

**Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 9 February 2015 at 5pm
in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.**

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

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

3 members of the public

02.15.1 Apologies

None

02.15.2 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. Mr Horrocks confirmed he was an executive member of the Putney Society.

02.15.3 Approval of the Minutes of Meeting held on 12 January

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January were approved subject to one minor amendment.

02.15.4 Matters Arising

Putney Lower Common

a) Milestone – The Chief Executive reported that he now attended the monthly project meeting with the contractors at the site and the issue with the Milestone had been raised. It had been reported that the Ailanthus roots were now so well spread that the Milestone may have to be temporarily lifted, the roots treated, and the Milestone replaced. He reassured the Conservators that the contractors were very aware of the sensitivity of this issue.

b) Meeting with Local Residents - The Chief Executive suggested that it would make sense for some lighting options to be available before a meeting with local residents took place. This was agreed.

c) Tree Felling - With regard to the consent for felling of TPO trees, the Chief Executive confirmed that an application was being submitted that week.

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Events – In response to a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that the new website would have a diary of events and that this would make it clear if parking on the Commons would be affected.

It was noted that the Windmill car park was becoming increasingly busy and that this was, in part, due to commuter parking. The Chief Executive considered that this was something the new Board would need to consider, particularly given the impact on genuine Common's users. He confirmed that enlarging the car park was not likely to be an acceptable option.

02.15.5 Chief Executive's Report

Windmill – The Chief Executive reported that he had appointed Marcus Beale Associates to seek Listed Building consent and prepare documentation, obtain costs and administer the contract for works to the tower and the buck later this year, including the installation of a membrane to make the tower watertight. The cost of the works would be in the region of £40,000.

Legacy – The War Memorial Trust had apologised that they had not had the opportunity to consider the application for assistance with work to the REMPF memorial. The Chief Executive considered it would likely be at least three months before any response was received. No work would begin on the Memorial until their response had been received.

Wimbledon Common: 100 Years of Change – The Chief Executive reported that the Wimbledon Society had now located the disc containing the text of the book, although the photographs were still awaited. The PA to the Chief Executive would obtain quotations in due course, including a cost for changing black and white photographs to colour.

Election – The Returning Officer reported that ballot forms had been posted out to Levy-payers, allowing them to vote both by post and electronically. The online voting system had been thoroughly tested and worked very well. Two successful meetings had taken place to allow Levy-payers to meet the 17 candidates with approximately 40 people at the Wimbledon Society meeting and 60 at the Putney Society meeting. The closing date for the election was 5pm on 25 February and the result should be available a few days later. The Returning Officer would speak to each candidate individually to inform them of the result.

In response to a question, the Returning Officer confirmed that there were no restrictions on the amount that candidates could spend on leafleting.

Concern was expressed over the language in some of the Candidates' flyers, particularly about the Putney Lower Common former hospital site and the Spencer Public House. The Returning Officer said that he had taken the view, after considering each Candidate Statement, that they should stand as submitted. Electors could decide how to vote on the basis of those statements. The Returning Officer also commented that he was aware that the wording on some of the Candidate's flyers was different from that in their biographical statements. This had led to questions being raised by a number of Candidates and electors and he was speaking to the Chief Executive about how best to respond in the interests of transparency.

Putney Hospital – The Chief Executive reported that the recent Newsletter prepared by the Office on the landscaping at the old Putney Hospital site was due to be circulated to local residents in the area, but he had been made aware that someone else had already done this – possibly with copies picked up from the Putney Society hustings meeting on 5 February 2015.

Lighting Around the Commons – The Chief Executive apologised for a missing sentence at the end of this item and reported that it should have read "...located in an area that was quite dark but the white light had received numerous complaints". He reported that he had held a very useful meeting with officers of Merton Council on this issue. They had told him that no capital expenditure was planned for replacing lighting in the Southside/Westside area over the next four years.

Levy Statement – The Chief Executive reported that nothing had appeared in the local press following the release of the statement. It had however been published by the SW19 and SW15 websites. He commented that he hoped to meet the editors of the local papers in due course.

Newsletter – The Chief Executive's suggestions for articles to include in the 2015 Commons News were noted and agreed. These included:

- Chairman/Chief Executive Update
- Restoration of the Commons at Putney Lower Common former Hospital Site.
- Outgoing and New Board
- Governance Review and the recommendations on future best practice for Trustees
- Update on conservation works that will provide a resumé of the Wildlife and Conservation Officer's Annual Report – heathland, woodland works etc.
- Work of the Keeping team in maintaining a safe environment for visitors.
- Activities at the REMPF
- BioBlitz, Open Day and other events
- Update on Communications, including the commissioning of a new website and how people can sign up to receive updates on news
- Overview of finance for Levy-payers
- Current news items

He informed the Board that the development of the new website was well underway and, once live, would encourage the public to sign up for e-newsletters. The PA to the Chief Executive had now developed a format for newsletters, and updates were being sent out more regularly. It was suggested that these more regular updates might eventually negate the need for an annual newsletter. The Chief Executive agreed to send out a mock-up of the new website to the Board in due course.

It was suggested that it was important to make the Levy-payers aware that a Communications Review had been carried out and to inform them when the various recommendations in the report were being acted upon. It was proposed that, as the Review was an internal working document, a summary of the recommendations should be put on the website. This was agreed.

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RESOLVED: The Board approved the Chief Executive's suggestions for articles for the Commons News. The Board agreed that a summary of the Communications Review, and details of action taken so far, should be placed on the website.

Annual Open Meeting – The Chief Executive recommended that, as the Cornerstone venue was no longer available, the 2015 Annual Open Meeting be held at the Kairos Centre on Mount Angelus Road, subject to a visit to ensure its suitability as a venue. This was agreed.

Christmas Cards – It was noted that sales of Christmas Cards had been down on the previous year, possibly due to the greater expense of posting the larger A5 cards abroad. It was agreed that in future an A5 and an A6 card be produced.

Roehampton War Memorial – The Chief Executive reported that a member of the public had written to English Heritage suggesting that the Roehampton War Memorial on Putney Heath be listed. He had since spoken to English Heritage to enquire if the memorial at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields should also be listed. The advice received was that any remedial works should be completed before seeking listed designation.

The Chief Executive was asked to find out if the Memorial in Wimbledon Village was listed.

02.15.6 Natural History Sub-Committee

a) Meeting held on 21 January 2015

The Conservators noted the report of the meeting held on 21 January. There were no questions.

It was reported that the February 2015 meeting of the NHSC would include the original Ecological Advisory Group, and new volunteers who had joined in the last year, to discuss the Monitoring of the Plain report, as well as monitoring on the Commons during 2015.

b) 2014 Report on Monitoring of The Plain

Dr Taylor commented on her draft report on the Monitoring of The Plain; this was still a working document but it gave a detailed analysis of the situation in 2014. The report pointed out the main successes and highlighted ways in which monitoring could be improved in future years. This would be discussed in more detail at the next NHSC meeting with the volunteer recorders.

The main part of the document covered the routine recording, particularly of flora which had not been monitored before. The second part of the report covered the Bioblitz held in June 2014. It was noted that it had been a busy day and almost certainly species had been under-recorded. However, with the date of the 2015 event already publicised, it was hoped there would be more volunteers on hand to help this year. It had also prompted other expert naturalist groups to take part in the day, particularly as they would be looking for more rare species, whereas the aim of the BioBlitz was to record as much as possible. The day had been considered a

success, with many visitors being surprised at the diversity of the Commons, and also the relationship between plants and insects.

It was reported that the visitor survey report was due shortly and would be available at the next NHSC meeting.

It was agreed that the report would be sent to Natural England once it had been finalised.

Other issues highlighted included the need for a GIS (Geographic Information System) to produce maps, and that a photographic archive would also be useful. Continuity in the methodology of recording, and how the information was recorded, were also essential to provide comparable information year on year.

Encouraging new recorders was also essential in order to monitor areas where holly had been cleared and the woodland at Putney Lower Common. It was suggested that abundance of some birds should be noted so that trends could be determined. It was also suggested that some bird species that were not as common as might be expected should also be monitored, such as Wagtails.

The Chief Executive commented that it provided a baseline which gave a good indication of the current situation, and the impact of future work could be better understood.

The Conservators thanked Dr Taylor for her excellent report.

02.15.7 Any Other Business

Signage on the Common – It was reported that a Conservator had received an informal complaint regarding the number of new safety signs on the golf course. The need for the signs had been accepted when it had been explained that the increasing number of people walking on the golf course meant that the signs were necessary to ensure public safety.

Old Minute Books – It was reported that a member of the public who now owned one of the original minute books dating from about 1866 of the Peek Committee that set up the Conservators, had been in touch with the Wimbledon Society and it was hoped that some arrangement could be made to preserve the book.

Putney Hospital – In response to a question, the Chief Executive commented that a date for the start of works was not yet known, although it was thought to be soon. He would follow this up with the contractors.

02.15.8 Date of Next Meeting – Monday 9 March 2015 .

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 9 March 2015.

The meeting finished at 6.00pm

