



**CONSERVATORS' PUBLIC MEETING**  
to be held on  
**Monday 9 October 2023 at 4.30pm**  
in the Information Centre, Manor Cottage,  
London SW19 5NR

## **AGENDA**

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

- |                 |   |         |
|-----------------|---|---------|
| <b>10.23.1</b>  | <b>Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence</b>   |         |
| <b>10.23.2</b>  | <b>Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting</b> |         |
| <b>10.23.3</b>  | <b>WPCC Board Meetings</b>  |         |
|                 | i. Resolutions of the Board Meeting of 10 July 2023   | Page 1  |
|                 | ii. Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 10 July 2023  | Page 2  |
| <b>10.23.4</b>  | <b>Matters Arising</b>  | Page 7  |
| <b>10.23.5</b>  | <b>Committee Matters</b><br><i>No matters to report</i>   |         |
| <b>10.23.6</b>  | <b>Chief Executive's Report</b>   | Page 8  |
| <b>10.23.7</b>  | <b>Fundraising Update</b>   | Page 10 |
| <b>10.23.8</b>  | <b>Conservation Update</b>  | Page 11 |
| <b>10.23.9</b>  | <b>Land Management Plan</b>   | Verbal  |
| <b>10.23.10</b> | <b>Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Report</b>   | Verbal  |
| <b>10.23.11</b> | <b>WPCC Forum/Group Meetings</b>  |         |
|                 | To note the minutes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum held on 11 July 2023   | Page 25 |
| <b>10.23.12</b> | <b>Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting</b>  |         |
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**CONSERVATORS' CONFIDENTIAL MEETING**  
**to be held on**  
**Monday 9 October 2023 at 4.30pm**  
**in the Information Centre, Manor Cottage**  
**London SW19 5NR**

## **AGENDA**

### **PART A(2) CONFIDENTIAL**

In accordance with the Resolution from the Board meeting held on 12 July 2021, this part of the meeting is considered confidential and therefore closed to members of the public.

|                 |   |           |
|-----------------|---|-----------|
| <b>10.23.13</b> | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>                             |           |
| <b>10.23.14</b> | <b>WPCB Board Meetings</b>                                  |           |
|                 | i. Minutes of the Part (A2) Board Meeting of 10 July 2023   | Page 1    |
|                 | ii. Resolutions of the Board meeting held on 17 July 2023   | Page 11   |
|                 | iii. Minutes of the Part (A2) Board Meeting of 17 July 2023 | Page 12   |
| <b>10.23.15</b> | <b>Matters Arising</b>                                      | Page 17   |
| <b>10.23.16</b> | <b>Constitutional Matters</b>                               | Page 18   |
| <b>10.23.17</b> | <b>Licences and Leases</b>                                  | Page 25   |
| <b>10.23.18</b> | <b>Wayleave</b>   | Page 30   |
| <b>10.23.19</b> | <b>Management Reports and Accounts:</b>                     |           |
|                 | a) June 2023  | Page 37   |
|                 | b) July 2023  | Page 40   |
|                 | c) August 2023  | To follow |
|                 | d) Approval to add CEO to Bank Mandate                      | Page 43   |
| <b>10.23.20</b> | <b>VAT Update</b>   | Page 44   |
| <b>10.23.21</b> | <b>Chief Executive's Report – Confidential</b>              | Page 46   |
| <b>10.23.22</b> | <b>Kingston Biodiversity Partnership</b>                    | Page 53   |
| <b>10.23.23</b> | <b>Fundraising Update</b>                                   | Page 56   |
| <b>10.23.24</b> | <b>2024 Conservators Election</b>                           | Page 59   |
| <b>10.23.25</b> | <b>Top Ten Risks</b>  | Page 62   |
| <b>10.23.26</b> | <b>Committee and Forums Draft Minutes/Notes</b>             |           |
|                 | <b>To receive minutes of the:</b>                           |           |
|                 | i. FIC meeting held on 18 September 2023                    | Page 69   |
|                 | ii. Friends Committee meeting held on 14 September 2023     | Page 76   |
| <b>10.23.27</b> | <b>Items for Inclusion in a Media Release by the Board</b>  |           |
| <b>10.23.28</b> | <b>Items for Future Consideration</b>                       |           |



## Wimbledon and Putney Commons

**Resolutions agreed at the Board Meeting held on  
Monday 10 July 2023 at 4.30pm**

### **Part A1 Public**

#### **Item 07.23.5 – Committee Matters**

##### **Resolution**

The Board approved the appointment of Sue Bucknall as Chairman of the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Committee.

### **Part A2 Confidential**

#### **Item 07.23.19 2024 Election of Conservators**

##### **Resolution**

The Board approved the 2024 Election Guidelines and Procedures.

### **Present**

Conservators: Mrs Sue Bucknall  
Mr Oliver Bennett  
Mr Peter Hirsch  
Mr Michael Johnston  
Mr Peter Shortt  
Mr Nigel Ware (acting as Chairman)

Officers: Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger  
Mr Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (For Part A1)  
Mrs Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer  
Mrs Maggie May, Fundraising Manager  
Mr Philip Warner, Management Accountant

Apologies: Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman  
Mr David Hince

**Draft Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on  
Monday 10 July 2023 at 4.30pm at the Information Centre, Manor Cottage,  
London SW19 5NR**

**Conservators:** Mr Nigel Ware (NW) (Acting as Chairman)  
Mr Oliver Bennett (OB)  
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Mr Peter Hirsch (PH)  
Mr Michael Johnston (MJ)  
Mr Peter Shortt (PS)

**Officers:** Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger (DCR)  
Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (C&EO)  
Maggie May, Fundraising Manager (FM)  
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive/Communications  
Officer (EA to CE/CO)  
Philip Warner, Management Accountant

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

The Board expressed their condolences to the families and friends of the two students of The Study School who so tragically lost their lives during the incident on 6 July 2023. Their thoughts were also with those who were injured and remained in hospital. The Board also expressed their thanks to the Commons staff who attended the scene and aided the emergency services throughout the day.

## **ITEM**

### **07.23.1 Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence**

**Apologies:** Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman (DNM)  
Mr David Hince (DH)

In the absence of the Chairman, NW reported that Clause 37 of the Commissioner's Clauses states:

*"....and if at any meeting of the Commissioners be not present, one of the commissioners present shall be elected chairman of such meeting by the majority of the votes of the Commissioners present at such meeting"*

All the Conservators present agreed that NW should chair this meeting and the subsequent confidential meeting.

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

MJ declared he was a Trustee of Buglife which was currently exploring a project on the Commons.

It was agreed that this did not preclude him from taking part in discussions.

### **07.23.3 WPCC Board Meetings**

- i. The Resolutions of the Public and Confidential Board Meetings of 5 June 2023 were approved.
- ii. The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 5 June 2023 were approved.

### **07.23.4 Matters Arising**

Crooked Billet – Following a meeting with the Acting Manager at the Crooked Billet, the DCR confirmed that the situation in regard to the noise caused by the deckchairs being removed and put away had improved. The Keepers were monitoring the area and the deckchairs were being kept within the boundary. No alternative to a rope had been agreed but, at the moment, did not appear to be necessary. The only issue not yet resolved was the matter of a note on each chair advising that the chairs, and the pub's toilets, were available for anyone to use.

### **07.23.5 Committee Matters**

#### **Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Committee**

At their meeting on 29 June 2023, the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Committee agreed the appointment of Mrs Sue Bucknall as Chairman. This was recommended to the Board for approval. This was approved and the Board recorded their thanks to Mrs Bucknall.

#### **Resolution**

**The Board approved the appointment of Sue Bucknall as Chairman of the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Committee.**

### **07.23.6 Operations Report**

The Board received and noted the Operations Report prepared by the WPCC staff.

The following points were reported:

**Wildlife Garden** – With the recent warm and wet weather, the wildlife garden had grown significantly and was attracting insects including several species of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Amphibians have included a newt and a frog. Orchard trees are on order and will be planted in the autumn. The Fundraising Manager is promoting the availability of two benches for sponsorship. The old laurel trees have been removed and will be replaced with a native hedge.

**REMPF** - The rugby and football season finished at the REMPf in late May but the team have been keeping busy in ensuring the pitches are in a good state for play once the new seasons start in September. Schools were still on site but about to stop for the summer holidays. The team have now acquired a Turf Tank Robot - an automated system for line-marking – as well as freeing up a member of staff, it uses less paint. After the hottest June on record, the little rainfall that we have received has managed to keep the pitches still green.

**Keepers** – The Keeper team were continuing with the cycling tasking with 45 cyclists stopped during June. Several cycling signs had been torn down so some time was having to be spent replacing them. There had been some issues with aggressive dogs, with one of the incidents involving a dog owned by a member of staff being attacked.

One of the Keepers stopped two men flying tipping on Wildcroft Road. They refused to give any details, but they picked up all the rubbish and left the area. They were driving a Zip Hire Van and we have shared this information with the local council. All the Keepers are being particularly vigilant regarding the fire risk. We have seen an increase in the number of BBQs and two fires have already been extinguished this month. Both water bowsers are now parked next to the paddock and the fire beaters have been made fit for use. These are kept at the side of the garage.

The Keepers will also start patrolling the golf course to monitor visitor and golfer behaviour. On Friday 30 June 2023 a group of visiting golfers had been verbally abusive to a pregnant woman who had challenged them after her dog had been hit with a golf ball. The golfers were visiting from another golf club as guests of the Wimbledon Common Golf Club. WCGC have advised them that they are not welcome back to the Commons.

PS asked if there had been any follow-up in respect of the recent incident where a visitor had been hit by golf ball. The DCR reported that nothing further had been heard. However, she would be meeting with the golf clubs the following week to discuss updates to the Memorandum of Understanding/Terms and Conditions of Play, which would include the reporting of such incidents. The document would be reviewed by NW before being sent to Bates Wells for comment.

There was a query about how the Club could enforce the rules of play if playing slots were being booked online. This would be discussed with the clubs and included in the document.

OB asked if a copy of the management agreement with Natural England mentioned in the MoU could be obtained.

### **Maintenance**

Maintenance have been busy with their routine tasks which have included:

- Tree safety
- Follow-up work after volunteer sessions and assisting with leading volunteers
- Cutting back vegetation encroachment around the Commons, including sightlines on internal tracks and roadsides.
- Amenity grassland mowing
- Lifting of trees/branches along Parkside South pavements/signage/traffic lights
- Essential maintenance day in the Windmill Car Park (car park was closed for at least half a day)
- Litter pick of A3 and Roehampton Lane
- Daily bin/dog waste bin emptying.
- Clearing drains around the Windmill Car Park toilet block

### **Events**

- **Weekend of Nature** – A very successful Weekend of Nature was held on 16-18 June. Eight events took place over the course of the weekend, along with activities at the Ranger's Office "Base Camp" and some positive feedback was received from those who attended the events as well as those who came across the Base Camp in passing.
- **Public Evening walk 5 July 2023 postponed** – Given the staff's current workload, it was decided to postpone the walk scheduled for 5 July. It will be arranged for later in the autumn.
- **Butterfly/Dragonfly Walk 29 July 2023** – Led by volunteers and OB, the walk would start to be advertised shortly.

- **Open Day 10 September 2023** - Plans are well underway for the Open Day on 10 September and staff are working hard to prepare a fantastic event given it will be the first since 2019

#### **07.23.7 Fundraising Update**

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

**Fundraising for footpaths** - On 1 July 2023, staff and Conservators had a stall promoting the path appeal during ParkRun, asking if attendees could make a donation and to share more about our plans. The Conservators expressed their gratitude for the £1,000.83 raised.

**Wildlife Garden Fundraising** - Two new benches and four small trees would be available for sponsorship in the garden and these opportunities had been initially offered to those who had previously donated to the wildlife garden. In total, these should raise around £9,000.

Tree sponsors will be invited to help with the planting which we hope will take place in late autumn or early winter. An information panel installed by the gate will list who has sponsored the trees.

FM reported that she had received a request from a member of the public who would like a bench on the Commons but had asked if payment could be made in instalments. She thought this was something that perhaps could be offered. Following discussion with NW, it had been agreed that as long as the costs were covered in the deposit payment, this would be acceptable. If this became a regular request, a formal agreement may need to be drawn up.

#### **07.23.8 Conservation Update**

##### **i. Annual Conservation Report**

The Board received and noted the Annual Conservation Report.

The C&EO advised that the report covered all the main habitats on the Common: heathland, grassland, woodland etc and set out the conservation work carried out in each of the habitats.

The report also covered the work of the volunteers which, during the last year, amounted to over 8,000 hours.

A chapter had been included on the London in Bloom awards, particularly setting out the judge's comments on both Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common which had been both thorough and very positive.

OB thanked PH for the woodland work and using that funding to help with the Stag Bog restoration. The extension of the meadows had been positive this year, along with reducing the amount of unnecessary mowing. OB asked what happened to the grass that was cut and collected. PH explained that the contractor removed it off site and composted it and sold what he could. OB suggested that in future it might be worth looking into alternative biomass options.

The Board thanked PH for the excellent report which would now be published on the WPCC website.

## **ii. Annual Monitoring Report**

The Board received and noted the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report, and it was agreed that the Report should be published on the WPCC website.

OB suggested that given the amount of work that had been put into the preparation of the monitoring report, it would be appropriate to issue a stand-alone media release. The Board agreed with this suggestion and the EA to the CEO was asked to draft the release for comment.

The Board expressed their thanks to the members of the Wildlife & Conservation Forum for their contributions to the report.

### **07.23.9 Land Management Plan**

The C&EO gave a verbal update on the Land Management Plan.

All information had now been received from all contributors and the final editing process was underway. He hoped to complete this work by the end of August. He was waiting to hear back from Natural England on dates for the two or three habitat walks with them but these would likely be in mid-October. The Conservators would hold a half day meeting to discuss the plan prior to the walks.

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

SB gave a verbal update on the Friends.

No major events were currently planned so focus was on increasing membership and fundraising. A few smaller activities had been arranged for August including two walks as part of the Roehampton Community Weeks and attendance at a local community fair. Alan Blower and Nick Manning had offered to repeat their Grand Houses of Rushmere walk in September.

SB commented that the fundraising at the Park Run had been successful in the main because of the very focused message. It had been agreed that a consistent branding would be developed specifically for the Friends.

The FM was also encouraging members to upgrade to benefactors.

### **07.23.11 WPCC Forum/Group Meetings**

The Board received and noted the notes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum held on 23 May 2023

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

There were no questions.



| <b>(Committee(s):</b>  | <b>Date(s):</b> | <b>Item no.</b>        |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|
| Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Meeting                                | 9 October 2023  | 10.23.4                |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Matters Arising from the Public Board meeting of 10 July 2023 |                 | <b>Private</b>         |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Chairman of Wimbledon and Putney Commons                    |                 | <b>For Information</b> |
| <b>Matters Arising</b>   |                 |                        |

**Crooked Billet** - No alternative to a rope [to demarcate the area where benches were permitted] had been agreed but, at the moment, did not appear to be necessary. The only issue not yet resolved was the matter of a note on each chair advising that the chairs, and the pub's toilets, were available for anyone to use.

Update – The DCR and the Keeper's continue to monitor the area and there have not been any issues reported to WPCC. The DCR will follow up with the notices on the deckchairs.

|  |                                     |                 |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Committee(s):</b>   | <b>Date(s):</b>                     | <b>Item no.</b> |
| Board of Conservators  | 9 October 2023                      | 10.23.6         |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Chief Executive Report                            | <b>Public</b><br>Yes                |                 |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons | <b>For Decision and Information</b> |                 |
| <h1>SUMMARY</h1>   |                                     |                 |

## Keepers Update

During August the Keepers focused their efforts on patrolling the golf course. In general there were not too many issues although the main problem were the number of out of control dogs that were allowed to run all over the course. A lot of dog waste was also noted on the edges of the course. From observations, the main cause is visitors letting dogs run loose onto the course late at night or first thing in the morning. The Keepers are looking at ways to try and deal with the issue, but the best solutions is to encourage other Commons users to report offenders.

We have had a few complaints this month from the public regarding rude or dangerous golfers. None of the allegations have been substantiated, but upon investigation it appears the golfers in question are visitors or green fee players rather than members. We have also noticed that there are some unofficial golfers coming onto the course, particularly in the evenings. The Keepers need to work with the clubs to prevent this as it presents real issues around safety and liability insurance. In general our findings are that the members show great respect to the Commons and the different user groups and users of the Commons in the main endeavoured to co-operate with the golfers. Where there are problems it is generally due to lack of awareness, failure to observe the signs or not looking for the players.

A new horse arrived at the stables in September. He is an ex-racehorse named Bold Conduct who has been gifted to us by a trainer based in Dorset. The Keepers are going to trial him over the next six weeks to see how he takes to the role. As a public engagement exercise, during the Open Day, members of the public were asked to pick a stable name for him. So far he is settling in well and taking the role of patrolling in his stride. If for any reason he doesn't work out, he will be returned to his owners and likewise once he retires.

## Maintenance Update

Between July and September 2023 the Maintenance Team have been carrying out a variety of regular works including:

- mowing and strimming
- bracken bruising
- drainage works at the Telegraph Car Park
- repairs to the Beverley Brook path near Mill Corner
- tree safety work
- woodland thinning

- full audit of the organisation's first aid kits
- Open Day set up and take down
- regular litter clearance and bin emptying

## REMPF Update

With June of this year being the hottest June on record, work at the Playing Fields, as for our other teams, was challenging. Work at the Playing Fields has included:

- Setting out facilities for the schools to hold their sports days as well as their regular use, including a 400 meter track using the new Turf Tank Robot (automatic line marker)
- Overseeding of the cricket outfield (sadly not successful given the adverse temperatures and the seed failed to germinate)
- Pitches re-seeding and preparation for the start of the football season in September
- Interviewing for the Groundsman vacancy
- Hosting of several external events including the Doko Challenge, which raises funds for the Gurkhas, and the Mongolian Day of Culture
- Issuing of football contracts to the existing weekend football teams and a new team who will replace a team that unfortunately folded half way through the previous season

## EVENTS

**Roehampton Community Weeks** – WPCC were involved in two of the events as part of the Roehampton Community Weeks: A guided walk with Head Ranger, Bill Rowland, and a walk led by Nick Manning, Friend and author of a book about the Commons, and Gilly King, resident curator/archivist/historian of University of Roehampton.

The latter walk tied in with the author's book on the Commoners, focusing on the Roehampton area.

**Commons Open Day** – The Open Day, the first since 2019, went ahead on 10 September 2023 and was a great success despite having to cancel some of the arena events due to the high temperatures (bird of prey display and the dog show). It was busy all day and we received some good visitor feedback. Some of the food stalls reported they had a quieter day than in previous years, but this was likely down to people not spending unnecessarily rather than lower numbers of visitors – there were definitely more families having picnics around the site. Next year's event will take place on Sunday 8 September 2024.

**Halloween Pumpkin Hunt** – We will hold a one-day Children's Pumpkin Hunt around the Nature Trail on Saturday 28 October 2023. The Friends are providing volunteers for the day.

**Carols at the Windmill** – The very popular annual event will take place on Saturday 9 December 2023 at the Windmill, jointly organised by WPCC and the Windmill Museum Trustees.

|   |                 |                        |
|---|-----------------|------------------------|
| <b>Committee(s):</b>  | <b>Date(s):</b> | <b>Item no.</b>        |
| Board of Conservators   | 9 October 2023  | 10.23.7                |
| <b>Subject:</b> Fundraising Update  |                 | <b>Public</b>          |
| <b>Report of:</b> Fundraising Manager   |                 | <b>For Information</b> |
| <b>Summary</b>  |                 |                        |
| This report provides a summary of fundraising activity between 4 <sup>th</sup> July and 2 <sup>nd</sup> October |                 |                        |

### **Fundraising for footpaths**

Work to improve four priority footpaths began on 25 September 2023. This project has been funded by donations from visitors and a grant from South Western Railway's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund.

The total raised including Gift Aid is £75,716

Donations – £12,481

Major Gift – £6,250

ParkRun - £985

Chapman Charitable Trust - £1,000

SWR CCIF grant - £55,000

WPCC is incredibly grateful for all the support received to enable this important work which will improve access and protect habitats. The full project cost is £88,000 and WPCC is contributing the remaining funds.

### **Book sale**

A second hand book sale has been organised by the Rangers Office and has been popular with visitors. All the books were donated to the charity to sell to help raise funds. Since 12th September, the total raised from donations for books is £427.

### **Wimbledon Village Stables**

The stables held their annual sponsored ride in September to raise funds for various charities, with 12 participants choosing to fundraise for WPCC to improve equestrian facilities on the Commons. £7,762 has been raised via JustGiving.

|   |                     |                 |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Committee(s):</b>  | <b>Date(s):</b>     | <b>Item no.</b> |
| Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators   | 9 October 2023      | 10.23.8         |
| <b>Subject:</b>   | <b>Non-Public</b>   |                 |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Conservation and Engagement Officer  | <b>For Decision</b> |                 |
| <h1>SUMMARY</h1> <p><b>An update on conservation matters prepared by the Conservation and Engagement Officer.</b></p> |                     |                 |

Remaining mindful of the need to minimise any unnecessary disturbance to wildlife during the summer period and especially to nesting birds (1 March to 31 July), much of the habitat management that takes place during this time has involved the gentle management of various areas of the Commons by different groups of volunteers.

Since the beginning of August 2023, we have however steadily increased the scale of projects that we have been able to carry out on the Commons.

### **Grassland Management**

As with many aspects of looking after the Commons, the management of the various areas of grassland involves a careful balancing act between the requirements of people and the needs of wildlife. It is for this reason that we undertake a variety of different management approaches to looking after the grassland sites on the Commons. For example, where necessary, road verges are often kept short to ensure that sight lines are maintained along busy roads and in some areas, certain sections of grassland are mown to provide visitors with easily accessible areas to play or relax.

For many of the Commons' larger areas of grassland, a strong emphasis is however placed upon improving the conservation value of these sites.

Without regular and ongoing care, which at the very least, should include an annual programme where vegetation is cut and removed from the site, any open area of land will gradually revert to scrub and eventually woodland. On the Commons, this work is carried out through a combination of employing an external contractor to cut and remove vegetation from the largest conservation grassland sites on the Commons and by using our own machinery to carry out a similar programme of work on some of the smaller areas on site.

As with many aspects of looking after the Commons, the management of the various areas of grassland involves a careful balancing act between the requirements of people and the needs of wildlife. It is for this reason that we undertake a variety of different management approaches to looking after the grassland sites on the Commons. For example, where necessary, road verges are often kept short to ensure that sight lines are maintained along busy roads and in some areas, certain sections of grassland are mown to provide visitors with easily accessible areas to play or relax.

For many of the Commons' larger areas of grassland, a strong emphasis is however placed upon improving the conservation value of these sites.





*Tibbet's Meadow on Putney Heath*

During 2023, contractors carried out work (known as cut and collect) on the following areas of grassland:

1. Putney Lower Common Main Field
2. Putney Lower Common Fairground site
3. Putney Heath Fairground site
4. Tibbets Meadow
5. The Plain
6. Centre Path Meadow
7. Wilberforce Field
8. West Place
9. Wimbledon Common Fairground site – 2023 has been the first year this site has been cut and baled but hopefully if Parnham's Fair takes the decision to only visit the Commons once a year (September) as opposed to their usual two visits per year, this area will be included in the annual programme of cut and collect that is carried out on the Commons.



*Cut and collect work opposite West Place on Wimbledon Common*

During August and September 2023, WPCCC Maintenance Team cut and collected vegetation from the following sites:

1. Southern Pound Meadow
2. Molinia Patch near Centre Path Meadow.
3. Telegraph Meadow
4. Small area of grassland near Roehampton War Memorial
5. Oasis Academy Meadow.
6. Selected areas of REMPF Memorial Ring.
7. Westside Common road verges

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

Another important area of grassland on the Commons can be found around the edge of the Wimbledon Common Golf Course. These areas are all within the Wimbledon Common SSSI and contain important areas of acid grassland. Unfortunately, not only are many of these areas heavily used by visitors to the Commons but over time, woodland and scrub encroachment has resulted in damage to the integrity of the grassland.

During the beginning of October 2023, the WPCCC Maintenance Team began work along the edge of Caesar's Camp fairway. The coppicing of mainly silver birch trees and gorse will help with the recovery of acid grassland in this area.





*London Scottish Golf Club 10<sup>th</sup> - Caesar's Camp.*

**Heathland Management:**

Temporary pools.

Temporary pools that can hold water for at least part of the year are very important for wildlife. There are two areas on Putney Heath where temporary heathland pools can be found and during August 2023, invasive vegetation was removed from these areas by the Commons' Maintenance Team to ensure their ongoing survival into the future.





*Temporary pool on Putney Heath*

### **Bare ground.**

In addition to the maintenance of the two temporary pools on Putney Heath, another similar piece of work that has recently been carried out in this area has been the creation of a small area of bare ground which is located close to the junction of Ladies Mile and Inner Park Ride. Bare ground is another important element of lowland heathland as it provides a breeding and a hunting habitat for a range of invertebrate and vertebrate species. The large tussocks of purple moor grass that were removed as part of this work have also been used to help dam a nearby drainage ditch. The aim of this activity is to retain water and keep this area of the heathland, known as wet heath, damp for a longer period of time than has recently been the case.

### **Heathland Volunteers:**

Since June 2023 there have been nineteen volunteer sessions spent on various areas of the Commons' heathland. These areas have included heathland either side of Ladies Mile, heathland south of Hookhamslade Pond and heathland adjacent to Tibbet's Meadow.

In addition to our own regular volunteer groups, other volunteer sessions have recently included volunteers from Putney High School, King's College and Rokeby school.



*Volunteer scrub bashing close to Ladies Mile.*

### **Ring barking:**

Ring barking (also known as girdling) involves the removal of a complete band of bark from around the trunk of a tree. This is a traditional method of woodland management that has been used for centuries as a means of clearing or thinning woodland and is something that is actively encouraged by wildlife conservationists. This method of woodland management provides a natural process which is similar to a tree dying slowly of disease and this creates a rich and diverse habitat for a wide range of insects and fungi as well as woodpeckers and other woodland birds.

During August 2023, ring barking was carried out to help thin woodland and reduce the number of invasive non-native Turkey oaks in the following areas:

- Immediately north of Bluegate Gravel Pit.
- The artificial mounds on Putney Heath.
- A small area of woodland close to the Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common.





*WPCC Maintenance Team ring barking Turkey oak along the edge of Tibbet's Meadow*

### **Wildlife Garden update**

Located in front of the Rangers Office on Wimbledon Common, the Commons' wildlife garden has been created through the generous donations of local supporters of the Commons. During summer 2023, the wildlife garden has literally burst into bloom and attracted a multitude of different species including various bees, butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, and beetles.

As the garden continues to take shape, over the past few months, we have carried out the following activities:

- Erected a new wooden fence around the entire perimeter of the garden.
- Constructed a hazel hurdle fence along the back of the garden to separate the area from the nearby garden belonging to Manor Cottage.
- Removed an old laurel hedge which will be replaced by a native mixed hedgerow in due course.
- Created two short sections of dead hedge which will help to prevent trampling towards the rear of the garden.





*The Commons' wildlife garden (photographed in June 2023)*



*Hazel fencing at the rear of the wildlife garden. In time, a mixed native hedgerow will be planted along the edge of this fence line.*



## Volunteering on the Commons:



### *Sunday morning scrub bashers (1st October 2023)*

As ever, over the past few months, volunteers have continued to help protect and enhance the Commons' landscape. From scrub bashing to litter picking, the Commons would not be as well looked after as they are today without the thousands of hours of care and attention that our volunteers devote to looking after this very special location.

Over the past few months, volunteer groups on the Commons have included:

- Sunday morning scrub bashers
- Beverley Brook litter picking volunteers.
- Farm Bog volunteers from the London Wildlife Trust.
- Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers
- Wildlife recorders
- Assistance with the Commons' Open Day
- Mid-week volunteer group
- Individual and group litter pickers
- School groups including pupils and staff from Kings College School, Rokeby and Putney High school.

## London in Bloom 2023

As a testament to the ongoing commitment of all those individuals who help to look after the Commons, in September 2023, 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 the Arts Pavilion, Tower Hamlets. In addition to this very welcome result, Wimbledon Common was also presented with the trophy for London Common/Open Space of the year 2023.

### 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 2023, the London in Bloom Campaign entered its 54th 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, the London in Bloom judge who had been assigned to visit the Commons arrived on site on 21 June and during a single day, both the Commons' two entries to the competition were visited and 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 there is always more that can be done to help improve any site, we are very pleased that out of a total score of 200 points, Wimbledon Common was awarded 193 points and not too far behind, Putney Lower Common was awarded 185 points.

### **Assessors General Comments & Award Justification**

#### **(Wimbledon Common)**



Right from the get-go, it became very clear that I was visiting a very special and very loved site. This was compounded by the profound and significant enthusiasm displayed by my host for the day ably providing most helpfully, a very expansive, thorough, and exciting portfolio,



for this year's London in Bloom competition. This was additionally supported by a very full volunteers' newsletter and the wider circulated, work on Wimbledon Common leaflet.

The whole day was an exemplar of textbook management and conservation of woodland and heathland areas and was a delight to be shown around such a lovingly cared-for series of green spaces. The Common hosts a number of different users, including the golf course and sports pitches - all of whom have fabulous relationships with the rangers - no mean feat given their differing requirements and inter-action with the visiting public. So strong is that bond that they fully understand each other's conservation needs. Not only were correct, conservation woodland management techniques being put into place, but were backed up by a very knowledgeable interest in the former with records of species of birds and mammals.

There genuinely was a very honest desire to maintain the area with indigenous species, where possible and evidenced by the methodical removal of Turkey Oak and re-planting with English Oak. The variety of vistas created by selective thinning to either increase the width of rides or to open glades and create various micro- habitats was well documented.

The use of mounted security by the Rangers on horseback was the icing on the cake, and clearly much appreciated by all who use the Commons. It was pointed out that it was an effective force for coercion rather than seeking to strictly enforce the bylaws.

Hard landscape elements, including signage were well distributed and designed to fit into the rural context with excellent amounts of information and the use of QR codes to provide further knowledge for users. The keen staff and volunteers of Wimbledon Common need little direction from me for future development. However, it will be good to see further rides opened up from encroaching vegetation as part of the existing strategy to do so. I sincerely hope that I can judge the site again next year!





## Assessors General Comments & Award Justification

### (Putney Lower Common)



Putney Lower Common is the other jewel in the crown maintained by the Rangers of Wimbledon Common. All the attributes and skill sets described in my report for that Common are replicated here. The site is a mixture of open common land, meadow, woodland, riverside and ornamental grass for amenity and recreational use. Great care has been taken to not only screen some of the newer buildings, (the Oasis Academy), but also to open up for residents, some of the adjacent housing by selective clearance of the woodland edge, whilst simultaneously gapping up other areas to create a dense woodland margin of indigenous species.

Two new attributes have been created in the last 12 months. These include the restoration of a footbridge, (rather nicely named after one of the park rangers with a 40 years' service – who is retiring shortly); and the other is the creation of Putney Lower Common, Orchard, which was planted as a part of the late Queen's green canopy initiative for her platinum jubilee. This had been sensitively located and constructed on a grid-iron fashion using estate-like timber enclosures for each tree.

The variety of landscapes on Putney Common, albeit on a smaller scale, is not too dissimilar to those of Wimbledon Common. Again, great care has been taken to liaise with stakeholders, including the local school and residents - and the creation of a woodland glade has been welcomed in opening up an area that had hitherto been the subject of antisocial activities – which has now ceased due to this initiative.

Hard landscape and signage is of the highest quality complete with QR codes, providing further information for those that seek it. The Rangers hut deserves special mention, being

simply only a 'portacabin', but ingeniously screened with almost a living wall to hide the built structure - allowing it to blend in with the adjoining commons in a seamless manner.

It was helpful to see stag beetle, log piles, being constructed to take advantage of fallen timber and deadwood and amplifies the enthusiasm and commitment of both Rangers and volunteers. This is a deservedly high scoring site, reflecting the tenacity and delivery of a strong management plan. Again, I would welcome coming back in future years to see further amelioration and the ongoing task of managing the meadows and tree stock to reflect user and ecological needs. Hopefully in oncoming years, the orchard will be extended further.



## Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting dated 11/07/2023

### Meeting Minutes

#### Attendees

Oliver Bennett - conservator (OB)  
Andy Davies – volunteer (AD)  
Angela Evans-Hill – staff (AEH)  
Les Evans-Hill - volunteer (LEH)  
Peter Haldane – staff (PH)  
Adrian Podmore – volunteer (AP)  
Simon Riley - volunteer (SR)

1. Apologies were received from Sue Bucknall, Andrew Harding, Michael Johnson, Maggie May (MM), Ros Taylor, Nick Tew and Henry Wilson (HW)
2. OB was reconfirmed as Chair of the Forum for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
3. Weekend of Nature (17 & 18 June 2023). It was generally felt the weekend went well although there was a distinct lack of children. The meeting discussed the possibility of changing the Weekend of Nature to cover a longer period of time, perhaps a month, but agreed that given staff resources, it would be better kept to one weekend. Thought would be given at a future meeting as to whether to ask for a donation for walks and to rename the general nature walk to make it more appealing to participants. As the Base Camp was quite busy, it was suggested that the possibility of including more display stalls and to have a selection of insects on display. The latter would require an expert to remain at base. **Action Point** – to be discussed further in 2024.
4. Conservation and general update from PH.
  - a) The Annual Conservation Report (period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023) is now approved and will be posted on the WPCC website very shortly.
  - b) There have been various scrub-bashing/thinning tasks in the period since the last meeting. This includes midweek volunteers (3 sessions), weekend volunteers (5 sessions) and school groups (4 sessions).
  - c) There continues to be strong volunteer participation in litter picks, including 6 self-led sessions in the period. There have also been two Beverley Brook litter events that included Himalayan Balsam removal.
  - d) Marginal water plant planting has been completed at the wildlife pond.



e) The Walking for Health Programme continues with approximately 9 participants per walk. PH noted that as well as being a healthy pastime for the participants the walks also gave him an opportunity to explain many of the management actions on the Commons.

#### 5. Recorder and Monitoring Updates

- a) LEH stated that he had recently recorded Oak Yellow Underwing moth from the Commons. This is the 9<sup>th</sup> British record. Otherwise poor year particularly with regard to insect abundance.
- b) AD said that after a slow spring things had improved somewhat recently with good numbers of Meadow Brown in particular.
- c) AP said that there had been some good recent bird records including Golden Oriole and Hawfinch. A male Reed Bunting appears to be holding territory on The Plain so it is possible they are breeding. The Little Grebes that have taken up summer residence on Bluegate have fledged four young. It would appear that the Swallows are onto their second brood.
- d) SR was pleased that the number of casual dragonfly records being recorded on I-Record was increasing with a few new recorders regularly posting entries

6. Feasibility study concerning the restoration of Farm Bog etc. PH confirmed that he would circulate the report to Forum members shortly

7. Buglife B-Lines initiative – MM has followed up with Buglife. There may be some opportunities however there are unlikely to be any developments in 2023.

8. Bug traps – AP agreed to try to find out likely cost of equipment. SR said he would email HW to ask for his thoughts.

9. Annual Monitoring Report - this has now been finalised and is will be posted on the WPCC website shortly.

10. Biomass initiative – this is with PH and will need discussion with new CEO. It was noted that a number of parties had expressed an initial interest.

11. Other Events – butterfly and dragonfly walk to be held on 29 July starting at 11am. There are also bird walks agreed for 17 September and 22 October 2023. AP will lead these.

#### 12. AOB

a) Land Management Plan – this is still in progress and is currently with PH. Forum members offered PH help on proof reading etc. Forum members also asked that they receive a copy once it is nearer its final form.

b) Forum members were pleased to see that the golf course surrounds are not being so heavily cut. SR offered to walk the areas concerned to give some idea of which areas might need an annual cut and collect and which areas could be left as the sward length varies considerably over the site.

c) AP wondered whether it might be possible to set up a live stream of the Swallow nests given the availability of relatively inexpensive technology. It was noted that this would be desirable but that work would need to be undertaken to explore if this would be feasible given current resources. AP agreed to give it further thought.

d) OB mentioned that at the WPC Open Meeting the Conservators expressed thanks to the Forum members for their work. OB noted that a majority of the questions from local residents pertained to rare species, habitat management and other environmental related matters which he considered very encouraging.

13. Next meetings are 12 September and 14 November 2023. **ACTION POINT** - agree dates for 2024 at next meeting.