

Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 8 December 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 Paula Graystone (Deputy Clerk & Ranger),
Ms A Evans (PA to Chief Executive)

5 members of the public

The Chairman repeated the statement he had made at the November Board meeting:

The public are reminded that they are admitted as observers not as participants. In view of the number of interruptions from members of the public at the October Board meeting, we have decided that the concession to allow questions and comments will be removed. Questions may be sent in the usual way to the Chief Executive. A view will be taken by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Chairman as to whether the matter is for the Board to consider or an operational issue for officers.

12.14.1 Apologies

Sir Ian Andrews for lateness

12.14.2 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.

12.14.3 Approval of the Minutes of Meeting held on 13 November

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November were approved subject to two minor amendments.

12.14.4 Matters Arising

Lighting around the Commons - It was agreed that, as a matter of some urgency, it should be made clear to Merton Council that the Conservators would want to be consulted on any discussions about changes to lighting around the Commons. It was also suggested that information on suitable alternatives be obtained.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, DECEMBER 2014

The Chief Executive reported that the Wimbledon Union of Residents' Associations had discussed the matter at their recent meeting and he hoped to receive an update from their Chairman shortly.

12.14.5 Chief Executive's Report

PART A - MATTERS ARISING

i. Windmill Repairs

The Chief Executive reported that a meeting had been arranged with the Windmill Trustees, Conservators and representatives of Marcus Beale Associates, the Chief Executive and Deputy Clerk & Ranger for 10 December to consider the recent remedial works and potential solutions, particularly in respect of the door, which was still leaking badly.

ii. Conservators' Election 2015

The Chief Executive reported that, following approval of the Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures at the November Board meeting, they had been issued to all Conservators for signature, to be returned no later than Tuesday 9th December 2014.

Copies of the documents had also been circulated to all those who had expressed an interest in standing as an elected Conservator at the forthcoming Election.

The first Candidates' Meeting had been held on Tuesday 2 December 2014 and had been very productive. Copies of a new document "Why Become a Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservator and Trustee of a Charity" had been circulated to those attending. A second meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 10 December at 7.00pm in the Cromwell Room, St Mary's Church, Putney.

A poster had also been prepared by ERS that would be placed in public buildings, churches and other public areas (doctors' surgeries etc), giving information on the forthcoming election and the opportunity for people to stand as candidates.

iii. Levy-paying Area

The Chief Executive reported that the new boundary map had been put on the website.

The Conservators noted that further work was required to resolve the issue of the very small number of properties that had been identified as falling within the London Borough of Richmond. The Chief Executive reported that it had been confirmed that these properties were not currently eligible to pay the Levy and therefore were not eligible to vote in the forthcoming election.

- iv. **Events** –The Board noted the events scheduled to take place on the Commons over the following two months.

- v. **Freedom of Information Request**

The Board noted that, whilst they had previously agreed to investigate the complaint brought by a representative of the Friends of Putney Common, it had subsequently been established that the complainant had pre-empted the matter by complaining to the Charity Commission. It had therefore been agreed that the investigation by one of the appointed Conservators would be withdrawn until such time as the Charity Commission had considered the complaint.

- vi. **Legacy**

The Board noted that the Deputy Clerk & Ranger was working with specialist contractors to obtain costs for the restoration of the REMPF Memorial.

PART B - GENERAL UPDATE

- i. **Footpath Restoration**

The Chief Executive reported that, earlier in the year, he had produced a comprehensive paper for the Board setting out a programme of repairs partially based on a report produced by two of the Conservators in the previous year.

Whilst it was understood and accepted that, given the nature of the site, many paths would be muddy at this time of year, where there were laid paths, particularly those with shared use, there was a need to ensure they were “fit for purpose”. Some of these paths were in need of restorative investment as access was proving difficult even after light rainfall, ie Inner Windmill Road, Ladies Mile and the tow path along the Beverley Brook at Putney Lower Common. Many of the horse-rides also required restoration.

Work had now been completed on the southern end of Inner Windmill Road, and it was hoped that work would be completed at Putney Lower Common very shortly. Work had begun on Ladies Mile but the onset of wet weather had resulted in work being postponed. It was confirmed that the clearance of ditches was an integral part of the path restoration work.

Consideration would need to be given to what work could be done in-house, and what would need to be outsourced.

- ii. **Illustrated Talk Putney Society and Meeting with Saint John’s Area Residents’ Association**

The Chief Executive reported that he had recently given two talks – one to the St Johns Area Residents’ Association and a second to the Putney Society. Both had been well-received and there had been positive feedback. He hoped to be able to give a similar talk to the Wimbledon Society.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, DECEMBER 2014

iii. Keeper Update

The Conservators noted the details of the number and type of incidents dealt with by the Keepers from August to October. The Chief Executive hoped these quarterly reports would build up a picture of the type of issues the Keepers had to deal with, and how they managed incidents in their front role.

iv. Website Development

The Chief Executive commented that a new website was imperative, particularly in light of the governance review, and was a key part of the proposed engagement strategy. Five companies had been approached and all had provided tenders for updating the site; these were currently being evaluated. It was hoped that a recommendation would be brought to the Board in January 2015 with a view to launching a new website in the spring of 2015.

v. Wimbledon Society Bulletin 2015

The Chief Executive reported that, during the summer, the Senior Keeper recorded an interview with the Wimbledon Society as part of their Oral History Library project. The interview covered his life and work on the Commons over the last 40 years. An extract from that interview had been published in their December newsletter.

vi. Dates of Future Board Meetings

Monday 12 January
Monday 9 February
Monday 9 March
Monday 13 April

12.14.6 Natural History

1. Report of the meeting held on 19 November

The Chairman of the Natural History Sub-Committee reported on the meeting held on 19 November.

OPM – The control of the Oak Processionary Moth would be an important issue in future years. Given that it was not clear how much support would be available from the Forestry Commission, there would be a need to identify nest hotspots and also the resources, both financial and physical, that would be required to deal with it.

Tree planting – The programme of tree planting was discussed and approved.

Walks:

- a) Putney Lower Common – The need to rearrange the Conservators' walk at Putney Lower Common was noted and the PA to the Chief Executive would be dealing with this.

- b) Woodland Walk – A woodland walk would be held on 18 March, prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

Volunteers/Monitoring – the February meeting would involve the ecological volunteers and would discuss the results from the 2014 BioBlitz event and more regular monitoring, as well as the plans for the 2015 BioBlitz.

Book: Wimbledon Common 100 years of change – In response to a question, the PA to the Chief Executive was asked to contact the Wimbledon Society to see if they had had an opportunity to locate the disc with the text of the book, Wimbledon Common: 100 years of change.

2. Verbal report of the meeting held on 8 December

The Chairman of the Natural History Sub-Committee reported that a meeting had been held that afternoon and had focused predominantly on the draft Annual Conservation Report. The final report would be presented to the Board in January.

12.14.7 Governance Review

The Chief Executive reported that the Report was the culmination of an extensive review undertaken by Dorothy Dalton Governance, a pre-eminent expert in charity governance. The work had started in the early summer and the Report contained a series of recommendations based upon the Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector.

In light of the forthcoming Conservators' Election, he commented that it would be important to share this with prospective candidates so that there was a clear understanding of the necessary work for the following 12 to 18 months. The Report demonstrated the need to bring the charity law aspect of the role to the fore, as well as the need for a more strategic approach to managing the Commons. The Report also made some firm recommendations on how both the Board and Sub-Committee/Working Group meetings should be organised.

In addition, the Report made recommendations on how the organisation could better engage with the public in the future, particularly over matters of concern to them, and he proposed to bring a paper to the Board on how this could be progressed. This, and other means of communication, such as a new website, would provide means of communicating more regularly with the public and would help to deal with some of the issues by formal engagement.

He congratulated the Board on embracing the need for a review and for supporting the approach taken. It would mean a difficult period of change but he considered it important that the report was taken as a mandate to ensure the continuation of the Commons for future generations and he hoped the Board would endorse the recommendations in the report.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive commented that any new arrangements should be introduced with the first meeting of the new Board in April. He suggested that he prepared a paper for the Board that set out how best to approach some of the issues. He also suggested that, in due course, the new Board

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, DECEMBER 2014

should meet with Dorothy Dalton Governance to ensure the implementation of the recommendations was on track. This was agreed.

It was further suggested that, as some of the recommendations were more urgent than others, such as frequency of meetings and structure of any sub-committees/working groups, it would be helpful to have these in place before the new Board met in April. This was agreed, although it was noted that many of the issues would need to be agreed once the new Board was in place.

RESOLVED: The Board unanimously:

- a. endorsed the recommendations set out in the Governance Review as a platform for delivering a new approach for governance from 1 April 2015.
- b. agreed to communicate to the wider public the proposed changes, arising from the Governance Review, to the way that the Board currently operates; and
- c. agreed to use the recommendations from the Governance Review to support the election process, enabling prospective Candidates to gain a better understanding of the necessary work over the next year to refresh governance arrangements and implement the new structure of meetings from April 2015.

12.14.8 Putney Hospital

Commemorative Stone – The Chief Executive circulated a paper showing the proposed site of the commemorative stone in the wall of the entrance lobby of the school building. This was noted.

Demolition - It was reported that the demolition works were nearing completion. There remained a number of Pre-commencement Planning Conditions, together with the Schedule of Approved Works, that still had to be discharged before works could begin. It was not yet clear when the main contractor would take possession of the site. However, prior to any works beginning, the extent of the development site would be pegged out, based upon the topographical survey prepared for the Conservators back in 2011 and independently validated.

Woodland – The Chief Executive reported that there were some urgent works required to the woodland to the west of the site and a restoration plan would need to be formulated. This would ensure that the woodland could be rejuvenated to ensure that it blocked the view of the new buildings from across the Common and also to open up the woodland to allow the herbaceous layer to develop. Some trees were already collapsing.

Milestone – The growth of Ailanthus within the hoarding surrounding the milestone was causing some concern. It had been suggested that the stone should be removed for safe-keeping but, on balance, it was now thought better to remove the hoarding, treat the Ailanthus and then replace the hoarding.

There were other landscaping and lighting issues on the eastern side of the site and, although longer term, were still an integral part of the discussions. There was a comprehensive set of drawings that had been part of the planning submission which

showed the details and the contractor would be working to those drawings. Several other issues were raised and discussed as follows:-

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had regular access to regular updates from the contractors on the pre-planning conditions. Some were operational issues that he would deal with but he would ensure the Board were kept up to date or consulted on more strategic issues.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he was trying to find out when the demolition contractor would leave the site, but nothing had been announced by Wandsworth Council yet.

The Chief Executive was asked why it was necessary to carry out the work to the woodland this winter rather than the following year. He responded that it was necessary to give the site the maximum time to recover and be restored as part of the implementation of the whole scheme. If it were delayed for a year, there would be an impact on the restoration. He assured the Board that works would be undertaken by competent landscape and tree contractors and overseen to ensure adherence to the management plan.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Conservators had agreed a series of detailed drawings in relation to landscaping that formed part of the easement. Wandsworth Council had to fulfil the Schedule of Agreed Works.

In respect of the gates to the access way, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Board would be consulted on the design options that were being considered.

It was suggested that, as the site was of strategic importance to both the Commons and the local community, the Conservators needed to be fully aware of the proposed works before they could agree final plans. The Chief Executive commented that a more detailed paper would be prepared for the January Board meeting and it was agreed that the recently postponed Conservators' Walk would be rearranged for a date prior to the Board meeting.

12.14.9 Dog-walking Code of Conduct

The Conservators noted the initial draft of the Dog-walking Code of Conduct leaflet. Thanks were expressed to a local resident who had provided the illustrations. Several amendments were suggested, including more detail in the Byelaws section and more information in the "Who are we?" section.

It was suggested that mention should be made of how much the clubs contributed towards the upkeep of the golf course, which would otherwise revert to woodland. It was considered that there may be a worthwhile public relations exercise, emphasising the need for mutual respect between the golfers and dog-walkers in particular, and the fact that golfers did provide extra "security" for walkers.

12.14.10 Any Other Business

Gents Toilets, Windmill Car Park – It was reported that the Gents' Toilets in the Windmill Car Park had been in a very muddy and poor state on the previous Saturday morning. The Chief Executive reported that the complaints had been noted

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, DECEMBER 2014

and were being dealt with. He commented that their poor condition had been wholly due to the number of Park Run participants using the facilities on a Saturday morning and it was suggested that this, and the effect of their numbers on parking in general, should be discussed with them.

Resolved: It was agreed that the Chief Executive would meet the Park Run organisers to discuss issues arising out of their event.

Telegraph Car Park – The Chief Executive reported that improvements had been carried out in the Telegraph car park, including removal of recycling bins by Wandsworth Council, resurfacing of the approach road and vegetation clearance.

12.14.11 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 12 January 2015

The meeting finished at 6.00pm

