



**WIMBLEDON AND
PUTNEY COMMONS
BUSINESS PLAN 2021 - 2024**

‘Wimbledon and Putney Commons will be an exemplar of conservation management, rich in wildlife whilst accessible and welcoming to all for exercise, quiet recreation and relaxation’.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) is a body corporate, established under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871 ('the Act'), responsible for the management of 1,140 acres of public open space comprising Wimbledon Common (including Rushmere (formerly The Green), Putney Heath and the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields (REMPF) as well as Putney Lower Common. These areas are jointly referred to as 'the Commons'.
- 1.2 The fundamental duty of WPCC, as set out in the founding legislation, is 'to keep the Commons for ever open and uninclosed and unbuilt on, and to protect the turf, gorse, timber, and underwood thereon; and to preserve the same for public and local use for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes'.
- 1.3 On 14 April 1972, WPCC was registered as a Charity with a founding objective 'to preserve the Commons as open spaces for purposes of unrestricted exercise and recreation and other purposes'. The Conservators act as trustees of the Charity.

2. Strategic Objectives and Themes

- 2.1 In June 2017, the WPCC Board ('the Board') approved the first ever Wimbledon and Putney Commons Strategy ('the Strategy'), following a recommendation from the 2014 Governance Review. The Strategy sets out both the broad vision and 62 Key Priorities for managing the Commons over the ten-year period from the 1st April 2018 to the 31st March 2028. It demonstrates the way in which WPCC will play its part in making this area of southwest London a great place to live, work and visit, contributing towards a world class city. (A copy of the Strategy can be downloaded [here](#).) The Strategy identifies two overarching long-term Strategic Objectives, which remain relevant for the purposes of this Business Plan and are set out in Figure 1 below.

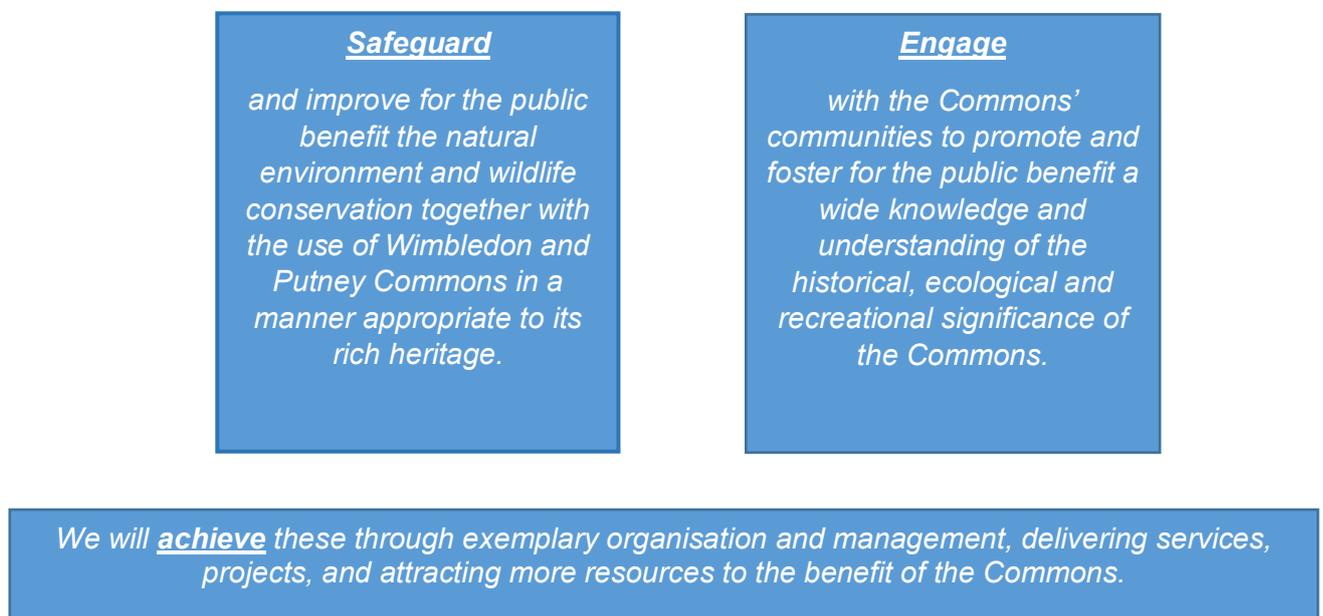


Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

2.2 Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged (refer to Figure 2 below).

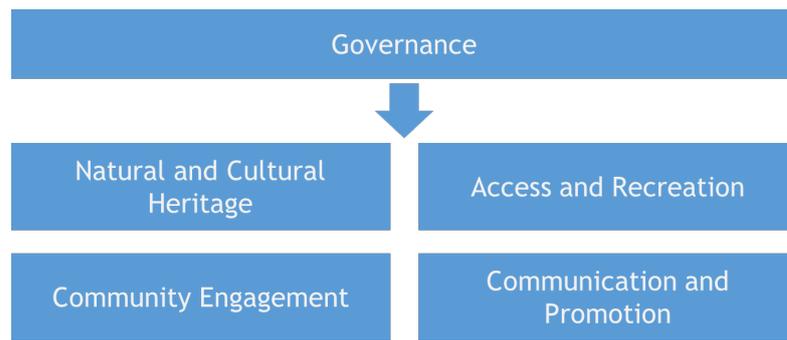


Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

2.3 It is within this strategic framework that individual initiatives, reflecting synergies and interdependencies across multiple Key Priorities, are progressed through the development of a rolling three year Business Plan.

3. Achievements in the year ended 31st March 2021

3.1 The table below sets out the progress made in each of the 20 Initiatives agreed by the Board in June 2020, under each of the five Strategic Themes.

Initiative	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Progress During 2020/21
GOVERNANCE			
1.	<p><i>Bring to a close the Statutory Inquiry.</i></p> <p>COMPLETED</p>	Board	<p>The Charity Commission's Statutory Inquiry came to a close with the publication of the Commission's Statement of Results of the Inquiry ('Inquiry Report') on 2 July 2020. Bringing the inquiry to a close had been a priority for WPCC and the charity worked closely with the Commission to support the inquiry and to ensure that measures were being put in place to strengthen WPCC's governance even whilst the inquiry was in progress.</p> <p>Developing and publishing clear guidelines for the triennial Conservator elections, a recommendation contained in the Inquiry Report, was completed prior to the 2021 elections.</p>
2.	<p><i>Consider amendments necessary to WPCC's constitutional framework to enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose of preserving, protecting and enhancing the Commons for the purposes of exercise and recreation.</i></p>	Board	<p>This project has largely been on hold since March 2020 due to (a) the operational demands arising from COVID-19 and (b) discussions between the Charity Commission and DCMS regarding the scope of s.73 Charities Act 2011, which has made it very difficult for WPCC to proceed without clarity regarding the means of achieving the proposed changes.</p>
3.	<p><i>Achieve financial stability for the Charity.</i></p>		<p>The National Lottery Heritage Funded Masterplanning process has included consideration of initiatives which could assist WPCC in achieving financial stability. With the review of constitutional arrangement being put on hold, there has been little progress with proposals to amend the levy.</p>
4.	<p><i>Undertake a review of staff remuneration.</i></p> <p>COMPLETED</p>	Finance and Investment Committee	<p>The remuneration review was completed in April 2021 by WPCC working with the HR Dept., a consulting firm appointed in 2019 following a tendering exercise, to undertake the review.</p> <p>The project consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a review of the existing organisation structure

Initiative	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Progress During 2020/21
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a complete review of current and historic pay and benefit arrangements • benchmarking of salaries against other relevant organisations • the development of recommendations regarding the pay and benefit structure • Consultation with all staff on these recommendations <p>The review was overseen on behalf of the Board by the Finance and Investment Committee.</p>
5.	<p><i>Recruit a new DEFRA Appointed Conservator.</i></p> <p>COMPLETED</p>	Board	<p>Following indications from Dr Ros Taylor that she would be stepping down as the DEFRA appointed Conservator in December 2020, the role was advertised in July 2020 and subsequently re-advertised in August 2020 due to the small number of applications received. A total of seven applications were received and four candidates were interviewed. From these, a shortlist of two 'preferred' candidates was submitted to DEFRA for consideration and Oliver Bennett was appointed as the new DEFRA Conservator for a period of three years in February 2021.</p>
6.	<p><i>Invest in IT and website (assuming procurement of a high-speed fibre cable).</i></p>	Senior Leadership Team	No progress during 2020/21
NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE			
7.	<p><i>Continue the preparation of a Land Management Plan to support the on-going sustainable management of the Commons.</i></p>	Senior Leadership Team	<p>A working draft of the first section of the plan has been completed. It has been established that the wildlife and Conservation Forum will form the steering group for the plan.</p>

Initiative	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Progress During 2020/21
8.	<i>Work with other open space partners to support the management of habitats including our conservation volunteers, London Wildlife Trust, South East Rivers Trust, Friends of Barnes Common, National Trust and Richmond Park.</i>	Senior Leadership Team/ Wildlife and Conservation Forum	<p>South East Rivers Trust has undertaken further restoration work on the Beverley Brook, in the form of planting of aquatic and marginal vegetation. Volunteers from SERT have also carried out litter removal along the Brook.</p> <p>A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the London Wildlife Trust for the management of Farm Bog. This formalises what has been a long-standing arrangement under which LWT volunteers undertake much of the essential management work for this important and rare habitat.</p>
ACCESS AND RECREATION			
9.	<i>Strengthen opportunities to promote the health/well-being/recreational and educational potential of the Commons.</i>	Board	<p>In March 2020, WPCC received confirmation that it had been awarded a grant of £60,000, towards an £80,000 project to resurface the path along the Beverley Brook between the REMPF Pavilion and the Brook Cottage bridge. This is a popular pedestrian route and part of the cycle network across the Commons. The remaining £20,000 required to undertake the work was provided by the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons and the project was completed in September 2020.</p>
10.	<i>Improve REMPF Pavilion and sports facilities and enhance this area as a major gateway onto the lower part of Wimbledon Common.</i>	Board	<p>Following the award of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant (see Initiative 18 below), the Board agreed to extend the brief to better understand the potential CapEX and OpEX for the REMPF pavilion. Following a competitive tendering exercise, consulting firm IF_DO was appointed to prepare a RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility Study on the REMPF pavilion. The results of that assessment have indicated that the cost for a full refurbishment of the existing building would likely be in the order of £7 million, whereas the cost of a new build has been estimated at £6.5 million. (The premium for the refurbishment option reflects the costs of providing temporary accommodation for the existing user groups during the construction period.) The Board has indicated that the new build would be the preferred option. If_Do has completed the RIBA Stage 1 feasibility study. A consultation with users</p>

Initiative	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Progress During 2020/21
			of REMPF was held in early March 2021 and feedback given was positive.
11.	<i>Restore the Maintenance Centre and REMPF Depots.</i>	Senior Leadership Team	New drainage has been installed in front of the REMPF Maintenance Centre in order to prevent run-off from the car park flooding the building. Early indications are that the drainage is working as hoped. Plans to purchase an additional shipping container to provide further dry storage at REPMPF have been delayed due a national shortage of containers.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT			
12.	<i>Understand perceptions of Commons via surveys.</i>	Board	No progress during 2020/21
13.	<i>Develop and implement visitor metrics.</i>		No progress during 2020/21
14. Key Priority	<i>Develop a structure to deliver and increase volunteering opportunities.</i>	Senior Leadership Team	COVID-19 meant that volunteer work parties were suspended for the vast majority of the year. Despite this, volunteer time for the year totalled 2,447 hours, primarily due to voluntary litter picking activities being undertaken by groups and individuals. This has included input from 41 students undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme.
15.	<i>Initiate a Supporters of the Commons group to raise the profile of the Commons and assist fund raising, including support for the 150th anniversary of the passing of the 1871 Act.</i>	Board	In April 2019, the Board agreed the basis for establishing the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons as a Conservator-led, integral part of WPCC rather than as a separate organisation. To date 546 subscriptions for memberships of the Friends have been taken up, including individual, household benefactor and corporate memberships. A series of Friends events had been planned for 2020/21. Unfortunately, these had to be cancelled due to COVID-19.
16.	<i>Develop softer community engagement via officer organised walks/talks, public meetings and Conservator led activities.</i>	Senior Leadership Team	COVID-19 meant that all face-to-face walks and talks were cancelled. However, both the Annual Open Meeting and the General Open meeting went ahead via Zoom. Similarly, the Winter Wildlife Talk,

Initiative	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Progress During 2020/21
			<p>which this year was given by the London Wildlife Trust and focused on urban wildlife, was held via Zoom and was extremely well attended. A Zoom 'guided walk' around the ponds of Wimbledon Common was 'led' by a local resident and qualified tour guide, Alan Blower. Over 400 people registered to attend.</p>
17.	<i>Develop and promote a year-round programme of events.</i>	Senior Leadership Team	All events were cancelled due to COVID-19. This included the Annual Open Day, along with the smaller established events such as the Easter Egg Hunt and the Pumpkin Hunt.
COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION			
18.	<i>Develop in consultation with stakeholders and the public a fully costed Masterplan for the future of the Commons, supported by the Business Plan and other strategies. This would form the basis of proposals for future major external funding grants, for the buildings and facilities within the 'Windmill and REMPF enclosures', enhancing these areas as important gateways and visitor attractions, and enhancement of the natural landscape including improved interpretation and education of the natural and social heritage on the Commons.</i>	Board	<p>The Masterplan project was placed on hold for most of 2020 due to COVID-19. Consultants Barker Langham recommenced work on the Masterplan in November 2020 and produced a first draft of the Masterplan, which was presented to the WPCC Board in February 2021. Based on feedback from the Board, a further draft of the Masterplan was produced along with a business plan and a series of reports, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built Heritage Conservation Plan • Natural Heritage Conservation Plan • Volunteer Development Plan • Interpretation Plan • REMPF Business Plan <p>Further feedback was provided by the Board – and the vision was rewritten and some projects, which were felt to be inappropriate for the Commons, were removed from the proposals.</p> <p>At the time of writing, Barker Langham are producing their final draft of the Masterplan and reports, which will then be presented to WPCC. However, before the Masterplan is complete, further public</p>

Initiative	Actions	Lead Responsibility	Progress During 2020/21
19.	<i>Improve gateway signage including the development of a new interpretative map of the Commons</i>		consultation will be undertaken, which may result in further amendments to the final document. No progress during 200/21
20.	<i>Produce new suite of leaflets (welcome/heritage/walking/ cycling).</i>		No progress during 2020/21. However, a leaflet relating to golf on the Commons, which had been discussed in previous years, was produced.

Table 1 - Progress with Key Priorities 2020/21

4. Initiatives for 2021 to 2024

- 4.1 The Business Plan for the three-year period from 2021/22 through 2023/24 builds on the achievements over the three years since the first Business Plan was produced. It also reflects (a) the impact that COVID-19 has had on views relating to management of the Commons and (b) the process of preparing the Masterplan and the impact this has had, particularly in clarifying and confirming the thoughts of the Board and senior staff on the degree of change which is felt to be appropriate/acceptable. The updated Business Plan is guided strongly by the Masterplan. WPCC's fundraising consultant has expressed the view that the recent changes made to the Masterplan now mean that we no longer have the basis of a second Heritage Fund bid. Nevertheless, there is considerable essential/high priority work contained within the Masterplan which cannot be put on hold indefinitely. Wherever possible, this will be undertaken using existing staff resource and operational budgets. However, the majority of the projects listed will require (a) input from external contractors/consultants and (b) significant capital expenditure to correct long-term under-investment in the infrastructure of the Commons. Therefore, an important element of the new business plan is the development of WPCC's fundraising capacity, including the recruitment of a Fundraising Manager. It is also proposed that WPCC uses some of its reserves as match funding to 'unlock' grants. It is worth noting that the figures provided in the plan represent what is thought to be a worst-case scenario in terms of match funding. Whereas the plan is based on an assumption that we will need to provide up to 25% of the cost for externally funded projects, this figure may be as low as 0 to 10%.
- 4.2 Another significant feature of the plan is a change to the staff structure. With the promotion of the Chief Operations Manager to Chief Executive, there are funds available in the salaries budget. It is proposed that, rather than recruit a replacement Chief Operations Manager, this money will be used to:
- Employ the temporary Litter and Waste Operative on a permanent basis – this role is proving effective in managing the waste on the Commons and in freeing up both the Maintenance and Keeper teams to undertake their core roles.
 - Recruit an additional member to the Maintenance Team – in order to help achieve our aspiration of higher standards of conservation management. This also reflects the fact that the Maintenance Manager will be asked to pick up some of the duties previously in the Chief Operations Manager's job description, particularly health and safety, and he will therefore be able to spend less time undertaking maintenance work with his team.
 - Recruit a part-time Administration Assistant, to undertake simple reception and administration duties currently undertaken by the senior management team.
- 4.3 The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic creates a continuing degree of uncertainty regarding WPCC's ability to progress and complete the initiatives set out in the plan. At the time of writing, a semblance of normality appears to be returning, and timescales given are based on assumptions that restrictions lifted in Summer 2021 are not reintroduced. However, a return to the controls which were in place during much of 2020/21 would result in slower or even no progress on some of the projects outlined below.
- 4.4 A number of other areas of uncertainty should be noted. The route to achieving constitutional change and regularisation of buildings remains uncertain. The Charity Commission and DCMS have still to give their views on the scope of s.73 of the Charities Act 2011 and therefore it is not possible at this stage to say whether WPCC will be able work with the Commission to develop a s.73 scheme or whether a private bill will be necessary. There is similar uncertainty in relation the rebuilding of the REMPF Pavilion. Attempts to achieve regularisation a s.105 order have proved unsuccessful. In the absence of an s.73 scheme, WPCC may need to consider obtaining declaratory relief, a lengthier, and more costly process. Because of this lack of clarity, only known

steps are included in the work plans and review/revision will be required as the position becomes clearer.

- 4.5 A number of the projects in Year 2 and Year 3 are dependent on grants and fundraising. It is highly unlikely that we will be successful in securing funding for all of these projects. Therefore, not all projects will progress as set out in the timetable. Those with funding will proceed and those without funding will be postponed until a later date, probably beyond the period of this plan.
- 4.6 Finally, there remains uncertainty in relation to a second Heritage Fund application. If WPCC decides to proceed with an application, this may include a number of the projects identified below. This will impact on timescales and budgets.

GOVERNING WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS

1. Consider amendments necessary to WPCC's constitutional framework to enhance WPCC's ability to achieve (A) a sustainable financial position and (B) its fundamental purpose of preserving, protecting and enhancing the Commons for the purposes of exercise and recreation

What success looks like

WPCC completes a three-staged public consultation

Stage 1 – amendments to the levy
 Stage 2 – concepts and principles
 Stage 3 – proposed text

Timescales for stages 2 & 3 may depend on the outcome of discussions between the Charity Commission and DCMS regarding the scope of s.73 of the Charities Act 2011.

This achieves the requirements of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Charity Commission that a “meaningful and proportionate” consultation exercise be undertaken to ascertain the views of stakeholders, particularly those likely to be affected, in advance of the formal submission on the proposed changes to the constitutional framework.

Feedback is received that supports change to WPCC's constitutional framework in three broad areas to allow the organisation is to better achieve its charitable objects:

1. Amendment of WPCC's Special Levy, including:
 - i. assessment of the number and nature of current visitors to the Commons;
 - ii. assessment of the CapEX and OpEX requirements for the business over the next decade based on the aspirations arising from the Masterplan and forecast user numbers/profiles;
 - iii. analysis of WPCC's financial history including contribution from Levy against population growth and inflation to understand key correlations;
 - iv. assessment of the Levy requirement inherent in the forecast investment profile.
2. Regularisation and clarification of buildings and land, including:
 - i. assessment of the land-use changes between the 1871 map and 2020 map of the Commons to be used in support of the regularisation of the

	<p>Commons including both the natural and built environments;</p> <p>ii. clarification of various powers (including those that have been exhausted) relating to both land and buildings.</p> <p>3. Modernisation of WPCC's governance arrangements and election procedures:</p> <p>i. updating of the governance provisions based on the Charity Commission's form of constitution for a CIO (Foundation Model), suitably adapted;</p> <p>B. Engagement Process - Conservators engage and gain the support of the relevant authorities regarding constitutional reform:</p> <p>1. positive engagement with the Secretary of State for the Environment to support a potential increase in the WPCC Special Levy and resolution to pursue an increase;</p> <p>2. consent from the Charity Commission to adopt the draft Scheme under section 73 of the Charities Act 2011 (to be prepared by WPCC) to regularise the position on buildings and land and modernise WPCC's governance arrangements.</p>
Lead	Board and Constitution Committee
2.	<i>Complete the Heritage Lottery funded Masterplan</i>
What success looks like	A completed realistic and appropriate Masterplan which is fundable and has the support of the Board, staff and the public
Lead	Board and Chief Executive
3.	<i>Develop performance related pay system in order to reward high performing staff</i>
What success looks like	Introduced and operating a performance related pay system under which performance is assessed against fair and measurable criteria and which has the full support of the staff team
Lead	Finance and Investment Committee and Chief Executive
4.	<i>Invest in IT and Website</i>
What success looks like	Fast, well-laid out and user-friendly website, improved data security and a more efficient telephone system
Lead	EA/Communications Officer
5.	<i>Undertake personal data audit and prepare and implement personal data management plan</i>
What success looks like	A clear understanding of the personal data that we hold, why we hold it and how we should manage it in order to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice
Lead	EA/Communications Officer

6.	Develop WPCC's fundraising capacity to secure additional income for both capital and revenue projects
<i>What success looks like</i>	An in-house fundraiser, working closely with the senior management team and the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons bringing in at least four times their salary via grant applications, appeals, legacies and donations from high net worth individuals to support both capital and revenue projects.
<i>Lead</i>	Finance and Investment Committee and Chief Executive
NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE	
7.	Develop the land management plan
<i>What success looks like</i>	A completed plan which sets ambitious targets for habitat restoration/enhancement, is 'user-friendly' and has the support of the Board, staff, the Wildlife and Conservation Forum and the public
<i>Lead</i>	Wildlife and Conservation Forum/Conservation Officer
8.	Draw up and implement strategic biological monitoring plan
<i>What success looks like</i>	A targeted and realistic biological monitoring plan focused on gathering the data necessary to enable WPCC to assess the appropriateness of habitat management works being undertaken and which identifies (a) who will undertake the monitoring (b) where there are gaps, identifies mechanisms for securing the people necessary to undertake the monitoring and (c) identifies who will analyse the data and ensure that is considered when habitat management is being reviewed.
<i>Lead</i>	Wildlife and Conservation Forum
9.	Undertake review of WPCC's environmental performance and draw up an improvement plan
<i>What success looks like</i>	A plan which clearly identifies meaningful environmental improvements which can realistically be achieved with the resources available to WPCC.
<i>Lead</i>	Board/Chief Executive
10.	Undertake major habitat restoration/creation project
<i>What success looks like</i>	Habitat and populations of important species significantly improved along with a raised awareness amongst the public of the ecological importance of the Commons.
<i>Lead</i>	Chief Executive/Conservation and Community Officer
11.	Complete the Wildlife Garden
<i>What success looks like</i>	An attractive garden which provides a microcosm of the Commons, an education facility and a relaxing space for those who want to enjoy being in nature but may be less mobile
<i>Lead</i>	EA/Communications Officer and Conservation and Engagement Officer.

ACCESS & RECREATION	
12.	Progress plans to refurbish/replace REMPF Pavilion
	Whilst the ultimate goal is to replace the existing Pavilion with a new modern sports facility, during the life of this Business Plan, success would be to establish the lawfulness of the existing building, with completed plans for a new building which have the support of the users/public and with a funding strategy for the building in place.
Lead	Chief Executive
13.	Install new drainage at REMPF
What success looks like	Well-drained football and rugby pitches which are useable all year-round
Lead	Chief Executive
14.	Install new contactless car park donation meters
What success looks like	A reliable donation machine which is simple and convenient to use resulting in significantly increased levels of donation
Lead	Chief Executive
15.	Create circular cycling route and operating a campaign on responsible cycling on the Commons
What success looks like	An easy to maintain, popular, family friendly off-road cycling route used safely and responsibly
Lead	Chief Executive
16.	Identify priority paths for improvement, based around access for all and habitat protection, and carry out improvement work
What success looks like	A limited network of well-defined paths which are useable by people of all abilities and in all weather conditions
Lead	Chief Executive
17.	Refurbish toilets at the Windmill Car Park
What success looks like	Modern, hygienic and easy to clean toilet facilities for use by the public
Lead	Chief Executive
18.	Install dog wash facility at Windmill Car Park
What success looks like	Well used facility providing a service for users of the Commons and generating income for WPCC
Lead	Chief Executive
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
19.	Expanding volunteer capacity
What success looks like	A large, fully engaged, diverse and mainly self-sufficient volunteer force working on targeted areas of the Commons freeing up the staff team to address other priorities.
Lead	Conservation and Community Engagement Officer

20.	Develop a project to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the W&PC Act 1871
<i>What success looks like</i>	An installation which is both functional and provides a commemoration of the of the 150 th anniversary of the W&PC Act
<i>Lead</i>	Chief Executive
COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION	
21.	Develop communication strategy
What success looks like	A clear plan setting out a strategic approach to all of our external communications including the website, social media, media releases, newsletters, signage and leaflets which assists is in communicating key long, medium and short-term messages.
Lead	Board/Chief Executive
22.	Install entrance signage at key access points and low-key signage within Commons
What success looks like	Signage which is attractive, eye-catching but appropriate to the setting at popular entrances to the Commons which communicate key messages to the public regarding use of the land, giving visitors a better understanding of the value of the Commons and of their responsibilities when visiting.
Lead	Board/Chief Executive
23.	Develop a new suite of leaflets
What success looks like	An informative suite of leaflets providing key facts/guidance in relation to various aspects of the Commons which are readily available and result in visitors being better informed about the Commons and how they use them.
Lead	Board/EA and Communications Officer

