

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, JULY 2014

Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 14 July 2014 at 5pm in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.

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

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

1 member of the public

07.14.1 Apologies

Sir Ian Andrews, Dr Ros Taylor

07.14.2 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.

07.14.3 Approval of the Minutes of Meeting held on 9 June

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June were approved subject to a minor amendment.

07.14.4 Matters Arising

Legacy - Mr Horrocks commented that he was keen that the legacy received from a local resident was not lost in the general fund. The Chief Executive reported that, once he had given consideration to where the legacy might be best spent, he would bring the matter back to the Board for their consideration and approval.

Alder trees – The Chief Executive reported that the Senior Keeper, Bill Rowland, had not been able to shed any light on the planting of the Alder trees or why the trees had been planted. It was suggested that perhaps David Haldane, the previous Wildlife Officer, could help. The Chief Executive would talk to Peter Haldane.

07.14.5 Chief Executive's Report

A MATTERS ARISING FROM JUNE 2014 MEETING

- i. **Travellers** – The Chief Executive reported that monitoring of the traveller movements had been greatly assisted by the formation of an e-mail network which included representatives from all the local Boroughs, together with the Metropolitan Police Service and the Ranger's Office. At present, there was a small unauthorised

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encampment located close to ASDA supermarket in Roehampton Vale. As a precautionary approach, access to the REMPF car park was being closely monitored.

The Office had also received a report that a group of travellers had attempted to access the Commons at both Putney Lower Common and at Putney Heath near the Green Man, but had not succeeded. The Chief Executive was still in discussion with the Wandsworth Events Police Service about assistance in removing travellers from Commons land if necessary. Kingston Council had apparently made use of their services.

- ii. **Footpath Repairs** – The Chief Executive reported that a specification for the works had been finalised and meetings had now been arranged with two more contractors to look at the areas of footpath requiring restoration. It was hoped that this initial stage would be completed within the next four to six weeks.

B GENERAL UPDATE

The following Section sets out the more substantive management issues:

i. Putney Lower Common – Hospital Site

As the Conservators were aware, the Judgment and Order had now been received following the Appeal Court Hearing. The Claimant's appeal had been dismissed by all three judges. It was not yet known if Mr Evans planned to ask for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court.

The Chairman reported that he had drafted a letter to send to the local Guardian for the Board's approval. Subject to some minor amendments, the letter was agreed. Once amended, the letter would also be published on the Commons' website, and sent to other local newspapers and websites.

- ii. **Events** – The Conservators noted the events taking place on the Commons over the next two months. In response to a question from Mr Horrocks, the Chief Executive advised that the Mosaic Jewish Primary School were not being charged for their visit to the Commons. He commented that there was no overall charging structure for events at present and he would be bringing a paper to the Board on this matter in due course.
- iii. **Tamil Event** – The Chief Executive reported that the REMPF had recently hosted the annual Tamil Cultural Day at the REMPF for the fourth successive year. Between 2,000 and 3,000 people had attended the event, participating in a range of sports and recreational activities. There were some complaints from nearby residents about the noise and these were dealt with promptly. The Chief Executive commented that this was an important event in the annual Tamil community calendar and was a one-day major event on the playing fields. There had also been some issues with litter and it was unlikely the organiser's full bond would be returned. However, if hosted in 2015, he would ensure that a detailed licence was prepared, setting out in clearer terms the organiser's obligations, particularly in regard to the impact on local residents.

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- iv. **Governance Review** – The Chief Executive reported that, in line with best practice for charities, a review of the governance arrangements for the Commons had commenced.
- v. **Windmill Repairs** – The Chief Executive reported that a meeting had been held with architects, MBA Associates, and a specialist timber company, BM TRADA, to consider the best way forward with the programme of repairs. It was agreed that some temporary repair works should be undertaken to the asphalt flat roof at the point where the ceiling joists meet the upright tower joists. This would hopefully provide a temporary solution to enable the Conservators to consider how best to proceed with the project and to ascertain if external funding could be secured to assist with the proposed major works. The temporary repair works should cost no more than £15,000. Mr Horrocks reported that a friend of his may like to contribute towards the cost of any repairs. The Chief Executive commented that this was very generous and if they would like to make contact with the office, he would be delighted to meet them with Mr Horrocks, and show them around the Windmill.
- vi. **Staff Vacancies** – The Chief Executive reported that the recruitment and selection process was currently underway to find a replacement Keeper. The Property and Maintenance Operative had also tendered his resignation and consideration was currently being given as to how best to fill this position.
- vii. **Tree Management** – The Chief Executive reported that an initial survey had been completed. A number of very large grey Poplars on the boundary of Wimbledon Common and Putney Vale Cemetery had collapsed in the storms of October 2013, causing damage to the boundary fence. Remedial work was necessary to clear three fallen Poplars, and a further nine trees needed to be felled. Given the nature of these works it might be necessary to close part of Stag Ride to facilitate access. At the same time, works to remove branches from five very large dead Oaks that were over-hanging Stag Ride would also be carried out. Quotations had been sought from five companies and the work was going to cost in the order of £10,000. This was a sizeable and technically challenging piece of work and the Chief Executive wanted to be sure that the company he appointed was capable of dealing with the work properly.

The Lombardy Poplars along Friars Avenue had also been inspected and work was necessary to remove a number of trees that had large cavities or were partially collapsing. This work would take place over the next month. During the autumn and winter period the remaining trees would need to be re-pollarded.

Work was also necessary at Putney Lower Common to fell a dead Horse Chestnut tree adjacent to the highway at Lower Common South. Also at Putney Lower Common, a significant number of the Oak trees have become infested with Oak Processionary Moth (OPM). The Forestry Commission had been notified and works to survey the area and carry out removal of nests was planned to take place over the next couple of weeks.

- viii. **Grassland Management** – The Chief Executive reported that he had taken a slightly more relaxed approach to grassland management around the Commons, particularly along roadside verges, except where sightlines were a safety issue. The majority of the local community seemed to welcome this approach as it did

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improve the rural aspect of the site. A phased approach to mowing was about to start, beginning with Westside and Southside.

Mr Horrocks commented that he was surprised there had not been more complaints, particularly as some had been received last year about the lack of mowing around the Roehampton Memorial on Putney Heath.

- ix. **English Woodland Grant Scheme** – The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the Forestry Commission had approved the grant application of nearly £69,000 to undertake further woodland management across the Commons, specifically works to manage holly encroachment across a further 19.47ha of land in 2015/16.
- x. **Emergency Procedures** – The Chief Executive reported that, as part of the on-going work to review emergency incident procedures, a plan had been produced setting out all the major access points onto the Commons, together with an accompanying schedule giving eight figure grid references. In addition, areas identified as potential helicopter landing sites had also been incorporated. A copy of these documents is to be shared with the emergency services and local stables.

The Conservators commented that this was an excellent piece of work and made some suggestions such as giving each site a unique number, and also changing the colours to make it easier for anyone with colour-blindness. The Chief Executive commented that he would be sending the maps to the emergency services and, in a covering letter, would ask them if they met their needs.

- xi. **Wimbledon Guild Village Fair** – The Chief Executive reported that he had had a meeting with the organisers of the Wimbledon Village Fair that morning to discuss the event held on Saturday 21st June 2014. Although the event went well, there was still an issue with parking and traffic management and the Chief Executive reported that a meeting with the organisers, the Council and the local police would be arranged to discuss this further. Mr Simon suggested involving the AA as more formal signposting in the area would be helpful. It was also noted that the classic-car event at the Cannizaro Hotel had not helped the traffic situation.

Mr Horrocks mentioned the difficulty in getting cover for the Conservators' stand and he thanked the Chief Executive for covering the last two hours of the day. He suggested that Ms Evans circulate a rota for the Stables Open Day as soon as possible and this was agreed.

- xii. **The Spencer, Putney Lower Common** – The Chief Executive reported that the licence with The Spencer had now been amended to allow staff to deliver food to the outside tables. This change did not permit staff to take orders for food or drink at the tables, nor to deliver drinks to the tables.

C Communications

- ci. **Responsible Dog Control** – The Chief Executive reported that work was on-going with the Dog-walking Code of Conduct and a local school was involved in producing the illustrations.

Prof. Touquet commented that in some areas of the golf course there were dog-waste bins close to greens and tees. He suggested that dog bins should not be

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placed in these areas so that dog-walkers did not have to walk so close to them. The Chief Executive commented that this matter would be considered and reviewed in due course.

- Cii. **Newsletter** – The Chief Executive reported that he and his PA had held a meeting with Mr Peter Price, Chief Executive of London Letterbox Marketing, to discuss issues with delivery of the Annual Newsletter to Levy-payers. Mr Price was very much of the opinion that delivery had been successful although he was aware there were issues with access to some block of flats. The Chief Executive commented that although this was one of the cheapest options for delivery, the Newsletter was delivered with other marketing material and could easily be considered as junk mail.

Mr Price had suggested some form of independent audit of the delivery process or, alternatively, the Newsletter could be placed into sealed envelopes with labels for each household. However, the latter suggestion would be very expensive at almost twice the cost of the current delivery method. The Chief Executive commented that the impression he had received from Levy-payers he had spoken to was that they still wanted to have the Newsletter delivered by hand.

It was agreed that the delivery should be reviewed and the Chief Executive was asked to look into the costs of an audit and alternative delivery methods and report back to the Board in due course.

With regard to the website, the current one was very dated and cumbersome to use and although other matters took priority at present, the website would need to be reviewed soon. He felt too much reliance was placed on the Newsletter as a means for communicating with Levy-payers.

- Ciii. **Templates** – The Conservators reviewed and approved the new templates for headed paper, compliment slips, business cards and signage as designed by Haygarths.

07.14.6 Natural History Sub-Committee

The Conservators noted the minutes of the Natural History Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 July.

The Chairman reported that Dr Taylor was unable to attend this Board meeting but would be co-ordinating the results of the BioBlitz for the next Natural History Sub-Committee meeting and a full report would be presented at the next Board meeting. He wished to congratulate Dr Taylor for initiating and successfully organising such a good event. Many members of the public who had attended had commented favourably on the event and had asked why it had not been done before. Approximately 20 people had attended each event. The Chief Executive commented that it was a really important family-orientated event and it had been encouraging to see so many children involved. There was a lot to discuss following the event but it was hoped that future events could build on its success.

Bees – Mr Horrocks asked if the Office were aware of what had happened to the bees and whether they would be returning. The Deputy commented that there had been some form of disease within the hive which had caused the queen to leave and the other bees to swarm. It was hoped that a new hive would be installed soon.

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Terrapin – In response to a question from Mr Horrocks, the Deputy reported that the large terrapin in the pond outside the Ranger's Office had been rescued from Queensmere. It would remain there until the Open Day and would then be rehomed.

Bats – Mr Simon commented that the Bat Survey carried out in 2013 had identified 8 species of bat on the Commons. He was concerned that some of these may be in the area that the Forestry Commission were spraying for OPM.

OPM – The Chief Executive reported that there had been outbreaks of OPM at Putney Lower Common and at Roehampton and it was hoped that the Forestry Commission would be spraying there shortly. He was concerned about on-going spraying of the OPM as it was currently government-funded but there was no guarantee this would continue.

07.14.7 Visitor Survey

The Chief Executive reported that one of Dr Taylor's mature ex-students had offered to carry out a visitor survey on Wimbledon Common, initially focusing around the Windmill area but with future surveys in other areas. The Chief Executive thought this was a very worthwhile exercise and it would be helpful to get feedback from the public in order to help inform future policy and where resources might best be targeted. The Conservators approved the form subject to some minor amendments. Any further comments should be forwarded to the PA at the earliest opportunity. Mr Simon commented that the wording of the proposed form should be careful not to create expectations that the Conservators could not meet.

The Chief Executive commented that he would also like to introduce people counters in some areas as he thought the number of visitors to the Commons was under-estimated.

07.14.8 Any Other Business

Wandsworth Council/Levy – In response to a question from Professor Touquet, the Chief Executive reported that he would be shortly following up with Wandsworth Council on the query raised at the Annual Open Meeting regarding their decision not to publish details of the Commons' Levy on the Council Tax information sent out to residents. It was felt that such information was important to encourage Levypayers to vote, or even stand, at elections, some of whom might be unaware that they lived Levy area.

Sign on Parkside – In response to a question from Mr Horrocks, the Chief Executive reported that the sign on the Common along Parkside advising motorists of the closure of Putney Bridge had been placed there without permission and contact had already been made with the Council on the matter. It was suggested that a fee should be charged for such permission.

Nature Trail Guide – The PA to the Chief Executive circulated copies of the new Nature Trail guide that had recently been received from the printer. She and Mr Peter Haldane were thanked for the work they had put into producing the booklet. This would be sold at a cost of £2.00 per booklet.

07.14.9 Date of Next Meeting – Monday 11 August at 5pm at the Information Centre

The meeting finished at 18.20pm

