



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Release August 2020

COVID-19 Update

At the 13 July 2020 WPCC Board meeting, the Conservators considered further measures to deal with the challenges associated with the vastly increased visitor numbers as the Commons continue to represent a safe place to meet and socialise. It was agreed to bring in extra litter bins, dog waste bins and skips to cope with the additional rubbish collection and disposal; waste management costs have risen to approximately four times their normal level, which has had a significant impact on the charity. With an expectation that visitor numbers will remain high, we would ask everyone for their continued support in helping us cope by taking litter home whenever possible. Fund raising appeals throughout July were carried out to help offset the increased costs associated with COVID-19 and we would like to express our deep gratitude for the generosity shown by so many in supporting the Commons. The public toilets at both the Windmill and the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields have now re-opened with increased levels of cleaning and sanitation. At the Board meeting, the Conservators recorded their sincere and continued appreciation for the commitment and hard work shown by the staff during what has been the busiest period on the Commons in living memory.



Wimbledon and Putney Commons Keepers prepare to clean up litter from the previous evening



A member of the Commons' Maintenance Team with one evening's litter collected from the Rushmere area of the Commons.

Appointment of Defra Conservator

Governance of Wimbledon and Putney Commons is provided by a board of eight Conservators (trustees), five of whom are directly elected every three years from the levy-paying area and the remaining three appointed by government departments: the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Dr Ros Taylor, who has served as the Defra-appointed Conservator for over seven years, will be retiring from the Board in October 2020. The Whitehall appointments bring great distinction and confer a sense of authority upon WPCC and there is no doubt that Dr Taylor, through her many years of dedicated service, has done exactly that.

Given Dr Taylor's impending retirement, at the 13 July Board meeting, Conservators approved the process for the recruitment of the next Defra-appointed Conservator. This is a great opportunity for an individual with an interest in, and knowledge of, wildlife and conservation to become involved in the governance of the charity and the management of the Commons. Details of the vacancy can be found on the WPCC [website](#).

Triennial Election

As mentioned above, five of the eight Conservators are directly elected every three years by all those eligible to vote in local elections whose residence is within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common or in the old parish of Putney. The next triennial election will be in 2021 and electors will be able to submit votes online or by post. The closing date for receipt of completed ballot papers is currently being discussed and is likely to be in mid-March 2021. A formal announcement of the date will be made in December 2020.

Following the 2018 election, the Conservators reviewed the election procedures and new guidelines for the election have been drafted but are still subject to external review. These guidelines, along with further details of the election, will be published later this year. Mr Nigel Ware, the Home Office appointed Conservator, has been appointed as the Returning Officer for the election and Civica Election Services Limited (formerly Electoral Reform Services) has been appointed as scrutineer.

Annual Open Meeting

The Conservators held their Annual Open Meeting on 29 July 2020 although due to coronavirus restrictions, the meeting was held using digital technology, with members of the public invited to view the meeting live online. An estimated 70 people joined the meeting, many of whom submitted questions in advance of the meeting. At the meeting, the Chairman of the Conservators, Mrs Diane Neil Mills, summarised both the achievements and the challenges of the past year, notably the impact of the pandemic on WPCC. Mr Nigel Ware presented the annual accounts, which in accordance with WPCC's constitution were "finally examined and settled" by the Conservators as part of the proceedings of the meeting. WPCC's Chief Operations Manager, Stephen Bound, discussed the operational challenges posed, not just by coronavirus, but also by one of the wettest winters on record. Dr Ros Taylor explained the recently launched biological recording project, Commons Wildlife Watch, which is vital to building knowledge which informs the management of the Commons. Mrs Sarah-Jane Holden provided an update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, which was established in September 2019 and will be leading the events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in 2021. Following the presentations, answers were provided to questions which had been submitted by members of the public both in advance of, and during, the meeting. Transcripts of the presentations and the question and answer session are available on the WPCC [website](#). We would like to thank all those who joined the meeting.

Regulatory Update

At the 13 July Board meeting, the Conservators formally received the Charity Commission's Report on the Statutory Inquiry, which was published on 2 July 2020. The Board resolved to carefully review the report's contents and to prepare a report detailing both the actions that WPCC has already taken in response to the recommendations outlined in the report as well

as further measures the organisation needs to consider in order to fully implement the Charity Commission's recommendations.

Governance

The [Resolutions](#) of the meeting of the Board of Conservators held on 13 July 2020 have been posted on the Wimbledon and Putney Commons website.

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.

Contact: Stephen Bound, Chief Operations Manager

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Tel: 020 8788 7655, E-mail: rangersoffice@wpcc.org.uk website: www.wpcc.org.uk