

## Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, NOVEMBER 2014

**Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on Monday 10 November 2014 at 5pm in the Information Centre, Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR.**

**Conservators Present:** Mr D Devons (Chairman)  
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 A Evans (PA to Chief Executive)

2 members of the public

The Chairman made the following statement:

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.

### **11.14.1 Apologies**

Sir Ian Andrews, Ms Paula Graystone (Deputy Clerk & Ranger), Mrs J Evanson for lateness

### **11.14.2 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.

### **11.14.3 Approval of the Minutes of Meeting held on 13 October**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October were approved without amendment.

### **11.14.4 Matters Arising**

None (See next item)

### **11.14.5 Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive was heard on matters relating to Wimbledon and Putney Commons as follows:

## **GENERAL UPDATE**

The following provides an update on matters arising from the previous Board meeting:

### **i. Christmas Cards**

The Conservators noted that the Christmas cards were now on sale in the Ranger's Office and that the dates for the stall in the Windmill Car Park were as follows:

Saturday 29th November 10.30am to 12 noon - David Devons and Andrew Simon

Saturday 6th December 10.30am to 12 noon - Derek Frampton and John Horrocks

### **ii. Windmill Repairs**

The Chief Executive reported that further investigations into the water ingress had been undertaken by a Millwright who had previously worked on the Windmill. During his visit he had made several suggestions regarding the recent remedial works and a meeting was being arranged with the Windmill Trustees, Conservators and representatives of Marcus Beale Associates to consider the effectiveness of the recent remedial works and potential solutions.

### **iii. Conservators Election 2015**

The Chief Executive reported that this matter was the subject of a separate paper prepared by the Returning Officer.

### **iv. Levy-paying Area**

The Chief Executive reported that, utilising digital mapping, a new road map had been prepared by Ordnance Survey (OS) in September. This had shown there to be a significant number of properties incorrectly either in or out of the levying area. This issue had been picked up by the Friends of Putney Common and was the subject of a recent press release by them. A response had been prepared by the Chairman and passed to both the SW15 website and the local papers.

After further discussions with OS, it became clear that the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile had been measured incorrectly, as the 1871 Act required that it should be measured along a road or footpath, on foot, ie along the side (walkway) of the road, not along the centre of the road. OS had therefore carried out some further work, measuring the distance to the nearest gate or door along the sides of roads, and the resulting map correlated much more closely with the original deposited road map. The Chief Executive was working closely with the three Councils to resolve the matter, and to agree the way forward.

The new map had also shown that, following boundary changes and construction of new residential dwellings, there was a very small number of properties within the London Borough of Richmond that fall within the Levy-

## **Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, NOVEMBER 2014**

paying boundary. Further legal advice was required with regard to the interpretation of "the relevant councils" that were listed within Statutory Instrument 1990 No. 201 as amended by SI 1993 No. 128 that relate to the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations, as these currently only referred to Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth Councils. The Chief Executive hoped to come back to the Board in December with a firm recommendation on this matter.

### **v. Events**

The Board noted the events scheduled to take place on the Commons over the following two months.

**Cross Country Race** – It was reported that the Thames Hare and Hounds would be organising the annual Oxford and Cambridge Universities' cross-country races on the Commons, starting at the REMPF, on Saturday 6th December.

### **vi. Bookfest Review – 2015**

The Chief Executive reported that a meeting had now been held with the Chairman and the Director of the Bookfest to review the 2014 event. He commented that it was clear that this event was now seen as an important annual literary festival that encouraged visitors to the Common and also contributed to the local community and economy of Wimbledon Village. The Board noted a paper received from the Director of the Bookfest that set out the wide range of activities and education programme undertaken by the charity in 2014, together with a plan showing the extent of the facilities they had requested for the event on the Common in 2015.

#### **RESOLVED:**

The Board unanimously approved the dates for the 2015 Bookfest as 2 until 15 October 2015, and the extent of facilities required based upon the plans submitted, subject to the Chief Executive negotiating an acceptable licence fee.

### **vii. Freedom of Information Request**

The Chief Executive reported that the Conservators had received a complaint regarding a number of Freedom of Information requests from a representative of the Friends of Putney Common made in mid-August 2014 concerning the Putney Lower Common Hospital site and land at Stag Lane. Whilst it had been confirmed that the Conservators did not fall within Schedule 1 of the Freedom of Information Act, it had been agreed that the organisation should act within the spirit of the Act. The complaint was being investigated by one of the Appointed Conservators.

### **viii. Health and Safety**

The Chief Executive reported that, as part of a review of the organisation's health and safety procedures, a revised Health and Safety Policy Statement had been approved. The Board noted that it was a legal requirement for all organisations employing over five people to have a statement of general policy

## **Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, NOVEMBER 2014**

on health and safety at work and that copies of the revised policy had been circulated to all staff.

### **FOR INFORMATION**

In line with some of the emerging issues from the Governance Review there are a number of operational issues, not associated with governance or business matters of the Board, but more for general information.

#### **i. Legacy**

The Chief Executive reported that two quotations had been received from specialist companies regarding the restoration works for the REMPF War Memorial and these were currently being evaluated. He further reported that the War Memorials Trust had yet to respond with any information on whether this project might be eligible for grant funding.

#### **ii. Tree Works**

The Chief Executive was pleased to report that very few trees on the Commons had been affected by the storms in October. The most notable incident had been on Stag Ride where the upper-part of the crown of an Oak had collapsed.

Following inspection of trees along Parkside, a number of trees had been identified as being diseased or having large cavities and Maintenance staff had undertaken works to have these felled or substantially reduced. A tender was currently being evaluated to undertake works to trees along the edge of the REMPF, Putney Heath and Roehampton Vale.

Works to complete the felling of a number of very large Poplars adjacent to Putney Vale Cemetery that were severely damaged or left exposed in the storms of 2013 had nearly been completed. This work had now allowed access so that repairs to the fence that was damaged could be undertaken. Work had also been undertaken to remove dead wood over-hanging Stag Ride.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive commented that the work tendered was not within the current capability of the Maintenance team but it was hoped that they might work alongside the tree surgeons to gain experience.

#### **iii. Merton Dog Control Orders**

The Chief Executive reported that it had recently been announced that the Dog Control Orders on which Merton Council had recently consulted, could no longer be introduced under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 as this legislation was being superseded by the new Public Space Protection Order Regulations. It was not known whether the Council would need to carry out another consultation exercise.

**iv. Wimbledon Common West Residents' Association (WCWRA) – Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ)**

The Chief Executive reported that WCWRA had advised that they were working with Merton Council to consider measures to resolve parking problems around Chester Road, Beech Close, Sycamore Road, The Quadrant and The Causeway through the introduction of CPZs operating Monday to Friday. A number of different proposals were currently being considered, including controlled parking from 11.00am to 3.00pm, introduction of double yellow lines and possibly a new one-way arrangement into and out of The Quadrant. No detailed proposals were currently available but WCWRA would be holding a public presentation of their proposals for council officers and local residents. Any firm proposal would need to be brought before the Board for its consideration, given the implications for larger delivery vehicles to businesses in the area, including the Maintenance Centre.

**v. Lighting Around the Common**

The Chief Executive reported that an issue had arisen when a street light on Westside Common had been replaced with a new bright LED luminaire. Following objections from local residents, the Council had agreed on this occasion to change the light back to a softer sodium luminaire. However, it appeared that a programme of replacing lights around the Village had already commenced, using another form of LED luminaire. Although they provided greater security, and were more energy efficient, light contamination was potentially an issue, particularly onto the Common. It was suggested that it ought to be possible to negotiate with the Council for use of a more appropriate light in sensitive areas. It was also suggested that the lights should be bat and moth-friendly.

**RESOLVED:** The Board agreed that the Chief Executive should discuss the matter with the local Residents' Associations to reach an agreement with them on the preferred lighting, before discussing the matter with the Council.

**11.14.6 Natural History**

**1. Report on Oak Processionary Moths**

Since OPM was first identified on the Commons in 2011, the Conservators had received an annual Statutory Notice under Article 31 (4) of the Plant Health (Forestry) Order 2005 requiring the application of certain methods of control for the treatment of OPM on the Commons. The current Statutory Notice was issued by the Forestry Commission (FC) in April 2014 and remained in force until 31 July 2015.

It was reported that, now the Forestry Commission were likely to withdraw financial support for the removal of OPM nests on the Commons, serious consideration would need to be given to the effect this would have on resources. In particular, work would need to be undertaken to identify nest hotspots and to try and contain the spread. The Chief Executive commented that the increase in staff time that would need to be dedicated to this work, and to the removal of nests, would have an impact on other work on the Commons.

## Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, NOVEMBER 2014

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted that although it was possible that the Commons may continue to benefit from Forestry Commission assistance in 2015, the scale of this help was currently unknown and therefore it was agreed that consideration be given to how resources, both financial and physical, could be made available for the future control of OPM on the Commons.

### 2. Report on visit by Natural England

It was reported that, during spring 2013, Natural England (NE) had carried out a series of Integrated Site Assessments (ISA) on Wimbledon Common SSSI/SAC. The aim of these assessments was to measure the condition of Wimbledon Common against a set of criteria which, if met, would result in the Common being classed as in '*favourable condition*'.

The feedback had been favourable but Wimbledon Common SSSI/SAC was still identified as '*unfavourable recovering*' which meant that the units involved were not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management techniques were in place to ensure the site would reach favourable condition in time. NE had reported that it had been good to see how much progress was being made across various areas of the Common. Of special interest had been the holly thinning operations that had taken place in the woodland and the areas of heathland where heather had been cut and soil scrapes had been carried out.

The Chief Executive commented that a better strategy for improvement work was needed in future, along with a better overview of priority habitats. Two main areas of concern had been the planting of Scots Pine off Warren Farm Ride, although it was noted by NE that these had historical significance, and the area known as the "Burning Dump", where the dumping of organic matter was an issue but no advice had been received to date on any management directions on how best to deal with this matter.

It was clarified that, in respect of the SSSI/SAC status, Natural England acted as a regulator and was required to ensure that the regulations relating to the management of such designated sites were adhered to. In response to a question about the possibility of grants, the Chief Executive commented that Natural England was in a hiatus on what would replace the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. The loss of this grant had resulted in a reduction of some £50,000 income per year. He thought there would be no change until after the general election and then he did not believe large sums would be available.

This issue would also have implications on resources and the Chief Executive suggested that a good body of volunteers could be critical in carrying the work forward. However, implementation of this would also have its own resource implications

A query was raised about the fertilisers that the Golf Clubs used on greens, particularly around Farm Bog and it was suggested that there should be a dialogue with the clubs.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Board agreed that:**

In areas dominated by heathland and grassland, there was a need to achieve a more varied age of heather, have more areas of bare ground and achieve a higher diversity of associated plants.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October**

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October. The following matters were highlighted:

**1. Proposals for woodland survey / inventory**

It was reported that the Chief Executive had commented that, whilst he considered a woodland survey to be worthwhile, he thought that a vegetation survey should be the first priority in order to provide a baseline on the percentage of each habitat on the Common. This would help break down the Common into specific habitat blocks, each ultimately with its own management plan. A vegetation survey would be likely to cost in the region of £20,000 as it would require the services of a consultant, but it would be vital in preparing a base-line conservation plan for the future, and also aid in application for grants. It was recommended that this be put to the Board for approval

**RESOLVED:** The Board understood the importance of acquiring a baseline on the condition of the vegetation on the Commons and approved the recommendation that a vegetation survey be prepared but that, given the financial implications, the Chief Executive should submit this project as part of his financial proposals for the 2015/16 budget, to be considered initially by the Finance Sub-Committee.

**2. Date for Bioblitz 2015**

It was reported that the Sub-Committee had discussed the form and timing of the 2015 Bioblitz event and resolved to recommend to the Board the weekend of 20/21 June and that the event have the same format as in 2014, i.e.:

Saturday evening – Bat walk and Moth event

Sunday morning – Bird walk and two further organised walks on The Plain and surrounding woodland.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted and approved the arrangements to hold the 2015 Bioblitz event on 20/21 June.

**Tree-Planting Programme** – It was reported that the tree planting programme for 2014 would be circulated to the Sub-Committee at their next meeting.

**11.04.7 Election of Conservators 2015**

The Board noted the paper prepared by the Returning Officer and the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive reported that the paper set out the current situation in respect of the forthcoming Conservators' election. The key issue in the paper was the series of

## Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, NOVEMBER 2014

draft documents which would be circulated to prospective candidates, and would also form the basis of the Conservator's/Trustee's Handbook. The documents clarified the role of Conservators/Trustees and set out how they should conduct themselves, what criteria were necessary for a Candidate to be eligible to stand as a Conservator/Trustee and what was involved in the role. Some minor amendments to the documents were suggested and agreed. With regard to the Code of Conduct, the Chairman asked the Board if they were happy to sign the document now. The Chief Executive commented that this would show an adherence to good practice. This was agreed and the Chief Executive was asked to circulate a copy to each Conservator for signature.

In addition, the paper set out the formal timetable for the 2015 election:

The key dates were as follows:

- Opportunities for prospective candidates to meet the Returning Officer and Chief Executive: 2 and 10 December 2014 (Putney and Wimbledon)
- Last date for receipt of completed nomination forms: 7 January 2015
- Opportunity for electors to meet candidates standing for election: 22 and 29 January 2015 (Putney and Wimbledon)
- Despatch of Postal Votes: 4 February 2015
- Return of postal votes to ERS: 5 p.m. 25 February 2015

The Chief Executive circulated three possible drafts of the proposed postcards it had been previously agreed would be circulated to Levy-payers. However, he explained that it had been suggested that the postcards may now not be necessary, given the recent publicity over the levy-paying area and that the additional expenditure may not be appropriate. In light of these circumstances, the Conservators agreed that the postcards should not be produced. However, it was agreed that the posters should still be produced. There was some discussion around whether the term "Conservator" or "Trustee" should be used, or indeed both. It was agreed that the Returning Officer should be consulted on whether this was critical and what he would recommend.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. The Board noted and agreed the timetable for the election. The Board also noted and, subject to some minor amendments, approved the following documents that would form part of the prospective candidate's pack:-

Terms of Reference  
Code of Conduct  
Disciplinary Procedures  
Nomination Form  
Proposer & Secunder Form



## Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, NOVEMBER 2014

2. The Board agreed that they should all sign the Code of Conduct and the Chief Executive was asked to circulate the document to all Conservators under a covering letter.
3. The Board noted measures being taken to improve the voting turnout and agreed that the postcard need not be produced this year. The Chief Executive was asked to consult the Returning Officer for his advice on the use of the term "Conservator" and/or "Trustee" on the poster.

### 11.14.8 Any Other Business

**Wimbledon Village War Memorial** - The Chief Executive reminded the Board that the Wimbledon Society were hosting a small ceremony on Tuesday 11 November at 6.30pm at the Memorial to celebrate the new lighting that had been installed.

**WW1 Mosaic of a Soldier** - The Chief Executive reported that the digital mosaic of a British Army Private killed during World War One had been created outside Broadcasting House. Pte J E Beaney was originally from Putney and his name was amongst those engraved on the REMPF War Memorial.

**Visitor Survey** - In response to a question, the Chief Executive reported that the work on the visitor survey was on-going and the interim findings were very positive.

### 11.14.9 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 8 December 2014

The meeting finished at 6.20pm



