

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Manor Cottage
Wimbledon Common
London SW19 5NR



Chief Executive: Simon Lee

MEDIA RELEASE - Putney Hospital Site

18th June 2015

At the Annual Open meeting on 17th June, the Chairman of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators made the following statement regarding the former Putney Hospital site at Putney Lower Common:

The new Board of Conservators are very aware of the concerns of many local residents over the way the access rights were sold, and also suggestions that the amount received from Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC) was below what might have been reasonably obtained at the time.

To address these issues a special board meeting of the Conservators was held on 11th May. At that meeting the Board agreed to the appointment of a leading firm of charity lawyers, Bates Wells Braithwaite (BWB), to undertake a preliminary review of the sale of the access rights.

I am pleased to be able to report some progress.

As some of you will know, the sale of rights over “designated land” such as at Putney Common, is covered by clauses s117 – s121 of the Charities Act. Although the charity took advice from their lawyer and surveyor at the time in relation to the grant of the easement, whether that advice and the subsequent actions of the charity were compliant with the relevant obligations under the Charities Act is still under review, including whether a formal qualified surveyor’s report was obtained.

The Board has now agreed to commission a surveyor with the relevant experience in advising charities to advise on what they would have considered to be the best terms that could reasonably have been obtained by the charity in return for the grant of the easement, taking into account the facts at the time that the two easements were granted. This advice will cover both the residential element of the development and the school. Finally, the advice will be in the form of a qualified surveyor’s report as required by the Charities Act 2011.

The qualified surveyor’s report will make it possible for the board to consider whether the receipt of £350,000 in cash and any other benefits received reflected the best terms that could reasonably have been obtained by the Conservators for the grant of the easement at the time.

The history of the development of the Putney Hospital site and its purchase by Wandsworth Borough Council for a new school and flats, and the earlier proposals by the Wandsworth Primary Care Trust, stretches over many years and is not only lengthy but also complex.

The actions the Board has initiated are well under way but, inevitably, will take some time to complete.

We have put the Charity Commission and our insurers on notice of the investigations being carried out to determine whether the charity has suffered a loss by the grant of the easement in 2014.

The Chairman's full statement is available at www.wpcc.org.uk

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NOTES for Editors

Wimbledon and Putney Commons is a charity managed by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators. 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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