



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Statement December 2020

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Levy 2021/22

A founding principle of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871 is that the Commons are principally financed by a dedicated levy on residential properties that “primarily benefit” from the Commons, defined by the Act as all those within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common (including Putney Heath) or within the Parish of Putney as it existed in 1871.

The levy area extends across three local authorities (Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston) to whom responsibility for billing and collecting the levy was transferred in 1990 from WPCC. The levy appears as a separate precept on the annual Council Tax statements of the relevant properties.

Secondary legislation that was introduced when these arrangements were put in place in 1990 established a limit for the aggregate levy, adjusted annually to reflect inflation as measured by the Retail Prices Index (RPI).

Following careful consideration at its 14 December 2020 meeting, the Board, in accordance with its previously approved policy, set the aggregate levy for 2021/22 at its maximum level of £1,262,008, generating an additional £14,151, relative to the 2020/21 level, to support the work of the Charity. The cost per property will not be known until mid-January 2021 when the three Councils determine the number of relevant properties within the levy area.

Given the continued pressure on operational budgets, the Board also agreed to extend the policy of setting the levy at the maximum aggregate level for a further five-year period, from 2022/23 to 2026/27.

Appointed Conservators

Ministry of Defence (MoD) – As announced in [June 2020](#), the new Secretary of State for Defence has recognised the importance of the link between WPCC and the MoD and as such has decided that the MoD-Appointed Conservator needs to have established connections with the MoD. In order to fulfil this objective, the Board has approved the appointment process and timetable under which advertising the vacancy will commence immediately following WPCC’s triennial election in March 2021. Mr Mike Rappolt, who currently serves as the MOD-Appointed Conservator will, with the Secretary of State’s full agreement, continue in post until such time as the newly-appointed Conservator is able to take up the position.

Defra – The 14 December 2020 WPCC Board meeting was the last to be attended by the Defra-Appointed Conservator, Dr Ros Taylor, who is retiring from the Board following seven years of loyal service. The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, thanked Dr Taylor for her outstanding contribution to the work of the Board, particularly in raising awareness of the ecology and conservation of the Commons and engaging with the community. Dr Taylor has been instrumental in the founding of the Commons’ Annual BioBlitz nature event, now a regular fixture on the Commons calendar, and has developed the Wildlife and Conservation Forum to involve many local expert and dedicated volunteers who have helped to monitor and record the Commons’ flora and fauna. Dr Taylor’s expertise, energy and dedication to the Commons will be deeply missed and we wish Dr Taylor all the best in the future.

Following a competitive selection process involving a wide range of highly-qualified candidates, Defra is expected to announce Dr Taylor's replacement early in the new year.

2021 Triennial Election

Five of the eight Conservators (who also serve as trustees for the charity) of Wimbledon and Putney Commons are directly elected by eligible electors living in the levy area every three years. On 4 December 2020, the Returning Officer issued the formal Statutory Notice advising that the closing date for the receipt of completed ballot papers for the 2021 elections would be Wednesday 10 March 2021. All those on the electoral register who live within the levy area are eligible to stand as a Conservator and to vote.

Anyone interested in standing as a Conservator in the election will be able to find details on eligibility and the election process, along with critical dates, on the Conservators' website [here](#).

General Open Meeting

Continuing the practice established by the Board following the 2018 triennial election of holding a second open meeting each year to focus on operational aspects of the Commons, the Conservators held a General Open Meeting on Wednesday 2 December 2020 via Zoom Webinar. The meeting was attended by over 60 households and demonstrated the value of the opportunity to both provide an update and express views and concerns for all participants. The notes of the meeting, the Q&As (including those not answered at the meeting) and a recording of the Webinar are all available on WPCC's [website](#). Conservators wish to thank all of those who attended the meeting and encourage those who were not able to do so to watch the recording.

Agreements with Key Partners

The Conservators are pleased to announce that a new five-year agreement has been reached with Thomas's Schools for the use of facilities at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields during school term time for football, rugby, cricket, athletics and outdoor learning. The relationship between WPCC and Thomas's provides access to sports facilities and outdoor space for Thomas's pupils during weekdays when the Playing Fields are otherwise underused and is an important source of income for WPCC.

The Board at its December 2020 meeting also agreed slightly modified terms for the reciprocal agreements with the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club (RWGC) relating to WPCC's maintenance centre and the RWGC's car park. The partnership arrangement, which dates to 1979, allows WPCC to fulfil its charitable objective of protecting and preserving the Commons, the importance of which has been so clearly demonstrated over the past nine months in particular. The terms of the arrangement have been agreed by both parties and the formal documents will be signed in the New Year.

Both agreements demonstrate the importance of working with local partners in the delivery of services that are clearly of great public benefit and we are grateful to our partners for their support.

Governance

The Resolutions of the meeting of the Board of Conservators held on 14 December 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.

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