



# Wimbledon and Putney Commons

## Media Statement January 2023

### Wimbledon and Putney Commons – Levy for 2023/2024

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 1871 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 charge 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) in the previous September.

Despite the decision taken by the Board in December 2020 to set the levy at the maximum level permitted for the following five-year period, the Conservators felt that it was important to review this decision given the recent significant increase in RPI.

Consideration was given to the current rise in the cost of living and the potential impact on levy-payers and the Board also noted the reassurance that they had received from the local authorities that any benefits and reductions to which residents were entitled for council tax purposes would also apply to the levy.

Under the 1871 Act, the Conservators have a constitutional duty to protect and preserve the Commons and to make the Commons available for the purposes of recreation and exercise and the cost of meeting these duties has been subject to increasing inflationary pressures. In addition to the pressures on the operating budget, there are significant essential capital works on the horizon, which will involve substantial unbudgeted expenditure.

In light of this, at its 12 December 2022 meeting, the Board concluded that it would be neither prudent nor in the best interests of the charity to propose an increase in the levy that was below the maximum permitted under the 1990 Regulations. The Board therefore set the aggregate levy for 2023/24 at £1,490,566, an increase of 12.64% reflecting RPI for the year to September 2022 and generating an additional £167,238 to support the work of the charity.

The cost per property will not be known until mid-January 2023 when the three councils determine the number of relevant properties within the levy area.

### Masterplan and Levy Consultation - Update

The Conservators would like to thank everyone who took the time to submit their views in the recent consultation on the Masterplan and the proposed increase to the levy. The consultants, R4C, are now considering the feedback and are preparing their report. Initial findings suggest that there is strong support for all of the projects in the Masterplan and also for the principle of increasing the levy. The final report will be published later this year.

## Art on The Commons – 2022/23

Following on from the huge success of the Art on the Commons competition held as part of our 150th Anniversary celebrations, the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons have launched a new competition for 2022/23.

The competition will run slightly differently in that there will be four quarterly rounds so that the entries capture the seasons, and will run as follows:

- Winter: December, January, February
- Spring: March, April, May
- Summer: June, July, August
- Autumn: September, October, November

The first round - "Winter" - is opened for entries in early December and hopefully the snow and frosty weather we experienced will have provided some amazing photographic opportunities!

The Competition is open to all our visitors and can be of any media - photos, paintings, sketches, etc, but must be of Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath or Putney Lower Common or represent them in some way. Up to six entries can be submitted across the three months of each round and be taken/created within the time period of each round.

Further details are available on the Conservators' website:

[www/wpcc.org.uk/artonthecommons](http://www/wpcc.org.uk/artonthecommons)

## Brasher-Chataway-Bannister Bridge

The Conservators were delighted to attend the opening of the restored wooden footbridge across the Beverley Brook near the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields on 3 December 2022. The Bridge has been christened the "Brasher-Chataway-Bannister Bridge", named after three champion runners (Chris Brasher, Christopher Chataway and Roger Bannister), all of whom were members of the Thames Hare and Hounds, the world's oldest cross-country running club, yet all three also went on to make significant contributions to support health and social welfare more generally. It was an honour and a pleasure to welcome members of their families to the event to help cut the ribbon and unveil the plaque.

The bridge was restored following a fundraising campaign led by the Thames Hare and Hounds. They raised all the funds needed from a number of generous individuals and local organisations including the Wimbledon Foundation, Thomas Day School – Putney Vale, RunThrough, the London Marathon Charitable Trust and the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, as well as members of the Thames Hare and Hounds itself.

The Conservators would like to thank everyone who contributed to the funds for the new Bridge.

## Carols at the Windmill

On 10 December 2022, the Conservators and the Windmill Museum Trustees jointly hosted the annual Carols at the Windmill. Always a popular event, this was the first time it had been held at the Windmill for three years, having been either cancelled or moved to a more open location during COVID.

Over 400 visitors braved the cold weather to join us for a fantastic evening of carolling with the Wandle Concert Band and to enjoy a warming glass of mulled cider and a mince pie. The arrival of Santa delighted both children and adults alike and it was a wonderful start to the festive season.

## Governance

At the Conservators' meeting of 12 December 2022, various governance matters were approved:

### a. Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee

At their meeting on 12 December 2022, the Board approved the appointment of MoD-appointed Conservator, Mr Peter Shortt, as Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee.

### b. Resolutions

The Resolutions agreed at the Board of Conservators' meeting held on 12 December 2022 can be found here: [Resolutions 12 December 2022](#)

### c. General Open Meeting

The notes of the Conservators' General Open Meeting held on 1 November 2022 were approved and are now available on the website: [General Open Meeting Notes](#)

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 January 2023