in discussion with the family of the late Mr Ribbins about the memorial bench they wished to place on the Common.

Tibbet's Corner – The Clerk & Ranger reported that he had still not heard from Wandsworth Council about their plans to alter Tibbet's Corner roundabout using Commons land.

Putney Cricket Club – The Clerk & Ranger reported that he had written to Putney Cricket Club to inform them of the Conservators' decision not to allow the development of the cricket facilities at Putney Lower Common. He had offered them the use of the facilities at the REMPF but had heard nothing further.

Buses at Putney Lower Common – Mr Horrocks reported that, at a recent meeting at Wandsworth Council, he had heard that London Buses did not wish to pay to use the

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Putney Hospital car park as a temporary bus stand. Instead buses would be turned by re-routing along Queen's Ride and Rocks Lane.

Model of the Windmill – The Clerk & Ranger reported that nothing further had been heard from the family of the late Mr Ron Ribbins about the model of the Windmill that he had made.

02.10.4 Clerk & Ranger's Report

Drinking Fountain – The Clerk & Ranger reported that he had met Mr John Mills of the Drinking Fountain Association to discuss the refurbishment of the drinking fountain at the horse trough near the Windmill. Mr Mills had agreed to get a quotation for the work and the Clerk & Ranger would report again to the Conservators at the March meeting. He explained that the small drinking fountain next to the original horse trough would be removed. The new design of drinking fountain would be incorporated into the horse trough.

2010 Newsletter – The PA to the Clerk & Ranger reported that the first draft of the newsletter had been completed and discussed by the Newsletter Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee was scheduled to meet again on 23 February and a further draft would be available for the Conservators' consideration at the March Board meeting.

Putney Lower Common Clearance – The Clerk & Ranger reported that, in response to public concerns over indecent behaviour at Putney Lower Common, Maintenance staff had carried out wood-thinning work and had created sight-lines through the woodland areas.

Stables Open Day – The Clerk & Ranger confirmed that the date of the Open Day had now been set for 12 September 2010. The original date of 11 July clashed with both the football World Cup Final and the British motor racing Grand Prix. The Keepers had been concerned that these might affect visitor numbers.

Emmanuel Church – Open Air Service – The Clerk & Ranger reported that he had received a request from Emmanuel Church to use the marquees erected for the Wimbledon Village Fair for (1) an informal evening for local youngsters on the Saturday evening, (2) a service on the Sunday morning after the Fair and (3) a further meeting for younger people on the Sunday evening. They would be similar to events which had taken place without incident the previous year, with the permission of the Conservators. The Conservators approved the request.

02.10.5 Natural History Sub-Committee Report

Beverley Brook - Dr Frank reported that whilst the Environment Agency's decision to cease to be responsible for the clearance of rubbish and tree-management along the Brook had been cautiously welcomed, there was some uncertainty as to the legal position. The Clerk & Ranger undertook to contact the National Farmers' Union for advice on the matter.

Boom on Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common – Dr Frank questioned the cost of installing a boom on the Brook to catch rubbish floating downstream. The Clerk & Ranger undertook to look into the cost of the work and possible funding.

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Farm Bog – Mr Horrocks had suggested that it would be useful for the Conservators to have a walk around Farm Bog so they could better understand the work being carried out there. This was agreed in principle. It was further agreed that at the March Board meeting a date should be arranged for this in April.

Centenary of publication of Walter Johnson's book "Wimbledon Common" – The Sub-Committee had discussed the possibility of celebrating the centenary by producing a pamphlet showing the changes on the Common over the last 100 years. Two ex-Conservators, Mr Tony Drakeford and Mrs Una Sutcliffe, and local bird expert, Mr David Wills, had agreed to contribute. Mr Frampton mentioned that the Wimbledon Village Museum held the diary kept by Millicent Ashford, mainly of bird observations on the Commons in the 1920s. He suggested that now might be a good time to have it published. It was agreed that Miss Ashford's family should be approached for permission.

Management of the Plain – It had been suggested that the increase in raptors on the Common, particularly on the Plain, may have contributed to the decline of skylarks and other songbirds on the Common. The Sub-Committee had discussed the possibility of carrying out some tree-thinning work in the area to discourage the raptors. The Conservators asked Dr Frank to produce a paper for further consideration.

02.10.6 Dog-Walking on Wimbledon Common

1. Number of Dogs

Mr Simon reminded the Conservators that, in March 2009, they had decided that the maximum number of dogs permitted to be walked by licensed dog-walkers should be reduced from six to five, with the change being reviewed in February 2010.

There were several reasons why the Conservators had thought it appropriate to introduce the reduction in 2009. It had been understood at that time that one or more of the surrounding local authorities was intending to include a limit on the number of dogs that could be walked at any one time in public open spaces within their borough (in regulations to be introduced under the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Act 2005). In the event this had not yet happened, although it was still thought likely that the boroughs would introduce some form of limit in due course. It was therefore recommended that for the time being the Conservators should reverse their decision but keep the matter under annual review, with the first review in September this year, just prior to the renewal of the existing dog-walking licences. This was agreed and also that this should have immediate effect for the current licences issued in November 2009. Mr Simon reiterated that the Commons were not a facility for commercial activities. The PA to the Clerk & Ranger was asked to write to all the licensed dog-walkers, and also all those who had written to the Office asking the Conservators to reconsider their initial decision, to advise them of the outcome.

Dog-Walking Licences

In March 2009, the Conservators also decided not to issue any further dog-walking licences, in addition to those currently issued, with the decision to be reviewed in February 2010. It was reported that there were currently 35 dog-walking licences issued: 27 to commercial dog-walkers and 8 to private dog-walkers. Of the 35 licences issued, only 12 were issued to people living within the levy-paying area. The Conservators

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decided that the review of the overall number of licences in issue should be deferred until the September Board meeting. This would allow them to take into account any impact on the Commons caused by the introduction of car parking charges in Richmond Park in April this year.

02.10.7 Putney Hospital

1. Mr Simon reported that the Putney Hospital Sub-Committee had met recently to consider the revisions to Schedule 4 of the proposed Section 106 Agreement and the plans referred to in that Schedule. Subject to some minor amendments, the documentation had now been approved by the Sub-Committee.
2. Subsequently, however, the solicitors acting for Wandsworth Council had, without giving any explanation, refused the amendment to Clause 17.6 of the Section 106 Agreement agreed with the Wandsworth Primary Care Trust. The Council required the Conservators to be jointly liable with the WPCT under Clause 17.6 for the completion of the Common Land Works described in Schedule 4. Mr Simon explained that the agreement provided that the WPCT would deposit a sum equal to the Council's estimate of the cost of these works as a security for their satisfactory performance by the WPCT. He considered it very unlikely that, as a reputable public sector body, the WPCT would default in carrying out these obligations. But if it did, the Council would have recourse to the security deposit to meet the cost of carrying out these works itself. The only obvious risk to the Conservators would arise if the security deposit was insufficient to cover the cost of the work. However, the WPCT had additionally agreed to include a clause in the Land Transfer document ("TP1") to indemnify the Conservators in that event. The Conservators agreed to accept this change to the Land Transfer and the Section 106 Agreement.
3. **Milestone** – Mr Simon reported that Kate Bradley of the WPCT had consulted the Conservators about a request from the Putney Society, which had asked the WPCT why the ancient milestone at Putney Hospital was still surrounded by its own separate hoarding, if no redevelopment was imminent. The Putney Society had requested that the hoarding either be removed from around the stone or that its continued enclosure be explained and justified. After discussion, the Conservators agreed that the hoarding should remain in place, to reduce the risk of damage during the period of preparations for likely redevelopment, as well as during the time while building contractors were on site.

02.10.8 Any Other Business

Bus Stop on Putney Heath – Mr Horrocks reported that the work on the bus stop on Putney Heath, adjacent to Dover Park Drive, had now been successfully completed.

02.10.9 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 8 March 2010 at 5pm at the Information Centre.

The meeting finished at 6.20pm

