



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Statement August 2022

Wetland Restoration

In support of the Conservators' renewed focus on the natural landscape, an application has been made to Natural England's 'Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme' for a grant of £47,000 to carry out a feasibility study for the restoration of several peat bogs on Wimbledon Common: Farm Bog, Ravine Bog, Stag Bog, Glen Albyn and also wider linked wetlands.

Peatland habitats such as these are now very vulnerable in England – 94% have been lost in the last century due to factors such as drainage, development and inappropriate management. The plants and animals that live on these sites are also now very rare. Peat bogs are crucial in the fight against climate change – a 30cm peat layer stores as much carbon as tropical rainforest over a similar area.

We expect to be notified of the outcome in 'late summer'. If we are successful, surveying work would be expected to begin in September 2022 and last until March 2023.

Major Project to Restore Queensmere

At the Conservators' recent meeting, the Board agreed to focus on the restoration of Queensmere as the major restoration project for the next two years. Queensmere is very popular with visitors and is one of the most visited locations on the Commons. However, in terms of landscape and wildlife, the pond has suffered due to its popularity and, as a habitat, is severely degraded.

The aim of the restoration would be to:

- Improve the ecological value of the pond;
- Increase the aesthetic appeal of the pond;
- Slow the rate of siltation of the pond;
- Help WPCC communicate to visitors the importance of conservation generally and the conservation value of the Commons in particular.

Research has shown that ponds support more invertebrates – and more of Britain's threatened wildlife, than its rivers. The Wildlife Trusts estimate that more than half a million ponds have been lost in the UK in the last 100 years and that one in five of the UK's remaining ponds are in poor condition. Therefore, restoration of ponds is extremely valuable. The project is subject to funding and our Fundraising Manager is currently researching potential funders.

150th Anniversary Celebrations

- **Reception on the Terrace Pavilion of the House of Commons**

The final event to mark the 150th anniversary of Wimbledon and Putney Commons was a reception on 21 July 2022 at the House of Commons, kindly hosted by Stephen Hammond, MP for Wimbledon. The evening provided an opportunity to pay tribute to

those who were instrumental in securing the future of the Commons under a separate Act of Parliament in 1871 and we were therefore delighted to have Sir Richard Peek, a direct descendant of Sir Henry Peek, as the guest speaker.

In his address, Sir Richard spoke of his ancestor's philanthropy that underpinned not only his quest to secure access to open space for the public but to improve health and social welfare more generally. Also in attendance were the great grandchildren of Richardson Evans, the man who led the campaign to save 95 acres of open space along the Beverley Brook and donated the land to the Commons in the early 20th century.

Given the recent extremes in weather, the Conservators were fortunate to have near perfect conditions and would like to thank all those who attended the event for their support, including both Fleur Anderson, MP for Putney and Sarah Olney, MP for Richmond Park, who together with Stephen Hammond collectively represent the Commons in Westminster.

In addressing those attending the reception, the Chairman Diane Neil Mills, remarked, 'As we look back not only on the past year but the past 150, we recognise that the key to the survival of the Commons has been the support, the engagement and the munificence of so many, those in the local community and beyond, including all those here this evening. On behalf of the Conservators, I would like to express our profound appreciation for the generous support that we are so fortunate to receive, a reflection of the passion for the Commons that is deeply felt by all.'

- **Picture Competition**

Running throughout our 150th anniversary year has been the picture competition, which has attracted more than 100 entries each month. The winning entries will be on display at the Open Day on 11 September 2022 in the "Gallery in the Garage" near the Ranger's Office and we encourage everyone to come along and vote for their favourite entry and help us choose the overall winner.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Open Day 2022

Plans are well underway for this year's Wimbledon and Putney Commons Open Day on Sunday 11 September. Having taken a Covid-enforced break for the last two years, 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.

Resolutions

There were no Resolutions agreed at the Board of Conservators' meetings held on 11 July 2022.

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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