



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Statement March 2024

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Levy 2024/25

The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) have agreed the levy for the fiscal year 2024/25, continuing its longstanding commitment to preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath, and Putney Lower Common.

Embedded in the founding principles of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871, the levy serves as the main source of funding for the maintenance and conservation of the Commons. The Act stipulates that properties located within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common (including Putney Heath) or within the historic Parish of Putney, as delineated in 1871, primarily benefit from the Commons and are thus subject to the levy.

Administered across three local authorities – Wandsworth, Merton, and Kingston – the levy is collected as a separate precept on the annual Council Tax statements of eligible properties. This revenue stream directly supports the work of the WPCC in preserving the ecological integrity and recreational value of the Commons.

During its meeting on 12 February 2024, the WPCC Board approved an aggregate levy of £1,622,642 for the 2024/25 fiscal year. This decision reflects the Board's decision, established in December 2020, to increase the levy by the maximum permissible amount based on the Retail Price Index (RPI) of the previous September. With the RPI recorded at 8.9% in September 2023, the levy increase will generate an additional £132,076 to bolster the WPCC's conservation efforts.

The three Councils responsible for billing and collecting the levy – Wandsworth, Merton, and Kingston – have determined that there are 41,477 Band D equivalent properties within the levy area for the 2024/25 calculation. Consequently, the levy per Band D property for the upcoming fiscal year will amount to £39.15.

"The Conservators remain steadfast in their mission to protect and enhance these invaluable green spaces for the benefit of current and future generations", said Chairman, Diane Neil Mills. "The continued support from the levy ensures that we can sustainably manage and conserve Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath, and Putney Lower Common for the enjoyment of all".

With regard to the recent consultation on a potential rebasing of the levy, given the very high level of support received, at their meeting on 11 December 2023, the Conservators agreed to pursue an increase in line with the proposal in the consultation document and have now contacted the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) regarding the matter.

The Board approves a far-reaching 10-year Land Management Plan

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) have approved a comprehensive ten-year Land Management Plan (LMP) aimed at safeguarding the rich biodiversity and unique habitats of Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath, and Putney Lower Common. A copy can be found on our website: [Land Management Plan](#)

Spanning 1140 acres, these areas serve not only as cherished open spaces for local and visiting residents but also as vital ecosystems supporting a diverse array of wildlife, plants, and trees. The Commons boast 900 acres designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), primarily due to the significance of their heathland and acid grassland. Moreover, they hold the designation of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), recognising its role as a habitat for the increasingly rare Stag Beetle.

The varied habitats of the Commons, including heathland, acid grassland, woodlands, riverine areas, and ponds, require specialized management to ensure their preservation. Smaller yet equally important habitats such as wayside verges, wet and boggy mires, and woodland glades also demand attention.

To address these conservation needs, WPCC's Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane, has meticulously crafted a ten-year Land Management Plan. This proactive framework emphasizes the unique qualities of the Commons, underscores the importance of landscape preservation, and identifies vulnerable areas requiring additional protection. Importantly, the plan seeks to balance conservation efforts with the diverse needs of visitors who frequent these natural spaces.

"The Commons' LMP is a strategic document that outlines our long-term vision and objectives for the next decade," stated Chief Executive, Colin Cooper. "It will serve as a roadmap for our conservation endeavours, setting achievable targets for the short term while safeguarding the ecological integrity of these treasured landscapes."

With the launch of this ambitious Land Management Plan, WPCC reaffirms its commitment to environmental stewardship and the preservation of Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath, and Putney Lower Common for generations to come.

Governance

1. Retiring Conservators

Elected - Three of the current elected Conservators: Diane Neil Mills, David Hince and Peter Hirsch, having each completed two terms of three years, decided not to stand for re-election in WPCC's 2024 election. At their recent Board meeting, the Conservators recorded their gratitude to all three for their commitment and dedication to the Commons during their terms of office. Diane Neil Mills, first elected in 2018, has served as Chairman of the Conservators for the past six years and in that capacity has led a number of important initiatives including the strengthening of the charity's governance arrangements and rebasing of the levy. David Hince, also first elected in 2018, has been a key member of a number of committees including the Financial and Investment Committee and in that role has brought commercial acumen and experience in finance to the Board. Peter Hirsch, also first elected in 2018, has served on the Audit and Risk Committee throughout his tenure and in that capacity has supported the committee's important function of scrutinising charity processes and identifying risks. Their terms will officially end on 3 April 2024.

As reported in the media release issued on 8 March 2024, the election for new Conservators concluded on 6 March 2024 and the newly elected Conservators will take up office on 3 April 2024.

Appointed – One of the three appointed Conservators – Nigel Ware, appointed by the Home Office – will reach the end of his second three-year term on 13 March 2024 and has decided not to seek re-appointment for a further term. The Conservators expressed their gratitude to Mr Ware for acting as Chair of the Finance and Investment Committee for six years, updating the way the charity managed its financial reporting and for twice serving as Returning Officer in the Conservators' elections.

The new Board will take up office on 3 April 2024 and will begin the recruitment process for Mr Ware's replacement as a priority.

Resolutions

The Resolution of the meeting of the Board of Conservators held on 12 February 2024 has been posted on the Wimbledon and Putney Commons website: [Resolution](#).

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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