

**Draft Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on
Monday 13 December 2021 at 4.30pm at Manor Cottage SW19 5NR
and by Electronic Conference Facilities**

Conservators: Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman (DNM)
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)
Mr David Hince (DH)
Mr Peter Hirsch (PDH)
Mr Michael Johnston (MJ)
Mr Mike Rappolt (MR)
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)

Officers: Mr Steve Bound, Chief Executive (CE)
Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk & Ranger (DCR)

Members of the public: Two members of the public attended

ITEM		ACTIONS
12.21.1	<p>Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from</p> <p>Mr Oliver Bennett MBE (OB) Mr Peter Haldane (C&EO) Mrs Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer (PA to CE)</p>	
12.21.2	<p>Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting</p> <p>None</p>	
	<p>Electronic Participation at the meeting.</p> <p>All Conservators confirmed their attendance.</p> <p>RESOLUTION</p> <p>In recognition of the Charity Commission guidance of 7 April 2020 and the rapidly changing situation with regards to the pandemic and for the purposes of good governance, the Board RESOLVED to convene the meeting in accordance with the provisions of the Commissioners Clauses Act 1847 and Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871 and through electronic conference facilities and to be bound by the Resolutions and Recommendations made, so long as every Conservator participating could hear and be heard by all other Conservators.</p> <p>All Conservators agreed and confirmed they could hear and be heard.</p>	

<p>12.21.3</p>	<p>WPCC Board Meetings</p> <p>i. Resolutions of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 11 October 2021</p> <p>The Resolutions of the Part A(1) Board meeting held on Monday 11 October 2021 were approved.</p> <p>ii. The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 11 October 2021</p> <p>The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board meeting held on Monday 11 October 2021 were approved.</p>	
<p>12.21.4</p>	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Contactless Car Parking Donation Meters - The CE confirmed that the meters had now been ordered. There was an 8-10 week turnaround as they are made to order so it will take some time for them to arrive.</p> <p>Recruitment - A new Fundraising Manager had been appointed, subject to references. Interviews for a Part-time Office Assistant would be taking place later that week. There had been over 70 applications for the post. The new Conservation and Maintenance Operative post was currently being advertised. The closing date was 22 December 2021.</p> <p>The Chairman commented that the response to the Office Assistant position clearly reflected the interest and goodwill of the community to become involved with the Commons.</p>	
<p>12.21.5</p>	<p>WPCC Forum/Group Meetings</p> <p>Wildlife & Conservation Forum – 9 November – The draft notes of the meeting were received.</p>	
<p>12.21.6</p>	<p>Conservation Update</p> <p>The meeting noted the comprehensive Conservation Update prepared by the Conservation & Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane.</p> <p>The CE reported that in addition to the five areas currently “cut and collected” to help improve the biodiversity of the acid grassland, the contractor who carried out this work on the three larger sites had now also been asked to quote for cutting and baling some additional areas. These included the large meadow at Putney Lower Common, the Putney Heath fairground site and an area near West Place.</p> <p>The volunteers had been working on the Tibbets Meadow area and had also opened up the heathland area at the northern end of Green Ride.</p>	

	<p>The programme of heather scrapes started three years ago, and had been visited by the Conservators at their 2021 management walk, had been expanded and three further scrapes had been created along the golf course fairways. These had been sown with seed from other areas of the Common.</p> <p>The Holly clearance work had now started along Robin Hood Ride to help develop a good woodland structure. The CE reported that there had been no complaints about the work.</p> <p>In response to a question from DH, the CE confirmed that a grant had been received for this work and reported that the work was on target to meet the requirements of the grant.</p> <p>The CE confirmed that the cost of the additional cut and collect work would be in the region of £5,000 per annum.</p> <p>The Chairman commented that it was an excellent report and thanked PH for drafting it. It was encouraging to see new volunteers coming forward. The CE reported that the Beverley Brook group was taking off and it was hoped that there would be a volunteer leader for that group going forward.</p> <p>In response to a question from PDH, the CE confirmed that there was little cutting of heather so disposal was not an issue. The Holly was being burned on site, which was not ideal, but was the only option available.</p> <p>MJ asked how the heather scrape project was communicated to the golf clubs as it was potentially in conflict with the work they carried out on the course. The CE commented that the clubs had always been allowed to manage the course as they saw fit but in future, as part of the land management planning process, would be asked to provide a description of exactly what work they intend to do under their management regime so this could be closely monitored.</p>	
<p>12.21.7</p>	<p>Project Proposal – Saving Wimbledon’s Wetlands</p> <p>The Board noted the report prepared by Conservator, Oliver Bennett.</p> <p>In his absence, the CE commented that in terms of the habitats on the Commons, the mires are probably amongst the rarest national habitats. They did not always capture the public’s imagination as they are not necessarily visually eye-catching. The restoration of the four main mire areas: Stag, Farm, Glen Albyn and Ravine was very important and it was right that attention was now being focused on them.</p> <p>The focus of the work was to ensure that the areas retained water and did not dry out. They were very difficult to restore if they dried out and there were signs that this was happening through drainage and tree growth.</p>	

	<p>Established trees would be cleared, although there were concerns about which trees were cleared. Drains would be blocked to ensure the peat remained wet so that it didn't release carbon into the atmosphere. From both the ecological and climate change perspective it was a valuable project.</p> <p>MJ commented that the bogs were a unique habitat and the Commons had the largest proportion of bogs in the London area and they were in quite poor condition at present. It was likely to be a £250,000 project but it was hoped that the work would be undertaken by a consortium as this would help with funding bids. Talks had been held with the London Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the South East Rivers Trust and it was hoped that a proposal and funding could be organised so that the work could begin in 2022.</p> <p>The Chairman commented that she had attended the site visit with the potential partners and the Conservators were fortunate to have relationships with these bodies who were keen to help.</p> <p>The Chairman wanted to raise the constitutional position, particularly given the need to remove some mature trees and that there would likely be questions raised. Section 36 of the Act clearly set out the Conservators duty to protect the natural aspect of the Commons as far as possible. The Conservators were also permitted under Section 39 to construct drains to improve the Commons for the purposes of health, unrestricted exercise and recreation and these works were originally undertaken on this basis. She also commented that communication with the public would be essential on this project, particularly in relation to the tree works and the scope of the project to be agreed would need to consider the concerns about mature trees in particular.</p> <p>The Board noted the recommendations set out in OB's report. The Chairman clarified that the project would be delivered by a partner organisation who would lead on the work with WPCC supporting. She further clarified in response to a question from MR that WPCC were not putting any finance into this project at the moment and would propose adding a further recommendation that made clear the way forward in respect of funding, i.e., finding an organisation to fund the feasibility study. The current proposed timetable was that the funding would be in place by April 2022, the work on the study completed by July 2022, and the consultation and full funding application to be carried out between August and October 2022. The project start date would be November 2022 with completion by May 2024.</p> <p>The new recommendation was approved.</p> <p>The CE suggested a minor amendment to recommendation 4 to reflect that it might not be possible to enter into an agreement with a partner and the work may need to be carried out by WPCC. This was agreed.</p> <p>MJ commented that this was an exciting project and might use some novel conservation techniques. It might mean that the Commons would become a focus of attention and this would need to be borne in mind.</p>	
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	<p>The Board thanked OB for work he had put into this project.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The Board agreed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the restoration of the Commons’ rare wetland habitats and their related species and peatlands. 2. Note that the project will help to meet WPCC’s statutory environmental duties. 3. Note that the project will secure additional climate change, biodiversity, volunteering, educational and flood risk management benefits for the local community. 4. Enter into a formal agreement with partner organisations to pursue funding for the project, and to deliver it. If this was not feasible, the Board agreed to explore alternative options. 5. Be kept informed of progress in achieving the project. 6. Explore funding opportunities for a feasibility study; the project would be considered as part of the business plan in April 2022. 	
<p>12.21.8</p>	<p>Chief Executive’s Report – Non-confidential Items</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Chief Executive’s Report.</p> <p>Safeguarding - The Charity Commission had updated the safeguarding guidance that it provided to charities and this would necessitate another review of WPCC’s safeguarding policy and procedures. The Board agreed that this would be undertaken by the CE and reviewed by ARC at their March 2022 meeting and then brought to the April 2022 Board meeting for approval.</p> <p>MR asked if the safeguarding policies for organisations using the Commons would be similarly reviewed. It was agreed that the new guidance should be sent to them and they be asked to confirm that their policies adhered to the new guidelines. It was also agreed that consideration would need to be given to what course of action should be taken if an organisation was in breach of their safeguarding policies. Some legal advice may need to be taken in this area.</p> <p>It was agreed that some thought might need to be given to the appointment of a member of staff as a Safeguarding Officer and that they would need to be given the appropriate training. MR reported that another charity he worked with had had to put their whole Board through online safeguarding training and the Board would also need to consider this.</p> <p>General Open Meeting Minutes – The Board agreed that the draft minutes of the general open meeting would be circulated by e-mail for comment and would be formally approved at the February 2022 Board meeting.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	<p>Board</p>

	<p>The Board noted the report and agreed:</p> <p>(a) The timescale for reviewing the safeguarding policy and procedures;</p> <p>(b) The procedure for agreeing the notes of the General Open Meeting held on 29 November 2021.</p>	
12.21.9	<p>Approval of the Levy for 2022/23</p> <p>For the benefit of the new Conservators, the Chairman explained that at the Board meeting held in December 2020, the Board had agreed that for the following five years, the Levy would be raised to the maximum permissible in accordance with the Statutory Instrument.</p> <p>The September 2021 RPI figure had now been determined as 4.85%, which would generate total levy income of £1,323,328 for the year ending 31 March 2023. The Council Tax Base for each of the Boroughs would not be known until at least mid-January and therefore it was not possible to calculate the Levy per household until these figures were available.</p> <p>RESOLUTION</p> <p>The Board RESOLVED that in line with the Board resolution of 14 December 2020 under which it was agreed that WPCC would raise the Levy to its maximum for the five-year period 2022/23 to 2026/27, and in accordance with the Statutory Instruments, the Levy be increased for the financial year 2022/23 by RPI to £1,323,328.</p>	
12.21.10	<p>Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons</p> <p>The Board received and noted the report prepared by SB, the Chairman of the Friends Committee.</p> <p>SB reported that the Committee was hopeful that all the postponed events would take place in 2022.</p>	
12.21.11	<p>Meeting and Events Calendar – Updated</p> <p>The Board noted and approved the updated calendar of meetings and events.</p> <p>The CE reported that the speaker at the Winter Talk had now asked that talk be held via Zoom.</p> <p>RESOLUTION</p> <p>The Board approved the amended Calendar of Meetings and Events.</p>	

<p>12.21.12</p>	<p>Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting</p> <p>There were no questions from the public attending.</p> <p>The Chairman took the opportunity on behalf of all the Conservators to thank Mr Asif Malik, who would be shortly standing down as the Chairman of the Windmill Museum Trustees, for all the work and effort that he had put into his term of office, particularly in putting together a dedicated group of volunteers. He was respected by all and had been a wonderful ambassador for the organisation, as had his wife, Frances.</p> <p>SB added that she would like to personally thank Mr Malik for all his help and for being so supportive in her role as Chairman of the Friends.</p> <p>Mr Malik thanked everyone for their kind comments. He stated that it had been a privilege to hold the role of Chairman but he had been in the post for six years and felt it was time for a change. He would remain as a Trustee for the time-being to support the new Chairman, Mr Rhys Torrington, who would take up office on 1 January 2022.</p>	
	<p>The meeting closed at 17.20pm.</p>	