

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, August 2014

Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 11 August 2014 at 5pm in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.

Conservators Present: Mr D Devons (Chairman)
Sir Ian Andrews
Mrs J Evanson
Mr Derek Frampton
Mr J Horrocks
Mr A Simon (Vice-Chairman)
Dr R Taylor
Professor R Touquet

Officers Present: Mr S Lee (Chief Executive)
Ms P Graystone (Deputy Clerk & Ranger)
Ms A Evans (PA to Chief Executive)

3 members of the public

08.14.1 Apologies

Mrs Evanson for lateness

08.14.2 Declarations of Interest

Mr Devons and Mr Simon confirmed they were both trustees of the Wimbledon Windmill Museum Trust. Mr Simon was also an executive member of the Wimbledon Society and sat on the PCC of Putney Parish. Mr Horrocks confirmed he was an executive member of the Putney Society.

08.14.3 Approval of the Minutes of Meeting held on 14 July

The Minutes of the meeting were approved without amendment.

08.14.4 Matters Arising

Alder Trees – The Chief Executive reported that according to Mr David Haldane, the previous Wildlife Officer, the Alders were planted as part of a religious ceremony to strengthen the ties between different faiths. Other than representatives from the Church of England, Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths, Mr Haldane could not recall if any other faiths had attended. It was thought that the trees were some 25 years old. One had died and it was suggested that perhaps contact should be made with the Church of England to see if they wanted to replace it.

08.14.5 Chief Executive's Report

B GENERAL UPDATE

The Conservators noted the Chief Executive's report and the following points were discussed:

- i. **Windmill Repairs** – The Chairman, in consultation with the Chairman of the Windmill Trustees, had prepared for the Windmill Trustees a paper setting out the

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current position on the Windmill repairs. A copy had also been circulated to the Conservators for information. Marcus Beale Associates had gone out to tender for the emergency roof repairs at the points where the tower uprights met the floor joints, but had only received a quotation back from one company. It was therefore agreed to accept that quotation, which appeared reasonable, subject to any comments from the Windmill Trustees; three Windmill Trustees had approved the proposal.

- ii. **Emergency Procedures** – An emergency exercise had been undertaken, with most staff believing it was a real event. In response to a question from Sir Ian Andrews, the Chief Executive reported that the scenario used for the emergency exercise was a young woman being dragged off a horse by an assailant armed with a knife on Robin Hood Ride near the Black Ring. The exercise had gone well, helped by the involvement of the Village Stables.
- iii. **Christmas Cards** – Prof. Touquet commented that he had suggested contacting the Wimbledon and Putney Colleges of Art for designs for Christmas cards. This would have the advantage of supporting a local young artist. It was agreed that this was a constructive suggestion and would be followed up for 2015.
- iv. **Wandsworth Council/Levy** – The Chief Executive reported that Wandsworth Council had advised that it was no longer their policy to list separately any of levies they collected on behalf of other organisations, such as the Commons Conservators, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and the Environment Agency. An online booklet was provided that fully set out the breakdown of the Council Tax and these levies. However, following further discussions with the Council that week, they could see the merit of including the Commons' Levy on the Council Tax bill and were currently looking into whether there would be a cost involved in doing this.
- v. **Conservators' Terms of Reference** – In response to a question from a member of the public, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Conservators' Terms of Reference was a new document and there had not been one in place before. He commented that such a document was best practice for charities and formed part of the larger governance review currently being carried out.

08.14.6 Natural History Sub-Committee

Dr Taylor reported on the Natural History Sub-Committee meeting of 23 July.

The Plain – The grass on the Plain had been cut during the week beginning 4 August. It had been cut to between 10cm and 15cm and it would be interesting to see if the earlier cut would make a difference in the spring of 2015.

OPM – For resource, rather than financial, reasons the Forestry Commission would not be carrying out OPM nest removal on the Commons. They appeared to be focusing on nest removal at the boundary of infestation to contain the spread of the OPM rather than in the core area in which the Commons fell. Although this would put an additional strain on the maintenance staff, they would start to remove the nests from the lower branches of trees at Putney Lower Common; the nests in the upper branches would be removed during the quieter winter months. The Chief Executive had contacted the Forestry Commission about their change of policy. He confirmed that no reports had been received about members of the public suffering any ill-effects.

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BioBlitz – The meeting had focused on the Bioblitz and what could be learnt from the event. It had been a great success and well attended. The Sub-Committee had agreed that it should become an annual event. It had been suggested that it should be held slightly earlier in the year, perhaps in June, to bring it closer to the Annual Open Meeting. Although this would mean the bat walk would have to start later, there would be more grasses and wild flowers to see as well as more birds to hear and see with Dave Wills. Data was still coming in but a report would be prepared in time for the Stables Open Day on 14 September

Tree Survey – The need for an in-depth tree survey had been considered and the Sub-Committee would continue to give the matter some thought. The risk assessment currently being carried out had brought into focus that there was not much data available on what was growing on the Commons.

Visitor Survey – The volunteer, Mrs Kim Bailey, who was carrying out the informal visitor survey on the Commons had been invited to attend the next meeting to give some initial feedback. It was noted that this was only intended to be a snapshot and, hopefully, the start of a more in-depth survey.

08.14.7 Minutes of the Annual Open Meeting for Approval

The minutes of the Annual Open Meeting held on 18 June 2014 were approved subject to some minor amendments. These would be published, in draft form, on the Conservators' website.

08.14.8 Any Other Business

Legacy – The Chief Executive confirmed that thought was still being given on how to spend the recent legacy left to the Conservators. He was currently following up on some ideas.

08.14.9 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 8 September. Following a query, the date of the October meeting was confirmed as Monday 13 October.

The meeting finished at 17.30pm

