

**Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 12 January 2015 at 5pm
in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.**

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

Officers Present: Mr S Lee (Chief Executive)
Ms Paula Graystone (Deputy Clerk & Ranger),
Ms A Evans (PA to Chief Executive)
Mr P Haldane (Wildlife and Conservation Officer)

3 members of the public

01.15.1 Apologies

Ms Jenny Evanson, Professor Robin Touquet.
Sir Ian Andrews - for lateness

01.15.2 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.

01.15.3 Approval of the Minutes of Meeting held on 8 December

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December were approved without amendment.

01.15.4 Matters Arising

Legacy – The Chief Executive reported that two quotations had been received for the restoration of the REMPF War Memorial. He was waiting to hear from the War Memorials Trust to see if any funding would be available before progressing the matter. He would advise the Board as soon as he had any further information.

Putney Hospital – In response to a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that both Wandsworth Council and their contractors were aware of the importance of ensuring that the boundaries of Common land were marked on site once the demolition was complete. These would be checked by the same surveyor who carried out the very thorough initial survey marking all the satellite points.

Milestone – It was agreed that any treatment to remove the Ailanthus would need to be done before it came into full leaf.

Wimbledon Common: 100 Years of Change – It was noted that the Wimbledon Society had not yet provided the disc of the text for the book and the PA to the Chief Executive was asked to follow this up again.

01.15.5 Chief Executive's Report

i. Windmill Repairs

The Chief Executive reported that a meeting had been held with representatives from the Windmill Trustees, Conservators, Marcus Beale Associates (MBA) and officers to consider recent remedial works and the on-going water penetration through the first-floor ceiling. The meeting had concluded that the works to the tower structure identified by MBA in their report of November 2013 should be pursued in 2015. It had also been agreed that the work to the buck and cap should be undertaken as maintenance items during 2015. MBA had convincingly shown that water penetrating through the felt behind the outer boarding of the tower was running down onto the second-floor floorboards and not onto the asphalt as previously thought.

As the cost was estimated to be in the region of £30,000, the Chief Executive would look into the possibility of securing external funding to support the project.

RESOLVED: The Board agreed that the proposed works to the tower structure, the buck and cap should be carried out in 2015.

ii. Conservators' Election 2015

The Returning Officer reported that 17 candidates, with a wide range of experience and knowledge, had submitted Nomination Forms. The Chief Executive commented that he was aware that both the Putney Society and Wimbledon Society were looking at how best to accommodate this large number of candidates at the meetings being arranged for the electorate to meet the candidates.

iii. Events

The Conservators noted the events taking place on the Commons over the next two months.

The Chief Executive reported that he had held a positive meeting with the Event Director of the Park Run to discuss the issues around the event held on the Commons on Saturday mornings, particularly the effect on parking and the state of the public toilets after the event. He had recognised the impact on the Commons and would work towards providing volunteers to help resolve these issues.

iv. Website Development

The Chief Executive reported that, following interviews and presentations, the Working Group had selected a communications agency company to progress the project. The company, which had been established for over 30 years, was based in Norwich and focused primarily on the charity sector. An initial briefing meeting was being held in mid-January 2015.

v. **Lighting Around the Commons**

The Chief Executive reported that he would be meeting with Merton Council in due course to discuss lighting around the Commons. It was confirmed that no works would commence before the end of the current financial year.

PART B GENERAL UPDATE

The Birds of Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath 2014

The Chief Executive reported that the annual report, The Birds of Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath 2014, compiled by a local ornithological expert Dave Wills, had been produced and would be available to purchase at a cost of £4.00 from the Ranger's Office. This was an excellent report that provided a comprehensive and important survey of the breadth of bird species that visit or reside on our Commons; the Conservators were very grateful for his expert work.

Conservation Newsletter

The Chief Executive reported that over the Christmas period, his PA had produced a Newsletter focusing mainly on a review of conservation matters but also including some key dates for 2015. This had been e-mailed to people who had asked to be kept informed of Commons activities. This would be published on the website and made available at the Ranger's Office and the Information Centre. The Newsletter was welcomed and the PA was complemented for it.

It was hoped that, with the updating of the Commons website, the production of this type of regular e-Newsletter would be one of the ways in which communication with Levy-payers and the wider community would be achieved, as there would be a facility to allow people to sign up to receive Newsletters.

01.15.6 Natural History

a) Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 December

The Conservators noted the minutes of the Natural History Sub-Committee meeting held on 8 December. A walk was arranged for 1pm on Wednesday 18th March for the Sub-Committee to look at the areas that had been cleared of holly but any Conservator was welcome to join the walk.

It was suggested that as the Conservators' walk on Putney Lower Common had focused on the development of the hospital site rather than the rest of the Common, another walk should be organised in the summer to look at the rest of the Common. This was agreed.

b) Annual Conservation Report

The Wildlife and Conservation Officer reported that the 2014 Annual Conservation Report provided a description of the conservation work that had been carried out on Wimbledon and Putney Commons during 2014.

Apart from providing details of the work carried out by the Conservators' staff, the report highlighted the important work that had been achieved through partnerships with the local community, and also through grant funding provided through the Forestry Commission. Over a three-year period, this grant funding would ensure that 30 hectares of woodland were thinned of Holly, work which would help raise the Commons' SSSI areas from their current position of "recovering" to one of "favourable". In addition, it would also improve access to the Commons and increase biodiversity.

Throughout the report, reference was made to the contributions made by volunteers on the Commons during 2014, and also that this resource was under-utilised. One of the roles played by volunteers during the year was with the survey programme to record the flora and fauna found on The Plain (adjacent to Windmill Road) and its surrounding area. This culminated in the Commons' first ever Bio-blitz event in July at which the amount of public support and the voluntary contribution were extremely positive, and it was hoped that this would continue into 2015. The Bio-blitz event proved that volunteering could be both educational and fun and that capturing people's enthusiasm for the Commons was something that should be built upon and prioritised over the coming year.

With OPM only likely to increase on the Commons in the near future, voluntary assistance was something that could prove invaluable in helping with the future management of this problem. The scope for the use of volunteers on the Commons was immeasurable and the Wildlife and Conservation Officer was currently working on a paper to develop a policy for implementing a volunteering programme.

The Conservators thanked the Wildlife and Conservation Officer for his very detailed and clear report and commented that it showed how busy the team had been given the difficult circumstances, especially the poor weather.

It was reported that the Heathland Management plan had two more years to run, and the Woodland Management plan was in its seventh year, with three more years to run. Renewal of both schemes would depend on the availability of future funding.

With regard to Oak Processionary Moth, it was agreed that, if volunteers were to be used to assist in spotting nests they would require comprehensive training. The Chief Executive commented that, although he was committed to the future use of volunteers, it was something that had to be done properly and consideration should be given to the submission of a bid for external funding to help resource this project.

With regard to Stag Beetles, it was reported that there had been an excellent feedback to the request in the 2014 Newsletter for information on sightings. The distribution of the Beetles was general, with many being sighted in the Wimbledon Village area and also around Putney Lower Common. Those sighted on the Commons tended to have been identified by staff.

The planting of more Holly on the Commons was queried, given the work that was being undertaken to remove it in many areas. It was noted that the Board had agreed to the planting of Holly along Parkside to provide screening some three years ago and although the planting of Holly in certain areas was useful, it was considered an invasive species in others. The Chief Executive commented that the Board had approved a vegetation survey and that this would help provide a baseline.

01.15.7 Putney Hospital

The Chief Executive began by reporting that the plan for the lighting to be placed on Putney Lower Common, which had been published on Wandsworth Council's planning website, had rightly caused concern amongst Putney Lower Common residents. He explained that this had been put forward by the main contractor without the Conservators' knowledge, and he wished to assure the meeting that it had not, nor would it be, agreed by the Conservators and it had now been removed from the planning website.

No further plans would be submitted for land owned by the Conservators without consultation with The Adams Loxton Partnership and himself and consideration by the Board. He reported that consideration was being given to holding a consultation evening for local residents in due course on lighting and also to have the opportunity for himself and The Adams Loxton Partnership to be able to explain the work being undertaken. This would probably be held at All Saints Church.

It was important to be clear that under the Easement granted to Wandsworth Council there was a Schedule of Agreed Works that laid out in some detail, in Appendix 1, all the requirements that were integral to reclamation of the Commons. He put forward a list of recommendations for the Conservators' approval for executing those requirements, apart from the lighting and the future maintenance plan.

He drew the Conservators' attention in particular to the change in the footpath layout which he now felt met the more rural aspect of the area. The footpath running parallel to Comondale had been removed so that there would be only one single access path from the site to Comondale. The footpath around the turning circle had also been removed since the grasscrete would provide an adequate walking surface. The surfacing of the footpaths had changed and would now be tar and chip for paths to the east of the access way and Coxwell gravel for the path to the west of the accessway.

The recommendations below were considered by the Board:

- a) to approve the proposed landscape restoration plan of the Common, as set out in Drawing ALP/655/P/02/Rev B – January 2015, prepared by The Adams Loxton Partnership, including:
- location and arrangement of the proposed accessway and surfacing in tar and chip to provide a rural finish;
 - preferred option for the accessway barrier as set out in Appendix 4, Drawing No ALP/673/P02/Rev A that is to be provided on Common land, but maintained by the school operator and head leaseholder;

The Chief Executive explained that the preferred wooden gate design was similar to other gates on the Commons and suited the rural setting. The gates would be suitable for use with electronic controls. Concern was expressed as to whether they would be robust enough to deter forced access but it was agreed that any gate could be accessed by a determined trespasser;

- provision of a new Lime tree in the middle of the proposed turning circle;
- proposed arrangement and surfacing of the footpaths, including those recommended in tar and chip finish and one in Coxwell Gravel;
- restoration of the hard-surfaced and former building areas back to grass and wild-flower meadows together with tree and associated soft landscaping plantings of the former car park, accessways and former nurses home to the north of the site (including excavation of the hard surface/building foundations down to a depth of at least 150mm below ground level and replacement with an approved low-quality soil, to promote the growth of a naturalistic grass and wildflower sward);

A representative of The Adams Loxton Partnership was present and was asked to speak to this item. He commented that all the light green areas on Drawing ALP/655/P/02/Rev B – January 2015 were currently hard surface and required a substantial amount of work to restore them back to Common. The foundations would be removed and backfilled with a form of podzol which would encourage the growth of meadow-type sward and wild flowers. It was noted that the complete return of grassy Common was unlikely but the growth would contain a mixture of species. It may need some on-going maintenance. He reassured the Conservators that the necessary piling work for the apartment block would ensure that all the sub-base material would be removed by Durkan. He would also raise with Durkan the need to remove the shed at the rear of the development site.

- position and retention of the Milestone south of the new gate. The current hoarding would be removed to treat the Ailanthus tree and then replaced.
- protection for retained trees in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012 and the location of the hoarding;

The Chief Executive reported that it was very important that, once the main contractor was on site, tree protection met British Standards.

- provision of grass and wildflower sward;
- reclamation of the redundant verge access way to the west of the site by Wandsworth Council;

Wandsworth Council were responsible for the reclamation and on-going maintenance of this area, and the Chief Executive would be meeting with the Council this week to ensure they were aware of what was required.

- removal of all low concrete post and iron railings around the front of the site adjacent to the Lower Richmond Road, and along the eastern edge of the access way to the east of the site;

- provision of bollards and low mounds, including bollards around the overrun for the coach-turning area.

The mounds would not be substantial but would fit in with other mounds in the area i.e. to a height of about 600mm. The bollards would also be rustic in appearance.

RESOLVED: The Board unanimously approved all the recommendations made by the Chief Executive as set out above.

- b) **Woodland Management Plan** - The proposed Woodland Management Plan covered all of the trees and shrubs to the west of the site and were set out in Appendix 6 of the Chief Executive's report, which had been issued to the Board before their inspection of the woodland on 9 January. The report covered the works to thin the woodland, ensuring its longevity, and the provision of indigenous tree and shrub/scrub planting to supplement the visual screening of the site. The woodland had been surveyed and it was unfortunate that a significant number of trees needed to be felled because they were dead, dying, damaged or had already partially collapsed. At least 15% of the felled wood would be left on site to create a wildlife habitat. Any felled trees would be cut as close to the ground as possible but the stumps would remain. Planting would maintain the visual screening of the current woodland and would be a mixture of transplants and new trees. In the longer-term, larger trees would be planted to provide better cover. Planting would be undertaken in spring and autumn this year.

The Chief Executive commented that the area marked as W1 was protected by a Woodland Tree Preservation Order so there was a need to apply to Wandsworth Council urgently to obtain authority for these proposals to ensure the work could proceed this year.

Permission for the felling of any trees with a TPO within the main site was covered by the planning permission.

It was agreed that it was important to carry out the new planting as soon as the felling had been completed. It was suggested that signs and leaflets be produced for local residents to explain the work being carried out. Information would also be put on the website.

RESOLVED: The Board unanimously approved the proposed Woodland Management Plan and the proposal to inform local residents of the woodland work by means of delivered leaflets, signs on-site and information posted on the Conservators' website.

- c) **TPO Trees** - the Chief Executive reported that three trees that required felling were covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The first was a Lime tree which already had permission to be felled in order to accommodate the school (but was not on land owned by WPCC); one of the Conservators' requirements, as noted above, was its replacement within the turning circle once building work had been completed.

A Japanese Maple tree was situated very close to the boundary of the demolition works and, although currently protected, the contractors would need to take care to ensure its survival.

The Conservators were asked to consider the principle of removing the Ailanthus Altissima (Tree of Heaven) located in the former car park of the hospital site that, due to its invasive nature, was causing damage to the surrounding land and woodland areas. If left, it would come to dominate the landscape. He proposed that it be replaced by at least three indigenous trees, such as Lime.

RESOLVED: The Board agreed the principle of removing the Ailanthus Altissima, subject to its being replaced by at least three indigenous trees.

- d) **Deferral issues** - The Chief Executive recommended that the Board defer approval of plans for restrained lighting until such time as The Adams Loxton Partnership had prepared options for the Conservators' approval and after consultation with local residents. Once approved by the Board, the proposals would be put forward to Wandsworth Council for determination of the outstanding planning condition, prior to the commencement of this phase of the development. He recommended that The Adams Loxton Partnership Ltd be authorised to commence this work immediately.

The Chief Executive further recommended that the management plan and drawing for the future maintenance liability for land adjacent to the Pink Land (the school site) and Green Land (the residential site) be deferred for the time being.

RESOLVED: The Board unanimously approved the Chief Executive's recommendation to defer approval of the lighting on the basis set out in the report and of the future maintenance plan for the land adjacent to the Pink and Green Land.

01.15.8 Any Other Business

Review of Christmas Card Sales – The Chief Executive was asked to provide information on the 2014 Christmas Card sales at the February Board meeting.

01.15.9 Date of Next Meeting

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

The meeting finished at 6.10pm

