

**Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on  
Monday 11 October 2021 at 6.00pm at the Wimbledon Common Golf  
Club, Camp Road, Lonon SW19 4UW**

**Conservators:** Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman (DNM)  
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Mr Oliver Bennett MBE (OB)  
Mr David Hince (DH)  
Mr Michael Johnston (MJ)  
Mr Mike Rappolt (MR)  
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)

**Officers:** Mr Steve Bound, Chief Executive (CE)  
Mr Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (CE&O)  
Mrs Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer (PA to CE)

**Apologies:** Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger (DCR), Mr Peter Hirsch

**Members of the public:** Four members of the public attended

ITEM		ACTIONS
10.21.1	<p><b>Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Ms P Graystone and Mr Peter Hirsch</p>	
10.21.2	<p><b>Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting</b></p> <p>DNM – member of the Thames Hare and Hounds</p> <p>The Board agreed this did not prevent DNM taking part in the discussions.</p>	
	<p>The Chairman welcomed the general public to the first open Board meeting and, indeed, to the first in person meeting of this Board.</p> <p>The principles of Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) had been applied in deciding which issues should be included in the confidential part of the meeting. There would be an opportunity for the members of the public who were attending to ask questions at the end of the meeting.</p> <p>Given the ongoing health concerns, the Chairman expressed her gratefulness for those attending to respect the safety measures that had been put in place.</p> <p>The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, expressed sadness at the recent passing of Professor Robin Touquet, a Conservator from 2012 to 2015, and asked to record the Conservators' appreciation for his service to WPCC and condolences to the family.</p>	

<p><b>10.21.3</b></p>	<p><b>WPCC Forum/Group Meetings</b></p> <p><b>Wildlife &amp; Conservation Forum</b></p> <p>OB gave a verbal report of the recent meeting of the Wildlife &amp; Conservation Forum which had taken the form of a survey of Farm Bog.</p> <p>The Commons had three important valley mire sites: Farm Bog, Stag Bog and Ravine Bog. They were an important part of the site's ecosystem and Farm Bog was part of the Commons' SSSI designation.</p> <p>OB was developing a monitoring plan for the Commons and this was put to the test at the recent survey of Farm Bog. A full report would be made to the Board in due course but the main issues were, however, that the Bog had contracted by some 50% over the last 50 years and it was drying out in some areas with some rare plants now locally extinct.</p> <p>A survey of Stag and Ravine bogs had shown that both were partly destroyed but the beat base was still intact. Historical drainage in the 1940s had resulted in hydrological changes resulting in some areas drying out and invasive species appearing. Both were restorable as was being demonstrated by the work being carried out by PH at Stag Bog which was resulting in a return of biodiversity.</p> <p>Whilst the dams recently restored in Farm Bog were also starting to reverse the damage, further work would be required to restore drainage and reintroduce plants. Funds would need to be found for this work and he had identified a grant scheme that opened in Spring 2022. OB had also identified partners to work with in the project – London Wildlife Trust (LWT) and the South East Rivers Trust (SERT).</p> <p>Of urgent concern was the need to find funding to remove the invasive plants in Ravine Bog.</p> <p>OB confirmed that the work required on the bogs was being incorporated into the Land Management Plan. It was hoped that the new Fundraising Manager would be able to help with finding suitable funding.</p> <p>The Board supported the continuation of the restoration work and the seeking of grants to fund the work.</p>	
<p><b>10.21.4</b></p>	<p><b>Conservation Report</b></p> <p>PH provided a Conservation update.</p> <p><b>Volunteering</b></p> <p>All pre-Covid volunteer groups on the Commons have been up and running since May 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekend scrub bashers – recently tackled scrub near Green Ride and on The Plain.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-week volunteer Group – recently carried out painting work, scrub clearance around the edge of Stag Bog and heathland restoration work near Tibbet’s Corner.</li> <li>• Volunteer litter pickers – approximately 30 regulars.</li> <li>• DofE volunteers – 51 young people involved so far this year.</li> <li>• Beverley Brook litter pickers – (new group June 2021).</li> <li>• Wildlife Recorders – well established group.</li> <li>• Additional volunteer groups have included: Putney High School, Kings College School, Geocache Community and a group from Beyond Autism.</li> <li>• Farm Bog Volunteers – In addition to volunteers from LWT, we are currently trying to add to the number of visits which this group make to the area each year</li> </ul> <p><b>Grassland Management</b></p> <p>Mowing on the Commons is broadly carried out in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amenity mowing (e.g. REMPF)</li> <li>• Conservation mowing (3x acid grassland sites on the Commons)</li> <li>• End of year mow (approximately 6x sites)</li> </ul> <p>The best practice for meadow management involved the cutting, baling and removal of the grass (“arising”) from site. Management by mowing or grazing was essential to the maintenance, structure, balance and diversity in grassland. Without this management, grassland would become coarse and rank, losing diversity and eventually turning into scrub or woodland. This management has been carried out on three sites (in addition to the existing acid grassland sites). These areas have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLC Oasis Academy</li> <li>• Telegraph Road meadow</li> <li>• Parts of the REMPF Memorial Garden</li> <li>• Wide grass verges along Westside Common.</li> </ul> <p>To further increase the active management of grassland sites on the Commons, we are also looking at costings to better manage five more sites on the Commons</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. West Place (2 acres/0.8 hectares)</li> <li>2. Wilberforce Field (1.6 acres/0.6 hectares)</li> <li>3. Putney Heath fairground site (2.2 acres/0.8 hectares)</li> <li>4. PLC main field (10.9 acres/4.4 hectares)</li> <li>5. PLC fairground site (3.5 acres/1.4 hectares)</li> <li>6. Total = approximately 20 acres/ 8 hectares</li> </ol> <p><b>London in Bloom 2021</b></p> <p>London in Bloom, the largest horticultural campaign in London, was set up to encourage and recognise the greening of London. The competition is marked under eight categories, including</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access, signage and visitor information</li> <li>2. Welfare of visitors</li> </ol>	
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	<p>3. Quality and maintenance of facilities          4. Maintenance (including control of litter, graffiti &amp; vandalism)          5. Maintenance of hard landscape features          6. Environmental sustainability (management of natural resources)          7. Conservation          8. Community involvement</p> <p>PH was delighted to report that Putney Lower Common had been awarded a Gold award, scoring 181 points out of 200 points. Wimbledon Common had also achieved a Gold Award and was also named category winner with a total of 184 out of 200 points.</p> <p>MJ asked if there was any litter management further upstream from WPCC's part of the Beverley Brook by Merton Council. PH was not aware of any. Similarly, he was not aware that they were managing invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam.</p> <p>MJ also asked whether Merton Council might be prepared to carry out mowing on our behalf. PH explained that the Council were more focused on amenity grassland management rather than the more specialised meadow management needed for the Commons.</p> <p>SB asked if it might be possible to work with schools to help with issues around litter, from both litter-picking and educational perspectives. PH explained this was already happening with the Oasis Academy at Putney Lower Common providing volunteers.</p> <p>The Board recorded its appreciation to all volunteers.</p>	
<p><b>10.21.5</b></p>	<p><b>Land Management Plan</b></p> <p>PH reported on the progress of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Land Management Plan (the Plan).</p> <p>He explained that the aim of the Plan was to provide information about the land management that would be delivered on the Commons over a ten-year period. It would be a document that would provide a transparent link between best practice, legislation and the practical tasks needed to be carried out on the ground.</p> <p>It would be a working document for staff, setting out operational objectives, the value of habitats and how they were being improved. It would also be available to anyone outside the organisation who had an interest in the Commons and how they were managed.</p> <p>The Plan would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental information</li> <li>• Biological information</li> <li>• Landscape. Cultural heritage, access and recreation.</li> </ul> <p>Following on from this there would be a number of operational objectives which would include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of the Commons main habitats</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management on and around the golf course</li> <li>• Improvements to access</li> <li>• Planning for climate change</li> <li>• Management for key species (Hedgehogs, Stag beetles etc)</li> </ul> <p>A steering group had been established for the Plan, which consisted of two Conservators (Chair and a member of WCF), the Chief Executive and PH. The first meeting had been held in September 2021. So far there had been significant research carried out and the Plan was a work in progress. Completion was forecast to be end-2022.</p> <p>PH confirmed that the Plan would include a list of priorities with costings.</p> <p>MR asked how the Commons' maintenance and conservation work would be managed in the meantime. PH explained that the Land Management Plan would more formally set out the work that was currently carried out by the staff and this work would continue as normal.</p> <p>It would be necessary for the Plan to be signed off by the Board and it was agreed that a meeting to specifically discuss the Plan and to be able to get the views of the Board, would need to be held when it was nearing its final draft form.</p>	
<p>10.21.6</p>	<p><b>Chief Executive's Report – non-confidential items</b></p> <p><b>Contactless Car Park Donation Meters</b> – Given the unreliability of the cash only donation machine in the car park, it had been agreed to replace it with a contactless machine. A survey had been carried out to find the best location for the required wifi connection. Fortunately, the location of the current meter was suitable. The new machine had therefore been ordered and would be fitted in due course.</p> <p><b>Recruitment to New Posts</b> – With the decision not to replace the Chief Operations Manager, three new posts were being created: Fundraising Manager, Maintenance Operative and a part time Office Administrator. The Job Descriptions had been finalised and advertising would begin shortly. The CE confirmed that advice had been taken on the appropriate salary for the Fundraising Manager and that the role was being advertised on specialist websites.</p> <p><b>Christmas Reception 3 December 2021</b> – The Board agreed to proceed with arrangements for the Christmas Drinks Reception at the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club, utilising the larger dining area. A decision would be taken at least three weeks before on whether to go ahead, taking into account the COVID19 situation and the prevailing government advice. MR suggested that criteria be agreed in relation to the decision to proceed with the event.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>The Board received and noted the report.</b></p>	

	<p><b>The Board agreed to go ahead with preparation for the annual Christmas Reception on 3 December, subject to a review of the COVID19 situation at least three weeks before the event.</b></p>	
10.21.7	<p><b>Conservators Code of Conduct and policy on email use</b></p> <p>The Board approved the Conservators' Code of Conduct which had been amended to include the new Use of E-mail Policy, and a declaration on personal data which current and future Board members would be required to sign. It was agreed that the policy would be included as an appendix to the Code of Conduct.</p> <p><b>Resolution</b></p> <p><b>The Board resolved to approve the revised Code of Conduct including the policy on email use as an appendix.</b></p>	
10.21.8	<p><b>Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons</b></p> <p>SB updated the Board on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons.</p> <p>COVID had continued to curtail activities with the cancellation of the Games Day. However, the Afternoon Tea at the AELTC was scheduled to go ahead on 26 February 2022 and the House of Commons Reception would be held on 21 July 2022.</p> <p>Several successful meet and greet sessions had been held which had resulted in the signing up of new members and many expressions of interest in volunteering on the Commons. A Family Day, held in September in conjunction with Wild Learning, had been successful.</p> <p>The first Corporate member had joined this year and it was hoped to be able to encourage more.</p> <p>It was hoped that a major project could be identified to which Friends would be encouraged to donate. Possibilities included the continuation of works to the Beverley Brook path, and the replacement of the bridge near the Playing Fields and repairs to the bridge at Putney Lower Common.</p> <p>A "150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picture Competition had been launched in August. This would run for 12 months with a new round each month. It was hoped that the winners would feature in an exhibition and a book later in 2022. Local business had been generous in donating prizes.</p> <p>There was a proposal that the Friends would fund a Memorial Drinking Fountain to be situated near Springwell Car Park. The Committee was currently looking into suitable design options.</p> <p>The Chairman thanks SB for her energy and commitment to the Friends.</p>	

<b>10.21.9</b>	<p><b>Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Open Meeting held on Wednesday 30 June 2021</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Annual Open Meeting held via Zoom on Wednesday 30 June 2021, the draft of which were approved via e-mail and published on the website, were formally approved.</p>	
<b>10.21.10</b>	<p><b>Meeting and Events calendar</b></p> <p>The Board received and noted the draft Meeting and Events Calendar.</p> <p>It was noted that the Constitution Committee meeting dates still needed to be confirmed at the next Committee meeting.</p> <p>It was also noted that the June 2022 Board meeting was scheduled during half term as it was difficult to schedule this meeting due to constraints in relation to the approval of the financial statements. MJ asked that where possible school holidays be avoided for meetings.</p> <p><b>Resolution</b></p> <p><b>The Board resolved to approve the draft Calendar of meetings and events for 2022.</b></p>	
<b>10.21.11</b>	<p><b>Public questions on matters considered in Part A(1) of this meeting</b></p> <p>Mr Asif Malik</p> <p>With regard to the drinking fountain, Mr Malik reported that the Wimbledon Society had been looking into the restoration of the drinking fountain near the junction of Parkside and Cannizaro Road and the possibility of moving it onto the Common. This might be an option for the Friends' memorial suggestion. SB thanked Mr Malik and commented that this would be looked into.</p> <p>With regard to events, Mr Malik asked if the Board were willing to give consideration to going ahead with the Carols at the Windmill this year. It was agreed that this would be discussed outside of the Board meeting.</p> <p>Mr Andrew Harding</p> <p>Mr Harding asked if the Board could confirm that the Land Management Plan would be underpinned by a specific habitat monitoring strategy so that the effect of management could be assessed? PH confirmed this would be the case.</p>	

	There being no further questions, The Chairman stated that in accordance with the policy agreed by the Conservators at the Board meeting of 12 July 2021 in relation to the admission of the public at meetings, the remaining agenda items for the meeting were considered confidential and as such members of the public were thanked for attending and kindly asked to leave.	
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The meeting closed at 7.10pm