

**Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on  
Monday 12 December 2022 at 4.30pm at the Wimbledon Common Golf Club, Camp  
Road, London SW19 4UW**

**Conservators:** Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman (DNM)  
Mr Oliver Bennett (OB)  
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Mr Peter Hirsch (PDH)  
Mr Michael Johnston (MJ)  
Mr Peter Shortt (PS)  
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)

**Officers:** Steve Bound, Chief Executive (CE)  
Maggie May, Fundraising Manager (FM)  
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive/Communications  
Officer (EA to CE/CO)

**Members of the public:** No members of the public attended.

ITEM		ACTIONS
12.22.1	<p><b>Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Mr David Hince (DH) Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger. Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer</p>	
12.22.2	<p><b>Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting</b></p> <p>The Chairman declared she was a member of the Thames Hare and Hounds.</p> <p>It was agreed that this did not preclude her from participating in any part of the meeting.</p>	
12.22.3	<p><b>WPCC Board Meetings</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 10 October 2022 were approved. There were no resolutions taken at this meeting.</p>	
10.22.4	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p> <p>The Chairman recorded the appreciation of the Conservators for the heathland management walk that had taken place on 29 November 2022, led by Peter Haldane and supported by the senior team.</p>	

<p><b>12.22.5</b></p>	<p><b>WPCC Forum/Group Meetings</b></p> <p>i. Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting held on 15 November 2022</p> <p>The Board received and noted the draft notes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting held on 15 November 2022.</p> <p>OB commented that the Forum had been focusing on reviewing the draft Land Management Plan.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Forum member, Simon Riley, for agreeing to take the notes of the meetings.</p>	
<p><b>12.22.6</b></p>	<p><b>Approval of the Levy for 2023/24</b></p> <p>The Board received and noted the CE's report setting out the proposals for setting the levy for 2023/24.</p> <p>The Chairman began by explaining that WPCC's power to levy a rate (under the 1871 Act as amended to issue a special levy under the 1990 Statutory Instrument) was one of the most important powers in WPCC's constitution. In December 2020, the Board had agreed a Resolution to set the levy at the maximum rate for a period of five years, which reflected WPCC's financial position given its investment needs and a recognition that budget deficits were not sustainable. The reason for revisiting the matter now was the current level of inflation of some 12.6%, a level that could not have been anticipated in 2020. It was important that the Board ensured that this was still the right decision. It was noted that there was a formal procedure in place if the Board were to revoke this earlier resolution.</p> <p>At their recent meeting on 8 November 2022, the Finance and Investment Committee had considered the matter. They had taken into consideration the current rise in the cost of living and the impact on levy-payers, particularly those who were struggling financially, but there had been reassurance from the local councils that any benefits and reductions to which residents were entitled for council tax purposes also applied to the levy.</p> <p>The proposal to rebase the levy, which was going through the first phase of a consultation process, communicated to the public that the levy at present was not sufficient to meet the charity's needs. To set the levy below the maximum this year could potentially confuse that message.</p> <p>The FIC had also recognised the Conservators' duty under statute to protect and preserve the Commons and under the constitutional framework they should set the levy to cover expenditure, which was also significantly increasing in the current financial climate, plus contingencies and reserve requirements.</p>	

Finally, consideration was also given to WPCC's responsibilities as an employer and the impact that inflation was having on its employees' cost of living.

Having taken this all into account, the FIC recommended to the Board that the levy be set at the maximum level, based on the annual increase in the RPI as at September 2022 of 12.6%.

In response to a question, the Chairman confirmed that the councils were obliged to collect the full levy applied to their area so the rate charged to households who did not receive any reductions compensated for the lower rate charged to those who did. It was noted that because of the way in which the 1990 Statutory Instrument worked, the number of properties within the levy-paying area was not relevant in terms of determining the aggregate revenue raised by the levy. Regardless, it was recognised that it was important that the Board consider the impact on individual levy payers.

It was not yet clear whether the percentage increase to the levy was counted as part of the limit on any increase that the councils were permitted to make under statute.

It was confirmed that commercial properties did not pay the levy.

NW asked for clarification on the estimate of £150,000 for unbudgeted expenditure. The CE advised that this was based on the costs for the replacement of the boilers in the REMPF pavilion and fire safety works at both REMPF and the Ranger's Office. It was noted that this figure included a provision for price increases.

The Board unanimously agreed with the Finance and Investment Committee's recommendation for increasing the levy by the maximum permitted amount.

A public statement would need to be prepared to explain the need for the increase.

### **Resolution**

The Board RESOLVED:

- a. That given the policy agreed by the Board at its meeting on 14 December 2020 to set WPCC's levy at the maximum sum available for a further five year period from 2022/23 to 2026/27 and having noted:
  - (i) the increases experienced in WPCC's rising capital and operational costs as a result of the recent increases in inflation and the impact of such increases on WPCC's operational budget; and
  - (ii) the protection afforded by the benefits and reduction schemes operated by the three local authorities that collect the levy on behalf of WPCC for the purposes of both council tax and WPCC's levy, particularly for those most in need;

AEH/SB to draft statement for approval by the Board.

	<p>to set the levy for 2023/24 at the maximum allowed, which is £1,490,566 representing an increase of 12.6377% from the 2022/23 figure, which reflects the annual increase in RPI for the year to September 2022;</p> <p>b. To prepare a written explanation of the need for the increase the levy to be published through WPCC's normal communications channels.</p>	
<p><b>12.22.7</b></p>	<p><b>Conservation Update</b></p> <p>The Board received and noted the C&amp;EO's Conservation report.</p> <p>In his absence the CE reported on recent works:</p> <p>Heathland Management – the amount of work carried out by volunteers and followed up by the maintenance team had been remarkable and clearance was now back up to pre-Covid levels. There had been five key areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heathland close to the small meadow along the southern section of Centre Path (adjacent to Memorial Ride).</li> <li>• Heathland located close to the junction of Green Ride and Memorial Ride</li> <li>• Heathland located between Roehampton Ride and Ladies Mile</li> <li>• Heathland located between Ladies Mile and Jubilee Path</li> <li>• Heathland to the immediate north of Inner Park Ride.</li> </ul> <p>Heather Management – Heather cutting was one of the key management tasks on the Commons to ensure a good variety of age in the heather. Cutting had taken place on Putney Heath and the seed from the cut was spread over a small heathland scrape recently created north of the A3, just south of the Roehampton War Memorial to re-establish a site that had previously had heather.</p> <p>Grassland Management – largely confined to the small meadow at the southern end of Centre Path, near the Southern Pound. The edges of the surrounding woodland had been cleared to stop further encroachment into the meadow.</p> <p>Woodland Clearance – The Contractors were currently on site clearing 6 hectares of holly from the woodland near Gravelly Ride. Good progress was being made and the contractors were excellent at communicating with the public.</p> <p>SB commented that the recent Heathland walk and been very helpful for the Conservators in gaining an understanding of the work that the volunteers carried out, and the impact it made. It was suggested that a future walk relating to the bogs or the brook would be helpful.</p>	<p>C&amp;EO to note</p>
<p><b>12.22.8</b></p>	<p><b>Land Management Plan</b></p>	

	<p>The Board received and noted the draft of the Land Management chapters that had been completed to date.</p> <p>The CE reported the C&amp;EO had made good progress on the Plan, particularly with Section 1, the Description, and was now making progress with Section 3, the Objectives.</p> <p>Chapters on the Bogs would be completed once the feasibility study had been carried out.</p> <p>Moving forward, the first complete draft should be available for the April Board meeting. The C&amp;EO was still working on some parts of the document and he was also waiting on contributions from the wildlife volunteers.</p> <p>The final draft would be commented on by the Wildlife &amp; Conservation Forum and the Stakeholder Group. Natural England and the Forestry Commission would also need to see the final Plan. The benefit of the two latter organisations approving the Plan was that their consent would not be required for individual projects.</p> <p>With regard to the Board, they would be asked to provide a general overview of the final plan to ensure it met the governance requirements for such a strategic document. The Chairman explained that the Board's role was to provide the governance for the document, overseeing its development, implementation and ongoing monitoring as well as ensuring that the necessary resources were included in the budgets and the business plan.</p> <p>OB commented that members of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum were going through the document in detail but there were a few points he wished to raise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The final draft would need editing to ensure it was easy to access;</li><li>• Clarification would be needed on which projects the Board would commit to spending money on over the period of the Plan;</li><li>• Identifying the "wish list" under each chapter to guide the Fundraising Manager on applying for grants;</li><li>• An executive summary, including the actions that need to be taken;</li><li>• Discuss the best means of communicating the important points in the document to the public. The CE commented that this was included in the plan for the document. NW suggested that, given the size of the document, it might be worth considering employing an editor to produce a smaller summary document that could be more easily understood by the general public.</li><li>• It might be possible to split the document into a series of smaller plans, perhaps the community engagement and the access sections being stand alone. He was keen to emphasise the community/volunteer involvement and develop the strategy on that matter. The Chairman commented that the volunteer strategy was also part of the Masterplan. It had not been included in the recent Masterplan consultation on the advice of the consultants however it was noted that it did need to be looked at. The CE suggested</li></ul>	
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	<p>that community engagement/volunteering would not normally form part of a Land Management Plan and could stand alone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OB commented that the Board had now seen the scale of the conservation challenges and that just one person was being asked to deliver the land management work and the community engagement. Thought should be given as to whether these should be two stand alone roles and that perhaps funding could be found to employ a Community Engagement Officer, if only for a short time.</li> </ul> <p>The CE commented that the target to complete the document was April, and he had advised the C&amp;EO that where background information was required, he should make that an project within the Land Management Plan.</p> <p>OB confirmed that the Wildlife and Conservation Forum had provided feedback that would be incorporated into the second draft. If Conservators had any specific comments or general feedback, they should be sent to the C&amp;EO as soon as possible.</p> <p>The Board wished to record its appreciation to the C&amp;EO for his efforts in producing the Plan.</p>	<p>Conservators to provide any feedback</p>
<p>12.22.9</p>	<p><b>Chief Executive’s Report – Non-Confidential Items</b></p> <p><b>Calendar of Meetings/Events 2023</b></p> <p>The Board noted the two proposed amendments to the Calendar of Meetings/Events for 2023:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Winter Talk – change of date from 14 February to 7 February 2023 to avoid Valentine’s Day. This was noted.</li> <li>2. General Open Meeting – The Chairman and Chief Executive both considered that holding the General Open Meeting in early November had worked well this year. It helped staff in that it eased the WPCC event and meeting congestion around early December and also avoided the start of the Christmas event season, hopefully giving more people the opportunity to attend.</li> </ol> <p>The Board agreed with this proposal and the EA to CE/CO was asked to update the calendar accordingly.</p> <p><b>Suffragette Memorial</b></p> <p><b>The Chairman had received a proposal from</b> representatives of the Dorset Hall Group who were keen to place a plaque/memorial to the suffragettes on Wimbledon Common. Dorset Hall was home to Rose Lamartine Yates, a social campaigner and suffragette. Mrs Lamartine Yates was the Secretary of the Wimbledon branch of the Women’s Social and Political Union, and it was understood that Wimbledon Common played an important part in the suffragette movement as it was regularly used for meetings and speeches as part of the women’s suffrage campaign. These meetings attracted crowds of up to 20,000.</p>	<p>EA to CE/CO to update calendar</p>

	<p>The location for the meetings was unclear, and reports of the meetings reference both 'the Pound' on Wimbledon Common and 'the Flagstaff'.</p> <p>As an aside, the Barker Langham Masterplan had suggested that some form of plaque be put up to explain the Pounds and their history, and the Chairman thought it might be possible to combine the two and make reference to the suffragettes on a sign about the Pounds.</p> <p>It was noted that the Board in 2006 had discussed and rejected a similar request, although it was not clear why it had been rejected.</p> <p>SB commented that she had looked into this, and given the importance of the movement, and the role the Commons played, felt that it should be marked in some way.</p> <p>OB was concerned about setting a precedent but agreed with the suggestion that it could be linked with signage about the Pound, or if it sat within the confines of a building or enclosure. He would be more concerned if it were to take the form of a statue.</p> <p>It was noted that there were other memorials on the Commons, such as the War Memorials, a plaque for Baden-Powell and also the WW1 airfield.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that the costs would be borne by the Dorset Hall Group.</p> <p>Following discussion, the Board agreed in principle to the placing of a memorial subject to them providing further information and the Board approving the final design and location. The Chairman would respond to the Dorset Hall Group accordingly, confirming that they would be expected to pay for it.</p> <p><b>Events Update</b></p> <p>Carols at the Windmill – The event had gone very well and despite the cold weather about 300 to 400 people had attended. The Chairman thanked the EA to CE/CO for organising the event and to all the staff who helped, as well as the Windmill Trustees who were serving hot drinks.</p> <p><b>Winter Talk</b> – EA to CE/CO confirmed that the Winter Talk on 7 February 2023 would be given by Dr Naomi Ewald of the Freshwater Habitats Trust. The focus of the talk would be on ponds and their importance as a habitat and for wildlife. This would be held face to face at the London Scottish Golf Club.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>The Board agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. that future General Open Meetings should be held in early November;</li></ul>	<p>Chairman to write to Dorset Hall Group</p>
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	<p>b. to the principle of placing a memorial to the suffragettes on the Common, subject to Board approval of the design and location of the memorial.</p>	
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<p>12.22.10</p>	<p><b>Fundraising Update</b></p> <p>The Board received and noted the Fundraising Manager's Report.</p> <p>The FM reported as follows:</p> <p><b>Contactless Car Park Donation Machine</b> - £706 has been donated since the last Board update in October. This brings the total donated to £2,062.</p> <p><b>The Hand in Hand Charity of the Year</b> - The Hand in Hand had chosen WPCC as its Charity of the Year. In November they held a pub quiz to raise funds for the Commons and raised £300 from the event. The year would finish in April 2023 and a total raised would be provided when known.</p> <p><b>Waitrose - Community Matters</b> - WPCC received a cheque for £1,000 from the Waitrose Community Matters Scheme. Staff at the Raynes Park store nominated WPCC as one of their local charities to support.</p> <p><b>BCB Bridge</b> - The formal Opening Ceremony took place on Saturday 3 December 2022. The Chairman thanked all those who helped to make the event go so well. It had been a good opportunity to meet most of the large funders and thank them for their support.</p> <p><b>Footpaths</b> – A new appeal had been launched on “Giving Tuesday” on 29 November to help provide the match funding for the grants for footpath repairs. It was hoped to raise £24,000. Just over £1,000 had been raised in the first month. Applications had been submitted to the Merton Community Infrastructure Levy and various other grant funders.</p> <p><b>Commemorative Orchard on Putney Lower Common</b> – The appeal to raise funds for the 12 memorial trees was going well with 8 already sponsored. Additional donations through JustGiving had now raised £3,585 with a further £2,000 pledged from potential tree sponsors. There would be a planting ceremony but it was not yet clear when this would be held as there had been a delay in tree delivery. The CE confirmed that the trees had been carefully selected and were native and suitable for the soil type on Putney Lower Common.</p> <p><b>Applications to the Mayor of London's environmental funding schemes</b></p> <p>Rewild London Fund - WPCC has submitted an application to carry out a pond survey and landscape design of Queensmere Pond, plus the delivery of a pond/water monitoring training course for staff and volunteers.</p>	
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	<p>Green and Resilient Spaces - This grant scheme is expected to open in the new year and WPCC would be submitting an application seeking funding for some of the conservation and access projects proposed in the Masterplan.</p> <p>PDH asked if there had been any progress made with approaching cyclists to ask if they could provide funding towards cycle path repairs. The CE commented that upgrading the cycle routes was scheduled for the third year of the Business Plan and they would be approached then through the contact who now sat on the Stakeholder Forum.</p> <p>The Board recorded their appreciation to the FM for her hard work in fundraising from the Commons and congratulated her on her first year working for WPCC.</p>	
<p><b>12.22.11</b></p>	<p><b>Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons</b></p> <p>SB gave a verbal report.</p> <p>SB reminded Conservators that there were two arms to the Friends - fundraising and celebration. Funds were raised mainly through membership and in the New Year she would be discussing with the FM ways to increase corporate and benefactor sponsorship.</p> <p>Membership continued to grow slowly, and it was important to ensure that events were held specifically for them. Four seasonal events were planned, the first of which was to be held on 18 December 2022 and would be a tour and talk on the Windmill and the surrounding complex. Conservators were welcome to come along.</p> <p>The Art on the Commons competition had been relaunched, in a slightly different format and would run from December through to November 2023.</p> <p>With regard to celebration, the Friends were looking to organise an event to mark the King's Coronation. The nature of the event was still under discussion but any comments from the Board would be welcomed. SB confirmed this would be an additional event as part of a borough-wide series of events. There was a suggestion that the event could have a "green" theme given the environmental interests of the King.</p> <p>OB suggested that perhaps the Open Day should be cancelled so that staff could focus on a large Coronation event. However, as they were quite different events and at different times, it was agreed not to merge the events. He further suggested that the Board consider what the benefit to the Commons would be in holding such an event. Whilst it was hoped that the event would break even, it was important from a reputational/community perspective.</p> <p>The Board agreed that the Friends Committee should continue to look into the options and come back to the Board with a proposal in February.</p>	<p>Friends Committee</p>

<b>10.22.12</b>	<b>Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting</b>  There were no members of the public present.	

