



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Statement March 2022

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS LEVY 2022/23

At the Board's 14 February 2022 meeting, it was reported that the three Councils responsible for billing and collecting WPCC's levy (ie, Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston) had determined that the number of Band D equivalent properties within the levy area for the purposes of the 2022/23 levy calculation was 41,170, an increase of 456 from the previous year.

As previously reported in the Media Statement following the Board's December 2021 meeting, the aggregate levy for 2022/23 was set at £1,323,328. On this basis, the levy per Band D property for 2022/23 will be £32.14, an increase of £1.14 (3.68 percent) compared to 2021/22.

NEW APPOINTMENTS TO THE STAFF OF THE COMMONS

Fundraising Manager

As a charity, Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators are very fortunate to be funded by a levy on properties within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the Commons or those within the old Parish of Putney. However, the levy doesn't cover the full costs of maintaining this important open space and the shortfall continues to grow due to increasing visitor numbers and aging infrastructure such as paths, buildings and signage. In recognition of the need to bolster fundraising efforts to support the levy income, the Conservators have appointed Maggie May as Fundraising Manager.

Maggie has previously worked for The Royal Parks, Friends of the Earth and the Campaign to Protect Rural England and so brings with her a wealth of knowledge of fundraising for open spaces. Maggie commented, "I am over the moon to have joined the Wimbledon and Putney Commons team as Fundraising Manager and I look forward to meeting those who love the Commons and working to raise funds to enhance and maintain this amazing place which I know is cherished by so many".

It costs around £2million to care for the Commons, to keep them thriving for both people and nature. Maggie's first priority will be to raise funds for important infrastructure projects to ensure that the Commons remain open and accessible to visitors.

Part Time Office Assistant

A part time Office Assistant has been appointed to help with the administration in the busy Ranger's Office. Alison Carlin has joined us working three days a week and has already become a valuable member of the team. Alison will be the new voice and face of the Ranger's Office and will be answering the phones and helping visitors to the Office with queries. Alison lives locally and has walked the Commons for years, particularly Putney Lower Common and up onto Putney Heath.

CONSERVATION UPDATE

Holly Thinning - This year's woodland management programme began with the thinning out of the holly in six hectares of woodland adjacent to Robin Hood Ride (the track running from Springwell Car Park down towards the A3). This work is an important part of the Commons' participation in a Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement with the Forestry Commission and Natural England, who provide grants to support the work.

If left unchecked, holly will quickly become the dominant woodland species, which results in woodland that is heavily shaded and in turn severely restricts the development of a well-structured woodland. In a natural, or near natural state, woodland would ideally contain a full range and balance of structure and this would include:

- a field layer (ferns and grasses);
- a shrub layer (low growing scrub species, up to 5m high);
- an understorey of low growing trees;
- the canopy layer.

Although it looks quite harsh now, removing most of the holly and opening up the understorey to allow light to enter will allow a natural process of woodland regeneration to take place.

Ride Management - With a greater number of species inhabiting the first ten metres of any woodland or ride edge than those that inhabit the remainder of the woodland, sensitive ride management forms another important part of the Commons' current CS agreement with the Forestry Commission and Natural England. Work started in early January 2022 with the Commons' Maintenance Team coppicing trees along the upper sections of Upper Gravelly Ride to not only widen the ride but to create glades within the woodland.

Glades are also an important feature within a woodland setting as they offer a contrasting habitat to the higher canopy with many insects finding refuge and food that is not found elsewhere. With the sun able to penetrate through to the woodland floor, a diverse range of plants and invertebrates can thrive creating a habitat that can support and provide a food source for many other species.

Tree Planting – Conservation work isn't just about clearing areas; planting is obviously important too. Since November 2021, the Commons' Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane, has (with the help of a team of volunteers) planted some 1,250 small trees or "whips" in five woodland areas around the Commons. All the species are native to the UK and included rowan, hawthorn, spindle, wild cherry, crab apple and hazel. They were planted in open areas of the woodland where there was very little existing understorey to help promote a variety of growth.

PUTNEY LOWER COMMON FOOTBRIDGE – LAUNCH OF FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Wimbledon and Putney Commons have launched a fundraising appeal to help fund the restoration of the footbridge over the Beverley Brook on Putney Lower Common. Currently closed to the public, surveyors have identified that the bridge is in need of major structural repairs to make it safe for use, with a cost in the region of £15,000. The bridge forms an important part of a much-loved circular walking route across the Commons, and therefore restoring the bridge is extremely important to the thousands of regular visitors.

Donations to the "Bring Back the Bridge" appeal can be made via our JustGiving page [here](#), and any donation large or small would be gratefully received.

As part of the appeal, there is also an amazing opportunity to have a personal dedication on the bridge! Whether it's a memorial to remember someone special, to mark an important anniversary, or just because of a love of the Commons, anyone interested in donating to have a plaque on the Bridge, should contact Fundraising Manager, Maggie, at maggie@wpcc.org.uk.

Governance

The Resolutions of the meeting of the Board of Conservators held on [14 February 2022](#) 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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