



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Statement July 2023

The Study School, Wimbledon

The Conservators and staff of Wimbledon and Putney Commons were devastated by the tragic incident at the Study School on Camp Road on 6 July 2023. Their thoughts and condolences are with the families and friends of Selena Lau and Nuria Sajjad, who both so sadly lost their lives on what should have been a day of happy celebration of the end of the school term. Our thoughts remain with everyone affected by this incident and we wish a speedy recovery to those who were injured.

The Conservators would like to recognise the exceptional work of their staff who so professionally assisted the emergency services throughout the day.

Annual Conservation Report

WPCC's Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane, has produced his Conservation Report for 2022/23, providing a comprehensive summary of the conservation, volunteering and public engagement activities that have taken place on the Commons. The Report gives a fascinating insight into day-to-day life here on the Commons and the work that goes into maintaining them as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a safe place for both visitors and wildlife.

Despite the prolonged drought of 2022 and the ongoing pressure of large numbers of visitors to the site, there is still a great deal to celebrate. In terms of managing the Commons various habitats, during 2022 some notable successes have included the expansion of our programme of grassland management, widescale restoration of the Commons heathland through scrub bashing and the continuation of holly thinning, ride management and the creation of glades around various parts of the Commons' woodland.

In addition to these activities, we have also re-established another important habitat that has not been recorded anywhere on the Commons since the beginning of the twentieth century. Created as part of the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting initiative, during the early part of 2023 a small orchard was planted on Putney Lower Common.

A copy of the report can be found here: [Annual Conservation Report](#)

Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

The Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons was launched in September 2019 and currently just over 600 people are members. The Friends bring together all of those who love these Commons and want to celebrate their significance not only as an important habitat for nature, but for the vital opportunity they provide for exercise, recreation and relaxation. The Friends are also committed to fundraising for projects that can help improve the accessibility and infrastructure of the Commons for all our visitors.

There are currently five membership categories: Individual, Household, Benefactor, Patron and Corporate. At their meeting on 10 July, the Board agreed to incorporate a half price concessionary rate for the Individual members category. This will apply to:

- a) Anyone claiming state benefits including disability, unemployment or pension credit
- b) Full time students
- c) Those under 21 years of age

This will come into effect later in the year once the necessary changes have been made to the WPCC website.

Fundraising

On 1st July 2023, staff and Conservators took the opportunity to promote the current *Access for All - Footpath Appeal* during the morning ParkRun, sharing information with the runners and other visitors about our footpath restoration proposals and asking visitors to consider making a donation.

Fundraising Manager, Maggie May, commented “The Conservators and staff are incredibly grateful to everyone who stopped by to chat and donated to the incredible total of £1,000.83 raised. It was invaluable to have the opportunity to talk to everyone about the proposals and to get their feedback too.”

Anyone wishing to contribute to the Appeal can do so by visiting the website here:

[Footpath Appeal](#)

Events

Weekend of Nature

A very successful Weekend of Nature was held on 16-18 June. Led by staff and volunteer experts, eight events took place over the course of the weekend with activities around small mammals, bats and moths, birds, butterflies and dragonflies, all with the aim of explaining the conservation work that we undertake on the Commons and the importance of that work to preserve the Commons as a habitat for such a wide variety of fauna and flora.

We were also delighted to welcome back our regular visitors, Reptile Events, whose snakes and bearded dragons are always popular with visitors, and Quekett Microscopical Club, who show our natural world through the very different perspective of a microscope.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Open Day 2022

Plans are well underway for this year’s Wimbledon and Putney Commons Open Day on Sunday 10 September. Having taken a Covid-enforced break in 2020 and 2021 and then the 2022 event cancelled following the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Commons’ team are very much looking forward to welcoming visitors back to this fantastic family event.

We are delighted to welcome back some old favourites to the show this year but we also have some new stalls for visitors to browse, plenty of food to choose from, a beer garden, and special arena guests Pedal Power Vs Parkour - the only show of its kind in the UK, their display combines the incredible skill, balance and power of a trials rider and the finesse of a gymnast/parkour athlete as they negotiate high platforms and trampolines around the arena.

Roehampton Community Weeks

The Roehampton Community Weeks programme is a three-week festival of free community activities and events aimed at the Roehampton and SW15 community. Events will take place from 5 to 25 August and we are delighted to be able to participate in the event. Our Head Ranger at Putney Lower Common, Bill Rowland, will be leading a walk on 5 August starting at the Roehampton War Memorial at 10.30am and finishing at the Windmill around 12 noon where refreshments will be provided. Bill has worked on the Commons for over 40 years and will share his wealth of knowledge on the history of the Commons. The walk should be of interest to all ages and will take in a mixture of terrain.

On 15 August, Nick Manning, author of a fascinating book written to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Commons entitled *The Commoners*, will lead a walking tour of the Roehampton University campus with Gilly King, who is the curator/archivist/historian/expert on the many treasures there. Many people will be unfamiliar with the campus and its fascinating history and amazing buildings so this will be fantastic opportunity to visit and learn about the site that would not normally be open to the public.

For more information visit the Roehampton Community Weeks website: [Roehampton Voice](#)

Governance

Annual Open Meeting

The Conservators held their Annual Open Meeting on 28 June 2023 at the Community Church in Putney at which they presented their annual reports and accounts. Copies of the annual report and accounts can be found [here](#) and minutes of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Business Plan Key Initiatives Progress Report

In June 2017, the Conservators approved the first ever Wimbledon and Putney Commons 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 1 April 2018 to the 31 March 2028. It demonstrates the way in which the Commons 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.

The Strategy identifies two overarching long-term strategic objectives:

- Safeguard and improve for the public benefit the natural environment and wildlife conservation together with the use of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in a manner appropriate to its rich heritage;
- Engage with the Commons' communities to promote and foster for the public benefit a wide knowledge and understanding of the historical, ecological and recreational significance of the Commons.

Within the strategic framework, there are five themes: Governance, Natural and Cultural Heritage, Access and Recreation, Community Engagement, Communication and Promotion; and it is within this strategic framework that individual initiatives are progressed through the development of a rolling three-year Business Plan.

A summary of the achievements and progress on the initiatives set by the Board in April 2022 can be found [here](#).

Meeting Resolutions

The Resolutions agreed at the Board of Conservators' meeting held on 10 July 2023 can be found [here](#).

ENDS

NOTES for Editors - Wimbledon and Putney Commons is a charity managed by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC). 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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Issued July 2023