

**Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on
Wednesday 1 June 2022 at 4.30pm at the Wimbledon Common Golf
Club, Camp Road, London SW19 4UW**

Conservators: Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman (DNM)
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)
Mr David Hince (DH)
Mr Mike Rappolt (MR)
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)
Mr David Hince (DH)

Officers: Mr Steve Bound, Chief Executive (CE)
Maggie May, Fundraising Officer (FO)
Mr Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (CEO)
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and
Communications Officer (PA to CE)

Members of the public: Seven members of the public attended.

ITEM		ACTIONS
06.22.1	<p>Confirmation of Attendance and Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following:</p> <p>Mr Oliver Bennett, Conservator Mr Michael Johnston, Conservator Mr Peter Hirsch, Conservator Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger (DCR)</p>	
06.22.2	<p>Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests in Respect of Items to be Considered in this Part of the Meeting</p> <p>AEH and DH both declared that they had previously used commercial dog-walkers licenced to walk six dogs on the Commons.</p> <p>The Board agreed that there was no reason for them either not to participate in any discussions or for DH to participate in the decision.</p>	
06.22.3	<p>WPCC Board Meetings</p> <p>i. Resolutions of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 11 April 2022</p> <p>The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board meeting held on Monday 11 April 2022 were approved.</p> <p>ii. Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 11 April 2022</p> <p>The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board meeting held on Monday 11 April 2022 were approved.</p>	

<p>06.22.4</p>	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Oil Spill Beverley Brook – The Board noted that the Environment Agency had not indicated that they would be carrying out any further work in relation to the recent oil spill at Beverley Brook.</p>	
<p>06.22.5</p>	<p>Committees</p> <p>Confirmation of Chairman – Finance and Investment – The Board noted and approved the re-appointment of Mr Nigel Ware as Chairman of the Finance and Investment Committee.</p> <p>Terms of Reference – Audit and Risk – The Board received and approved the amended Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman clarified that in respect of the Chairmanship of the Friends Committee, this matter had not been formally considered at the meeting of 28 April 2022 but would be formally considered at their next meeting.</p> <p>Resolution</p> <p>The Board approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the appointment of the Chairman of the Finance and Investment Committee; ii. the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee. 	
<p>06.22.6</p>	<p>WPCC Forum/Group Meetings</p> <p>Wildlife and Conservation Forum 10 May 2022 – The Board received the notes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum meeting held on 10 May 2022.</p>	
<p>06.22.7</p>	<p>Authorised Dog Walking</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Chief Executive’s report.</p> <p>The Chairman began by giving a brief outline of the recent history of the issue. Concerns had originally been raised in the Stakeholder Forum in 2018/19 and in response to that, the Board had undertaken a public consultation. In February 2020, the Board considered the matter again (including the results of the public consultation) and although the policy that was in place was not endorsed, it was agreed that no further licence to walk up to six dogs would be issued and the scheme would therefore ultimately lapse. It was also agreed that further measures would be put in place to aid the identification of those with licences along with a voluntary donation scheme, subject to the agreement of the Stakeholder Forum. This was just prior to the start</p>	

of the pandemic (with the subsequent lockdowns) and as a result, the scheme was not implemented.

In 2021, with a new Board in place, concerns were again raised by both Conservators and the Keepers. The Chairman emphasised that the concerns were not prompted by any irresponsible actions by the licenced dog walkers or by any breach of the byelaws on their part but simply that the Board felt that the scheme was not right for the Commons.

Following deliberation at their meeting in December 2021, the Board agreed that the scheme would finish at the end of October 2022. All those with the authorisation were written to and there were some concerns raised by them. With hindsight, the Board agreed that they should have consulted with the authorised dog-walkers prior to coming to a decision. Recognising that, the Board revoked the resolution taken in December 2021 and held a meeting with the authorised dog-walkers on 11 May 2022.

The CE gave a summary of the concerns of the Board and the responses from the dog-walkers that were expressed at the meeting and also through written correspondence. The Board's main concerns included the following:

- The increasing numbers of dogs on the Commons and the affect on a SSSI;
- Disturbance to wildlife;
- Consistency of policy with adjacent landowners;
- Difficulties in identifying authorised dog walkers;
- Confusion to general users of the Commons regarding number of dogs permitted under byelaws
- The recommendations of professional bodies;
- Parity of treatment of users of the Commons.

The Chairman commented that it was necessary to find a balance. It was recognised that dog-walking on the Commons was an important activity and one of the most popular uses of the Commons and this was not an attempt to curb that in any way. Equally, commercial dog-walking did provide a valuable service and there was no wish to stop that altogether. Although there were certainly measures that could be put in place to mitigate some of the concerns, as a charity WPCC had a duty to follow guidance of professional bodies and associations and, in this case, their very clear advice was that no more than four dogs should be walked together.

SB commented that she had been impressed by the professionalism of the dog walkers and whatever was decided, their good work should be acknowledged and we should look at ways to assist them, balanced with the need to follow the guidance issued by professional bodies.

The Chairman opened the meeting up to questions from those present in the audience. The following points were raised:

- The guidance issued by the professional bodies was just guidance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some local authorities certainly allowed more than four dogs to be walked. • Dog-walkers cleared up a lot of rubbish and other dogs' faeces off the Commons. The Chairman reiterated the appreciation of the Board and this was not in question. • The licencing requirements for day care for dogs was very strict but still allowed up to one carer for 10 dogs. The Chairman commented that this was a different situation to having dogs in a fixed environment where there were not necessarily general public around. • The Dogs Trust and RSPCA guidance was likely based on dogs that are unknown and possibly rescued. Dog walkers always walked dogs that were generally known to them. The Chief Executive commented that the guidance did not specify this. • Why did insurance companies insure walkers for six or eight dogs if this was not recommended. • SB commented that the professional body guidance was based on the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and other Acts of Parliament and, as charity trustees, they were duty bound to ensure they abided by the law. She appreciated that this would inconvenience the dog-walkers and understood that they were responsible dog-walkers. • If the guidelines were to be followed in this instance, then the Conservators should also insist that all dogs on the Commons wear collars and identification, which is also required by law. This was supported. • It was confirmed that two of the authorised dog-walkers were walking their own dogs and were not commercial dog-walkers. • The change would require a change in business model for commercial dog-walkers. <p>The Board considered the points raised but agreed that the number of dogs being allowed to walk together should be reduced to four.</p> <p>RESOLUTION</p> <p>Having given full and proper consideration to the views of authorised dog walkers and in light of the clear guidance published by the Pet Industry Federation endorsed by the Dogs' Trust, RSPCA, Pet Industry Federation and Canine and Feline Sector Group regarding animal welfare, the Board RESOLVED that:</p> <p>(a) the number of dogs that any one person can walk on the Commons is limited to four in all cases;</p> <p>(b) existing licences that have recently been renewed are allowed to continue until they expire at the end of October 2022.</p> <p>All Conservators present voted in favour of the resolution.</p>	
<p>06.22.8</p>	<p>Annual Conservation Report</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Annual Conservation Report prepared by Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer.</p>	

He reported as follows:

- The Commons' Annual Conservation Report covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and it covered the main conservation activities that were carried out during this period on the main areas of the Commons.
- Topics covered included heathland, management of grassland, woodland, ponds, Beverley Brook, valley mires, Putney Lower Common, invasive non-native species, volunteers and London in Bloom.
- Much of the work that was carried out between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 was done so in the wake of COVID-19 which caused so much erosion and damage to many areas of the Commons' landscape.
- The Report was not only a record of the work carried out but also a celebration of all that has been achieved in a very short time to help repair and conserve the Commons' natural and semi-natural landscape.
- Through a combination of staff time, volunteer time (which amounted to approximately 5,489 hours) and suitable weather, we have been able to complete a great deal of very important work.
- On the heathland, successes have included the removal of large invasive trees on two main areas of ground (Tibbet's Corner and Green Ride), volunteer scrub bashing on five areas of heathland, heather cutting, the management of bracken and heather restoration on three areas of ground around the edge of the golf course.
- One of the most successful and largest of the tasks that have recently been undertaken is our current involvement in the woodland Countryside Stewardship agreement. The two most significant tasks that have been completed have included holly thinning in the woodland adjacent to the upper section of Robin Hood Ride and ride work along the upper section of Upper Gravelly Ride. Both of these tasks were carried out to improve the amount of light that is present in the woodland and to provide space for natural regeneration. The woodland edges were particularly important for biodiversity. This work had been very successful and there had already been significant signs of regeneration.
- In terms of the Commons' ponds, as highlighted in the 2020/2021 Annual Conservation Report, public notices alone have not managed to prevent dogs from entering the water off-lead. To provide added protection to wildlife and provide suitable conditions for emergent plants to thrive around the edges of the ponds, this year temporary fencing has been put up in two of the ponds: Hookhamslade and Scio pond.

	<p>DH asked about the erosion to the banks on Beverley Brook where dogs regularly entered the water. PH explained that one or two slopes and beaches had been created as part of the recent restoration work but it would be helpful to create more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another piece of work that has recently been started is the restoration of the Commons' valley mires. A large amount of research has been carried out by Oliver Bennett and alongside London Wildlife Trust volunteers a great deal of ground work has been carried out to help restore Farm bog and further work will be carried out, in time, at Stag bog and Ravine bog. • From 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, volunteers provided the Commons with nearly five and a half thousand hours, excluding those who regularly help by monitoring the Commons' wildlife. At the current time volunteers are involved with approximately eight different activities, all of which form important elements of help to look after the Commons. • Every task carried out by volunteers provides a meaningful activity that is needed to help look after the Commons. It should remain a top priority to ensure that volunteering always benefits the actual needs of the Commons and in this way a real sense of purpose can be maintained among all of our many volunteers. <p>The Chairman asked why there had been a re-designation of the SSSI area in 1986. PH stated that the designations had been reviewed in 1986 and requirements had become more specific, rather than a general requirement to protect the land when the SSSI was introduced in 1953.</p> <p>The Chairman commended the communication that was put out for some of the more dramatic pieces of work carried out which kept the number of complaints to just one or two. PH explained that the staff carrying out the work are also fully informed about what they are doing and why, and often talk to the public. It was noted how important a part that played in explaining to the public why the work was being carried out.</p> <p>MR commented that there was little mention in the report in relation to Putney Lower Common. PH commented that it was a very small area of the Commons and for 2020/21 most of the work there had been routine. In previous years, a lot more work had been carried out there and this was reflected in the relevant reports.</p> <p>The Conservators thanked PH for his comprehensive report.</p>	
<p>06.22.9</p>	<p>Land Management Plan</p> <p>The Board noted the draft first section of the Land Management Plan provided for information.</p>	

PH explained that several parts of this section were being written by volunteers and remained a work in progress.

The section covered the introduction to the plan, background and historic information about the Commons, biological information and information related to people, stakeholders, access and recreation.

This information has been gathered from a variety of sources including:

- Written and photographic archives for the Commons
- Surveys, plans and past reports for the Commons
- Various books that have been written on related subjects covered in the Commons' LMP
- Government and various charitable organisations' publications
- Approximately 25 different Land Management Plans from various UK National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Conversations with staff and volunteers

The purpose of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Land Management Plan (2022–2032) is to provide a pro-active management framework which highlights the special qualities of the Commons, the importance of its landscape and to identify those areas of the site which are vulnerable or require additional protection.

The target audience for the Land Management Plan is anyone who has an interest in the future management of the Commons. The aim was provide a document that covered all of the necessary aspects of the land management of this site but is also engaging and interesting to all readers whatever their background knowledge or level of understanding.

Each chapter should tell a story and therefore provide a holistic portrayal of the Commons which includes the historical, cultural and ecological view of the Commons.

Whilst there was a lot of information that we do know about the Commons, there was still a lot of information that is unavailable.

Much of the information that is available is quite old. For example, the last substantial bat survey that was carried out on the Commons was during 2013. Although this gives us an idea about which bats could be out there, it is difficult to know the actual situation. PH hoped that funds could be made available to carry out more survey work.

The Commons need to be looked at in the whole as opposed to individual elements. The Commons are a complex site with a mosaic of different habitats that all interlink with one another. Hopefully, when the Land Management Plan is completed, there will be a better idea of what the priorities are in terms of management resources.

MR hoped some clear objectives would come out of the Plan with measures in place to monitor progress against the objectives. PH commented that safeguarding would be covered under the education section.

	<p>SB suggested that once the first draft was complete, PH organise a site visit for the Conservators to help give them some context to the objectives of the Plan. This was agreed.</p> <p>DH asked about the timeframe for the Plan, particularly in relation to grant application work being carried out by MM. PH explained that he was keeping MM up to date with progress so she had the information she needed for grant applications.</p> <p>The Board thanked PH for his work so far.</p>	
<p>06.22.10</p>	<p>Chief Executive's Public Report</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Chief Executive's report.</p> <p>Roehampton Cricket Nets - In 2013, WPCC granted Roehampton Cricket Club a licence to install cricket nets on Putney Heath immediately to the north of the cricket pitch. However, the club were not in a position to fund the nets until this year. They identified funding available from the England and Wales Cricket Board, and WPCC successfully submitted an application for this funding on RCC's behalf (as the applicant had to be the landowner). The remaining money was raised by RCC. The nets were installed in late April/early May. They will be available for the public to use free of charge when not in use by RCC and a sign is to be installed to communicate this to the public. The sign would also include a contact number to book use of the nets with the club.</p> <p>The original licence agreed in 2013 required revisions/updates and therefore a new licence was produced by Bates Wells. This has been reviewed by FIC. RCC has agreed to cover the cost of drafting this licence.</p> <p>There had been a small number of comments from local residents concerned about noise and a lack of public consultation. The Chief Executive had responded and nothing further had been heard.</p> <p>Fundraising Strategy – As proposed at the Board meeting on 11 April 2022, the Fundraising Strategy was presented to the Friends Committee at their meeting on 28 April. The Committee agreed the Strategy without change and the Board approved and adopted the Fundraising Strategy.</p> <p>Fundraising Update – MM reported that in February 2022, a fundraising appeal had been launched to renovate the footbridge on Putney Lower Common which had been closed for some time due to safety concerns. Thanks to the generosity of the community and visitors to the Common, some £15,500 had been raised by April. The contractor had been appointed and work should start in the summer.</p> <p>Annual Newsletter – AEH reported that the annual "Commons News" newsletter has now been printed and was due to be distributed across the Levy-paying area from 6 June 2022, or possibly earlier as printing was completed ahead of schedule. Conservators were asked to let the</p>	

	<p>Ranger’s Office know if they do not receive their Newsletter through the letterbox by 15 June 2022. The Chairman thanked AEH for her work on the Newsletter.</p> <p>Commons Games Day – The Chief Executive reported that the Games Day, celebrating 150 years of sports on the Commons, on 22 May 2022 had been very successful and congratulated everyone who had been involved in the organisation. The Chairman expressed her appreciation and commented that the event had demonstrated the partnership element of the event, with the clubs and teams who used the Commons coming together to help celebrate the Anniversary.</p> <p>2 June 2022 – Jubilee Beacon Event – An event had been organised to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee on Thursday 2 June 2022. There would be two walks that would “process” from the Wimbledon Village War Memorial and the Roehampton War Memorial to the Windmill where there would be a candlelit celebration and the Windmill lit up to represent a Beacon.</p> <p>17-19 June – Weekend of Nature – The annual Weekend of Nature event would be taking place the weekend of 17th, 18th and 19th June 2022. Staff and volunteers will lead a series of walks covering both the management and the flora and fauna of the Commons.</p> <p>21 July 2022 – The Chief Executive reported that the Evening Reception at the House of Commons had now sold out.</p> <p>Hand in Hand The Chief Executive reported that the Hand in Hand were holding a fundraising event for the Commons on Saturday 4 June.</p> <p>Resolutions</p> <p>The Board RESOLVED to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) approve and adopt the Fundraising Strategy presented at the Board meeting on 11 April 2022; b) record its gratitude to all those involved in organising, running, supporting and participating in the 150th Anniversary Games Day. 	
<p>06.22.11</p>	<p>Update on the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons</p> <p>SB added her thanks on behalf of the Friends Committee to everyone who helped on the Games Day and for making it such a success.</p> <p>SB asked if Conservators could help at the Jubilee event scheduled for 2 June 2022. She would be joining the walk from Roehampton Memorial and would appreciate support for that walk in particular.</p> <p>The Art on the Commons competition continued to go well and thought was being given to a way to raise funds from the competition.</p>	

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	SB reported that she had been given eight tickets by the Holland Park Opera which were to be used specifically for volunteers who were over 65 as a way of thanking them for their help.	
06.22.12	Public Questions on Matters Considered in Part A(1) of this Meeting There were no further questions.	



Signed by the Chairman
Diane Neil Mills