

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, December 2009

Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 14 December 2009 at 5pm in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.

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

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

1 member of the public was present for part of the meeting.

12.09.1 Apologies

None

12.09.2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

12.09.3 Matters Arising

Cannizaro Road – The Conservators had previously suggested to Merton Council that Cannizaro Road be made a 20mph zone. The Clerk & Ranger reported that Mr Mario Lecordier of Merton Council had passed the Conservators' comments to another department for consideration. The matter would be discussed by the Conservators again at their March Board meeting together with the problem of the earth banks along the sides of the road which were wearing away and covering the white lines.

Tibbetts Corner Roundabout – Mr Horrocks provided a copy of a report from the Agenda of the Wandsworth Planning and Transport Committee meeting where it had been reported that there were plans to alter Tibbetts Corner Roundabout using Common land. The Clerk & Ranger reported that he had spoken to the Council and asked them to put their proposal in writing but he had heard nothing further.

12.09.4 Clerk & Ranger's Report

Paddock - The Clerk & Ranger reported that the paddock where the horses were turned out was constantly waterlogged during the winter months and suggested that several loads of soil were placed in the paddock to raise the ground level. He also suggested that the existing fence be replaced as many of the posts had rotted. There was some discussion on how best to proceed with the work, including using scrapings from Putney Heath and top soil from the recently created Scallop at Beverley Brook. The Clerk & Ranger would consider the possible options in the Spring when it was proposed to carry out the work.

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Clerk & Ranger's Party – The Conservators congratulated the Clerk & Ranger on a successful Clerk & Ranger's party on 4 December at the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club. It was agreed to hold the event at the same venue next year and a date of 3 December 2010 was agreed. The Clerk & Ranger was asked to ensure that a vegetarian option was provided next year. The Conservators asked if a copy of the list of guests that had accepted could be sent to them a few days prior to the event, and this was agreed.

Drinking Fountain – The Clerk & Ranger was pleased to report that the Drinking Fountain Association had agreed to make a grant towards the restoration of the trough and drinking fountain near the Windmill (the remainder of the cost would be met by a local resident). He would be liaising with their representative, Mr John Mills, to agree a programme and design, in the new year. The Clerk & Ranger reported that the three missing granite corner stones could not be found. He was asked to obtain an estimate for making three copies of the fourth stone, which was still in situ.

Dog-Walkers Coffee Morning – The Clerk & Ranger reported that a group of dog-walkers had, for the last couple of years, held a "coffee morning" just before Christmas in Springwell Car Park. They always have a donations box and this year raised £97.50 to be put towards the running of the Commons. The Conservators asked that a thank you note be sent on their behalf.

New Stag Cottages – The Clerk & Ranger reported that the two shrubs that had died in the garden of 1 Stag Cottage had now been replaced with two Azalea shrubs, which were slightly more suitable to the soil conditions.

Cycling on the Commons – The Clerk & Ranger reported that the Keepers had begun putting up the new "no cycling" signs and this work was continuing. Once this work was completed, they would make a concerted effort to deal with cyclists who cycled off the permitted cycle paths. Mr Frampton commented that the local Safer Neighbourhood team were prepared to help with the exercise.

Paths – The Clerk & Ranger reported that the potholes in the cycle paths across the Rushmere had now been filled in with scalplings.

ITEMS FOR REPLY

Parnham's Fun Fair – The Clerk & Ranger reported that Mr Parnham had asked if he could book dates for his visits to Rushmere in 2010. The proposed dates were:

Main Fair: Pull on 5 June; Open - 10 to 13 June and 17 to 20 June.

Children's fair: Pull on 31 August. Open: 3 to 5 September 9 to 12 September.

Although there had been one complaint this year about the later children's fair, there had also been many positive comments. The Conservators therefore approved the request but asked the Clerk & Ranger to check the actual date that the fair would move on in June as it seemed earlier than usual.

Buses – Putney Lower Common – The Clerk & Ranger reported that he had received a request from Wandsworth Council to use the car park at Putney Hospital as a temporary bus stand whilst the Putney Lower Common bus stand was resurfaced. Mr Slaughter would also be speaking to Kate Bradley at the WPCT as the area was now surrounded by hoarding in anticipation of the demolition of the hospital. The Clerk & Ranger reported

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that he had arranged to meet Mr Slaughter and Ms Bradley to discuss the request further. The Conservators agreed with the request in principle and the Clerk & Ranger was authorised to negotiate a suitable fee.

12.09.5 Natural History Sub-Committee Report

Management of the Plain – Dr Frank reported that he had had discussions with Natural England and they had indicated that they might be prepared to be flexible about the agreed cutting regime for the Plain. The Sub-Committee would be putting together a scientific paper in the hope that a cutting regime could be agreed that was more suitable for encouraging skylark nesting. It was suggested that Dr Frank spoke to Richmond Park to discuss how they managed their grassland to encourage skylarks.

Black Poplars – The Chairman asked if a sketch could be provided showing the proposed location of the new Black Poplars on Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common.

Annual Conservation Report – Dr Frank reported that the Annual Conservation Report had been prepared by the Wildlife and Conservation Officer, Peter Haldane. The PA to the Clerk & Ranger reported that the document would be sent out with the December minutes in order that the Conservators had sufficient time to consider it before it was discussed at the January Board meeting.

Beverley Brook – Dr Frank reported that notification had been received from the Environment Agency that the Conservators were now responsible for the clearance of rubbish from the banks and the watercourse on those parts of Beverley Brook that fell within the Conservators' land. The Clerk & Ranger was asked to look into the legal position of the Conservators' responsibilities for maintaining the Brook.

12.09.6 Putney Hospital

The Chairman proposed that, as there appeared to be several changes to the Putney Hospital documentation, particularly the drawings, and that there were several plans and Schedules not yet received, that the matter be deferred to the Putney Hospital Sub-Committee for further consideration and recommendation prior to the January Board meeting. This was agreed and the PA to the Clerk & Ranger was asked to arrange a meeting for the first week of January. It was further agreed that Ms Kate Bradley of the WPCT, and also a representative from Wandsworth Council capable of explaining and negotiating the changes, should also be asked to attend the meeting.

12.09.7 Putney Lower Common – Access for the Partially-Sighted

The Clerk & Ranger reported that Mr Horrocks had forwarded to him an e-mail he had received from Ms Susan Pitt and Ms Maria Oshodi, with whom the Conservators had had previous correspondence about the provision of surfaced paths on Putney Lower Common to allow guide dogs to run off-lead. The e-mail attached a letter that had been sent to the Conservators by a Mr Mike Woolston of the Guide Dogs for the Blind, which had not been received by the Ranger's Office. A copy had since been forwarded to the Office. The Chairman expressed his concern at the correspondence between Mr Horrocks and the two ladies since the matter had already been decided by the Conservators in May. It was agreed that a copy of the Chairman's letter of 14 May to Mr

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Mudd at the Guide Dogs for the Blind, and to which a reply had not been received, be forwarded to Mr Woolston.

12.09.8 Windmill Car Park Toilets

Mr Plastow reported that the Sub-Committee met on Monday 7 December to discuss the revised quotation provided by the Crest Group for the new toilets. After some consideration, the Sub-Committee had recommended the acceptance of the quotation to the Conservators. Although at approximately £31,000 it was higher than another quotation received, the Crest Group were particularly experienced in this type of work. Therefore the Conservators agreed with the recommendation. It was also agreed that the work should start in April so that the Conservators could take advantage of the VAT registration, which would come into force on 1 April. The Clerk & Ranger noted that this expenditure had not been included in the 2010/11 budget and provision would need to be made. It was also agreed that a sign should be put up outside the toilets to explain to the general public the work that was being carried out.

12.09.9 Commons News 2010

The PA to the Clerk & Ranger had drafted a list of possible articles for inclusion in the 2010 Commons News. It was suggested that the front page should have news items rather than a feature article and it was also suggested that articles be included on the Pegasus Crossing, the reduction in the levy, the appointment of a new Chairman and the new turbine in the Windmill. It was agreed that the Newsletter Sub-Committee would meet in the new year and the PA to the Clerk & Ranger was asked to arrange a suitable date.

12.09.10 Any Other Business

Commercial Dog-Walkers on Putney Lower Common – Mr Horrocks reported that, during a recent meeting at Putney Lower Common with Mrs de Coverly Veale and Mr Peter Haldane, they had noticed a number of commercial dog-walkers walking more than four dogs. The Clerk & Ranger reported that patrols by the Keepers had been stepped up at Putney Lower Common and many of the dog-walkers had now been spoken to and should have received a letter informing them of the byelaws. Many of the dog-walkers parked on Barnes Common, which fell under the control of Richmond Council who had not yet implemented the Dog Control Orders limiting the number of dogs that could be walked there. It was suggested that Mr Horrocks and Mrs de Coverly Veale wrote privately to Richmond Council expressing their concerns about the number of dogs being walked and the level of dog-fouling.

Rugby Festival at REMPf - The Clerk & Ranger reported that he had received a request to hold a rugby festival at the REMPf over the first Bank Holiday weekend in May 2010. The event would include rugby and volleyball as well as the erection of a marquee, food stalls, and parking would also be required. The Conservators agreed to the request on a one-off basis but asked the Clerk & Ranger to ensure suitable restrictions were put in place on the use of a tannoy system to minimise any nuisance to local residents, and in particular the time from which it could be used on the Sunday morning.

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12.09.11 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11 January 2009 at 5pm at the Information Centre.

The meeting finished at 6.45pm

David Devms