

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Manor Cottage
Wimbledon Common
London SW19 5NR



Chief Executive: Simon Lee

MEDIA RELEASE

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

October 2017 Update

The Spencer Benches

For the past seven years The Spencer public house has, under an annual licence with WPCC, placed 22 picnic benches on Putney Lower Common during the summer months.

Given concerns that the benches may not be universally popular, the Board agreed to undertake a consultation. Over a five week period 1,239 responses were received, 628 on-line and 611 submitted via the 'Freepost' postcards.

70% of respondents stated that they would like to see the benches remain as a long-term fixture, a further 26.5% supported the benches retention but thought the policy should be reviewed every five years. Only 3.5% of respondents thought the benches should be permanently removed. Local residents made up the vast majority of the respondents. 974 (78%) gave an SW15 postcode for their home address. A further 181 respondents (15%) were from other SW postcode areas.

Many of those who provided further comments expressed the view that the benches are a community asset, using them on occasions to relax/picnic without spending money in The Spencer. Those opposed to the benches considered that 'commercialisation' of the Commons was inappropriate.

Given the strength of the results, the Board agreed at its meeting on 9th October to enter into negotiations for a further five-year period with The Spencer and to make it explicit that the benches must be available for all users of the Commons.

Access for All

The fundraising appeal launched in the summer to restore Inner Windmill Road to provide improved 'access for all' has been very generously supported and to date through donations and grants just over £43,000 of the £55,000 target has been raised. The Wimbledon Foundation, the charitable arm of The All England Lawn Tennis Club, recently confirmed a donation of £4,500 towards the appeal. The Board are most grateful to levy payers and other members of the public for their generosity.

Each metre of restoration costs £45.00, if you would like to contribute please use the on-line JustGiving page www.justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/wimbledon-putneycommons/accessforall or send donations to The Ranger's Office, Manor Cottage, Windmill Road, Wimbledon, SW19 5NR. Donating towards your Commons provides the perfect Christmas gift to a friend or relation.

It is proposed that the appeal will close at the end of January and plans then put in place to restore this major arterial route through the Common in the Spring of 2018.

We are also delighted to report that the Wimbledon Village Stables have launched their own campaign to raise funds to restore the horserides across the Commons. To date £9,000 has been raised towards this appeal. A star of this campaign is the Fantastic Mr Fudge, "a little pony living in

a big city!" who as mascot of the Wimbledon Village Stables is helping to raise funds for the restoration of the Commons horserides.

London in Bloom

We are delighted to announce that Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common both won Gold awards in the "Common of the Year" category of this year's London in Bloom competition. Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the London in Bloom campaign is about celebrating and recognising the passion Londoners have for greening our Capital city.

Judged under a broad range of criteria including community involvement, conservation, maintenance of facilities and ensuring the welfare of users, both Commons scored extremely well in all categories and as a result both Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common were presented with gold awards which are given to entries that have been recognised by judges as having reached an 'outstanding' standard.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

In late June 2017, HMRC wrote to advise that they were undertaking an inspection to confirm working practices regarding WPCC's VAT and Employer returns and records and to check the systems that WPCC has in place to accurately record all VAT and PAYE responsibilities.

The inspection took place on the 1st August 2017. WPCC has since received confirmation that HMRC are satisfied and indeed stated: "*I have to say it was nice to see records being kept in such good order.*" They have now closed their case.

Wimbledon Airfield

The Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust wish to commemorate all airfields that have been critical in the defence of the nation. By 2030 they hope to have installed 400 memorials. Many airfields are now disused and research by the charity revealed that Wimbledon Common had its own airfield located on The Plain from 1915 to 1918.

Wimbledon Common Airfield was a 3 class landing ground which came under 49 Wing during the Great War and was also used by No.141 Squadron. The airfield was dismantled soon after The Armistice.

The Trust have provided a granite plaque to commemorate the Commons' airfield which has been installed on the outside of the Ranger's Office, facing The Plain and adjacent to the Information Centre, where there is more information available about the military associations with the Commons. A small ceremony will be organised to formally commemorate the site of the airfield.

Triennial Election 2018

The date for the next triennial election of five elected Conservators has been set for the 28th February 2018. The Board have appointed Mr Mike Rappolt, Appointed Conservator for the Ministry of Defence, as the Returning Officer. The election will be organised through the Electoral Reform Society.

Anyone living in the levy-paying area and registered on the most recent Electoral Register is eligible to vote in the election. Fewer than 20% of the circa 64,000 eligible electors did so in 2015. This was a very disappointing turnout and the Returning Officer is determined, with your help, that it should be improved in 2018. This is your opportunity to have your say in who is elected to oversee the management of your Commons for the next three years.

Anyone who might be interested in standing as a Conservator (more commonly now referred to as a Trustee) of the charity is asked to contact the Ranger's Office on Tel: 020 8788 7655 E-mail rangersoffice@wpcc.org.uk. More information is available on www.wpcc.org.uk

Statutory Inquiry

WPCC has been advised that the Interim Manager appointed by the Charity Commission under section 76(3)(g) of the Charities Act 2011 has delivered his Report and will be meeting with the Commission later this month. The trustees will be given the opportunity, in due course, to see the Interim Manager's draft report and provide comments on its factual accuracy. The Commission have advised that it is not yet able to give the Charity an indication of when the Statutory Inquiry is likely to be completed.

The Board continues to provide full cooperation to the Statutory Inquiry and to the Interim Manager.

ENDS

NOTES for Editors - Wimbledon and Putney Commons is a charity managed by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators. It was established under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871. The Commons comprise some 1,140 acres across Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common.

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