

**Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on
Monday 11 December 2023 at 4.30pm at the Information Centre, Manor Cottage,
London SW19 5NR**

Conservators: Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman (DNM)
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)
Mr Oliver Bennett (OB)
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)
Mr Peter Hirsch (PDH)
Mr Michael Johnston (MJ)
Mr Peter Shortt (PS)

Officers: Colin Cooper, Chief Executive (CE)
Angela Evans-Hill, Executive Assistant to Chief Executive and
Communications Officer (EA to CE/CO)
Philip Warner, Management Accountant (MA)

Members of the public: Two members of the public attended.

The Board expressed their condolences to the family of the member of the public who sadly took their own life on the Commons at the weekend and their thoughts remained with everyone who had been involved.

PART A(1) PUBLIC

12.23.1 Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Apologies: Mr David Hince, Conservator
Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger (DCR)
Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (C&EO)
Maggie May, Fundraising Manager (FM)

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

DNM confirmed she was a member of the Thames Hare and Hounds. The Board agreed that this did not preclude DNM from any discussions at the meeting.

12.23.3 WPC Board Meetings

The Resolutions and the Minutes of the Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 9 October 2023 were approved.

12.23.4 Matters Arising

Media Release on the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report – The EA to CE/CO advised that the Media Release in respect of the monitoring report had now been circulated.

The Crooked Billet – The deckchairs had now been put away for the winter but the matter of notices on the chairs advising the chairs were available for anyone to use was still outstanding. It was suggested that they be reminded so that this could possibly be done over winter.

Action: DCR

Open Day – The income/expenditure for the Open Day would follow.

Action: DCR

12.23.5 Committee Matters

There were no committee matters to report.

12.23.6 Chief Executive's Report

The Board received and noted the CE's report.

Keepers - The Keepers had a busy period with a member of the team on long-term sick leave. They had been working extra shifts to maintain a presence on the Common every day.

The usual incidents have been dealt with, the top three being:

- Cyclists - mainly off tracks and a couple with excess speed;
- Dogs - groups meeting up causing more than four dogs being together;
- Golf - not wearing correct attire.

Horses – The Keepers had heard from Hillside Animal Sanctuary who advised that Hector had settled well into retirement. The new horse Bold Conduct had settled in well.

Winter routine was currently in operation with the car park opening time changing to 7am.

Maintenance – The Maintenance Team's planned heathland/acid grassland restorations works had started at the beginning of October 2023 with tree felling, woodland thinning and scrub clearance work being completed along the golf course fairway Caeser's Camp, amongst sections of heathland along Ladies Mile, a continuation of works in extending the Tibbets Corner Meadow heathland site, and the ongoing work to the large areas of heathland and woodland pasture amongst the grasslands between Memorial Ride, Green Ride and Centre Path. Felled timber from these projects would be used to create habitat piles or stockpiled for future use.

REMPF – A new member of full-time staff had been recruited and had started work in September 2023. The team was busy with weekend sports matches and the schools during the week.

Independent Green Space Managers Network - Following an invitation from Parks for London, who chair and provide the secretariat function, the CE had started to participate in this informal network of pan-London non-local authority green space owners and managers. The network aims to share experiences, innovation and good practice.

Wandsworth Sustainability Partnership – The CE was invited to participate in this informal network of local organisations, people, as well as, officers and members from the Council. The meeting included a talk about the findings of a study done by the Grantham Institute 'How do UK citizens perceive the co-benefits of climate action?'. This was followed by some breakout sessions to discuss sustainability matters people were working on.

The next meeting in February 2024 would be face-to-face in Battersea on 'Nature, Biodiversity and Conservation', which promises to be very interesting.

Events and Visits

Levy Consultation Public Meetings – The CE thanked all staff who had attended the three in-person and one online consultation events, with several attending when they were off duty. He asked to put on record his thanks to them for their commitment in attending these out-of-hours but important events. The Chairman also reiterated her thanks to everyone involved in the meetings.

Base Youth Centre Roehampton Visit (25th Oct) – The CE hosted a visit from Base Youth Club, based in Roehampton. They were given a tour of our stable yard, shown how to groom horses and the role of the Keeper and then helped the C&EO clear encroachment of trees on to the heathland at Putney Heath. A visit to the Windmill Museum then followed, where the teens learned about the history of the windmill. None of the children had visited the Commons before.

Wild Collect – The CE led a walk for Wild Collect, a student group from the University of Roehampton who had an interest in nature.

The EA to the CE had also recently established contact with ARK Putney Academy (off Putney Heath), which was an action following our meeting the Putney Society, and it was hoped that they would come for a similar visit.

Both these visits furthered engagement with the Roehampton Community.

Halloween Pumpkin Hunt – The Pumpkin Hunt held on 28 October 2023 was a huge success and very popular with visitors. Around 250 children took part.

Carols at the Windmill – The event took place on Saturday 9 December 2023 at the Windmill, jointly organised by WPCC and the Windmill Museum Trustees. The evening raised some £1,700 (gross). The Chairman commented it was a very successful evening that generated a lot of goodwill. SB thanked volunteers from the Friends who helped raise donations.

It was noted that a new film was being released about the Wombles and this might generate additional interest in the Commons.

12.23.7 Fundraising Update

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

Significant Donations - In October 2023, WPCC was presented with a cheque for £750 from the Wimbledon Windmilers, a regular sports group.

Robert Holmes & Co have continued their support of the Commons and pledged to make a donation of £2,180 to help plant the hedgerow in the Wildlife Garden and support woodland management activities as part of their tree funding programme.

In November 2023, a regular 'Healthy Walk' attendee gave WPCC a donation of £1,000 as a way to say thank you for 'opening their eyes to the Common'. The thank you card said, 'It has been great getting to know the Commons in all the seasons and to learn about the maintenance that is done to keep it looking natural'.

Reception for Benefactors - A Festive Drinks Reception had been organised for 12 December 2023, but had been postponed to the New Year due to illness.

Contactless Payment Devices - Two more contactless payment devices had been purchased to help the staff and volunteers take donations at events.

12.23.8 Conservation Update

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

A lot of work had been carried out on the heathland over recent months, with a focus on the clearance of invasive trees to the immediate south of Tippet's Underpass, opening up a new area of heathland. This had been carried out by staff and volunteers.

In addition to the heathland work that has been carried out near Tippet's Meadow, another area of heathland where invasive trees have recently been cut back is located close to the junction of Ladies Mile and Inner Park Ride. While the work in this area only covered a relatively small area of heathland, there is a good coverage of heather remaining on this site which should benefit from increased levels of light and the reduction of invasive vegetation.

Clearance work had been taking place on the golf course, particularly around the Caesar's Camp fairway. This involved the coppicing of mainly silver birch trees and gorse and will help with the recovery of acid grassland in this area.

Healthy Walks continued on a three-weekly basis.

Holly clearance work had now started as part of the woodland clearance. The area being focused on this year was between the golf course and Queensmere. There was a potential for public comment given the decision to burn the holly arisings. The work should be completed late January/early February.

12.23.9 Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Report

SB reported on the Friends recent activities.

Current membership was as follows:

Benefactors – 55
Household – 347
Individuals – 231

An opportunity to purchase membership to the Friends as a gift had been set up and marketed. One had currently been sold.

Membership fees alone had raised over £100,000 since inception in September 2019.

The C&EO had led a walk on 19 October 2023 around the woodland to explain the management of the woodland. He had led a second walk on 16 November 2023 at Putney Lower Common. He would lead a further walk in spring 2024.

The Friends and the CE helped with the Walk and Talk walks. Conservator PDH had led a walk on Wimbledon at War on Remembrance weekend.

A walk was being held on 13 December 2023 for Friends and donors who had contributed to the path appeal. The CE commented that the new paths had received a lot of positive feedback, particularly from local users with mobility issues.

12.23.10 2024 Calendar of Meetings

The Board received and noted the calendar of meetings and events for 2024. It was suggested that there was an opportunity for Conservators who were thinking of re-standing in the forthcoming election to attend other Committee meetings in January and February 2024 to get a sense of their work.

12.23.11 WPCF Forum/Group Meetings

The minutes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum held on 24 October 2023 were received.

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

Green Ride – It was noted that the path had only been restored from Inner Windmill Road to Memorial Ride. The CE explained that there had been insufficient funds to complete the whole path but this would be done in the future. Funds had been received from South West Trains as part of their sustainability work.



