



**CONSERVATORS' MEETING**  
**to be held on**  
**Monday 11 April 2022 at 4.30pm**  
**in the Wimbledon Common Golf Club, Camp Road**  
**SW19 4UW**

## **AGENDA**

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

- 4.22.1 Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence [4.30pm]**
- 4.22.2 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting**
- 4.22.3 Election of Chairman of the Board of Conservators**
- 4.22.4 WPCC Board Meetings**
- i. Resolutions of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 14 February 2022 Page 1
  - ii. Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 14 February 2022 Page 2
- 4.22.5 Matters Arising [4.40pm] Page 9**
- 4.22.6 WPCC Forum/Group Meetings**  
Notes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum Meeting held on 29 March 2022 Page 10
- 4.22.7 Conservation Update [4.45pm] Page 15**
- 4.22.8 Land Management Plan [4.50pm] Verbal Report**
- 4.22.9 Chief Executive's Report – non-confidential items [4.55pm] Page 18**
- 4.22.10 Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons [5.00pm] Verbal Report**
- 4.22.11 Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting [5.10pm]**
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## **PART A(2) CONFIDENTIAL**

### **Resolution from the Board meeting held on 12 July 2021**

Having agreed the 'Policy on Public Admission to Meetings and Publication of Agendas, Minutes and Resolutions' and to hold Board meetings in public from 1 October 2021, the Board:

- a) resolved to exclude the public for discussion of item(s) under WPCC Part A2 Board meetings on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons.

#### **4.22.12 WPCC Board Meetings [5.25pm]**

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| i. Resolutions of the Board Meeting of 14 February 2022 | Page |
| ii. Minutes of the Board Meeting of 14 February 2022    | Page |
| iii. Minutes of the Board Meeting of 14 March 2022      | Page |

#### **4.22.13 Matters Arising** Page

#### **4.22.14 Chief Executive's Private Report [5.30pm]**

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#### **4.22.15 Committee Terms of Reference [5.40pm]**

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#### **4.22.16 Fundraising: [5.45pm]**

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| i. Update    | Page |
| ii. Strategy | Page |

#### **4.22.17 MoD Appointed Conservator [6.00pm]**

#### **4.22.18 Management Accounts: [6.10pm]**

- |                  |           |
|------------------|-----------|
| i. February 2022 | To Follow |
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#### **4.22.19 Business Plan 2022-2025 [6.15pm]** Page

#### **4.22.20 Constitutional Matters [6.35pm]** Page

#### **4.22.21 Licences and Leases – Legal Advice [6.50pm]** Page

#### **4.22.22 Safeguarding [7.00pm]** Page

#### **4.22.23 Land at Stag Ride/Lane [7.05pm]** Page

#### **4.22.24 Top 10 Risks [7.10pm]** Page

#### **4.22.25 Charity Governance Code [7.15pm]** Page

#### **4.22.26 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement [7.20pm]** Page

#### **4.22.27 Audit & Risk – Report to the Board [7.25pm]** Page

#### **4.22.28 Draft Minutes/Notes [7.35pm]**

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| To receive   |      |
| i. Draft minutes of the Constitution Committee held on             | Page |
| ii. Draft Minutes of the Finance and Investment Committee held on: |      |
| • 8 March 2022   | Page |

- 23 March 2022

To follow

- iii. Draft minutes of the Friends Committee held on
- iv. Draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 1 March 2022

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**4.22.28 Items for inclusion in a Media Release by the Board [7.45pm]**



## Wimbledon and Putney Commons

### Recommendations and Resolutions agreed at the Board Meeting held on Monday 14 February 2022

#### Part A1

##### 02.22.6 Terms of Reference

##### Resolution

The Board approved the revised Terms of Reference for:

- (a) the WPCC Stakeholder Group
- (b) the WPCC Constitution Committee

##### 02.22.10 Chief Executive's Public Report

##### Recommendation

The Board noted:

- (a) the good progress achieved by the Conservation and Engagement Officer and the Maintenance Team and
- (b) Natural England's ongoing commitment to contribute to the management of heathland and grassland on the Commons.

##### Present:

Conservators: Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman  
Mr Oliver Bennett  
Mrs Sue Bucknall  
Mr Michael Johnston  
Mr Mike Rappolt (for Part A1)  
Mr Nigel Ware

Officers: Mr Stephen Bound, Chief Executive

Apologies: Mr Peter Hirsch  
Mr David Hince  
Mr Mike Rappolt (for Part A2)

Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk & Ranger  
Mr Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer

**Draft Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on  
Monday 14 February 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  
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Mr Michael Johnston (MJ)  
Mr Mike Rappolt (MR)  
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)

**Officers:** Mr Steve Bound, Chief Executive (CE)  
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and  
Communications Officer (PA to CE)

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

ITEM		ACTIONS
<b>02.22.1</b>	<p><b>Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from</p> <p>Mr David Hince (DH) Mr Peter Hirsch (PDH) Mr Peter Haldane (C&amp;EO) Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk &amp; Ranger (DCR)</p>	
<b>02.22.2</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting</b></p> <p>MR declared he was involved in fundraising for another charity.</p> <p>The Board agreed that there was no reason for him not to participate in any discussion.</p>	
<b>02.22.4</b>	<p><b>WPCC Board Meetings</b></p> <p><b>i. Resolutions of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 13 December 2021</b></p> <p>The Resolutions of the Part A(1) Board meeting held on Monday 13 December 2021 were approved.</p> <p><b>ii. The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 13 December 2021</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board meeting held on Monday 13 December 2021 were approved.</p>	
<b>02.22.5</b>	<b>WPCC Forum/Group Meetings</b>	

	<p>i. Draft Minutes of the Wildlife and Conservation meeting held on 11 January 2022</p> <p>The Board received and noted the draft notes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum held on 11 January 2022.</p> <p>The Chairman wished to record the Board’s appreciation to all the Forum members who had volunteered to assist with the drafting of the Land Management Plan. NW asked why the valley mires project might be of concern to visitors? OB responded that if the project were to go ahead, some substantial scrub and ditch clearance and some path diversions would be required so it would be important to ensure that the public were kept informed.</p> <p>The Chairman noted that she had understood that the Forestry Commission (FC) had recently visited the area of the proposed valley mires project and, although supportive, had suggested a number of conditions. It was confirmed that these concerns were that the Environment Agency (EA) should be consulted regarding any water course being blocked, a preference to see mature oak and hornbeam areas left out of the work and a gradual programme of work that would be monitored during the first and third years of operation.</p> <p>SB explained that some of the oldest trees on the Common were on the border of the mire and this would be discussed in more detail with The FC and Natural England prior to any work starting. OB felt that this would not fundamentally affect the project.</p> <p>ii. Approval of the General Open Meeting Minutes of 29 November 2021</p> <p>The Board approved the minutes from the General Open Meeting held on 29 November 2021. These would now be published on the WPCC website.</p>	
<p><b>02.22.6</b></p>	<p><b>Committee Terms of Reference</b></p> <p><b>i. Stakeholder Group</b></p> <p>The Board noted the changes to the Terms of Reference for the Stakeholder Group (SG). These minor changes to membership numbers and length of service were agreed. In addition, it was agreed to clarify that the Residents’ Associations must sit within the Levy area, to include examples of bodies that could represent the interests of disabled visitors, and that the Terms of Reference should be reviewed every three years.</p> <p>There was a further discussion on educational representatives and it was suggested that perhaps a representative of the Forest Schools should attend. However, it was agreed that as a licence holder it would not be appropriate for them to attend. Some further thought would be given to this.</p>	<p>AEH to amend Terms of Reference to reflect agreed changes.</p>

	<p>It was noted that there was now a cycling representative, which was an important development as cycling had never been formally represented in the SG.</p> <p>In accordance with the Terms of Reference, it was confirmed that Conservators would attend by invitation of the members of the SG if it was felt that there was a relevant item to be discussed. This was only a forum for discussion, not decision.</p> <p><b>ii. Constitution Committee</b></p> <p>The Chairman explained that there had been a number of amendments to the Terms of Reference given the change of status from a Working Group to a Committee.</p> <p>The Committee was now chaired by a Conservator and the role of the external supporters was very clear in that they supported the Committee but had no voting rights and although they had formal legal qualifications, they were not providing “formal” advice, but assistance based on their knowledge of the law. The quorum and voting rights were clearly set out and, following a discussion at the last Committee meeting, it was agreed to include the preamble to the 1871 Act as it helped to reassure that any changes to the Act proposed by the Committee had to be consistent with the preamble and that the preamble was immutable.</p> <p>Following discussion it was agreed that the restriction regarding length of service should apply only to members, and not co-opted supporters.</p> <p>OB raised the point of the use of gendered language and whether the use of the term “Chairman” was appropriate as it was not inclusive. It was noted that the Board discussed this in April 2018 and the view was that the 1871 Act used the term Chairman with reference to the Board. It was however agreed that it would be at the discretion of each Committee/Chair but the Board should be aware of this issue and it should be considered when the Communications Policy was being developed.</p>	<p>AEH to clarify that the length of service applies only to members not supporters of the committee</p>
<p><b>02.22.7</b></p>	<p><b>Conservation Update</b></p> <p>The Board received and noted the conservation report prepared by the Conservation and Engagement Officer. The CE reported in his absence.</p> <p>The CE reported that the bare ground creation work began in 2018 in order to try and re-establish heather on the edge of the golf course. This had worked well, rabbits notwithstanding, and the heather was regenerating. Natural England was keen on the work and so three more scrapes had been created and spread with seed from heather in other areas of the Commons. The areas would be temporarily fenced to keep the rabbits off. This work should start in March 2022 once the woodland clearance had been completed.</p>	

	<p>The Holly clearance along Robin Hood Ride had been a significant piece of work carried out by a contractor. This work was paid for by a grant through the Woodland Countyside Stewardship Scheme for woodland improvement. Although the agreement on what work should be carried out was vague, the Forestry Commission had been keen to see holly clearance and ride management. A total of 18 hectares of holly were being cleared over three years (starting in 2022) and just over six hectares had been done this year. The reason for the work was to open up the woodland to allow in more light so that a natural woodland understorey could develop and provide better biodiversity. The added benefit, which many people commented on when the work was carried out previously, was that it made the area much safer for lone walkers.</p> <p>The ride management had been carried out by the Commons' Maintenance Team. Roughly 80% of the ecological value of a woodland is at its edge so the better managed this area is the better habitat it provides. The work will also allow the paths/rides to dry out and make them better for visitors. The Forestry Commission had visited the site and were delighted with the work and public feedback had generally been positive. A lot of information had been made available to visitors both at the site and on the website and social media.</p> <p>MR commented that there was no mention that the work was paid for by the Forestry Commission. It was agreed that anything put out to the public should mention that the work was being carried out with the financial support of the Forestry Commission.</p> <p>MJ asked what impact the use of chemicals by the golf clubs might have. SB confirmed that the clubs had been asked this question and they had confirmed that they did not use herbicides. They used organic fertilisers on the greens and the tees. The work carried out on the course would be clarified within the Land Management Plan.</p> <p>MJ also asked about the fencing that would be put around the bare ground scrapes and would it be off a height sufficient to stop people and dogs accessing the areas. SB commented that it would be high enough to deter dogs but low enough for golfers to be able to step over to retrieve golf balls.</p> <p>MJ asked what would be done to stop trampling of the newly cleared woodland areas. It was hoped that people would keep to the paths but this would be monitored and dead hedging put in place if necessary.</p> <p>SB asked what type of fencing was being used in general. For example, the roping around the windmill area to allow the regrowth had been insufficient and often ignored. She was particularly concerned about the Plain and the ground-nesting bird area. SB commented that roping off did work in the main but there would be something more robust around the ponds, such as chestnut paling. MJ asked why the Skylark area on the Plain was not fenced. SB advised that this would be too big a job even to put up temporary fencing. OB asked whether time and resource should be spent on putting up signs on the Plain this year. SB suggested this be discussed as part of the Land</p>	
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	<p>Management Plans discussion. It was noted that this also affected other ground nesting birds, not just Skylarks.</p>	
<b>02.22.8</b>	<p><b>Land Management Plan (LMP)</b></p> <p>The CE reported that a Land Management Plan Steering Group meeting had been held the previous week. Good progress was being made in drafting the plan.</p> <p>The first part of the Plan, which involved gathering all the information about the Commons had 41 sections and 38 of these were currently either completed or being worked on.</p> <p>With regards to the objectives section, the heathland and Valley Mires sections had been completed. Some work would be needed to keep the Plan focused on headlines to make it more understandable to staff and the general public. It had also been agreed that maps would be included to show where work will be carried out.</p> <p>It was hoped that a draft of the first chapter would come to the Board in April 2022. However much of the remaining work on this section was in the hands of volunteers and PH would be following up with them.</p> <p>OB commented that a discussion was still needed with Natural England in respect of the objectives for the heathland and grassland and this may delay the process.</p> <p>The CE confirmed that the mapping comparison work (1871 to current day) carried out by MRG Studios would be included. SB asked how the maps might be available to the Conservators to view. The CE confirmed that they weren't in an easily accessible form at the moment and this was something that would be looked into.</p> <p>The CE reported that the meeting had also discussed the major habitat restoration project that was included in the business plan. It was suggested that whilst the LMP was developed it was difficult to assess the priorities so it may be better to postpone the major project for a year and choose a smaller project this year. This would be discussed further in April.</p>	
<b>02.22.9</b>	<p><b>Chief Executive's Report – non-confidential items</b></p> <p>The Board received and noted the Chief Executive's report.</p> <p><b>Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)</b> - The current CSS agreement expires at the end of 2022 and would be replaced by Environmental Land Management contracts. Natural England would be administering the scheme but they didn't yet fully understand how it would work so they are proposing that the CSS should roll over for another five years, subject to amendment once they understand how</p>	

	<p>the new scheme will work. It was positive news that they were still keen to support the Commons' heathland and woodland work.</p>	
	<p>MR left the meeting.</p>	
<b>02.22.10</b>	<p><b>Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons</b></p> <p>SB updated the meeting on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons.</p> <p>She began by welcoming Maggie May, the new Fundraising Manager.</p> <p>WPCC was now half way through the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year and other than the Art on the Commons project, very little else had been able to go ahead.</p> <p>The Afternoon Tea at the AELTC was scheduled for 26 February 2022 and SB was pleased to report that all tickets had been sold. The sale of tickets would cover most of the costs and it was hoped to raise funds through the auction and the Heads and Tails game.</p> <p>Planning for the postponed Celebration Games Day on 22 May 2022 would begin very shortly. Any help that could be offered would be gratefully received.</p> <p>There had been some discussions around holding a Platinum Jubilee event on 2 June 2022. Initial thoughts were that it would be similar to a previous remembrance event in November 2018 (to mark the centenary of the end of WWI) with processions from Roehampton, REMPf and Wimbledon Village. These would congregate for an event at the Windmill which would follow the national beacon programme, including illuminating the Windmill. There were some issues around staff availability to help. Some thought had been given to hosting a Jubilee picnic, but it was agreed not to proceed with this.</p> <p>The House of Commons Reception event would take place on 21 July 2022.</p> <p>The Art on the Commons competition would end in July 2022 and it was hoped to hold some form of exhibition which might also be a fundraising opportunity. MJ suggested holding the exhibition at the Wimbledon Village Club. This would be looked into. Around 100 of the entries would be included in a display at the AELTC Afternoon Tea.</p> <p>OB suggested linking the Weekend of Nature to fundraising. MM thought that this was more about education/engagement than fundraising but certainly fundraising messages would be at the event.</p>	
<b>02.22.11</b>	<p><b>Meeting and Events Calendar – Updated</b></p> <p>The Board noted the updated calendar of meetings and events.</p>	

<b>02.22.12</b>	<b>Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting</b> As there were no members of the public in attendance, there were no questions.	
	The meeting closed at 17.45pm.	

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Meeting	11 April 2022	04.22.5
<b>Subject:</b> Matters Arising	<b>Private</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons	<b>For Decision and Information</b>	

### **Committee Terms of Reference**

*AEH to amend Terms of Reference to reflect agreed changes.*

The Terms of Reference for the Stakeholder Forum and the Constitution Committee have been updated.

# Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Wildlife & Conservation Forum March 2022

Notes of a meeting of the Wildlife & Conservation Forum held  
at 5.00pm on Tuesday 29 March 2022

**Present:**

**Conservators:** Oliver Bennett (OB) (Chairman)  
Michael Johnston (MJ)

**Members:** Andrew Harding (AH)  
Adrian Podmore (AP)  
Andrew Harding (AH)  
John Wier (JW)

**Officers:** Peter Haldane (PH) Conservation & Engagement Officer  
Maggie May (MM) Fundraising Manager

**Guests:** Ros Taylor (RT)  
Christine Schams (CS)

## 1 Apologies

Les Evans-Hill (LE-H), Simon Riley (SR), Angela Evans-Hill (AE-H)

## 2. Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

## 3. Approval of the draft minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 January 2022

The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 January 2022 were approved.

## 4. Matters arising, not included in the main agenda

None

## 5. Valley Mires Bog Restoration Project

MM reported that there is an opportunity for WPCC to apply for a feasibility study to be carried out through the Esme Fairbairn Foundation which is one of the UK's largest independent funding organisations. A final decision will be required from WPCC as to who will be responsible for supervising the study and when this has been agreed, MM will submit a 200 word expression of interest to the Esme Fairbairn Foundation.

## 6. Land Management Plan update

A condensed version of the valley mires chapter of the Commons' Land Management Plan had been emailed in advance of the meeting to all members of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum. All pages of the valley mires chapter were looked at by members of the forum during

the meeting and various matters of interest were discussed. AH and PH had provided OB with comments via email and after discussion with the group, OB agreed to make amendments where appropriate. Comments from the group had included the potential re-introduction of male veiwort (*Pallavicinia lyellii*) to the Commons, the potential construction of dams to help retain water at the various bog sites, the use of temporary fencing around Farm bog to reduce disturbance, and future works that would be required at both Farm bog, Stag bog and Ravine bog.

PH suggested that to reduce the costs of using chestnut paling at Farm bog, volunteers could be asked to construct additional dead hedges around the perimeter of this area with scrub that had been cut back by volunteers on the heathland. A large dead hedge had recently been created by volunteers at Farm Bob which would help to prevent trampling across one section of the bog and provide a temporary wildlife habitat.

With reference to Stag bog, PH reminded the group than an active badger sett was located very close to part of the area that had been included in the stag bog restoration work. Badgers are a protected species and under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, it is an offence (section 3 of the Act) to disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett. Badger tunnels can extend up to 20 metres from entrance holes and are located between 0.2 metres and several metres deep, depending on the soil and topography. It is generally recommended that a protection zone of 30 metres is used when carrying out work close to an active badger sett to avoid disturbances such as the loud noise of vibrations that might agitate badgers. In some circumstances, light machinery could be used 20 metres away from an active sett and hand tools only may be used up to 10 metres away from an active sett. Accurate measurement should be taken prior to any future work being carried out to restore Stag bog to ensure that we are in full compliance with the law.

With reference to Ravine bog, it was agreed by members of the forum that a clear identification was made as to the presence of the invasive plant known as Duck potato and methods to eradicate this highly invasive species would be explored.

In general, PH suggested that while small trees could be felled at all of the bog sites, ring barking larger trees (willow, silver birch and non-native invasive species) instead of straight felling would provide the following advantages:

- There would be less disturbance caused to wildlife.
- Ring barking would help to provide additional and valuable dead-wood habitats on site.
- Ring barking larger trees would be quicker than felling and would therefore allow the WPCC Maintenance Team to achieve a significant amount of work in the days that had been allocated to them in the draft valley mires chapter for the Land Management Plan.

All ring barking activities would be carried by trained and certified chainsaw operators from the Commons' Maintenance Team.

## **7. Wildlife & conservation management activities at Wimbledon and Putney Commons**

### **Woodland Management:**

As all woodland management had recently been stopped to coincide with the UK bird nesting season (1 March to 31 July) PH provided members of the Forum with a brief update about what had been achieved by staff and volunteers over the past few months. This work had included holly thinning on approximately 6.5 hectares of

woodland which is located adjacent to the upper section of Robin Hood Ride, the creation of two woodland glades in areas also adjacent to Robin Hood Ride, hazel coppicing along the lower section of Lower Gravelly Ride, the planting of 1250 small trees around various woodland locations and ride management along Upper Gravelly Ride.

In all areas, public notices had been on display prior to and during each woodland operation and information related to the work had also been available on the WPCCC website. The ride thinning work had been quite dramatic in appearance, but this work formed a vital part of improving the biodiversity of the Commons woodland. The only part of this operation that is still to be completed is the creation of a small number of ephemeral pools which although temporary will add to the wildlife value of this area of the Commons. This work will be completed during Spring 2022.

### **Pond Management:**

PH reported that as is customary during this time of the year, during the beginning of March 2022, he had checked all nine ponds on the Commons for signs of frog spawn. During this visit, large clumps of frog spawn were found at Scio Pond, 7 Post Pond, Rushmere, Bluegate Gravel Pit and Ravine Pond. All frog spawn was found amongst the protection of marginal vegetation but PH informed members of the Forum that unfortunately, many of the Commons' ponds are lacking this vital habitat. In accordance with the suggestions that were made by PH in the 2020/21 Annual Conservation Report, to help restore and protect important areas of vegetation in some of the Commons' ponds, during spring 2022, temporary chestnut paling fencing will be positioned around one section of Scio Pond on Putney Heath and around a section of Hookhamslade Pond. Unfortunately, signage alone has proved to be ineffectual against dogs entering the Commons' ponds and causing disturbance to both flora and fauna and therefore, some form of physical barrier will be necessary to protect these important habitats around the site.

### **Bird nesting season 2022:**

PH reported that apart from necessary tree safety operations, all conservation activities which could disturb nesting birds are stopped between 1 March and 31 July. To assist with nesting birds on the Commons, during February 2022, floating platforms on Queensmere and Kingsmere were made available for waterfowl to nest on, two duck tubes on Kingsmere were re-furbished with nesting materials and a total of seven woodcrete bird boxes were positioned along the edge of Upper Gravelly Ride and close to the Commons' stable yard. In addition to this work, approximately 34 public notices have been positioned around the perimeter of The Plain as part of the Commons annual policy of protecting the Plain for the use of ground nesting birds and notices have also been positioned around all of the Commons' nine ponds asking visitors to keep dogs on lead and out of the water during the bird nesting season.

## **8 Monitoring Report 2021**

A draft copy of the Commons' Monitoring Report 2021 had been prepared by OB and emailed to members of the Forum in advance of the March 2022 meeting and a general discussion was held to ensure all of the records and interesting observations

had been included and for members of the Forum to agree the text of the executive summary.

As the monitoring report was currently incomplete, AP informed OB that he would provide the Commons bird sightings for 2021 as soon as possible and PH reported that he would provide sightings for reptiles and amphibians.

With reference to the text of the executive summary, PH raised the point that OB had referred to certain habitats on the Commons as being either unfavourable or unfavourable declining when they had been classified by Natural England as unfavourable recovering which means that the SSSI units are not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management measures are in place. There followed some discussion on this point and it was suggested by OB that Natural England may be incorrect in their classifications of various areas of the Commons' SSSI. It was OB's opinion that the baseline for the management of the Commons' SSSI should be in accordance with the original 1953 SSSI designation and the fact that such a large amount of heathland had disappeared on the Commons over the period of time that this designation had been in place, indicated that not enough had been done to protect this valuable habitat. RT suggested that the original SSSI designations were often very loose agreements and the Commons would have been re-notified since this period of time. RT also suggested that we should be careful about challenging the decisions of Natural England as it was very important to maintain a good working relationship with this government department. PH informed members of the Forum that as this matter had recently been raised at other meetings, he had already contacted Natural England as it was necessary that a baseline for future heathland operations is confirmed by them. PH would inform members of the Forum of the outcome of his discussions with Natural England in due course.

In terms of collecting data for the Commons' monitoring report, RT suggested that it would be useful if declines and successes were noted which would provide comparison between various years. RT also suggested that it would be useful to report how much monitoring had occurred during each recording season and to think about how future monitoring reports could provide increased levels of practical information which would help in the management of the Commons.

## **9 Review of Monitoring 2022**

As many of the active wildlife recorders were absent from the meeting, there was nothing to report on this matter.

## **10 2022 planning**

The main event that had been scheduled for this meeting had been the Commons Weekend of Nature event which is planned for 17-19 June 2022. As AE-H was not able to attend the meeting, it was agreed that PH would ask her to circulate a draft schedule of events to members of the Forum.

## 11 Open Forum

AP reported that he had been in contact with Rhys Torrington who is the Chairman of the Windmill Trustees on the subject of positioning swift nesting boxes on the outside of the Wimbledon Common Windmill. The reply from Rhys Torrington was that his group was only responsible for the inside of the windmill and its contents and the ownership of the building itself remained the responsibility of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Board of Conservators. As the Windmill is a Grade II listed building the recommendations from the Forum were that the windmill would not be a suitable location for Swift boxes. It was however suggested the perhaps Manor Cottage could provide an alternative location where swift boxes to be located. PH agreed to ask Stephen Bound, the current occupier of Manor Cottage, if he would be happy to trial the use of swift boxes on the property.

Although SR was unable to attend the March 2022 meeting of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, it was agreed that PH would include a small number of suggestions that had been made by him via email in the final notes for this meeting.

SR reported that the British Dragonfly Society had tentatively suggested making Wimbledon Common a 'Dragonfly hotspot'. SR would carry out further research into this suggestion and report back the Wildlife and Conservation Forum at a future date.

SR reported that he had looked at recent recording of amphibians and reptiles on i-record and on the members area of the Surrey Amphibians and Reptiles Group (SARG) and it had been interesting that there were very few records for South-West London. SR is in the process of making contact with SARG to see whether they would be interested in covering this area of London in the future.

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	11 April 2022	04.22.7
<b>Subject:</b> Conservation Update	<b>Public</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Conservation and Engagement Officer	<b>For Decision and Information</b>	
<h1>SUMMARY</h1>		
This report provides an update on the conservation and management work carried out by the staff and volunteers.		

### **Oil Spillage - Beverley Brook**

Early on Sunday 27 March, the Ranger's Office was made aware of what appeared to be oil on the surface of the Beverley Brook where it runs through Wimbledon Common.

The Environment Agency was contacted and they advised that there had been an incident on Pyl Brook, a tributary that feeds into the Brook some distance upstream of the Commons, and they were trying to identify the cause. We understand that they believe a third party is involved and they are currently investigating this.

Thames Water have been on site to inspect the Brook and a clean-up operation is underway along the length of the Brook which will hopefully remove the oil.

It is not possible to gauge what the damage to the infrastructure and eco-system of the Brook may be. After all the work and effort that has been put into improving the Brook over the last few years by both staff and volunteers, this has come as a real blow. Staff will be better able to assess any damage once the clean-up operation has been completed.

### **Pond Management:**

As is customary during this time of year, all of the Commons' nine ponds were checked for frog spawn during the beginning of March 2022. During these visits, large amounts of frog spawn were found at Scio Pond, 7 Post Pond, Rushmere, Bluegate Gravel Pit and Ravine Pond.

With females laying eggs in well vegetated, shallow ponds, all frog spawn was found amongst the protection of marginal vegetation but unfortunately, too many of the Common's ponds are seriously lacking this vital component. While large areas of open water can be visually appealing, these areas usually provide the most species poor habitat in a pond with most of

the wildlife inhabiting the margins of the ponds where a good source of vegetation and muddy ground can be found.

To help restore and protect areas of important vegetation in some of the Commons' ponds, during spring 2022, temporary chestnut paling fencing will be positioned around a section of Scio Pond on Putney Heath and a section of Hookhamslade Pond. If this work is successful at reducing the levels of disturbance in these two ponds and helps with the restoration of marginal vegetation on both sites, additional ponds will be provided with similar temporary fencing during subsequent years.



*Frog spawn photographed amongst marginal vegetation at Rushmere.*

### **Bird nesting season 2022.**

The recognised period for bird nesting in the UK is from the 1 March until the 31 July. To ensure that disturbance is minimised to nesting birds, all major woodland operations are stopped until after the end of bird nesting season and a number of bird boxes, floating platforms and duck tubes are made available for the use of different nesting bird species. As with previous years, on the 1 March 2022, just over 30 public notices were also placed around the perimeter of The Plain to help provide a suitable area for potential ground nesting birds to use.

During February 2022, six new bird boxes were also positioned along the edge of Upper Gravelly Ride with specifications to attract any of the following species: great tit, blue tit, coal tit, nut hatch and possibly wren. In addition to this, we have two nest boxes that have been specifically designed to attract wrens and three bird boxes for robins that are located at various points around the windmill complex and an assortment of other bird boxes that have been positioned around various areas of the Commons in the past.

Perhaps one of the most novel nesting innovations that was trialled on the Commons during 2021 was the use of two duck tubes that were positioned close to the island on Kingsmere. With mallard numbers declining in the UK, off-ground duck nest tubes provide a simple and

effective way of protecting nesting birds. While mallards normally nest on the ground, where they are vulnerable to flooding and predation, by elevating nesting tubes on poles several feet off the ground, the eggs and ducklings are less at risk. Consisting of a wire mesh frame filled with hay, the narrow entrance of the tube provides a nesting site which is both protective and warm enough for the incubating female and her clutch of eggs.



*Duck tube at Kingsmere*

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	11 April 2022	04.22.9
<b>Subject:</b> Chief Executive Report	<b>Public</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons	<b>For Decision and Information</b>	
<b>NOT FOR PUBLICATION</b>		
<b>Summary</b>		
The report provides an update on non-confidential operational matters since the Board meeting on 14 February 2022.		

### **Audit Timetable**

The annual audit timetable has been agreed with Kreston Reeves. This is as follows:

Information received for audit by KR	20 April
Audit fieldwork	w/c 25 April
First issue of draft accounts and audit findings issued	13 May
Joint audit and risk and finance meeting	17 May
Updated accounts and audit findings	24 May
Upload to website	6 June
Sign off meeting	29 June

Note that the timetable has had to be compressed slightly compared to previous years. Bringing forward the Board meeting at which the accounts will be considered to 1 June and the joint ARC/FIC meeting to 17 May means that (a) Kreston Reeves will not be able to get the first draft of the accounts to us until four days before the joint ARC/FIC meeting and (b) will give only four full working days between the ARC/FIC meeting and the date by which papers for the 1 June Board meeting need to be issued.

### **Break ins – REMPf Pavilion**

During early March, the Pavilion was broken into on three separate nights. On all occasions, the changing room doors were broken and the changing rooms were used for drug taking. These incidents were reported to the Metropolitan Police. A forensics officer attended and took fingerprints and samples of other substances from which DNA might be recovered.

We have since been informed that the DNA recovered from the Pavilion matches DNA held on record and the police will be questioning a suspect. Clearly, may be difficulties obtaining a prosecution where evidence of this type has been gathered from a public building. However, the police have been informed that the changing rooms are only used by contracted sports clubs, who will have a register their players, and schools, who will know which pupils have been present on site. The police have been informed that WPC would wish to prosecute if sufficient evidence can be secured.

## **Pollution Incident – Beverley Brook**

On Sunday 27 March 2022 at around 9.00am the Ranger's Office was telephoned by a member of the public to advise that there appeared to be oil or diesel in the Beverley Brook. The EA/Communications Officer, who was duty manager at the time, immediately informed the Environment Agency.

Contractors working on behalf of the Environment Agency have been on the Common since Monday 28 March 2022 attempting to clean up the oil from the Brook. Unfortunately, their priority appears to have been preventing oil from entering Richmond Park. The Chief Executive has raised this with Natural England, as regulators of the SSSI and SAC and has also written to the environment Agency's Area Director of Operations for London requesting an explanation of the Agency's approach to this incident.

We have been receiving reports of distressed birds covered in oil. Whilst we were able to catch a mallard in this situation, there have been a number of reports of herons in distress, which we have been unable to catch.

It is understood that the pollution occurred close to the Pyl Brook, a tributary of the Beverley Brook, and was the result of the deliberate actions of a third party on the Saturday.

## **Storm Eunice**

Storm Eunice, which hit south-east England on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022, caused considerable damage on the Commons, mostly in the form of uprooted or fallen trees/limbs. With one exception, these fell on remoter areas of the Commons. However, a beech located alongside Nurses Walk fell onto the A219 Parkside, holding up traffic for 45 minutes whilst WPC staff cleared the tree from the road. The Board should note that both the Keeper team and the Maintenance Team maintained a presence on the Commons throughout the storm, patrolling for signs of damage and warning members of the public of the risks. They performed exceptionally in difficult and dangerous circumstances. The Maintenance Team spent the whole of the 18 February 2022 and much of the following two weeks clearing up fallen trees where these had blocked paths.

## **Fundraising Update**

**Fundraising by the community** - This year we have continued to strengthen charitable partnerships in the community and are grateful to the local business and community groups that support our work, helping to make the Commons even better for everyone. Wimbledon Village Stables held their annual fundraising ball in March and chose the Commons as their beneficiary. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who made a donation on the night and helped raise over £10,000 for the Commons, helping to restore the Horse Rides and Black Ring that are enjoyed by so many riders. We are also delighted that the Hand in Hand has chosen the Commons as their 'Charity of The Year' and will be hosting fundraising events throughout the coming year.

**Update on Bridge Appeal** - In February, a public fundraising appeal was launched to fully restore the footbridge on Putney Lower Common which has been closed for a year due to broken sleepers and the steel frame corroding. The work will include replacing the decaying sleeper treads, repairing the bridge's steel frame, making it safe for use and protecting it for the future. The work to restore and reopen the bridge will cost in the region of £15,000. Thanks to the donations made by the community, £5,160 has been raised. An additional £2,000 has been pledged by the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons which takes us nearly halfway to our target. We'd like to thank everyone who has made a donation.

**Beverley Brook Oil Spill** - We have received nearly £3,000 in donations to help with the long term clean up and care of the Beverley Brook. These donations will help purchase new equipment for the volunteer team that help keep the Brook clean and thriving.

## **Events**

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Afternoon Tea** – The Afternoon Tea event was a great success. All 150 tickets were sold and all feedback has been very positive.

**The Grand Houses of Rushmere Virtual Walk** - Alan Blower's latest virtual walk held on 22 March went well with 140 people booking, and 84 people attending. The talk raised £255 in donations.