



**CONSERVATORS' PUBLIC MEETING**  
to be held on  
**Monday 3 February 2025 at 4.30pm**  
**in the Information Centre, Ranger's Office,**  
**Manor Cottage, London SW19 5NR**

## **AGENDA**

### **PART A(1) PUBLIC**

- 02.25.1 Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence**
- 02.25.2 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting**
- 02.25.3 WPCC Board Meetings**
- i. Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 9 December 2024 **Page 3**
- 02.25.4 Matters Arising Page 10**
- 02.25.5 Board and Committee Matters Page 11**
- i. Approval of the Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference
- 02.25.6 Levy 2025/26 Page 16**
- 02.25.7 Chief Executive's Report Page 17**
- 02.25.8 Conservation Update Page 20**
- 02.25.9 Fundraising Update Page 28**
- 02.25.10 Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Report Verbal**
- 02.25.11 Environment/Sustainability Update Page 30**
- i. Collection of Fungi on the Commons **Page 32**
- 02.25.12 Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting**
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**Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on  
Monday 9 December 2024 at 4.30pm at the Information Centre, Manor Cottage,  
London SW19 5NR**

**Conservators:** Mauro Mattiuzzo (MM)  
Oliver Bennett (OB)  
David Brown  
Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Michael Johnston (MJ)  
William Liu (WL)  
Peter Shortt (PS)

**Officers:** Colin Cooper, Chief Executive (CE)  
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer  
Lynnie Farrant, Fundraising Manager  
Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (C&EO)  
Philip Warner, Chief Finance Officer.

**Members of the public:** No members of the public attended.

**PART A(1) PUBLIC**

**12.24.1 Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence**

Paula Graystone

**12.24.2 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting**

None

**12.24.3 WPCB Board Meetings**

**i. Resolutions of the Board Meeting 14 October 2024**

The Resolutions of the meeting held on 14 October 2024 were approved.

**ii. Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 14 October 2024**

The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board meeting held on 14 October 2024 were approved.

**12.24.4 Matters Arising**

**Land Management Plan Workshop** – It was noted that this Workshop would be held in early 2025. OB commented that he and the C&EO would be discussing the priorities and the outcome of that discussion would form the basis of the Workshop. The CE advised that the aim of the Workshop was to ensure the Board understood the priorities, rather than this being a further review of the LMP and how it was implemented.

**Village Noticeboard** - A new noticeboard outside the Dog & Fox in the Village was available for WPCB to put posters up. This would be utilised in the New Year.

## **12.24.5 Board and Committee Matters**

### **Board/Committee Meeting Dates**

#### **i. Meeting Dates relating to Annual Open Meeting**

The Board noted and approved the following changes to FIC, ARC and Board meetings following the change of date for the Annual Open Meeting to 18 June 2025.

- **13 May 2025**, 10am – the FIC scheduled for that day will now be a joint ARC/FIC meeting. It is suggested that this is followed by the scheduled FIC meeting.
- **20 May 2025** - The Joint ARC/FIC meeting that was scheduled for 20 May will now just be ARC.
- **27 May 2025**, 4.30pm - Board meeting. The Board meeting scheduled for Monday 2 June will need to be brought forward to Tuesday 27 May 2025 (the Monday is a Bank Holiday).
- **18 June 2025** – 7.30 for 8pm Annual Open Meeting

#### **ii. January FIC Meeting**

Members of the FIC agreed a request from the FIC Chairman to move the January FIC meeting from 21 January to 20 January 2025.

#### **iii. Board Meeting – December 2025**

The Board noted and approved the request to move the December 2025 Board meeting from 8 December to 15 December. It was noted that any financial matters requiring Board approval by early December would need to be brought to an earlier Board meeting, or a suitable process put in place.

#### **iv. Environmental and Sustainability Committee**

The Board noted and approved:

- a. The appointment of Oliver Bennett as Chairman of the Committee.
- b. The Terms of Reference of the Committee in the form attached to these minutes.

## **12.24.6 Chief Executive's Report**

**Keepers** - The team of horses is now up to full strength, with the arrival of ex-Military working horse, Galway, from Melton Mowbray on Wednesday 20th November. This is the first mare that has been on the team for at least 30 years. She has just turned 16 and is an Irish Draught cross. She is currently on light duties to get her fit for longer patrols.

**Dog incidents** – Keepers were regularly speaking to a dog-walker who was walking an XL Bully dog unmuzzled. He had been spoken to by the police but the dog had still been seen occasionally un-muzzled.

Staff dealt with a member of the public walking a Boxer at the Playing Fields who attacked the line marking robot. The dog was on a retractable lead at the time. A visit was arranged by the Wandsworth Dog Warden and in their view, the owners were responsible dog owners, however, they were advised to keep the dog away from playing fields staff and equipment in the future.

**Rough Sleepers** – an elderly gentleman sleeping rough in Cannizaro Park, but spending his days on Rushmere, had been helped by the Merton Homeless team and was now in accommodation.

The lady with the bags that was spending days near the Village War Memorial had been sectioned and taken to hospital but was back on the Common the next day. The Merton Homeless team continued to monitor her.

**Drone Incident** - A visitor was stopped on two occasions flying a drone, concerningly on the first occasion he was flying the drone over groups of children and women. He became very abusive when stopped. On the second occasion he was followed off the Commons at the Playing Fields where he was picked up in a car by an older relative, who then drove the vehicle threateningly at staff. The police attended and have dealt with the matter, “suggesting” to both men that they were banned from visiting the Commons.

**Maintenance** - Extensive site maintenance work had been completed, including mowing, strimming, vegetation trimming, and access improvement works around Roehampton Lane, Putney Heath, and Ross Court. Wheelchair access on the nature trail was maintained, with bridge repairs and path widening. Renovation of paths and roads included pothole repairs, installing memorial benches, wooden bollards, and no-parking signs. Contractors regraded the sandy ring horse school. Drainage and ditch maintenance, including repositioning runoff systems, were also undertaken.

Restoration projects at Queensmere pond and heathland areas involved tree felling, holly clearance, and exposing mature oaks. Acid grasslands were restored through vegetation clearance, with efforts to improve safety and habitat diversity. Tree safety inspections continued, addressing storm damage and removing invasive species like Ailanthus. Japanese knotweed treatment is planned, and heather regeneration initiatives are underway.

Bench surveys have identified new locations and assessed conditions. Sustainability audits, waste management, and equipment servicing progressed. Staff received training on stump grinding and conflict resolution. Community projects were supported with resources for Cannizaro Park and Ashburton Community Gardens. War memorials were cleaned and maintained ahead of Remembrance Day.

The Commons had survived two named storms well, with only one major tree coming down.

**Playing Fields** - The team at the Playing Fields have been busy with their usual tasks ensuring the pitches are playable for the schools and the weekend football and rugby, including mowing and marking out. Thomas Schools have been playing football over 12 pitches and also held their annual cross-country event over 5 days. They have also hosted a Run Through ½ Marathon and 10K run with approximately 800 runners.

The Head Groundsman had found a reconditioned Verti-drain machine and was able to agree a good fee for it and was also able to negotiate free delivery, a new set of tyres and a new PTO shaft included in the price. Whilst time-consuming to use, it was making a significant difference to the pitches.

The Head Groundsman has been contacting local football clubs to fill some availability in the weekend football schedule and has signed up an additional five weekend teams. Regular maintenance continues and, alongside litter picking, the team have dealt with a mystery leak in Thames Hare and Hounds reception room which was causing damage to the ceiling. A saturated area was removed to prevent the damage spreading. The situation is being

monitored. The under-pitch chambers have also required pumping on several occasions following the substantial rain that came with Storm Bert, 3000 litres each time.

## **Community Engagement and Events**

**Southside Boundary Management:** We are liaising with a local resident (who is concerned about the edge of the Commons opposite his property) to clarify the Commons' boundary along Southside and install log butts to prevent erosion and potential encroachment during Council resurfacing projects and by cars using the pay and display bays.

**Barnes Common AGM:** The Chief Executive attended the Barnes Common AGM on 21 November 2024, where the Conservation Manager presented on saprophytic species and tree age diversity. The CE aims to strengthen relationships with neighbouring landowners and managers.

**Putney Society Talk:** Staff attended a talk on biodiversity measurement and habitat restoration, highlighting the potential of eDNA testing for species monitoring. This technique, which had been used in the Queensmere Project, could benefit aquatic habitats on the Commons.

**Carols at the Windmill:** The annual Carols at the Windmill event is scheduled for 14 December, featuring the Wandle Concert Band. The event was organised in conjunction with the Windmill Trustees who provide the volunteers to sell refreshments. The Friends and other volunteers would be helping with fundraising and welcoming visitors.

### **12.24.7 Conservation Update**

The Board received and noted the Conservation and Engagement Officer's Report which provided a summary of Conservation activity during October and November 2024.

Heathland Management – the main work had been focused on scrub-bashing with the majority of work being carried out on Inner Park Ride and Jubilee Path on the Heath. Work had been carried out to connect the areas of heathland Centre Path and Plain and Green Ride. Similar work was being carried out near Tibbet's Meadow and Kingsmere. Additionally, Birch has been removed near Kingsmere, although a large area is left to provide a screen from the A3.

### **Wimbledon Common Golf Course**

Over the past two months, there have been two projects carried out by volunteers and the WPCC Maintenance Team around the edge of the Wimbledon Common Golf Course. This work has included the creation of two small areas of bare ground and tree clearance between LSGC first fairway and Camp Road:

**Bare ground creation:** Two small areas of bare ground have been created along the edge of the Wimbledon Common Golf Course to help with the restoration of heather and other heathland/acid grassland species. Both areas were chosen as small remnants of heather were located on each site but without protection, these would soon be lost. Following the creation of both areas of bare ground, mature heather was cut and collected on The Plain and spread across each site. As soon as time allows, both sites will be protected with temporary fencing.

Tree work between Hope Grant Fairway and Camp Road: This work was carried out as part of a larger project to improve sightlines and increase public safety along one section of Camp Road. In terms of the security and tree safety aspect of this task, mainly holly has been cut back but several false acacia trees have also been removed.

To help facilitate this ongoing project, the Commons' mid-week volunteer group spent one session cutting back young birch and holly, demonstrating that a small programme of work could greatly assist in the protection of acid grassland along this area of the Commons.

### **Woodland Management**

Hazel coppicing was carried out by the Commons' mid-week volunteers along the edge of Robin Hood Ride during November 2024. Managed on a rotation cycle, hazel on this site will likely be re-coppiced every 5-8 years. During this period, the changing height and density of the coppiced hazel will provide food sources for butterflies and other insects. All cut material from this activity have been incorporated into a dead hedge which is located approximately 10 metres away from the edge of the ride. Dead hedges are created using small dead branches and coppiced shoots in many areas of the Commons where they provide food and shelter for a wide range of species.

Holly thinning - The latest phase of holly thinning on the Commons has been carried out close to the edge of Queensmere and in woodland adjacent to Jerrys Hill. The Chairman mentioned he'd been aware of a member of the public visiting the office and complaining about the holly burning. PH explained that this was the most environmentally sound of all the available options and all the necessary paperwork and approvals were in place. However, the matter would be kept under constant review with the possibility of the brush being used for bioenergy purposes.

Queensmere Restoration – Tree work - Phase 1 of the Queensmere restoration project, which has involved tree work around the edge of the pond was started in November 2024. Most of the water has now been drained from the pond. Work would stop over the holidays, recommencing on 6 January 2025.

**Water Vole Recovery** – The C&EO attended the London Water Vole Recovery Programme (LWVRP) Practitioners Meeting held on 30 October 2024. Their main aim is to eradicate mink so a programme of Water Vole reintroduction could be established. They are currently looking for sites for reintroduction and, following a visit by Sam Facey of ZSL, Wimbledon Common has been shortlisted. There would need to be some habitat management work, and that might be a fundraising opportunity and/or work being carried out by volunteers, but the project was at an early stage and discussions were ongoing. Sadly Putney Lower Common was not considered to be able to support a viable population at the moment. It was suggested that Mr Facey could be a potential speaker at the 2025 Winter Talk. This was agreed.

### **12.24.8 Fundraising Update**

The Board received and noted the Fundraising Manager's Report. The following points were highlighted:

The Queensmere Restoration Appeal had been launched with dedicated benches being offered at the Pond. There were six benches available and two had already been reserved.

The Big Give Christmas Challenge in aid of Queensmere was launched on 3 December with an online target of £3,600 which would be matched by generous pledges from WPCC benefactors and Big Give Champion, The Reed Foundation, giving a total target of £7,200. The donations were matched within one day and the target had been exceeded with the current total standing at £8,225. With gift aid, the total increased to just under £9,250. There had also been some generous offline donations giving a running total of £11,500.

Benches in general had been popular with seven new ones installed over the past two months, notably on Rushmere Green and Green Ride. One of these was a 'happy to chat' bench located by Rushmere Pond, with the aim of encouraging conversation and combat loneliness. This bench was dedicated to the late Mary Purcell Cosgrave and has a special plaque inviting people to sit if they are happy for others to stop and say hello. In response to a question, the FM confirmed the benches were only placed on non-sensitive areas where there was already significant footfall.

There was an ongoing survey into existing benches, in particular those that needed to be replaced with efforts being made into contacting the original donator. Where this was not possible, the bench would be replaced but the plaque kept, with a display wall being created in a suitable location.

The Friends of WPCC staged an 'Art of Illusion' fundraising event on 19 October, in aid of Queensmere Pond, which raised more than £2,200.

#### **12.24.9 Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Report**

SB provided a verbal update as follows:

Membership remained constant with new members joining regularly. With membership fees and fundraising, income from the Friends' in the last quarter was around £13,000.

The 'Art of Illusion' fundraising event was a great success and SB thanked all those who volunteered to help on the evening.

The Friends' had held recently held a walk on The Beatles connections in the area.

Friends would be concentrating on community engagement type events in 2025 and would be meeting in the new year to discuss. It was hoped that the funds would be able to be used for the signage project.

The Walk and Talk on the following Saturday would be visiting Queensmere to talk about the rewilding work. It was noted that holly would be available for those on the Walk and Talk and be available outside the Maintenance Centre on Camp Road.

The Chairman suggested holding a Friends' event on Putney Lower Common/in Putney. SB commented that the Committee would give some thought to this.

DB commented that the Committee would also be looking at Friends' communications in 2025.

#### **12.24.10 WPCC Forum/Group Meetings**

The Board received and noted the draft minutes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting held on 6 November 2024.

**12.24.11 Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting**

There were no questions

The meeting finished at 5.25pm.



<b>(Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Meeting	3 February 2025	02.25.4
<b>Subject:</b> Matters Arising from the Public Board meeting of 9 December 2024		<b>Private</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Deputy Chief Executive		<b>For Information</b>
<b>Matters Arising</b>		
Matters arising from the meeting held on 9 December 2024 that are not covered on the Agenda.		

### **LMP Workshop**

**Land Management Plan Workshop** – It was noted that this Workshop would be held in early 2025. OB commented that he and the C&EO would be discussing the priorities and the outcome of that discussion would form the basis of the Workshop. The CE advised that the aim of the Workshop was to ensure the Board understood the priorities, rather than this being a further review of the LMP and how it was implemented.

**ACTION: DCE – Ongoing**

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators	3 February 2025	02.25.5
<b>Subject:</b> Committee Matters	<b>Public</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Chairman of Wimbledon and Putney Commons	<b>For Decision</b>	
<h1>Summary</h1>		
The report contains updates on the WPCC Committees.		
<b>Resolution</b>		
That the Board approve the Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee.		

### Committee Terms of Reference

Somewhat belatedly, the Audit and Risk Committee have approved their Terms of Reference which are now recommended to the Board for approval. There are no amendments from the previous ToR approved by the Board.



# WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS

## Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee

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### 1. Overall responsibility

**On behalf of the Board of Conservators, it is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) independently to:**

- monitor the integrity of the annual financial statements of WPCC, reviewing significant financial reporting issues and judgements contained in them;
- ensure effective policies and procedures and compliance systems for managing risk are in place and to review their effectiveness;
- make recommendations to the Board of Conservators in all matters in relation to the external auditor;
- ensure effective procedures and safeguards are in place to monitor the prevention of fraud and corruption;
- prepare and publish an annual report of the work of the ARC; and
- report back to the Board of Conservators on all matters where decisions are required unless, exceptionally, authority has been delegated to the ARC by the Board of Conservators in respect of a particular matter.

### 2. Composition, attendees and quorum

- The ARC will consist of not fewer than three Conservators appointed by the Board of Conservators.
- Neither the Chairman of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) nor any member of the Finance and Investment Committee may be a member of the ARC although they may attend as observers.
- External, independent co-opted members with relevant skills, expertise and experience may be appointed by the Board of Conservators, as long as the number of Conservators on the ARC is greater than the number of external independent observers invited to attend regularly<sup>1</sup>. External independent co-opted members are not members of the ARC and have no voting rights.
- At least one member of the ARC should have significant, recent and relevant financial experience, expertise or qualification.
- The Chairman of the ARC will be appointed by the Board of Conservators on an annual basis as recommended annually by the May meeting of ARC.
- In the absence of the Chairman the remaining Conservators present shall elect one of their number to chair the meeting.
- The Chief Executive, Chief Operations Manager and such other members of staff as the ARC Committee may require, shall normally attend meetings.
- Recommendations to the Board of Conservators or decisions, where appropriate, will be made on the basis of a majority of the votes of the ARC members present and in the case of an equal division of votes the Chairman shall have a second/casting vote.
- A quorum shall consist of two members of the ARC each of whom is a Conservator.
- The Chairman of the Board may nominate alternative Board delegates if one or two of the members of ARC cannot attend a meeting.
- The members of the ARC may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members to withdraw from the discussion of particular matters to facilitate open and frank discussion.
- Appointments to the ARC will be for a period of up to three years extendable by no more than two additional three-year periods.

<sup>1</sup> As WPCC's governing documents are silent about non-Conservators serving on Sub-Committees, the usual assumption is that they are therefore not permitted. One way of bringing on relevant skills and expertise is to have carefully selected co-opted members present regularly who can add to the quality of decision-making and who can alert Conservators to opportunities, risks etc.

- There will be at least three ARC meetings each year usually held three weeks before a scheduled Board of Conservators meeting. The May meeting will need to consider the draft audited accounts and the Management Letter provided by the independent auditors.

### 3. Authority

The ARC is authorised by the Board of Conservators to:

- approve actions, where this is specifically delegated as set out in the WPCC Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegations, as approved by the Board of Conservators;
- appoint ad-hoc task groups comprising members of the Audit and Risk Committee (and others whom the Board of Conservators considers appropriate) to assist it in carrying out the task and to report back to the Audit and Risk Committee for referral and decision to the Board of Conservators;
- investigate any activity within its terms of reference; and
- seek any information it requires and to ensure the attendance of management representatives at meetings as appropriate.

The ARC shall inform and discuss with the Board prior to action:

- any proposed public statements to be made in respect of matters appertaining to the ARC;
- any expenditure it wishes to incur on behalf of the ARC, subject to confirmation from the Board that funds are available; and
- any outside legal or other independent professional advice and on securing the attendance of outsiders with relevant experience and expertise that it considers necessary.

The ARC shall comply with any decisions concerning authorisation and/or payments to external auditors that the Board of Conservators may make from time to time.

### 4. Main duties

All these duties are to be undertaken within the framework of WPCC's objectives.

#### Financial

The main financial duties of the ARC are:

- to review and challenge where necessary the accuracy of information provided in the WPCC's Annual Report and the annual accounts;
- to review, and challenge where necessary, the actions and judgements of management, in relation to the annual financial statements before submission to the Board of Conservators, paying particular attention to:
  - critical accounting policies and practices, and any changes in them;
  - decisions requiring a major element of judgement;
  - the extent to which the financial statements are affected by any unusual transactions in the year and how they are disclosed;
  - the clarity of disclosures;
  - significant adjustments resulting from the audit;
  - unadjusted mis-statements in the financial statements;
  - significant adjustments resulting from the audit;
  - the going concern assumption;
  - compliance with accounting standards;
  - reviewing WPCC's statement on internal control systems prior to endorsement by the WPCC Board; and
- to review relevant sections of the WPCC's Annual Report before its publication and consider whether the information is adequate, consistent and easy to understand.

#### Internal control, risk management and compliance

The main internal control, risk management and compliance duties of the ARC are to:

- keep under review the effectiveness of internal controls and risk management systems, including compliance with the legal and regulatory environment within which WPCC operates;

- review WPCC's risk register and heat map at each meeting so as to ensure that the major risks to which the charity is subject are appropriately recorded and that actions to mitigate such risks are in place;
- review the adequacy of governance arrangements;
- monitor and advise the Board of Conservators on the risks attached to WPCC's pension schemes particularly defined benefit schemes; and
- review and approve the statements to be included in WPCC's annual report concerning risk and risk management, including a statement regarding risks attached to WPCC's defined benefit pension liabilities and how these pension liabilities are being handled by the Board of Conservators.

### External audit

The main external audit duties of the ARC are to:

- determine the frequency of tendering for external auditing services;
- oversee the process for selecting the external auditor;
- recommend the audit fee to the board;
- discuss with the external auditor, before the audit commences, the nature and scope of the audit and to review the auditor's quality control procedures and steps taken by the auditor to respond to changes in regulatory and other requirements;
- meet the external auditor at least once a year in the absence of management to discuss their remit and any issues arising from the audit and the management's response to the auditor's findings and recommendations;
- review the external auditor's management letter (audit findings report) and senior management's draft response and to formulate for the approval of the Board of Conservators any written representations that may be needed by the auditors in connection with WPCC's statutory accounts or any other financial statements;
- review the performance of WPCC's auditors and advise the Board of Conservators on any changes that ought to be made to their terms of engagement;
- monitor and review the external auditor's independence, objectivity and effectiveness, taking into consideration relevant UK professional and regulatory requirements; and
- develop and implement policy on the engagement of the external auditor to supply non-audit services, taking into account relevant ethical guidance regarding the provision of non-audit services by the external audit firm.

### Whistle-blowing

The main duties of the ARC with regards to whistle-blowing are to:

- review the arrangements for employees and others to raise concerns in confidence, ensure that the arrangements are documented in a clear policy and allow proportionate and independent investigation of possible wrongdoing and appropriate follow-up action
- review WPCC's procedures for detecting fraud and corruption.

### Other

Other duties of the ARC are to:

- ensure that contingency and disaster recovery plans are in place and are regularly tested;
- where the monitoring and review activities of the ARC reveal cause for concern, or scope for improvement, to make recommendations to the Board of Conservators on action needed to address the issue or to make improvements; and
- ensure communication with other WPCC Committees as appropriate.

The ARC may, from time to time, be assigned additional duties as considered relevant by the Board of Conservators.

### General

General duties of the ARC are to:

- review annually the effectiveness of the ARC and to provide and publish an annual report that will include:
  - i. what the ARC has achieved in the last 12 months;
  - ii. what the ARC hopes to achieve in the next 12 months;

- iii. what the ARC plans to do differently in order to increase its effectiveness; and
- iv. what changes, if any, are needed to the ARC Terms of Reference to be approved by the Board of Conservators.

This report will be published as an annex to the Annual Report.

## **5. Reporting**

Reporting duties of the ARC are:

- to provide minutes of all meetings for review at meetings of the Board of Conservators drawing out:
  - i. key issues including risks of which Board of Conservators need to be aware;
  - ii. decisions that the Board of Conservators are being asked to make, with recommendations from the ARC; and
  - iii. any actions taken by the ARC under delegated authority.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Board Meeting	3 February 2024	02.25.6
<b>Subject: WPCC Special Levy 2020/21</b>		<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Chief Executive		<b>For Decision</b>
<b>NOT FOR PUBLICATION</b>		
<b>Summary</b>		
<p>This report sets out the proposed 2025/2026 WPCC Special Levy.</p> <p><b>Draft Resolution:</b></p> <p><b>That the Board RESOLVE:</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In line with the Board resolution of 14 December 2020 under which it was agreed that WPCC would raise the Levy to its maximum for a minimum five-year period, in accordance with the Statutory Instruments, the Levy be increased for the financial year 2025/2026 by RPI to £1,666,382.</p>		

## **WPCC Special Levy 2025/2026**

### **Recommended Levy Increase for the 2025/26 Financial Year**

The Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations 1990 (the ‘1990 Regulations’), as amended, establishes a formula that determines the maximum levy that WPCC may issue each financial year based on a fixed quantum set in 1990 at £500,000, increased each year by the Retail Prices Index (RPI). Under the legislation, each financial year, the Conservators have the power to issue a levy at the level deemed necessary to fulfil their statutory duties provided it does not exceed this maximum level.

At the Board meeting held on 14 December 2020, the Board resolved the following:

*Given the continued pressure on operational budgets, the policy of setting the levy at the maximum sum available, will continue for a further five-year period 2022/23 to 2026/27, to be reviewed if changes to the levy base are secured.*

The Financial and Investment Committee therefore recommends that the Board agree to continue to follow this Resolution and sets the levy at the maximum sum of £1,622,642. This is based on the RPI figure for the year to September 2024 of 2.6956% and increases the maximum levy from £1,622,642 in 2024/25 to £1,666,382 in 2025/26, potentially generating an additional £43,739 to support the work of the charity.

This increase will set the Levy at £40.10 for a Band D property, an increase of £0.95 over the 2024/25 figure of £39.15.

The Board are asked to resolve to approve the Finance and Investment Committee’s recommendation.

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	3 February 2025	02.25.7
<b>Subject:</b> Chief Executive's Public Report		<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons		<b>For Decision and Information</b>
<h1>SUMMARY</h1>		
<b>Draft Recommendation:</b>		
That the Board receives and notes the report.		

## Keepers' Update

There was a spate of vandalism on the Common, including eggs thrown at the Tea Rooms' windows and rubbish scattered around the area, including dog faeces. Both the Tea Rooms and the Senior Keeper filed police reports, but no clear CCTV footage was available. Additionally, the golf course also suffered damage – unrelated to the usual bike damage – both the Wimbledon Common Golf Club and the Senior Keeper submitted a police report, but again, no clear leads emerged. It is possible that these incidents were linked and related to an issue that the Keepers had been dealing with but that is anecdotal at best with no firm evidence.

A police chase on the Common resulted in the recovery of two cars: one near Warren Farm and the other, a Porsche, retrieved from Queensmere with the help of the maintenance team.

The lady who spends her days on the Common near Rushmere and bags up rubbish from the bins remained on the Common, despite efforts to address the situation. However, we understand that she has now been sectioned and is hopefully receiving the help that she needs. Following a request from Wimbledon Village Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), the area was cleared of her bags of rubbish.

We recently hosted a school visit from Wimbledon High, with 50 students participating. This visit was linked to their donation of a defibrillator to the maintenance department, which was greatly appreciated.

Staff updates include Carl Lacey successfully completing his probation period and now residing at Telegraph Cottage. Kris Newell has completed his three-month appraisal and has adapted well to his role. Additionally, the backlog of accumulated staff leave caused by last year's shortages has been largely cleared.

Our new horse, Galway, has settled into her role seamlessly. Originally purchased by the army for the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery, she was found unsuitable for that role and later for riding school duties. Following a period of rest, she was acquired by WPC and has adapted well to her new environment and responsibilities. Meanwhile, Scrumpy, our long-serving grey



horse, is showing signs of age, including stiffness and lameness. A routine vet visit will assess his fitness for work.

**Car Park Survey** - On 15 January, the Keepers carried out a survey of the Windmill Car Park, stopping visitors as they arrived to ask several questions including the reason for their visit, proposed length of stay, how often they used the car park and did they experience problems in finding a parking space, other Commons car parks used, if they knew who managed the Commons and if they paid the Commons' Levy. The data collected will now need to be analysed and it was hoped a volunteer could be found to help with that.

## **Maintenance Update**

This period has been dominated by woodland and heathland management, as well as tree safety measures compounded by seasonal stormy weather. Key highlights include the completion of contractor-led holly thinning and tree management around Queensmere Pond. Maintenance teams carried out tree felling and coppicing to increase light, airflow, and reduce leaf litter, creating a more open woodland edge dominated by mature English oak. Crown reductions and extended limb removals were also undertaken, and felled timber was repurposed for leaky dams, habitat stacks, or other conservation projects, ensuring minimal waste.

Heathland restoration works along the Inner Park and Jubilee Path involved felling larger silver birch and turkey oaks, uncovering mature English oak and transitioning the area into a woodland pasture. Turkey oak trunks were prepared for roadside projects, with remaining timber used for nature stacks and woodchip distributed to Cannizaro Park for pathways and hedgerow mulching. Storm response has been significant, with named storms necessitating reactive and preventative tree safety work across the commons. The team addressed risks identified in safety inspections, handling tasks both in-house and with arboricultural contractors.

Notable projects included overdue hedge reduction at the Henry Chester Building, which promoted thicker growth and improved wildlife value while facilitating easier maintenance. The Robin Hood Ride restoration involved holly removal, selective felling of turkey oak and aspen, and careful coppicing of hazel, significantly improving light levels. Additional works included monolith management of large declining turkey oaks and Norway maples. Ongoing tasks involved processing sapling piles from heathland management and stump grinding at key locations using a newly acquired machine.

General site maintenance included litter picking, increased waste bin emptying due to holiday visitor volumes, and addressing fly-tipping incidents. Infrastructure repairs were undertaken, such as replacing rotten log butts, reinstating wooden posts, and resolving drainage issues at the Telegraph car park and Ravine slope. Work to drainage systems has been enhanced with underground services mapping via QGIS. The team also installed a new memorial bench along Green Ride and repaired entry gates damaged by high winds.

Additional efforts focused on maintaining horse rides, with contractors addressing drainage, reboarding, and sanding the Sandy Ring using funds raised independently. Staff underwent stump grinding training, and vehicle servicing and equipment repairs were completed. Routine inspections of ladders, platforms, and the MEWP were conducted. New digger attachments funded through the World Ranger Day appeal were delivered and deployed.

The maintenance team supported the Windmill's upkeep, including pest control, gravel replenishment, and museum refurbishment. Event preparations for the Christmas carol service and large running events were also completed. Finally, the team assisted local authorities with stolen vehicle recovery and provided additional coverage for REMPF weekend sports due to staffing shortages.

## **Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields Update**

Over the past weeks, various routine and operational tasks have been completed at REMPF. Grounds maintenance included litter picking, emptying rubbish bins, and verti-draining when conditions permitted. The pitches and surrounding areas, including the memorial ring, dog field, splash field, and archery fields, were mowed, while slitting and rolling of pitches using the Rota Knife occurred as weather allowed. All pitches were over-marked, with additional blue markings completed for Thomas's mini rugby pitches. Approximately 3,500 liters of water were pumped from the two water chambers as part of ongoing water management efforts. Contractors, including plumbers, electricians, and representatives from Notts Sport, were coordinated on-site to carry out necessary repairs and maintenance tasks. Meetings were held with Willington School to discuss their potential use of REMPF as their sports facility and with Matt Nichol from Thomas's School to plan future usage and ensure alignment with their requirements. Preparations for the upcoming Rosslyn Park 7s tournament continued, with several meetings held with Andy Higgins to address logistics and planning.

Several events and tasks occurred during this period. TH&H hosted their Annual Varsity Race and their monthly run on the second Sunday. Numerous weekend football and rugby matches were played, alongside Thomas's School rugby training and matches during weekdays and Saturday mornings. Additionally, Transport for London utilized the REMPF car park for buses from Christmas Eve through Boxing Day. Storm Darragh caused match cancellations on December 7th and 8th due to adverse weather conditions, while frost resulted in the loss of fixtures during the first two weekends of January.

Facility maintenance remained a priority. WCS conducted routine servicing, including Clo2 servicing, temperature testing, descaling, and cleaning of all shower heads. Repairs were made to the water circulation pump on the Cornish side of the pavilion, with a replacement pump and non-return valve installed by Rowlen's. Ian Goddard, the electrician, replaced several lighting tubes and an emergency light unit, as our stock of spare tubes had been depleted. Thames Water addressed a leak on Kingston Hill, removing contaminated water from the extension fields. In the TH&H reception room, an ongoing issue with a ceiling leak was monitored. Since cutting an access hole, no further leakage has been observed, and a proposal to install an inspection hatch has been suggested to improve the appearance while retaining accessibility for future inspections.

Overall, this period saw a mix of routine operations, weather-related disruptions, and significant progress in engaging with schools and preparing for major events. Further updates will be provided as necessary.

## **Carols at the Windmill**

The Carols at the Windmill event was a great success and thanks are extended to all the Conservators and Friends who volunteered on the evening.

## **Winter Talk**

The Annual Winter Talk is taking place on 19 February 2025 at the London Scottish Golf Club, starting at 7.30pm. The talk will be given by Sam Facey, Estuaries and Wetlands Project Officer at ZSL (Zoological Society of London) and will focus on the London Water Vole Recovery Programme which is working towards restoring resilient populations of water vole back to the rivers of London, and possibly including the Commons. At the time of writing, The event had almost sold out.

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	3 February 2025	02.25.8
<b>Subject:</b> Conservation Update		<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Conservation and Engagement Officer		<b>For Information</b>
<h2>Summary</h2> <p>The Board are asked to note this report which provides a summary of Conservation activity during December 2024 and January 2025..</p>		

### Heathland Management

Over the past two months, heathland management on the Commons has included the following activities.

- The largest area of heathland work that has recently been carried out on the Commons has been located between Jubilee Ride and Inner Park Ride. This area covers approximately 1.5 hectares of ground and has involved the clearance of scrub and larger trees which have mainly included silver birch and Turkey oak. All large pieces of timber that have been collected from this project will either remain on site as habitat piles or used for other purposes on the Commons. Apart from stump grinding, which will be carried out in due course, this area of work has now been completed.



*Jubilee Path/ Inner Park Ride heathland site photographed during August 2024*





*Jubilee Path/ Inner Park Ride heathland site photographed on 14 January 2025*

- Additional heathland work has included a continuation of the birch thinning near Kingsmere and scrub bashing by 3 groups of the Commons' Sunday morning volunteers.



*(Above) Sunday morning scrub bashing site photographed on 12 January 2025*



## Woodland Management

During the past two months, woodland management on the Commons has focused on hazel coppicing and ride management along the edge of Robin Hood Ride and hazel coppicing along the edge of Warren Farm Ride.

### Hazel coppicing:

As noted in the last Conservators conservation report, coppicing involves cutting a tree to its base where new shoots will be produced during the following growing seasons. Originally used to produce a regular source of wood for a wide range of products, today, hazel is coppiced on the Commons to help improve the biodiversity and health of the woodland. Both areas of hazel coppicing have been carried out by volunteers from the Commons' mid-week volunteer group. It is anticipated that this activity will continue throughout February 2025.



*Hazel coppicing along the edge of Robin Hood Ride*



## **Ride Management:**

During January and early February 2025, ride management has been carried out along the edge of Robin Hod Ride by the Commons' Maintenance Team. This work has involved the removal of several semi mature trees which have overwhelmingly included aspen and holly.

The aim of this work is to significantly reduce the heavy shading along this area of the Commons which will be of benefit to both woodland flora and fauna. Where large native trees have been found along this ride, these have been largely untouched unless tree safety work has been required. All deadwood from this work will remain on site.



*Photographed as part of the ride management work that was carried out along the edge of Warren Farm Ride during 2024, the photograph above provides an example of one way that deadwood is retained on site.*

## **Wimbledon Common Golf Course**

During the past two months, the main task that has been carried out by WPCC teams around the edge of the Wimbledon Common Golf Course has involved tree thinning in the area adjacent to the WCGC 10<sup>th</sup>/LSGC 3<sup>rd</sup> Hole which is known as Long Butt. As noted in the Commons' Land Management Plan, many of the fairways that are located on the Wimbledon Common Golf Course are bounded on either side by a dense woodland edge. In line with the Commons' overall woodland management objectives to help develop a woodland edge that will increase the species diversity and the habitat structure of the Commons secondary woodland, where appropriate, semi-mature trees



that are located along the edge of the course will be thinned/coppiced and managed on a rotational basis.

With our recent programme of work along the edge of Long Butt largely completed, silver birch and poor-quality oak were cut back and incorporated into a large dead hedge. As part of this work young trees were also cut back to reveal an impressive beech tree that had, over time, become largely obscured by competing tree growth. Mature, woody gorse that had steadily encroached upon the fairway was also cut back to improve the safety of visitors using this area of the Commons.



*Long Butt photographed during August 2024*



*Long butt photographed on 24.01.25. Additional mowing of bramble on site will be carried out during February 2025.*





*Gorse, bramble and scrub have been cut back to reveal this Memorial bench that was positioned on site in 1993. Over the past 30 years, the woodland edge had extended by approximately 10-15 metres.*



Part of the recent work along the edge of Long Butt had been to thin out trees that could threaten the long-term survival of this large Beech tree. Known as halo thinning, this practice is used to remove young, competing trees from around veteran and



ancient trees. This work is of great benefit for the tree and the wildlife that lives in the many niches that are provided by trees such as the one photographed above.

### **Queensmere Restoration**

Following the Christmas break, the contractors from Aquamaintain returned to the Commons during the second week of January. Since this point, the team have continued to drain the pond of water, and the excavation of silt has formed a major part of their work. At the point of writing this report, work has been carried out to create the reed bed and wooden revetments have been constructed along both sides of the pond. The Rangers Office has provided regular on-site updates to keep the public informed about the progress of the work.





*(Above) Queensmere x2 photographs taken on 17 January 2025*

### **Volunteers & Public Engagement** (9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 to 10 February 2025)

#### Volunteers:

- Sunday morning scrub bashers – 4 sessions
- Mid-week volunteers – 4 sessions (hazel coppicing)
- Beverley Brook volunteer litter pickers – 3 sessions
- DofE volunteers (multiple visits, mainly litter picking)
- Individual litter pickers

#### Public Engagement and external meetings:

- Health walks (every three weeks)
- Beverley Brook Partnership Meeting
- Site visit by staff from the South East Rivers Trust and the London Wetland Centre to view potential wetland projects on the Commons.



<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Board of Conservators	3 February 2025	02.25.9
<b>Subject:</b> Fundraising Update	<b>Public</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Fundraising Manager	<b>For Information</b>	
<b>Summary</b>		
Fundraising activity from October to January 2025		

### 1. General Fundraising:

General donations continue to be received from online donations, car park donations, and events such as the Carols at the Windmill and Friends memberships.

### 2. Queensmere Restoration Appeal

Commemorative benches at Queensmere are currently being offered and discussions are underway with several people who have expressed an interest. In addition, a sponsorship pack is being produced offering opportunities to sponsor the viewing platform, with both corporate and individual options.

The Big Give Christmas Challenge, in aid of the restoration appeal, was held in December, raising a **final sum of £11,798.67**.

### 3. Benches

New commemorative benches are being installed across the Commons, notably in Green Ride, Putney Lower Commons and Rushmere.



#### 4. Friends

**RunThrough Christmas Run 2024.** The Friends supplied volunteers to run the 'bag drop' In addition, WPCC was gifted 20 free places by RT. 8 runners took these up, donating their entry fee directly to the charity.

We have been offered 20 places for each RT event taking place on the Commons (5/6) in 2025 and we are liaising with the local running clubs and other groups to sign up WPCC runners for every event.



#### Christmas Carols at the Windmill

A number of Friends of WPCC volunteers led by Conservator, Sue Bucknall, handed out song sheets and collected cash and card donations at the Windmill during the event.



<b>Committee(s):</b> Board of Conservators	<b>Date(s):</b> 3 February 2025	<b>Item no.</b> 02.25.11
<b>Subject:</b> <b>Environment, Sustainability and Monitoring Update</b>		<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Deputy Chief Executive		<b>For Decision</b>
<h1>SUMMARY</h1>		
The Board are asked to note the update on Environment, Sustainability and Monitoring matters.		

## Background

With the introduction of the new Environment and Sustainability Committee (ESC) and the staff-led Environment and Sustainability Forum (ESF), the Wildlife and Conservation Forum (WCF) has undergone a structural change. This will also change the way in which some matters are reported to the public.

As the WCF minutes will now be received by the ESC, and so reported in the Confidential section of the Board meeting, it was considered that there was a need for a standing item on the public agenda to allow an update to be provided to the Board, and any members of the public attending the meeting, on overview on any matters ecological.

## Environment and Sustainability Committee

The Environment and Sustainability Committee (ESC) plays an important role in ensuring the charity stays on track with its environmental responsibilities and statutory duties. Chaired by the DEFRA-appointed Conservator, Oliver Bennett, the Committee's main responsibilities include:

- Reviewing WPCC's environmental and biodiversity obligations to ensure that staff and Trustees fully understand our duties and compliance requirements.
- Creating a framework to monitor how well WPCC is meeting these statutory duties.
- Monitoring progress on the work set out in the Land Management Plan.
- Ensuring there are effective policies, procedures and systems in place for environmental management and sustainability—and regularly reviewing their performance.
- Advising the Board of Conservators on all matters related to the environment, sustainability, and land management.
- Receiving updates and monitoring reports from the Wildlife and Conservation Forum and the Environment and Sustainability Forum.
- Tracking and reviewing environmental performance data.
- Preparing and publishing an annual report on environmental and sustainability activities.

The Committee has now met twice and is progressing the work to understand any conflicts between the Charity's governing document, the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871, and statutory duties under its designations – Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation. In addition, there are other Acts that may also affect the Commons

management, such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act which needs to be taken into account.

### **Environment and Sustainability Forum**

The Environment and Sustainability Forum is a staff-led initiative, chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, with the primary objective of developing and implementing strategies that promote environmental sustainability within the Charity's operational work. This includes identifying and addressing environmental challenges, recommending sustainable practices, and fostering a culture of responsible resource use.

The current focus of the Forum is to appoint a consultant to carry out a Carbon Audit which will provide a baseline that will set out carbon stocks and emissions of each element of the Commons habitats as well as the operational emissions of the team's activities. This baseline will inform the next steps that staff can take to improve the Charity's carbon footprint.

### **Wildlife and Conservation Forum**

The Wildlife and Conservation Forum has existed in different forms for many years. The Forum has previously been composed of Conservators and volunteers, the latter being local experts with relevant and specialist knowledge of the flora and fauna that can be found on the Commons.

Moving forward, the WCF will continue as an operational forum chaired by the executive, without Conservator membership or attendance, serving as an important meeting for staff and volunteers working on land management and species recording to exchange information and offer advice. This area of work is expected to grow as the charity becomes more data-driven and evidence-led. The revised Forum will be chaired by the Conservation and Engagement Officer.

### **Monitoring Update**

One of the Commons volunteers, Les Evans-Hill, produces a regular "Nature Notes" Newsletter which now has over 200 people on its circulation list. The information in the Newsletter is provided by those volunteers who record on the Commons on behalf of WPCC. The Newsletter will be promoted more rigorously during the coming months.

Recording is generally quiet over the winter months but some highlights over the last two months include:

- One male and one female shoveler duck resting on island at Bluegate Pond
- Another Shoveler seen at Kingsmere Pond.
- Two Common Snipe, west of Ladies Mile/S of Inner Park Ride seen by two different recorders
- Bank vole on the east side of Hookhamslade pond



<b>Committee(s):</b> <b>Board of Conservators</b>	<b>Date:</b> <b>3 February 2025</b>	<b>Item no.</b> <b>02.25.10i</b>
<b>Subject: Fungi collection policy</b>		<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of: Chief Executive</b>		<b>For Decision</b>
<p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>The Board is asked to revoke the current fungi collection policy and implement a ban on the collection of any fungi on the Commons.</p>		

**Introduction**

Based on a recommendation of the Chief Executive, the Environment and Sustainability Committee (ESC) agreed at their meeting in December 2024 that the charity’s fungi collection policy should be revoked by the Board at their meeting on 3 February 2025.

**Fungi collection policy**

The WPCC policy on fungi collection, currently [on the website](#), is that “250g per person” of fungi can be collected, and that “a permit must be obtained from the Ranger’s Office if you wish to pick fungi”. There are several concerns about the policy:

1. **Legal compliance:** the policy may not have been agreed with Natural England and therefore it may contravene the legislation that applies to the site. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 applies a general ban on the collection of fungi in the SSSI.
2. **Over-collection:** we do not know what volume of fungi collection is possible without causing damage to these species. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a significant volume of fungi is being taken off the site, and that many people are not obtaining a permit.
3. **Species extinction:** current levels of fungi collection may risk the local extinction of fungi and those species that rely on them.
4. **Education:** collection of fungi removes an opportunity for other visitors to enjoy viewing and learning about these species.

The Board is therefore asked to consider this matter and revoke the current fungi collection policy and to implement a ban on collection.

If the Board agrees to revoke the policy, the collection of fungi will be a contravention of the Commons byelaws and the website will need to be updated as follows:

*The collection of fungi is a contravention of the Commons byelaws. Most of the Commons are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and therefore we do not permit the collection of fungi. If you see anyone collecting fungi, please call the Ranger’s Office on 020 8788 7655.*