

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, October 2009

Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 12 October 2009 at 5pm in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.

Present: Mr D Devons (Chairman)
Mrs D de Coverly Veale
Sir Ian Andrews
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)

2 members of the public were present for part of the meeting.

10.09.1 Apologies

None

10.09.2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved subject to a few minor amendments.

10.09.3 Matters Arising

Mr Ron Ribbins – The Clerk & Ranger reported that Mr Bill Rowland, the Senior Keeper, had represented the Conservators at Mr Ribbins' funeral on 18 September.

Roses Fun Fair – The Clerk & Ranger reported that Roses Fun Fair on Putney Heath had been successful and the weather had remained dry.

Management Plan – The Conservators asked that Mr Peter Haldane, the Wildlife and Conservation Officer, be thanked for his excellent and informative presentation of the management plans and for the conducted walk. The Conservators had found both very beneficial and it was suggested that it be repeated every few years, particularly when any new Conservator was appointed.

10.09.4 Clerk & Ranger's Report

Pavilion Flat – The Clerk & Ranger reported that, following Mr John Newman's retirement, Jack Rowland had moved into the Pavilion Flat. He would undertake the security duties previously carried out by Mr Newman, i.e. locking and unlocking the main gate in the absence of Mr Ian Osbon, and helping to keep a general eye on the facilities.

London in Bloom – Prior to the start of this meeting, the Conservators were presented with a certificate for winning the "Best Common" section of the annual London in Bloom competition. The certificate was presented by Mrs Bellamy, the secretary of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association. The Conservators thanked Dr Frank for showing the judges around the Commons and Mr Haldane for his preparatory work.

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Putney Lower Common – Cemetery Cottage – The Chairman asked if the Conservators had any objections to the planning application made by Wandsworth Council for the change of use of Cemetery Cottage on Lower Richmond Road to a residential dwelling. Whilst there was no objection to the change of use, the Clerk & Ranger was asked to write to Wandsworth Council endorsing the comments made by the Putney Cricket Club questioning the need for two parking spaces to be provided in front of the building; the comments in the Design and Access statement accompanying the planning application should also be supported, i.e. that the architectural aesthetic of the building should not be changed. The Clerk & Ranger was also asked to point out to the Council that the Conservators would wish to be consulted on any future planning applications for the building. The Conservators also considered the possibility of purchasing the property as staff accommodation when it came on the market. Whilst the Clerk & Ranger did not think it would be practical to have a full-time member of staff based at Putney Lower Common, it was agreed that the matter would be considered further once the property came on the market.

10.09.5 Natural History Sub-Committee Report

Farm Bog – Dr Frank reported that work had begun on tree clearance at Farm Bog. The work would, hopefully, be completed over the next week or two.

New Stag Cottages – Mr Horrocks reported that he and Mr Peter Haldane had inspected the shrubs planted in the front gardens of the new Stag Cottages and it had been agreed to replace two of the Aucuba Japonica that had not survived. The Clerk & Ranger was asked to speak to the residents to explain that access would be required to replace the shrubs. He was also asked to check if the conifers planted in the rear garden were surviving.

10.09.6 Dog Walking

The Conservators noted the further e-mail that had been received from a licensed dog-walker about the reduction in the number of dogs that may be walked. The letter from Justine Greening MP in response to a letter from Mr Mark Upton was also noted and the Clerk & Ranger reported that a meeting with Ms Greening would be arranged to discuss the matter in January, prior to the review by the Conservators.

Local resident, Mrs Jenny Brickman, had also written on the matter and the Conservators felt that she had made several important points, in particular about the increasing use of the Commons for commercial activities.

10.09.7 Byelaws/Mr David Essex

The Chairman reported that, as the Conservators were aware, Mr Stephen Hammond MP had taken up Mr Essex's complaints about the legality of Byelaw 10 with Defra. Consequently, an e-mail had been received from Alasdair Grant at Defra asking for clarification on which grounds in Section 84 of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Act 1871, Byelaw 10 had been based. The Deputy Clerk & Ranger and the Chairman had written a reply and this had been sent to Mr Grant; a reply was awaited. A further e-mail had also been received from Mr Essex commenting on a common in East Yorkshire where off-lead dogs and skylarks appeared to co-habit successfully. The Chairman had drafted a reply pointing out there was no comparison

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between a common outside a small Yorkshire town and a common within densely populated London suburbs. His reply was approved subject to a minor amendment.

10.09.8 Putney Hospital

The Chairman reported that a brief meeting had been held with Kate Bradley on Wednesday 30 September to discuss in more detail the Highway Works plans. A further meeting had been arranged for 22 October to allow Mr Horrocks to meet the WPCT's highways advisor to discuss the plans again, in particular the turning head off Commondale. Mr Simon would also attend the meeting. The PA to the Clerk & Ranger was asked to re-send the Highway Works plans to Mr Horrocks and Mr Simon.

The Chairman reported that the WPCT's Board had also met on 30 September and had decided not to proceed with the development of the Putney Hospital site at the moment, although it might be re-considered if alternative accommodation could not be found for the three Putney GP practices.

10.09.9 Carriageway Re-Surfacing – Cannizaro Road

The Chairman reported that the re-surfacing works on Cannizaro Road had started on Monday 5 October. A letter had been received from Mr Gary Marshall of Merton Council setting out the schedule of works and also pointing out that Merton Council would not take any responsibility for the repair of any potholes that appeared outside of the adopted public highway. It was agreed that any complaints would be dealt with if and when they arose. With regard to the Conservators' suggestion that Cannizaro Road should have a 20mph speed restriction, the Clerk & Ranger was asked to follow-up Mr Marshall's suggestion that he write to the Traffic and Highways Service Manager, Mr Mario Lecordier. The Clerk & Ranger was also asked to suggest that a white line be provided along the kerbstones on each side of the roads, particularly Cannizaro Road, to highlight the edges of the highway, especially in the dark.

10.09.10 Thames Tunnel Field Investigations

The Clerk & Ranger reported that, as requested at the September Board meeting, he had written to Mr Jonathan Schofield of Thames Water to ask what the survey work on Putney Lower Common would involve and what measures would be taken to ensure minimum damage to the Common. A reply stated that the scope of the survey was being reviewed, which might result in a change to the survey area. Mr Schofield promised to write again once details had been finalised.

10.09.11 Public Toilets – Windmill Car Park

Mr Plastow reported that the Sub-Committee had met on 21 September. He circulated to the Conservators a list of the requirements that had been agreed. There was some discussion how best to proceed and it was agreed that Mr Plastow would draw up modified plans, based on the original plans, and a third contractor, another specialist, should be asked to provide a quotation as a comparison. The Sub-Committee would then decide which contractor to proceed with and ask them to provide a revised quotation based on the exact requirements.

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10.09.12 Archiving

The Chairman reported that Mr Simon Fenwick, the Archivist, had provided a brief update on the work carried out so far on the archives. Mr Fenwick currently worked two days a week and had so far sorted all the archive files and had boxed approximately 30% of the total into 25 boxes – a copy of the list had been provided for the Conservators and they agreed it was most interesting. Mr Frampton queried why some items from the 1930s were missing. The Deputy Clerk & Ranger thought they may have been stored at the Conservators' former solicitors in Lincoln's Inn Fields and had been destroyed during the bombing in the Second World War. Photographs, plans, press cuttings and minute books still needed to be listed and an index prepared. The Conservators asked if Mr Fenwick could provide a brief future work plan so they could have some idea of how much longer he felt the work would take.

10.09.13 Any Other Business

Southside Common/Murray Road – Mr Plastow reported that there used to be a slab of stone set in the ground marking the site of the old village well on Wimbledon Common opposite the junction of Southside Common and Murray Road. The slab was replaced by the Wimbledon Society some years ago but had been stolen. The Wimbledon Society were prepared to consider replacing the stone again and the Conservators welcomed this. The Conservators also agreed to help fund the project if necessary, and supply the manpower to move the new slab into place.

Christmas Cards – The PA to the Clerk & Ranger explained to the new Conservators that for the last few years the Conservators had manned a small stall in the Windmill Car Park to sell Conservators' Christmas cards and other merchandise during November. She circulated a rota and asked the Conservators if they would complete a form by the end of October to show their availability over three weekends beginning 14/15 November.

Cycling on the Commons – The Chairman reported that he had received a letter from a local resident, Mr Greenwood, complaining about the number of cyclists on the Commons breaking the byelaws, particularly around the golf course. Mr Greenwood suggested that the current level of "no cycling" signs was inadequate. The Clerk & Ranger was asked to arrange a survey of the current signs to see if there were areas where more signs could be usefully placed. It was also suggested that this be made an item on the Agenda for the next Board meeting.

10.09.14 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 9 November 2009 at 5pm at the Information Centre.

The meeting finished at 6.35pm.

David Devon