



**CONSERVATORS' PUBLIC MEETING**  
to be held on  
**Monday 14 October 2024 at 4.30pm**  
in the Information Centre, Ranger's Office,  
Manor Cottage, London SW19 5NR

## **AGENDA**

### **PART A(1) PUBLIC**

- 10.24.1 Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence**
- 10.24.2 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting**
- 10.23.3 WPCC Board Meetings**
- i. Resolutions of the Board Meeting 22 July 2024 **Page 1**  
ii. Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 22 July 2024 **Page 3**
- 10.24.4 Matters Arising**  
There are no matters arising on this part of the Agenda
- 10.23.5 Board and Committee Matters**  
There are no Board and Committee Matters for this part of the Agenda
- 10.24.6 Chief Executive's Report** **Page 10**
- 10.24.7 Conservation Update** **Page 15**
- 10.24.8 Fundraising Update** **Page 27**
- 10.24.9 Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Report** **Verbal**
- 10.24.10 WPCC Forum/Group Meetings**
- To note the minutes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting held on 16 July 2024 **Page 28**
- 10.24.11 Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting**
-



## Wimbledon and Putney Commons

### Resolution agreed at the Board Meeting held on Monday 22 July 2024

#### Part A1 Public

##### 07.24.5 Committee Matters

###### Resolution

The Board approve the appointment of Peter Shortt as Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee and Mauro Mattiuzzo as Chairman of the Constitution Committee.

#### Part A2 Confidential

##### 07.24.15 Board, Committee and Forum Matters

###### Resolution

The Board approved the appointment of Conservator, Sue Bucknall, to the Audit and Risk Committee.

###### Resolution

The Board:

1. approved the establishment of an Environment and Sustainability Committee
2. approved the Terms of Reference for the Committee
3. approved the appointment of Oliver Bennett and Michael Johnston as the Conservator representatives on the Committee and
4. approved the appointment of Oliver Bennett, being the Defra Appointed Conservator, as Chairman of the Committee.

##### 07.24.18 Dedications and Memorials Policy

###### Resolution

The Board unanimously approved the resolution to revoke the existing policy on benches (as approved in September 2012).

#### Present

Conservators: Mauro Mattiuzzo (MM)  
Oliver Bennett (OB)  
Mr David Brown (DB)  
Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Michael Johnston (MJ)  
Mr William Liu (WL)  
Peter Shortt (PS)

Officers: Colin Cooper, Chief Executive (CE)  
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer  
Lynnie Farrant, Fundraising Manager  
Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger  
Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (C&EO)

Apologies: Philip Warner, Management Accountant

**Draft Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on  
Monday 22 July 2024 at 4.30pm at the Information Centre, Manor Cottage,  
London SW19 5NR**

**Conservators:** Mauro Mattiuzzo (MM)  
Oliver Bennett (OB)  
David Brown  
Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Michael Johnston (MJ)  
William Liu (WL)  
Peter Shortt (PS)

**Officers:** Colin Cooper, Chief Executive (CE)  
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer  
Lynnie Farrant, Fundraising Manager  
Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger  
Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (C&EO)

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

**PART A(1) PUBLIC**

**07.24.1 Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence**

Philip Warner, Management Accountant

**07.24.2 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting**

SB advised that she would now be representing WPCC on the Board of Trustees for the Windmill Museum Trust. She would recuse herself from discussions if the need arose.

**07.23.3 WPCC Board Meetings**

The Resolutions of the Board Meeting 3 June 2024 and the Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 3 June 2024 were approved.

**07.24.4 Matters Arising**

**06.23.3 WPCC Board Meetings** - The EA to the Chief Executive/CO was asked to send calendar invites for the remaining Board meetings this year - **Completed**

**06.24.9 Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Report** - DB commented that many people he spoke to locally were not aware of the Friends and suggested a campaign through the local Residents' Associations, perhaps via their annual newsletters, to improve visibility of Friends. The Chairman also suggested an occasional stall at the Village Farmer's Market. This was agreed. **Ongoing**

**Staff** - The Board noted that the new Keeper was now in position and fitting in well.

## **07.23.5 Board and Committee Matters**

### **i. Chair of Constitution Committee and Audit and Risk Committee**

The Board approved the appointment of Mauro Mattiuzzo as Chairman of the Constitution Committee and Peter Shortt as Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee.

### **ii. Calendar of Meetings for 2025**

The Board noted the draft calendar of meetings for 2025 and were asked to provide feedback to the EA to CE before the next Board meeting.

**ACTION: ALL**

## **07.24.6 Chief Executive's Report**

The Board received and noted the Chief Executive's Public Report.

**Keepers' Update** - During June, the team continued to operate with four Keepers. The new Keeper, Carl Lacey, had started work on 8 July and had settled in well. Another recruitment process was underway to fill the remaining post – the advert had gone viral on Facebook and the publicity has resulted on nearly 70 applications to date.

The improving weather has increased visitor numbers with the start of the annual small gatherings of teenagers near The Causeway and Rushmere. There had been several incidents of end of term gatherings and one had over 200 children burning school books etc. some alcohol and drug paraphernalia were found.

With dusk being later the late turn Keeper is finishing at 2130hrs and the late-turn Keeper has had time to deal with "bandit" golfers including four unpaid green fees on a Bank Holiday – this amounts to a £160 loss to the Golf Club but, more importantly, the golfers are not covered by either club's insurance. There is also regular damage being done on the Greens in the evening or early hours of the morning. We are fully aware of this and will try to tackle it with better signage and when up to full strength increase number on late turn to deal with this. It is suspect the cyclists come to the Common when they know it is clear of staff.

Staff are working with a visitor who is walking an XL bully without a muzzle. He has also approached staff for help with in acclimatising his dog to horses.

The horses are all well and, on a rota basis, are enjoying a month off at grass.

There have been several public engagement visits from local schools.

### **Maintenance Update**

The Maintenance Team have been continuing with routine summer work, focusing on tree safety, mowing and completing the installation of the Fixed Point Photography Posts, other than the one at Queensmere which will be put in when the regeneration work starts.

With regard to mowing, the work has mainly focused on sightlines and overgrown paths. There have been many compliments on social media about how the cutting has been managed this year and the Commons are being held up as an example to other organisations that manage open spaces in the area.

## **Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields Update**

Builders arrived to start work on the new Boiler Room and this has now been completed, painted and emergency lighting installed.

The team have been Verti-Draining the pitches, a time-consuming exercise which takes some 6 hours per pitch. The Verti-drain was borrowed from the golf clubs and unfortunately it broke during use. The team were able to repair the broken part, saving some £700.

Two members of the team attended a groundsman seminar the Crowborough RFU ground, where there were some very interesting workshops and demonstrations. The main topic was drainage and the number of litres of water per pitch compared to previous years.

Doko Challenge, to raise money for the Gurkha Welfare, held a very successful day raising £6000 at a sponsored run event. The entrants carry baskets weight with sand ranging from 5kg, 10kg, and 15kg over a 5k run. The first back recorded a time of 24 minutes.

Work is underway to renew the weekend football contracts. The pitches are always popular and there is a waiting list for any availability.

The Mongolian Day of Culture was held on Sunday 7 July. Although the weather was far from kind, with thunder/lightening and heavy rain, this didn't prevent them having a good time.

## **General**

### **Incident – 25 June 2024**

On 25 June an Air Ambulance landed behind the Windmill Car Park with several police cars and ambulances in attendance following a report of a member of the public who had caused himself harm. Staff were involved in ferrying police and ambulance staff to the location. Fortunately the gentleman was found in good time and taken to hospital. Nothing further has been heard.

**Wimbledon Tennis Complaints** Since the set up of the Complaints page on the WPCCC website some years ago, a large number of complaints are received in relation to the tennis championships. Updates had been made to the website to advise complainants that they had reached the wrong site and giving the correct details. Around 100 e-mails had been received compared to 2023's total of 200 so hopefully that messaging is working.

## **Community Engagement and Events**

### **“Commons Therapy” visit – 5 June 2024**

The EA to CE is part of a group called “Commons Therapy” which is made up of representatives from other open spaces such as Malvern Hills, Tunbridge and Rusthall Commons, Ashdown Forest, Banstead Commons and Cleeve Common. They meet quarterly via Zoom to discuss matters that are of interest but on 5 June, Officers hosted the group for a visit here on the Commons. It proved invaluable from their perspective, and indeed for WPCCC staff, and it was a great opportunity to swap knowledge and learn from each other.

**Weekend of Nature** – The annual Weekend of Nature took place on 21 to 23 June 2023. The weather held fair and all events were able to go ahead, other than the moth-trapping on the Saturday evening as our volunteer was struggling with bad hay fever. A full report is being prepared but highlights included:

- 8 field mice caught as part of the Small Mammal Survey
- 6 species of bat:
- A Sparrowhawk and Red Kite
- Kestrel catching its prey
- Bee Orchids
- Small Heath butterfly

The EA to the CE reported that the walks were fully subscribed and it was busy around the base camp most of the morning. The Conservators complemented the volunteers on leading some very interesting walks.

The Chairman thanked all the volunteers for giving up their time in particular, Les Evans-Hill, for participating in several events.

### **Annual Open Meeting – 24 June 2024**

As it had not been possible to prepare the minutes of the meeting, and given that the next Board meeting was not until October 2024, the Board agreed that they would approve the draft minutes of the AOM by e-mail so that they could be published on the website in draft form, with the proviso that they are brought to the October meeting for formal approval.

**Benches on Rushmere** – SB reported that the recently refurbished bench on Rushmere had been surrounded by broken glass. Several ideas were discussed, including some suggested by the recent Walk and Talk group. It was suggested that a message be sent to schools as the end of term approached and ask them to pass the message on to their students, and to put up some additional signage.

In more overgrown areas, there would be some clearance work to open the areas up and make them less attractive for groups of youngsters.

It was noted that additional bins are put out on Rushmere during the summer, although they remain locked during the week to avoid being filled by local residents' own rubbish.

**E-Bikes** – It was confirmed that e-bikes were permitted on the Commons but that the hire bikes should not be able to be docked on the Commons as an electronic exclusion zone was in place. Any found on the Commons were moved out to the adjacent pavements. There were issues with them being used off the permitted cycle paths and causing damage to the golf course. It was not possible to chase them but tasking this issue would take precedence when the keeper team was up to strength.

**ACTION: EA to CE**

### **07.24.7 Conservation Update**

The Board received and noted the Conservation and Engagement Officer's report. The following points were highlighted:

**Heathland Management** – Over the past two months, heathland management on the Commons has involved scrub bashing on the heathland near Roehampton Ride, Jubilee Path and Centre Path. Denser areas are avoided as it is still bird-nesting season.

All scrub bashing sessions are followed up by the Commons' Maintenance Team to ensure that all small tree stumps were made safe, and all cut materials were chipped. Low growing bramble has also been mown within the confines of a woodland edge close to Ladies Mile. Bracken rolling will be starting shortly on all areas of open heathland.

**The Beverley Brook** - The Conservation team have been reducing shade bearing trees and branches along the edge of the Brook, mainly sycamore. Two visits have been made to Wimbledon Common and one session has been made to Putney Lower Common. Volunteer litter picking sessions have been held along the Wimbledon Common section of the Beverley Brook and volunteers have also carried out further clearance of Himalayan balsam on Wimbledon Common

**Pond Management** - all visible signs of a highly invasive plant called Duck potato (also known as broadleaf arrowhead) have been removed from Ravine Pond. Native to southern Canada and most of the contiguous United States, this plant can be marginal or submerged aquatic. It is anticipated that further visits will be required in the future to help control this species and the Pond will be regularly monitored.

**Grassland Management** – Work has mainly focused on controlling bracken and bramble from invading the edge of several fairways. The next stage would be to remove much of the top layer of mulch to allow the grass to grow through. All the fairways have been measured to ensure they do not exceed a width of 20 metres.

**Wildlife monitoring** – The Bat Conservation Trust have asked if the Commons would take part in a national bat survey and allow the temporary installation of static bat detectors to monitor bat activity. The device will remain in situ for two periods of five nights in July 2024, and it is anticipated this will be an annual monitoring site. The data will contribute to the production of bat species population trends at the GB, England and London/Southeast scales. The results from this survey will be shared with the Commons in due course.

**Putney Lower Common Trail Cameras** - Two trail cameras were positioned on Putney Lower Common during June 2024, utilising funds left over from the recent bridge appeal. The following species have been identified:

- Grey squirrel
- Brown rat
- Red fox
- Domestic dog
- Small mammal (difficult to identify but probably a mouse)
- Magpie
- Robin
- Pigeon
- Hedgehog

#### **07.24.8 Fundraising Update**

The Board received and noted the Fundraising Manager's Report.

The following points were highlighted:

Donations



The Fundraising Manager and members of the Friends of WPCC attended the Park Run Summer Run which was held on the Commons. Despite the inclement weather and relatively low turnout, just shy of £600 was raised. Friends were looking at having a similar presence at future events taking place on the Commons.

### **Rewilding Queensmere**

Tenders had been sent out to potential suppliers who have a deadline of mid-August to submit proposals. They were all provided with details plans on which to quote. Supplementary funds will be raised by the offer of memorial benches and other dedications on site.

### **The Big Give**

Following the success of the Big Give earlier this year, we are applying to the Big Give Christmas Challenge to run a match fund campaign for the Queensmere project, deadline 19 July. A further submission had been made to the Big Give for their Christmas Fund which, if successful would go towards the project.

**Dedications** - A master list of WPCC benches is being created to identify potential new locations for benches to be offered to applicants on the dedications waiting list. Existing benches would also be reviewed with the aim of contacting the donators to either renew the memorial or free up the space. OB Noted tat Greenwich Park was offering benches for £15,000 and the FM would look into their offering.

### **07.24.9 Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Report**

SB reported as follows:

The Friends were very grateful for the Fundraising Manager's hard work, having been in post for just a few weeks.

Friends membership was currently

Benefactors – 50  
Household – 330 (660)  
Individual - 227

A membership drive was planned and also to introduce a Direct Debit option for membership fees. This would prevent the issue of memberships lapsing when credit/debit cards expired.

Income for the first quarter was £7,895 including Gift Aid.

Fundraising events were currently being organised, including a Friends' "birthday" event. but SB also planned to introduce one large event each year to bring in a larger amount of donations. This would probably take the form of a "walkathon" around the Commons. A half-marathon may also be organised for 2025.

The next event would be a visit to the House of Commons on 5 August 2024.

### **07.24.10 WPCC Forum/Group Meetings**

### **Wildlife and Conservation**

- i. The Board noted the draft minutes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum held on 7 May 2024.
- ii. The Board noted the 2023 Annual Monitoring Report and congratulated all those involved in its production.
- iii. The Board approved a Media Release to accompany publication of the Monitoring report subject to some grammatical amendments.

**ACTION: EA to CE**

**07.24.11 Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting**

There were no questions.

The meeting finished at 5.30pm

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	14 October 2024	10.24.6
<b>Subject:</b> Chief Executive's Report	<b>Public</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons	<b>For Information</b>	
<h1>SUMMARY</h1>		
<b>Draft Recommendation:</b>		
That the Board receive and note the report.		

## Keepers' Update

The Keepers are now up to a full complement of six, having been one team member down since the end of September 2023 and two team members down for a few months.

With the first new keeper, Carl, starting on 8 July 2024, the second vacancy has now been filled by Kris Newell and he joined the team on 30 September 2024. Kris previously worked for Thames Water, but prior to that he spend 22 years in The Household Cavalry. We had a very lengthy recruitment campaign to find the right person to fill the role.

The annual "Ball Boys party" at The Rushmere went off without incident. The informal gathering usually takes place on the last day of the tennis championships but as that coincided with England football team playing in the World Cup final, there was much less activity than in previous years. Nor was there a police presence as they were deployed elsewhere. The event seems to have died down since Covid.

There have been numerous traveller incursions in nearby open spaces. This led to the locking of three of the Commons' four car parks. The Keepers spent a lot of time monitoring the situation in Ham and Kingston. The most recent incursion was at the Charrington Bowl in Tolworth but has since moved on and there have ben no further reports. .

WPCC has received several reports about a lady who frequents Nurses Walk off Parkside near the Village. She either sits surrounded by bags, or is walking up and down the path, moving her bags as she goes. Staff have spoken to the Merton Rough Sleeper team and they do not believe she is homeless as she is always clean and tidy. Staff have approached her to see if we can help but this does seem to cause her some distress and results in her raising her voice and backing away. The Merton team have experienced similar behaviour. The Merton team have spoken to the police as she was seen urinating in the road and they had hoped the police could take her in so that she could be given some help. This has not yet happened so she is still in the area and having moved from the horseride (where she was spooking the horses) and from the War Memorial area (where she was upsetting local residents) she is now tucked away in a small area of woodland just off Parkside.

The nice weather at the end of the summer brought out a series of flashers. This is something the Keepers take very seriously and always attempt to apprehend the culprit, but without any success to date as they tend to disappear off the Commons very quickly. However, at the end of August, a member of the public called the police and after a brief search, along Inner Windmill Road a male was arrested for a public order offence, he was either too drunk or under the influence of drugs to make a getaway. Unfortunately he did not match the description of previous offenders.

The horses have all returned from their months' vacation in Cobham. The new horse, Bold Conduct, (who has been here almost a year) really benefited from the break and has returned much calmer and settled in the routine. Scrumpy came back a bit footsore, but Keepers have worked with the farriers and vets and I am pleased to report he is back to full work and is sound.

To bring the horses up to a full complement, Keepers have been looking at a military working horse called Galway. She is an ex Royal Horse Artillery officers charger. 16 years old and perfectly sound, Keepers have been able to negotiate her purchase for a very reasonable price.

### **Maintenance Update**

The following work has been carried out as part of the Maintenance Team's general site management work:

- Continued work on completing the forest school site, for use by and located next to, Roehampton Church School.
- Continuing the mowing and strimming vegetation management, including maintaining good safe access for all by clearing pavement and roadside edges, maintaining safe pedestrian and vehicle sightlines, cutting fire breaks and maintaining internal pathways, and cutting a small number of historically mowed amenity areas for use throughout the year.
- Strimming/mowing around bins, benches, posts, newly planted trees, the different memorials, and other important infrastructure.
- Regular digging out drainage run offs and emptying catchpits in key locations in preparation for and maintenance during the heavy rains.
- Path, track, and horse ride repairs and regrades due to bad damage from heavy water erosion.
- Lifting of low tree branches (to aid visibility in some areas), the sensitive and controlled cutting back of some sucker growth and the ringing of ivy as part of the pre tree safety inspection process.

Tree Safety/Habitat Management:

- Stump reduction and scrub chipping as part of the aftercare work following staff/volunteer heathland and scrub basher sessions.
- Tree safety work – Some reactive and some planned as part of external (monthly professional tree inspection contractor) and internal tree inspections and observations.
- Continued with projects to create seasonal ponds and wet woodland areas with our excavator by diverting and flooding ditches in suitable locations.
- The continued lifting of low trees branches across the main paths and tracks to allow better access for emergency vehicles and the meadow bailing contractors
- Bracken bruising/rolling continued across selected sites, heavy with bracken growth.
- Control of scrub and bramble encroachment, around thicker rank grassland by tractor mowing to continue with the early stages of grassland and heathland restoration works.

- In addition to the contractor bailing on some of our larger grassland and meadow sites, the Maintenance Team has carried out cut and collect mowing across a number of sensitive meadows where grassland and heathland restorations work continues to be an important focus.

#### Other Tasks

- With the recent and serious traveller incursion threat looming over the Commons during the late summer period, the maintenance team's role was to make sure the any potential sites of ingress were secured, by installing extra wooden posts and moving large tree trunks/butts to block access gates, as well as being a reaction force in case any incursions did occur.
- Along with our regular litter picking duties on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath, since Bill Rowland's retirement, the team is now responsible for all the litter and dog bin emptying duties at PLC as well as twice weekly litter picking efforts around the whole of that site and its many roadside verges.
- Other larger scale waste related jobs include the tidy up and litter pick after the Wimbledon tennis ball boys party on Rushmere, as well as dealing with a number of small and large scale fly tips, including one where a large amount of full builders paint tins were dumped.
- The annual task of getting our used tyres removed to be recycled was completed, with over 40 tyres this year - a mix of tyres that were dumped across the site and some coming from our own fleet vehicles.
- A number of new and replacement memorial benches have been installed at sites including along the Beverley Brook towpath, Centre Path, and the Rushmere site.
- A public access defibrillator has been fitted at the Maintenance Centre building. The funds for this were raised by Wimbledon High School.
- The Commons' Open Day is a really special event for the public and staff alike, and the run up to the event is a busy time for everyone. The Maintenance Team was involved in prepping the site by cut and collect mowing the area, lifting trees and creating safety sightlines, installing underground cables, fixing pathways, erecting tents as well as cleaning up the display vehicles and equipment ready to be presented to the visitors.

On the day, the team ran the popular tractor and trailer rides, helped with the setup, assisting the stall holders, car parking duties, answering queries and questions around our display materials, all the litter picking and bin emptying duties on the day, and then was integral in packing the whole thing away at the end of the day!

- Continued maintenance inspections to the Windmill were carried out by staff, covering both the external mill structure as well as the internal museum.
- Supervised volunteer parties including groups of children from the Roehampton community on Putney Heath and the assisting with the Beverley Brook litter picking sessions.
- The team continued to supply the Ashburton Estates' Community Gardeners in Roehampton, with our waste manure and composted woodchip to help with their community gardening projects opposite Putney Heath Rd.
- The team attended the biennial APF (Arb) Show, which is the UK's largest forestry, woodland and arboricultural show located at the Radley Estate in Warwickshire, where

new forms of equipment, tools, and techniques in the management of woodland and open spaces were being displayed and demonstrated.

## **Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields Update**

Work for the REMPF team has included the regular weekly tasks of mowing, marking out, litter picking and emptying the bins.

The football and rugby seasons began at the end of August so the team have been working hard to ensure the pitches are in good condition for play. This has included using a Verti Drain on the front pitches and the areas on the extension field where the majority of the flooding has previously occurred. The schools are also now back on site and pitches have been marked out for them.

There has unfortunately been some vandalism damage to the club house veranda – they kicked down the handrails and uprights - which the team has repaired. There was also damage to the doors of the public toilets and new CCTV cameras have now been installed at the rear of the building.

The team visited Malvern College for a Fleet Line Marker pre-launch of their Robot line marker. This was a chance to see the equipment in action and to network with people from all over the world.

The REMPF car park is the most vulnerable when it comes to illegal incursions and so it remained locked for several weeks. This does mean more work for the team as they have to be around to unlock/lock the gates when required.

Events starting at the Playing Fields have included the RunThrough half Marathon & 10K run and the Street Child Charity run.

## **General**

Fire/Intruder Alarms – the alarm systems at the Ranger's Office, Windmill and Maintenance Centre. Lightning conductor testing on both the windmill and radio mast at the Ranger's Office has also been completed.

## **Community Engagement and Events**

### **1. Open Day**

Despite the thunderstorms and torrential rain that occurred in the early hours of the morning, the weather on the Open Day dawned sunny and dry and fortunately stayed that way all day. This was the most commented upon feature of the day! The day was a huge success in respect of PR for the Commons with some lovely feedback from visitors. There has been an initial full team de-brief with some suggestions for next year, and the smaller organising team will consider these in more details in due course.

### **2. PLC walk**

The Chief Executive, along with the Conservation and Engagement Officer and the Maintenance Manager met a group of residents to talk about work and future arrangements for staffing at Putney Lower Common.

### **3. Pumpkin Hunt**

The Annual Children's Pumpkin Hunt will take place on Saturday 26 October, based at the Windmill. There will be some additional attractions such as Reptile Events, a face painter and the Windmill Trustees are running a craft session. If anyone is available to volunteer on the day it would be much appreciated. It runs from 10.30am to 4.00pm.

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	14 October 2024	10.24.7
<b>Subject:</b> Conservation Update		<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Conservation and Engagement Officer		<b>For Information</b>

## Summary

The Board are asked to note this report which provides a summary of Conservation activity during August, September and October 2024.

### Heathland Management

Over the past three months, heathland management on the Commons has included:

- Volunteer groups (x 17) scrub bashing on the heathland. Areas have included heathland between Jubilee Path & Inner Park Ride, heathland between Roehampton Ride & Ladies Mile and heathland adjacent to Centre Path and The Plain.



*Putney Heath scrub bashing sites: 22 July 2024 to 14 October 2024 (above)*





*Wimbledon Common scrub bashing sites: 22 July to 14 October 2024 (above)*

- All scrub bashing sessions were followed up by the Commons Maintenance Team to ensure that small tree stumps were made safe and all cut materials on open sites were chipped. Where possible, the volume of chipping required has been reduced by using cut sapling to create dead hedges. This has been carried out on two heathland locations.
- In addition to the scrub bashing that has been carried out by volunteers, the Commons' Conservation Team have also carried out additional tree thinning work on three heathland sites. These sites have included heathland located near Centre Path, heathland located near Tibbet's Corner and heathland located near Kingsmere.

## Grassland Management

Over the past three months, the following management has been carried out on the Commons grassland sites.

- Preparation for the cut and collect work that was carried out by a contractor on nine of the largest grassland sites on the Commons. This work involved the removal of ragwort, the removal of notices around The Plain, the marking out of areas on The Plain where the contractor was not required to mow, the removal of all obstructions on The Plain which could damage machinery and the strimming of all hazards such as concrete utility covers and deep depressions in the ground.
- The nine areas where cut and collect was carried out by the contractor included: Wimbledon Village Fairground site, West Place, Wilberforce Field, Centre Path Meadow, The Plain, Tibbet's Meadow, Putney Heath Fairground site, Putney Lower

Common Fairground site and Putney Lower Common Main Field. The total area for this year's cut and collect by the contractor is approximately 23.5 hectares.



*Cut & collect work taking place on the Wimbledon Village Fairground site during the week of the 12 August 2024. Cut & collect was carried out on The Plain during the week of the 21 August 2024.*

For the smaller and less accessible grassland sites on the Commons, vegetation was cut and collected on 14 sites by the Commons' Maintenance Team. This work was carried out during the middle of September 2024. Areas have included:

- Open Day area near Manor Cottage
- Windmill complex verges
- Wildlife Garden
- Windmill Road Triangle
- Grassland opposite the LSGC Club House
- Area surrounding the Oasis Academy on PLC.
- Scout Field Meadow (near REMF)
- Crossroads Meadow
- Roehampton Heathland site
- Crabtree's Meadow (located near Kingsmere underpass)
- Area adjacent to Memorial Ride
- Southern Pound Meadow
- Westside Common verges
- Brickfield site



*Cut & collect work at Crossroads Meadow (September 2024)*

### **Wimbledon Common Golf Course.**

During the past three months, the main activity that has been carried out by Common's staff has involved the cut and collect of vegetation along seven fairways. These fairways include:

- LSGC 1 Elcho
- LSGC 2 Big Ravine
- LSGC 3 Long Butt
- LSGC 4 Running Deer
- LSGC 5 Queensmere
- LSGC 6 Sandpits
- LSGC 18 Windmill (northside)



At various intervals during 2024, the width of fairways and the adjoining semi-rough has been measured by PH and they have been found to be satisfactory. As agreed with the Head Greenkeeper for the Wimbledon Common Golf Course, Ian Jennings, PH has been regularly kept up to date with other actions that have been carried out on the golf course.

### **Putney Lower Common**

Over the past three months, the main conservation-based activities that have taken place on Putney Lower Common have included:

- Watering the 12 orchard trees
- Monitoring the two wildlife cameras that are currently on-site.
- Cleaning the 12 bird nesting boxes that are currently on PLC.
- Contract cut & collect of two large grassland sites.
- Cut and collect by the Maintenance Team of the grassland area surrounding the Oasis Academy.
- Mowing carried out by the Maintenance Team of remaining grassland sites on PLC.
- Japanese knotweed managed on site by the Maintenance Team.
- Yellow rattle planted on two areas of grassland.

## **Beverley Brook**

Over the past three months, there have been regular volunteer litter picking events carried out along the Wimbledon Common section of the Beverley Brook. Vegetation has also been cut along the bankside of the Wimbledon Common section of the Beverley Brook (approximately 230 metres). This work was carried out to allow increased levels of light to reach the channel and to improve access along this part of the Commons.

## **Wildlife**

Trail Cameras:

Since 19 June 2024, there have been two trail cameras positioned on Putney Lower Common. For added security, both cameras are located close to the Rangers enclosure. Both cameras have been regularly monitored by the Conservation Ranger and at the current time, there have been 17 separate species photographed.

- Grey squirrel
- Brown rat
- Red fox
- Domestic dog
- Domestic cat
- Small mammal (difficult to identify but probably a wood mouse)
- Hedgehog
- Magpie
- Robin
- Pigeon
- Blue tit
- Great tit
- Jay
- Dunnock
- Song thrush
- Wren
- Red admiral



### **Bird nesting boxes:**

During October 2024, 31 bird nesting boxes were cleaned and inspected by the Commons' Conservation Department. From this number, 27 nests had been occupied during the year (one nest box was occupied by a family of wood mice) and four showed no sign of nest building.

During October and November 2024, an additional 55 bird nesting boxes will be installed around various locations on the Commons. All 55 nesting boxes are 1B Schwegler nest boxes. These nest boxes are constructed from woodcrete which is a breathable blend of wood, concrete and clay which will not rot, leak, crack or warp, whilst preventing condensation and maintaining more constant temperatures inside than wooden boxes. These nest boxes have a life expectancy of between 20-25 years.

The reason behind the dramatic increase in the number of bird nest boxes on the Commons is partly to increase the number of much needed breeding and roosting space for cavity-nesting species but also to provide nature-based solutions for the control of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM).

Nature based solutions are defined by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2022) as *"actions which enlist elements of nature or natural processes to address a particular problem, or suite of problems, faced by society and which deliver multiple benefits in the form of public goods"*.

There are currently several studies that have been carried out in the United Kingdom and Europe that draw on nature-based solutions to control OPM populations. One piece of evidence that has arisen from these studies is the role that natural and native predators have on controlling OPM. One native predator that has been found to have a dramatic impact on OPM has been Great tits (and to a slightly lesser degree, Blue tits). Great tits have been

noted to predate OPM at all life stages, with Great tit chicks consuming up to 800 caterpillars per fortnight. Blue tits also predate on OPM but only at the first two larval stages.

As noted in one Forestry Commission report:

*“Encouraging Great tits in areas with OPM populations could be a way to start reducing those population sizes in your area of management. There are further benefits to attracting birds to public areas – particularly as birds become increasing tools for encouraging public interest in the environment and increasing perception of nature as both relaxing and beneficial to health. Additionally, there have been links between abundance of birds in an area and higher levels of seed dispersal, as well as pollination rates”.*

In terms of UK legislation, the Environment Act 2021 provided enhancement to the biodiversity duty from the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) which came into force in January 2023. The biodiversity duty requires local authorities, public bodies, and businesses with duties for land which deliver something of public importance to actively and measurably further biodiversity goals in their areas (UK GOV, 2023). Increasing floral diversity using native flora, amending mowing regimes and encouraging (and providing resource for) bird and bat presence are actions that are considered to fit within the remit of the biodiversity duty, and could be included in any statutory reporting requirements authorities have.



*Bird nesting box located on Putney Heath*

## **London in Bloom 2024**

As a testament to the ongoing commitment of all those individuals who help to look after the Commons, in October 2024, both Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common were presented with a Gold Award at this year's London in Bloom awards which was held at RHS

Garden, Wisley. In addition to this very welcome result, Wimbledon Common was also presented with the trophy for London Common/Open Space of the year 2024.

#### Gold Award

An exceptionally high standard demonstrated throughout. A consistent approach, which demonstrates both best practice and sustainable effort. Meets all of the judging criteria and objectives of London in Bloom and scores very highly in each section of the judge's criteria.  
Outstanding – 170-200 points (85% - 100%)

The London in Bloom campaign is the largest horticultural campaign in London, involving hundreds of different communities from around the Capital each year. Aiming to increase community involvement, care for our environment and maintain our precious Green Spaces, in 2024, the London in Bloom Campaign entered its 56th year of operation and the Commons are very proud to have been involved with this important event since 2009.

#### **The key aims of the campaign are:**

1. To make London a greener and more pleasant place to live and visit.
2. To recognise the role of volunteers in supporting London's parks and green spaces.
3. Encourage all the community to care for our environment.
4. Work to increase biodiversity in London.
5. Develop and share best practice amongst all who work to green London.

This year, two London in Bloom judges visited Wimbledon Common on 17 June and a separate judge visited Putney Lower Common on 26 June and both entries were marked under the following categories:

#### **Section A: Making way for people**

- Access for all
- Signage and visitor information

#### **Section B – Welfare of Parks Users**

- staff/voluntary presence
- control of anti-social behaviour

#### **Section C – Facilities (appropriate provision, accessibility and appearance of facilities)**

- Quality and maintenance of facilities

#### **Section D – Maintenance (including control of litter, graffiti and vandalism)**

- Horticultural/formal features
- Woodlands and hedgerows



- Ponds and lakes
- Sporting and recreational facilities

#### **Section E - Maintenance of hard landscape features**

- Paths, benches, bins, hides and shelters

#### **Section F - Environmental sustainability (Management of natural resources)**

- Control of litter and graffiti and actions to control fly tipping and unwanted egress.

#### **Section G – Conservation**

- Management of natural features, wildlife and flora

#### **Section H -Community Involvement**

- Volunteers and use as an educational resource for schools

While we endeavour to build upon each year's success at this annual event, we are very pleased that out of a total score of 200 points, Wimbledon Common was awarded 189 points and not too far behind, Putney Lower Common was awarded 182 points.



## Meetings attended & Public engagement:

PH attended the [London Urban Forest Workshop](#) at City Hall London (July 2024) The London Urban Forest Partnership is a network of organisations that collaborate to protect, manage and enhance the Capital's trees and woodlands. The partnership meets quarterly to share information and data, help inform tree related programmes in London and promote the benefits of the City's urban forest.

[Conservators summer tour](#) of the Commons (July 2024) This year's visit involved a tractor ride around part of the Commons and included both staff and Conservators. During this evening tour, the following topics were included:

- Heathland management
- Golf Course management
- Woodland Management
- Queensmere.

[Roehampton Community Weeks](#) – On 19 August, PH led a walk as part of the Roehampton Community Weeks. The walk started at the Roehampton War Memorial and followed a route that encompassed Scio Pond, Curling Pond, Jerry's Hill, Queensmere and The Plain.

[Beverley Brook Catchment Partnership](#) meeting attend by PH (September), The aim of this meeting was to view some of the work that had been carried out and is planned on Barnes Common and to discuss future opportunities the partnership could be involved with.

[The Commons Open Day 2024](#) (September) Another very successful annual Open Day was held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2024. This event attracted thousands of visitors and gave the Commons the opportunity to showcase some of the many activities that are carried out on this site throughout the year.

[National Heathland Conference](#) (September 2024). This event was held in Dorset and was attended by PH on behalf of WPC. Held over three days, the conference including subjects such as re-wilding, urban heath challenges, condition monitoring and a visit to Purbeck Heaths (NNR)

[Guided walk](#) led by PH for a local community group based at Manresa House in Roehampton (September). This walk covered the Roehampton section of the Commons, Jerry's Hill and Queensmere.

[Meeting with Sam Facey from the London Water Vole Recovery Programme](#) (September) The aim of this meeting was to view the two sections of the Beverley Brook that are located on the Commons and evaluate whether these sites would be suitable for a future release programme of water voles. If the sites are not currently at the stage where a release programme would be viable, advice will be provided about how this situation could be changed in the future.

The London Water Vole Recovery Programme is an initiative that is supported by the Mayor of London's Rewild London Fund to form a collaborative network acting across Greater London, sharing expertise on water vole and water vole habitat conservation. This initiative is led by the Zoological Society of London, Greenspace Information for Greater London, the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the London Wildlife Trust. WPC currently

supports the London Water Vole Recovery Programme by attending meetings and we are in contact with volunteers and staff from this organisation.

**PLC Stakeholder walk** (October) to discuss the future management of PLC with key stakeholders from this area of the Commons. WPCC staff involvement included Peter Haldane, Jack Rowland and Colin Cooper.

**Meeting with Jamie Simpson (October) Black poplar trees for PLC** – Jamie Simpson is an arboriculturist specialising in the management of veteran trees and leads the Black Poplar Species Action Plan, part of the Richmond BAP.

(Information below taken from the Friends of Barnes Commons website)

*Black poplars are a flood species, thriving in waterlogged habitats. The Native black poplar (Populus nigra ssp. betulifolia) is a rare and endangered tree within the United Kingdom, with an estimated 7,000 trees left remaining. Extensive genetic testing, led by Jamie Simpson, has identified the Borough of Richmond as having some of the highest levels of genetic diversity of Black poplars anywhere in the country. Of greatest interest is the population along the Thames towpath at Barnes, which is believed to be a remnant wild population.*

In October 2024, Jamie visited Putney Lower Common with PH to look at potential locations where Black poplar trees that have been propagated from a nursery that is located within Barnes Common, could be planted on Putney Lower Common.

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	14 October 2024	10.24.8
<b>Subject:</b> Fundraising Update		<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Fundraising Manager		<b>For Information</b>
<b>Summary</b>		
Fundraising activity from late July to September 2024		

### 1. General Fundraising

An impromptu campaign was set up to mark World Ranger's Day on 31 July 2024. Supporters were contacted via direct mail, supplemented by posters on the Commons and social media. Over the one-week campaign more than £3,000 was raised, which will be used to purchase woodland management equipment.

### 2. Queensmere Project

A specialist contractor has been appointed to begin the Queensmere restoration and rewilding project in the New Year, with completion scheduled for Spring 2025. Rewild London has requested site a visit during before the work begins as part of their project monitoring. The second tranche of the grant awarded (£65,000) will be received upon completion.

A Queensmere Restoration Appeal is being launched with press articles, emails to Friends and supporters and information on website to raise the remaining funds that are required.

Requests for benches at Queensmere are currently being processed. Six suitable spots have been identified and being offered to those on the waiting list. Other discussions ongoing regarding sponsorship of viewing platform, dog posts etc.

### 3. Benches

Jack Rowland and Peter Haldane have identified suitable new locations for benches, particularly on Putney Lower Common and Rushmere, and these options are currently being matched to those on the waiting list.

# **Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting dated 16 July 2024 - FINAL**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### Attendees

Oliver Bennett - Conservator (OB)  
Sue Bucknall – Conservator (SB)  
Colin Cooper – Chief Executive (CC)  
Andrew Davies – volunteer (AD)  
Les Evans-Hill - volunteer (LEH)  
Peter Haldane – Conservation & Engagement Officer (PH)  
Nick Haswell – volunteer (NH)  
Michael Johnston – Conservator (MJ)  
Sarah Murton – Conservation Ranger (SM)  
Simon Riley - volunteer (SR)

1. Apologies were received from Ros Taylor (RT), Andrew Harding (AH) and Henry Wilson (HW).
2. The group briefly introduced themselves to SM (Conservation Ranger) & NH (volunteer) who have recently joined the Forum. SM gave an introduction to herself - see para 6 below. NH introduced himself by explaining that although he lives in North London he visited the Commons often. He has expertise in many aspects of natural history but particularly insects and spiders.
3. The Forum confirmed OB's appointment as Chair for the period April 2024 to March 2025.
4. The minutes of the Forum meeting of 7 May 2024 were agreed
5. Action points from previous meeting.
  - a) **Land management Plan - minor amendments made by Conservators prior to its approval as final. Action Point – PH to circulate. DONE**
  - b) **Queensmere restoration report. Action Point – PH to arrange for final report to be made available on the Volunteer Portal. This should be available shortly. OUTSTANDING**
  - c) **Forum constitution. Action point - CC to circulate his thoughts on changing the make-up and constitution of this Forum. It was noted that a discussion on this issue was taking place immediately after the Forum meeting. OUTSTANDING**

- d) Farm Bog. Action Point - CC to Write to London Wildlife Trust (LWT) regarding Farm Bog. DONE**
  - e) Future Monitoring Reports. Action point – OB to discuss some ideas to improve the Monitoring Report with SM/PH. OUTSTANDING**
  - f) 2023 Monitoring Report Press Release. Action Point – OB to discuss with AEH and CC. OUTSTANDING**
  - g) New Forum members – Action point OB to invite Henry Miller & NH. NH has now joined the Forum. DONE**
  - h) Open Day engagement from Forum. Action point – all. OUTSTANDING**
  - i) Farm Bog flora - Action Point – to be discussed – all.** Policy needs to be developed (and included in LMP) for the various recently introduced plant species on Farm Bog. Deferred until AH is available at Forum meeting. **OUTSTANDING**
  - j) Sarah Murton to join Forum. Action point – PH to discuss with SM. DONE**
- 6.** Introduction to SM. SM gave a brief overview of her experience which includes practical habitat management, surveying & managing volunteers. SM also explained that she was going to be involved with implementing the LMP. In this regard she has already started to consider (with the help of RT) a methodology for grassland flora recording. The recording effort was going to be concentrated on the 15 separate areas of grassland that are currently subject to cut and collect, either by Commons' staff or contractors, using, amongst other approaches, partly randomised fixed quadrats. (Note that the areas of grassland do not currently include rough or semi-rough of the golf course.) The quadrats would be surveyed on a three year fixed cycle. SM wants to ensure that the survey methodology is relatively simple/repeatable and scalable, noting that some of the grassland sites are quite small whereas others are large (eg the Plain). In this way a good body of data will be accumulated that will help in determining whether management regimes were delivering biodiversity gains. Good data will also make future grant aiding applications more robust.
- 7.** Fundraising & Projects update – PH and CC updated the Forum on ongoing initiatives. The Queensmere restoration project is now out for tender. 6 contractors were invited to tender, 4 have said they will, 1 has said they will not and 1 is yet to reply. Sale of named benches is one initiative being considered to raise further funds. It was also noted that the whole issue of benches was going to be revisited by the Board as some current benches were felt to be in inappropriate positions and may need to be moved. It was also hoped that the Commons could participate in a Christmas Big Give campaign with matched funding available up to £10,000.

8. Conservation update – PH circulated his report prior to the meeting. Included in the report was information on a new British Bat Survey being run by the Bat Conservation Trust. This involves the use of static bat detectors of which one has been positioned on the Commons near Stag Bog. Trail cameras continue to be in operation on Putney Lower Common and these are producing some interesting results including the confirmation of continued presence of Hedgehog. Amongst other things work has continued on removing scrub from heathland, fairway widening, bracken bruising & invasive species removal/reduction (eg Duck Potato (*Sagittaria latifolia*) in Ravine Pond) as well as tree work to allow more light into shaded areas of the Beverley Brook.
9. Recorder and monitoring updates. Recorders circulated their thoughts prior to the meeting. It was generally concluded that 2024 has, so far, been a very poor year for invertebrates in particular.
10. Weekend of Nature debrief. In the absence of Angela Evans-Hill and a shortage of time it was agreed to discuss the Weekend of Nature by email.  
**Action point – SR to circulate an email to gather comments and thoughts.**
11. Events and Future events – LEH & SR have agreed to host a Butterfly & Dragonfly Walk on 27 July 2024. AEH will advertise.

## 12.AOB

- a) SB mentioned that it was the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Sir Henry Peek in February 2025. Sir Henry Peek was instrumental in the preservation of the Commons as the unenclosed public space we know today. SB asked that Forum members to provide her with brief anecdotes about the Commons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for inclusion in an anniversary publication to be produced shortly.
- b) LEH mentioned that a new approach was being taken with regard to bird and other wildlife sightings on the Commons. Records can now be reported via the Commons' website and a new Wildlife and Nature Notes Newsletter has been developed the first edition of which was circulated recently.
- c) LEH mentioned that he has placed a camera trap at Bluegate and will report back interesting sightings.
- d) A live camera feed has been installed next to an active Swallow nest in the stables. It is hoped that access to the feed will be made available to the public in 2025.
- e) It was noted that Swift boxes and a caller had been installed near the Visitor's Centre. We will watch developments with interest.
- f) Date of next meeting 3 September 2024

## **Future Dates**

### **Forum meetings**

3 September 2024  
12 November 2024

### **Other**

Butterfly & Dragonfly Walk – 27 July 2024  
Open Day – 8 September 2024  
Bird Walk – 15 September 2024

### **Projects/Ideas Listing**

Purchase of bug traps for purpose of more extensive invertebrate surveys

Consideration of invasive non-native species, including mapping

Work to update and combine flora datasets

Surveys of saproxylic invertebrate fauna

Spring/Summer walks for Board

Monitoring/mapping of veteran trees

Peatlands project