



CONSERVATORS' MEETING
to be held on
Monday 13 February 2023 at 4.30pm
in the Wimbledon Common Golf Club, Camp Road
SW19 4UW

AGENDA

PART A(1) PUBLIC

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|-----------------|---|---------|
| 02.23.1 | Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence | |
| 02.23.2 | Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting | |
| 02.23.3 | WPCC Board Meetings | |
| | i. Resolutions of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 12 December 2023 | Page 1 |
| | ii. Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 12 December 2023 | Page 3 |
| 02.23.4 | Matters Arising | Page 13 |
| 02.23.5 | Levy for 2023/24 | Page 14 |
| 02.23.6 | Chief Executive's Report – Non-Confidential Items | Page 17 |
| 02.23.7 | Fundraising Update | Page 19 |
| 02.23.8 | Land Management Plan | Verbal |
| 02.23.9 | Conservation Update | Page 20 |
| 02.23.10 | Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons | Verbal |
| 02.23.11 | WPCC Forum/Group Meetings | |
| | Draft Minutes of the Wildlife & Conservation Forum meeting held on 10 January 2023 | Page 26 |
| 02.23.12 | Calendar Update | Page 28 |
| 02.23.13 | Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting | |
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CONSERVATORS' MEETING
to be held on
Monday 13 February 2023 at 4.30pm
in the Wimbledon Common Golf Club, Camp Road
SW19 4UW

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.

- 02.23.14 Declarations of Interest**
- 02.23.15 WPCB Board Meetings**
 - i. Minutes of the Board Meeting of 12 December 2022
- 02.23.16 Matters Arising**
- 02.23.17 Committee Business**
- 02.23.18 Licences and Leases**
- 02.23.19 Masterplan/Levy Consultation Report**
- 02.23.20 Business Plan Update**
- 02.23.21 Budget 2023/24**
- 02.23.22 Management Reports and Accounts:**
 - a) November 2022
 - b) December 2022
- 02.23.23 Chief Executive's Report – Confidential Items**
- 02.23.24 Constitutional Matters**
- 02.23.25 Fundraising Update**
- 02.23.26 Top Ten Risks**
- 02.23.27 Draft Minutes/Notes**

To receive

 - i. Draft Minutes of the Finance and Investment Committee
 - ii. Draft minutes of the Friends Committee held on 2 February 2023
- 02.23.28 Items for future consideration**
- 02.23.29 Items for Inclusion in a Media Release by the Board**



Wimbledon and Putney Commons
Resolutions agreed at the Board Meeting held on
Monday 12 December 2022 at 4.30pm

Part A1 Public

12.22.6 Levy 2023/2024

Resolution

The Board RESOLVES:

- a. That given the policy agreed by the Board at its meeting on 14 December 2020 to set WPCC's levy at the maximum sum available for a further five year period from 2022/23 to 2026/27 and having noted:
 - (i) the increases experienced in WPCC's rising capital and operational costs as a result of the recent increases in inflation and the impact of such increases on WPCC's operational budget; and
 - (ii) the protection afforded by the benefits and reduction schemes operated by the three local authorities that collect the levy on behalf of WPCC for the purposes of both council tax and WPCC's levy, particularly for those most in need;

to set the levy for 2023/24 at the maximum allowed, which is £1,490,566 representing an increase of 12.6377% from the 2022/23 figure, which reflects the RPI figure for the year to September 2022;

- b. To prepare a written explanation of the need for the increase the levy to be published through WPCC's normal communications channels.

Part A2 Confidential

12.2.17 Committee Business

Resolution

The Board resolved to:

- a. Approve the appointment of Mr Peter Shortt as Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee
- b. Approve the amended Terms of Reference for the Constitution and Friends Committees.

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12.22.20 Land at Stag Lane/Stag Ride

Resolution

The Board resolved to:

- a. sign the Deed of Transfer for the land at Stag Lane/Stag Ride;
- b. authorise, in accordance with section 333 of the Charities Act 2011, the Chairman of the Conservators and the Chairman of the Finance and Investment Committee to sign this document on behalf of Wimbledon and Putney Commons.

Present:

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

Officers: Steve Bound, Chief Executive (CE)
Maggie May, Fundraising Manager (FM)
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive/Communications Officer (EA to CE/CO)

Apologies: Mr David Hince (DH)
Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger.
Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer

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Draft Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 12 December 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 (OB)
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)
Mr Peter Hirsch (PDH)
Mr Michael Johnston (MJ)
Mr Peter Shortt (PS)
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)

Officers: Steve Bound, Chief Executive (CE)
Maggie May, Fundraising Manager (FM)
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive/Communications
Officer (EA to CE/CO)

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

ITEM		ACTIONS
12.22.1	Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from: Mr David Hince (DH) Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger. Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer	
12.22.2	Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting The Chairman declared she was a member of the Thames Hare and Hounds. It was agreed that this did not preclude her from participating in any part of the meeting.	
12.22.3	WPCC Board Meetings The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 10 October 2022 were approved. There were no resolutions taken at this meeting.	
10.22.4	Matters Arising There were no matters arising. The Chairman recorded the appreciation of the Conservators for the heathland management walk that had taken place on 29 November 2022, led by Peter Haldane and supported by the senior team.	

<p>12.22.5</p>	<p>WPCC Forum/Group Meetings</p> <p>i. Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting held on 15 November 2022</p> <p>The Board received and noted the draft notes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting held on 15 November 2022.</p> <p>OB commented that the Forum had been focusing on reviewing the draft Land Management Plan.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Forum member, Simon Riley, for agreeing to take the notes of the meetings.</p>	
<p>12.22.6</p>	<p>Approval of the Levy for 2023/24</p> <p>The Board received and noted the CE's report setting out the proposals for setting the levy for 2023/24.</p> <p>The Chairman began by explaining that WPCC's power to levy a rate (under the 1871 Act as amended to issue a special levy under the 1990 Statutory Instrument) was one of the most important powers in WPCC's constitution. In December 2020, the Board had agreed a Resolution to set the levy at the maximum rate for a period of five years, which reflected WPCC's financial position given its investment needs and a recognition that budget deficits were not sustainable. The reason for revisiting the matter now was the current level of inflation of some 12.6%, a level that could not have been anticipated in 2020. It was important that the Board ensured that this was still the right decision. It was noted that there was a formal procedure in place if the Board were to revoke this earlier resolution.</p> <p>At their recent meeting on 8 November 2022, the Finance and Investment Committee had considered the matter. They had taken into consideration the current rise in the cost of living and the impact on levy-payers, particularly those who were struggling financially, but there had been reassurance from the local councils that any benefits and reductions to which residents were entitled for council tax purposes also applied to the levy.</p> <p>The proposal to rebase the levy, which was going through the first phase of a consultation process, communicated to the public that the levy at present was not sufficient to meet the charity's needs. To set the levy below the maximum this year could potentially confuse that message.</p> <p>The FIC had also recognised the Conservators' duty under statute to protect and preserve the Commons and under the constitutional framework they were required to set the levy to cover expenditure, which was also significantly increasing in the current financial climate, plus contingencies and reserve requirements.</p>	

	<p>Finally, consideration was also given to WPCC’s responsibilities as an employer and the impact that inflation was having on its employees’ cost of living.</p> <p>Having taken this all into account, the FIC recommended to the Board that the levy be set at the maximum level, based on the annual increase in the RPI as at September 2022 of 12.6%.</p> <p>In response to a question, the Chairman confirmed that the councils were obliged to collect the full levy applied to their area so the rate charged to households who did not receive any reductions compensated for the lower rate charged to those who did. It was noted that because of the way in which the 1990 Statutory Instrument worked, the number of properties within the levy-paying area was not relevant in terms of determining the aggregate revenue raised by the levy. Regardless, it was recognised that it was important that the Board consider the impact on individual levy payers.</p> <p>It was not yet clear whether the percentage increase to the levy was counted as part of the limit on any increase that the councils were permitted to make under statute.</p> <p>It was confirmed that commercial properties did not pay the levy.</p> <p>NW asked for clarification on the estimate of £150,000 for unbudgeted expenditure. The CE advised that this was based on the costs for the replacement of the boilers in the REMPF pavilion and fire safety works at both REMPF and the Ranger’s Office. It was noted that this figure included a provision for price increases.</p> <p>The Board unanimously agreed with the Finance and Investment Committee’s recommendation for increasing the levy by the maximum permitted amount.</p> <p>A public statement would need to be prepared to explain the need for the increase.</p> <p>Resolution</p> <p>The Board RESOLVED:</p> <p>a. That given the policy agreed by the Board at its meeting on 14 December 2020 to set WPCC’s levy at the maximum sum available for a further five year period from 2022/23 to 2026/27 and having noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the increases experienced in WPCC’s rising capital and operational costs as a result of the recent increases in inflation and the impact of such increases on WPCC’s operational budget; and (ii) the protection afforded by the benefits and reduction schemes operated by the three local authorities that collect the levy on behalf of WPCC for the purposes of both council tax and WPCC’s levy, particularly for those most in need; 	<p>AEH/SB to draft statement for approval by the Board.</p>
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	<p>to set the levy for 2023/24 at the maximum allowed, which is £1,490,566 representing an increase of 12.6377% from the 2022/23 figure, which reflects the annual increase in RPI for the year to September 2022;</p> <p>b. To prepare a written explanation of the need for the increase the levy to be published through WPCC's normal communications channels.</p>	
12.22.7	<p>Conservation Update</p> <p>The Board received and noted the C&EO's Conservation report.</p> <p>In his absence the CE reported on recent works:</p> <p>Heathland Management – the amount of work carried out by volunteers and followed up by the maintenance team had been remarkable and clearance was now back up to pre-Covid levels. There had been five key areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heathland close to the small meadow along the southern section of Centre Path (adjacent to Memorial Ride). • Heathland located close to the junction of Green Ride and Memorial Ride • Heathland located between Roehampton Ride and Ladies Mile • Heathland located between Ladies Mile and Jubilee Path • Heathland to the immediate north of Inner Park Ride. <p>Heather Management – Heather cutting was one of the key management tasks on the Commons to ensure a good variety of age in the heather. Cutting had taken place on Putney Heath and the seed from the cut was spread over a small heathland scrape recently created north of the A3, just south of the Roehampton War Memorial to re-establish a site that had previously had heather.</p> <p>Grassland Management – largely confined to the small meadow at the southern end of Centre Path, near the Southern Pound. The edges of the surrounding woodland had been cleared to stop further encroachment into the meadow.</p> <p>Woodland Clearance – The Contractors were currently on site clearing 6 hectares of holly from the woodland near Gravelly Ride. Good progress was being made and the contractors were excellent at communicating with the public.</p> <p>SB commented that the recent Heathland walk and been very helpful for the Conservators in gaining an understanding of the work that the volunteers carried out, and the impact it made. It was suggested that a future walk relating to the bogs or the brook would be helpful.</p>	C&EO to note
12.22.8	Land Management Plan	

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	<p>The Board received and noted the draft of the Land Management chapters that had been completed to date.</p> <p>The CE reported the C&EO had made good progress on the Plan, particularly with Section 1, the Description, and was now making progress with Section 3, the Objectives.</p> <p>Chapters on the Bogs would be completed once the feasibility study had been carried out.</p> <p>Moving forward, the first complete draft should be available for the April Board meeting. The C&EO was still working on some parts of the document and he was also waiting on contributions from the wildlife volunteers.</p> <p>The final draft would be commented on by the Wildlife & Conservation Forum and the Stakeholder Group. Natural England and the Forestry Commission would also need to see the final Plan. The benefit of the two latter organisations approving the Plan was that their consent would not be required for individual projects.</p> <p>With regard to the Board, they would be asked to provide a general overview of the final plan to ensure it met the governance requirements for such a strategic document. The Chairman explained that the Board's role was to provide the governance for the document, overseeing its development, implementation and ongoing monitoring as well as ensuring that the necessary resources were included in the budgets and the business plan.</p> <p>OB commented that members of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum were going through the document in detail but there were a few points he wished to raise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The final draft would need editing to ensure it was easy to access;• Clarification would be needed on which projects the Board would commit to spending money on over the period of the Plan;• Identifying the "wish list" under each chapter to guide the Fundraising Manager on applying for grants;• An executive summary, including the actions that need to be taken;• Discuss the best means of communicating the important points in the document to the public. The CE commented that this was included in the plan for the document. NW suggested that, given the size of the document, it might be worth considering employing an editor to produce a smaller summary document that could be more easily understood by the general public.• It might be possible to split the document into a series of smaller plans, perhaps the community engagement and the access sections being stand alone. He was keen to emphasise the community/volunteer involvement and develop the strategy on that matter. The Chairman commented that the volunteer strategy was also part of the Masterplan. It had not been included in the recent Masterplan consultation on the advice of the consultants however it was noted that it did need to be looked at. The CE suggested	
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	<p>that community engagement/volunteering would not normally form part of a Land Management Plan and could stand alone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OB commented that the Board had now seen the scale of the conservation challenges and that just one person was being asked to deliver the land management work and the community engagement. Thought should be given as to whether these should be two stand alone roles and that perhaps funding could be found to employ a Community Engagement Officer, if only for a short time. <p>The CE commented that the target to complete the document was April, and he had advised the C&EO that where background information was required, he should make that an project within the Land Management Plan.</p> <p>OB confirmed that the Wildlife and Conservation Forum had provided feedback that would be incorporated into the second draft. If Conservators had any specific comments or general feedback, they should be sent to the C&EO as soon as possible.</p> <p>The Board wished to record its appreciation to the C&EO for his efforts in producing the Plan.</p>	<p>Conservators to provide any feedback</p>
<p>12.22.9</p>	<p>Chief Executive’s Report – Non-Confidential Items</p> <p>Calendar of Meetings/Events 2023</p> <p>The Board noted the two proposed amendments to the Calendar of Meetings/Events for 2023:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Winter Talk – change of date from 14 February to 7 February 2023 to avoid Valentine’s Day. This was noted. 2. General Open Meeting – The Chairman and Chief Executive both considered that holding the General Open Meeting in early November had worked well this year. It helped staff in that it eased the WPCC event and meeting congestion around early December and also avoided the start of the Christmas event season, hopefully giving more people the opportunity to attend. <p>The Board agreed with this proposal and the EA to CE/CO was asked to update the calendar accordingly.</p> <p>Suffragette Memorial</p> <p>The Chairman had received a proposal from representatives of the Dorset Hall Group who were keen to place a plaque/memorial to the suffragettes on Wimbledon Common. Dorset Hall was home to Rose Lamartine Yates, a social campaigner and suffragette. Mrs Lamartine Yates was the Secretary of the Wimbledon branch of the Women’s Social and Political Union, and it was understood that Wimbledon Common played an important part in the suffragette movement as it was regularly used for meetings and speeches as part of the women’s suffrage campaign. These meetings attracted crowds of up to 20,000.</p>	<p>EA to CE/CO to update calendar</p>

	<p>The location for the meetings was unclear, and reports of the meetings reference both ‘the Pound’ on Wimbledon Common and ‘the Flagstaff’.</p> <p>As an aside, the Barker Langham Masterplan had suggested that some form of plaque be put up to explain the Pounds and their history, and the Chairman thought it might be possible to combine the two and make reference to the suffragettes on a sign about the Pounds.</p> <p>It was noted that the Board in 2006 had discussed and rejected a similar request, although it was not clear why it had been rejected.</p> <p>SB commented that she had looked into this, and given the importance of the movement, and the role the Commons played, felt that it should be marked in some way.</p> <p>OB was concerned about setting a precedent but agreed with the suggestion that it could be linked with signage about the Pound, or if it sat within the confines of a building or enclosure. He would be more concerned if it were to take the form of a statue.</p> <p>It was noted that there were other memorials on the Commons, such as the War Memorials, a plaque for Baden-Powell and also the WW1 airfield.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that the costs would be borne by the Dorset Hall Group.</p> <p>Following discussion, the Board agreed in principle to the placing of a memorial subject to them providing further information and the Board approving the final design and location. The Chairman would respond to the Dorset Hall Group accordingly, confirming that they would be expected to pay for it.</p> <p>Events Update</p> <p>Carols at the Windmill – The event had gone very well and despite the cold weather about 300 to 400 people had attended. The Chairman thanked the EA to CE/CO for organising the event and to all the staff who helped, as well as the Windmill Trustees who were serving hot drinks.</p> <p>Winter Talk – EA to CE/CO confirmed that the Winter Talk on 7 February 2023 would be given by Dr Naomi Ewald of the Freshwater Habitats Trust. The focus of the talk would be on ponds and their importance as a habitat and for wildlife. This would be held face to face at the London Scottish Golf Club.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>The Board agreed that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. that future General Open Meetings should be held in early November; 	<p>Chairman to write to Dorset Hall Group</p>
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	b. to the principle of placing a memorial to the suffragettes on the Common, subject to Board approval of the design and location of the memorial.	
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12.22.10	<p>Fundraising Update</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Fundraising Manager’s Report.</p> <p>The FM reported as follows:</p> <p>Contactless Car Park Donation Machine - £706 has been donated since the last Board update in October. This brings the total donated to £2,062.</p> <p>The Hand in Hand Charity of the Year - The Hand in Hand had chosen WPCC as its Charity of the Year. In November they held a pub quiz to raise funds for the Commons and raised £300 from the event. The year would finish in April 2023 and a total raised would be provided when known.</p> <p>Waitrose - Community Matters - WPCC received a cheque for £1,000 from the Waitrose Community Matters Scheme. Staff at the Raynes Park store nominated WPCC as one of their local charities to support.</p> <p>BCB Bridge - The formal Opening Ceremony took place on Saturday 3 December 2022. The Chairman thanked all those who helped to make the event go so well. It had been a good opportunity to meet most of the large funders and thank them for their support.</p> <p>Footpaths – A new appeal had been launched on “Giving Tuesday” on 29 November to help provide the match funding for the grants for footpath repairs. It was hoped to raise £24,000. Just over £1,000 had been raised in the first month. Applications had been submitted to the Merton Community Infrastructure Levy and various other grant funders.</p> <p>Commemorative Orchard on Putney Lower Common – The appeal to raise funds for the 12 memorial trees was going well with 8 already sponsored. Additional donations through JustGiving had now raised £3,585 with a further £2,000 pledged from potential tree sponsors. There would be a planting ceremony but it was not yet clear when this would be held as there had been a delay in tree delivery. The CE confirmed that the trees had been carefully selected and were native and suitable for the soil type on Putney Lower Common.</p> <p>Applications to the Mayor of London’s environmental funding schemes</p> <p>Rewild London Fund - WPCC has submitted an application to carry out a pond survey and landscape design of Queensmere Pond, plus the delivery of a pond/water monitoring training course for staff and volunteers.</p>	
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	<p>Green and Resilient Spaces - This grant scheme is expected to open in the new year and WPCC would be submitting an application seeking funding for some of the conservation and access projects proposed in the Masterplan.</p> <p>PDH asked if there had been any progress made with approaching cyclists to ask if they could provide funding towards cycle path repairs. The CE commented that upgrading the cycle routes was scheduled for the third year of the Business Plan and they would be approached then through the contact who now sat on the Stakeholder Forum.</p> <p>The Board recorded their appreciation to the FM for her hard work in fundraising from the Commons and congratulated her on her first year working for WPCC.</p>	
<p>12.22.11</p>	<p>Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons</p> <p>SB gave a verbal report.</p> <p>SB reminded Conservators that there were two arms to the Friends - fundraising and celebration. Funds were raised mainly through membership and in the New Year she would be discussing with the FM ways to increase corporate and benefactor sponsorship.</p> <p>Membership continued to grow slowly, and it was important to ensure that events were held specifically for them. Four seasonal events were planned, the first of which was to be held on 18 December 2022 and would be a tour and talk on the Windmill and the surrounding complex. Conservators were welcome to come along.</p> <p>The Art on the Commons competition had been relaunched, in a slightly different format and would run from December through to November 2023.</p> <p>With regard to celebration, the Friends were looking to organise an event to mark the King's Coronation. The nature of the event was still under discussion but any comments from the Board would be welcomed. SB confirmed this would be an additional event as part of a borough-wide series of events. There was a suggestion that the event could have a "green" theme given the environmental interests of the King.</p> <p>OB suggested that perhaps the Open Day should be cancelled so that staff could focus on a large Coronation event. However, as they were quite different events and at different times, it was agreed not to merge the events. He further suggested that the Board consider what the benefit to the Commons would be in holding such an event. Whilst it was hoped that the event would break even, it was important from a reputational/community perspective.</p> <p>The Board agreed that the Friends Committee should continue to look into the options and come back to the Board with a proposal in February.</p>	<p>Friends Committee</p>

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10.22.12	Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting There were no members of the public present.	

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Meeting	13 February 2023	02.23.4
Subject: Matters Arising from the Board meeting of 10 October 2022		Public
Report of: Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons		For Decision and Information

Item	Action	Update
12.22.6 Approval of the Levy for 2023/24	AEH/SB to draft statement for approval by the Board.	Done
12.22.7 Conservation Update	Organise a future walk relating to the bogs or the brook.	Information passed to C&EO
12.22.8 Land Management Plan	Conservators to pass any feedback on the Plan to the C&EO	No comments received
12.22.9 Calendar of Meetings and Events	Update calendar with new dates for Winter Talk and 2023 General Open Meeting	Done
12.22.9 Suffragette Memorial	Chairman to write to Dorset Hall Group	The Chairman wrote to the Dorset Hall Group on 14 December 2022 and is due to meet with them on Friday 10 February 2023.
12.22.11 Friends	Friends Committee to look into options for an event to mark the Coronation on May 2022	Done – verbal update under item 02.23.10

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Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Board of Conservators	13 February 2023	02.23.5
Subject: Levy	Non-Public	
Report of: Chief Executive	For Decision/Information	
<h3>Summary</h3>		
<p>This report sets out the position regarding the 2023/24 levy and in particular the per household rate and the request from the Leader of Wandsworth Council to reconsider the RPI increase.</p>		
Recommendation		
<p>That the Chairman prepares a letter to Councillor Simon Hogg in response to his letter of 24 January 2023 setting out the basis for WPCC's decision</p>		

We have now received confirmation of the Council Tax base and the per household rate for 2023/24. The levy for the average (Band D) property will be £35.96 for the year, which represents an increase of £3.82 per household per annum on 2022/23. The increase reflects the decision taken in December 2022 to increase the levy by the September 2022 RPI, the maximum allowable under the 1990 levy regulations.

WPCC has received a letter dated 24 January 2023 from Councillor Simon Hogg, the Leader of Wandsworth Council, requesting that the Conservators reconsider the 12.6% increase (Appendix 1) in light of the current cost of living crisis. This letter was forwarded to Conservators, with an explanation of the process for revoking a Board decision. There have been no requests from Conservators to reconsider the resolution of December 2022 to increase the levy by 12.6%.

It appears that Councillor Hogg has also released his letter to the press. Details of the letter were published on the 'Putney SW15' website and the website editor contacted WPCC for a statement on the matter. In response, the following statement was issued to Putney SW15 (but not more widely):

The Conservators have received Councillor Hogg's letter and are currently considering it.

However, the Conservators emphasise that the decision to raise the 2023/24 levy by RPI was taken in the knowledge that:

- 1. The local authorities that collect the levy on behalf of WPCC apply to the levy any benefits and reductions to which residents are entitled.*
- 2.. Under charity law, the Conservators have a duty to act only in the best interests of the charity and the Commons. This includes ensuring that WPCC has the resources to protect and maintain this valuable open space for the community.*

In terms of the impact on households, the RPI increase for 2023/24 represents an additional payment of 32 pence per month for a 'Band D' property.

From the Leader of the Council

Diane Neil Mills
The Ranger's Office
Manor Cottage
Windmill Road
Wimbledon Common
London SW19 5NR

24 January 2023

Dear Diane,

Thank you for your great work looking after our commons so that they can be enjoyed safely by everyone.

Wandsworth Council hopes to continue our long history of cooperation. We are happy to work closely with the Wimbledon & Putney Commons Conservators to find ways of joint working that identify efficiencies to maintain and improve our commons.

I was pleased to meet with you and your Chief Executive recently to discuss the concerns of Wandsworth Council about a potential increase in the council tax levy we collect on your behalf from tens of thousands of residents in the west of our borough.

I understand that you plan to increase the levy by the maximum amount, 12.6%.

We believe that this increase during a cost of living crisis is wholly unacceptable.

We cannot support such a large increase in your levy. I would ask that Conservators reconsider the decision and follow Wandsworth Council's example by providing improved services for the same low council tax.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Hogg
Leader of the Council

Copy to: All Conservators & Chief Executive

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It is proposed that the Chairman writes a response to Councillor Hogg setting out the basis for the Board's decision, but that this letter is not made public.

The Chairman and Chief Executive are scheduled to meet with the Leader and Chief Executive of Merton Council on 8 February 2023 and a verbal update will be provided at the Board meeting.

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Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Board of Conservators	13 February 2023	02.23.6
Subject: Chief Executive Report	Public	
Report of: Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons	For Decision and Information	
<h1>SUMMARY</h1>		

Walk and Talk/Healthy Walks

The Chairman and the Chief Executive met with representatives of the Walk and Talk Movement, a Merton based CIC who organise group walks in open spaces with the aim of improving physical and mental health and combating loneliness. They currently have walks taking place in a number of open spaces in Merton but would like to organise a regular walk on the Commons. They carry their own public liability insurance, and the walks are led by trained volunteers. WPCC's Conservation and Engagement Officer previously organised and led a programme of Healthy Walks, but these have not taken place since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. The Walk and Talk Movement events appear to be a suitable alternative which place no demand on staff time.

Management accountant appointment

The Chief Executive has agreed terms with the preferred candidate. At the time of writing, Croner are finalising the contract and it is hoped that this will be signed by the Board meeting.

New members of the Stakeholder Forum

Following attempts to secure greater representation from Putney and Roehampton on the Stakeholder Group, the following have been appointed:

- Carey Botting – who represent a Residents Association in Roehampton and;
- Angus Robertson – who represents Alton Action, a group established to provide the residents of the Alton a Estate with a voice in future plans for the estate.

Crooked Billet consultation

For several years the Crooked Billet pub has been making unofficial use of the Commons by placing deckchairs outside the pub for customers to use on the area of WPCC land between the pub and Woodhayes Road. In Summer 2022, Young's entered into a licence agreement with WPCC to permit the use of these deckchairs on our land. Young's have asked for a similar arrangement this year – between April and October. However, before offering a new agreement, WPCC wishes to undertake a public consultation on the pub's use of the land. The consultation materials will be based on those used by WPCC when gathering views on the Spencer benches, with members of the public being able to provide responses via an online survey or a Freepost postcard (see Appendix 1).

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WIMBLEDON & PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS: SPENCER BENCHES PUBLIC CONSULTATION



The benches opposite the Spencer pub on Putney Lower Common have been placed on the Common from the 1st April to 30th September each year for the past 7 years. The benches are not just for use of customers of the Spencer; they can be used by any visitors to the Common. The Spencer pays the Conservators for the right to have benches, providing valuable income for the management of the Common. They have also led to an increase in the pub's income. The licence for the benches is due for renewal – and we'd like your views.

Would you like to see the benches opposite the Spencer pub continue to be placed on the Common for the spring and summer months?

- Yes, I would like the benches to be a long-term fixture
- Yes, but their use should be reviewed every five years.
- No, I would like to see the benches removed.

Have you used to picnic benches opposite the Spencer on Putney Lower Common? (Please tick any which apply)

- Yes, as a customer of the Spencer.
- Yes, but not as a customer/just for relaxing
- No, I have never used them

If you have any other comments on this matter, please use the box below:

Please provide us with your postcode and house number:

Please return your completed form to the Freepost address overleaf (no stamp required)

Agenda

Committee(s):	Date(s): 13 February 2023	Item no 02.23.7
Board of Conservators		
Subject: Fundraising Update	Public	
Report of: Fundraising Manager	For Information	
Summary		
This report provides a summary of fundraising activity in December and January.		

Fundraising for footpaths – Access for All appeal

We are applying to grant funders to enable the restoration of main footpaths and shared cycleways, along with the addition of new bike racks. The cost for restoring five main paths is around £120,000.

The community fundraising appeal, has now raised £11,572 since launching at the end of November. Hopefully by the time of the Board meeting on 13th February we will be celebrating that we are halfway towards our fundraising target of £24,000.

Commemorative Orchard on Putney Lower Common

An orchard was planted in the first week of February as part of the Queen's Green Canopy – a tree planting initiative launched as part of Her Majesty's jubilee celebrations. Donations will help fund the purchase of 12 trees, their planting and protection and their long-term care with the purchase of a water bowser (watering equipment that attaches to buggy). Donations will also help care for the wider landscape on Putney Lower Common.

Ten of the trees have now been sponsored or reserved. Donations now total £3,755 with a further £1,000 pledged from prospective tree sponsors. Sponsors include residents from the Henry Chester Building, visitors, congregation members from the Parish of Putney and the Friends of WPCC.

A community celebration and thank you supporter event is planned for Sunday 5th March at Middy. At the event, sponsors and donors will be given their sponsorship certificates and a panel will be installed that details the different varieties of fruit trees and who they are sponsored by.

Contactless Car Park Donation Machine

£753 has been donated since the last Board update in December. This brings the total donated to £2,779 with 179 donations made. In the months of August, September and October, donations totalled above £500. Since then, the monthly donation total has been between £310 and £350.

As the number of donations being made each month appears to be decreasing, new clearer signage and posters are being designed with a harder ask to promote the donation scheme to drivers.

Conservators Board Meeting: Monday 13 February 2023

Conservation Report

Woodland work:

Holly Thinning

Since the beginning of November 2022, a small team of contractors have been involved with holly thinning on the Commons. This work has covered 6 hectares of woodland starting close to Lower Gravelly Ride and finishing along the edge of Queensmere Fairway. As holly is a native species which provides nesting opportunities for birds and a valuable source of nectar for a wide range of invertebrates, wherever holly thinning has been carried out, approximately 10% of the existing holly coverage in each hectare of ground has been retained.

This year's programme of work has achieved several objectives:

- Provided a more open woodland which is of benefit to the regeneration of flora. In addition to the removal of holly, several small woodland glades have also been created.
- Helped with the overall improvement of the Stag Bog valley mire system.
- Enhanced the health and safety of visitors to the Commons by improving sightlines along the edge of two fairways (Queensmere and Paradise).



Holly thinning work around the Stag Bog valley mire.

Lower Gravelly Ride (ride thinning)

During the beginning of 2023, the Commons' Maintenance Team have been involved with woodland management work along the edge of Lower Gravelly Ride. This work has involved coppicing targeted trees that are located up to 10 metres away from the edge of the ride. The aim of this work has been to create a ride that is approximately 1.5 metres wider than the height of the surrounding trees. This will reduce shading and allow an increased level of light to reach the woodland floor which in turn will lead to the development of a long interface between a dense scrub edge and other open nectar sources which are vitally important for invertebrates and other wildlife.

As a result of the lack of historic management that has taken place along much of the Commons' extensive network of rides, where large, native tree species have been found, these trees have been left untouched as the removal of these important natural habitats can rarely be justified.

Similar to last year's woodland operation that was carried out along Upper Gravelly Ride, as much dead wood as possible has been left on site to provide additional habitats. Where suitable, small ephemeral pools will also be excavated along the edge of the ride.



Lower Gravelly Ride – Wherever possible, large pieces of cut timber are buried on site to provide additional dead wood habitats.

Stag Bog:

In addition to the holly thinning work that has been carried out around the Stag Bog valley mire, over the past few months, the Commons' Maintenance Team have also continued to enhance this area by reducing the tree coverage on site. Trees that have been coppiced on this site have mainly included silver birch and semi-mature oak. All large pieces of timber have been stacked around the edge of the site to create a natural barrier that will help reduce the level of footfall in this area. This timber will naturally decompose and in doing so provide additional dead wood habitats. Other pieces of timber have been used to partially fill in ditches and therefore slow down the loss of water from this area.



The northern section of Stag Bog following work carried out by the Commons' Maintenance Team during December 2022

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Heathland:

Over the past few months, volunteer scrub bashing sessions have continued on Putney Heath. Scrub bashing has focused on the area of heathland which is parallel to Jubilee Path. Following all volunteer scrub bashing sessions, the Commons' Maintenance Team are responsible for chipping and disposing of all cut materials and ensuring that cut tree stumps are made safe. To help reduce the amount of scrub regeneration on the heathland, the addition of a stump grinder to the Maintenance Team's collection of tools would be extremely useful.



Before and after (above)

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Grassland:

In recent months, volunteers and staff have continued cutting back invasive trees around the edge of the small meadow that is located close to the southern section of Centre Path. A stump grinder will be required to remove any remaining tree stumps as this will help to prevent damage occurring to machinery during any subsequent mowing operations on this site.



Centre Path Meadow

Putney Lower Common

The orchard on Putney Lower Common has now been planted. Trees include six apple trees, three pear trees and three cherry trees. All twelve trees are protected by a wooden fence and following the planting of these trees, wire mesh has been secured around the bottom section of the fencing to reduce the likelihood of dogs causing damage to the young trees.





**Notes of the
Wildlife and Conservation Forum
Tuesday 10 January 2023
Held in the Information Centre, Manor Cottage SW19 5NR**

Attendees

Conservators: Oliver Bennett (OB)
Sue Bucknall (SB)
Michael Johnston (MJ)

Volunteers: Andy Davies (AD)
Les Evans-Hill (LEH)
Andrew Harding (AH)
Adrian Podmore (AP)
Simon Riley (SR)
Nick Tew (NT)

Officers: Peter Haldane (PH), Conservation and Engagement Officer

1. Apologies were received from John Weir and Christine Schams.
2. Introductions were made for the benefit of new attendees.
3. The minutes of the meeting dated 15 November 2022 were approved. There were a few action points all of which have been dealt with.
4. PH gave a brief summary of current projects. There is ongoing woodland work – primarily holly removal and ride thinning in a few areas. Tree removal has also taken place at Stag Bog valley mire exposing it for the first time for many years. This is hopefully the first step towards restoration. Note that felled trees have been used as natural barriers to reduce footfall and erosion in the area. There has also been further scrub clearance by volunteers on Putney Heath and finally an area of grassland close to the southern section of Centre Path has been expanded by the removal of encroaching trees. It was also mentioned that Peter had had a start-up meeting with Penny Anderson Associates (who have been commissioned to prepare a feasibility report regarding the restoration of the valley mires) in December 2022 with all information requested now sent. It is hoped that they will start their on-site appraisals soon.
5. In previous years two annual monitoring reports have been prepared for the Commons. One a relatively casual document focusing on birds, butterflies and dragonflies prepared to encourage more interest in the Common's natural history, the other a more technical read which memorialized records, observations around management, climate etc. It was decided to combine

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these two, but to be designed in a way that both objectives are achieved. OB asked that all data for inclusion in the report be forwarded to him by the end of February. It was also thought useful for the Forum to conduct a condition assessment for one priority habitat per year using criteria developed by the JNCC. This will help develop targets and will guide the land management plan (LMP) – see item 6.

6. It has been agreed that in addition to what has already been prepared for the LMP an executive summary will be prepared for each habitat. OB has suggested and it was agreed to use a format found in Transforming Conservation: A Practical Guide to Evidence and Decision Making. The Conservators would then agree and sign-off on the summaries. Although the summaries will be short it was suspected that their preparation could actually be quite time consuming so it was agreed that an additional Forum meeting would be held in February. Priority habitats (based on SSSI citation) would be dealt with first and others too depending on progress and time available. **Action Point – PH - in progress.**
7. SR agreed to review the terms of reference for the Forum and tidy up documentation where necessary. It was considered best to do this via email correspondence as it looks to be fairly complete. **Action Point SR.**
8. In terms of wildlife recorders reports, LEH had a record of a migrant Pearly Underwing moth, the first for the area since 1905.
9. AOB. None
10. Next meeting (ignoring one-off meeting referred to in agenda item 6) is 14 March 2023.

Agenda

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Board of Conservators	13 February 2023	02.23.12
Subject: Calendar	Non-Public	
Report of: Chief Executive	For Decision/Information	
<h3>Summary</h3>		
The Conservators are asked to note the proposed changes to the meeting calendar.		

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

The Chief Executive may not be able to attend the ARC meeting currently scheduled for 7 March and once confirmed, the date may need to change.

Constitution Committee

At the request of the Chairman, the date of the Constitution Committee meeting scheduled for 26 September 2023 has been brought forward a week to the 19 September 2003.

The updated calendar will be added to the Portal and revised meeting invitations sent out.