

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC)
Manor Cottage
Wimbledon Common London SW19 5NR
Chief Executive: Simon Lee



MEDIA RELEASE

April 2019 Board Update

Inner Windmill Road

In 2017, the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators launched a fundraising appeal, Access for All, to raise funds for the critically needed restoration of the Inner Windmill Road, which was becoming increasingly difficult to negotiate, particularly for those with pushchairs or wheelchairs.

Conservators and staff were overwhelmed by the speed and generosity of the response to the appeal from local residents, visitors and organisations who collectively contributed the £55,000 needed within six months. The restoration works were carried out during April and May 2018 and feedback on the works has been extremely positive.

The second phase of the restoration works, the siting of new memorial benches along the road, is now nearing completion and to mark this achievement, the Conservators hosted a small ceremony to officially open the new shared-use access route in late March 2019, to which all donors were invited.

At the opening, we were delighted to have Mr Ian Hewitt, Chairman of the Wimbledon Foundation, cut the ribbon which was a particular honour given the significant contribution that was made to the works by The Wimbledon Foundation, the charity arm of The All England Lawn Tennis Club. Mr Hewitt was joined by the Chairman of the Conservators, Mrs Diane Neil Mills (see picture at the end of this Media Release), who expressed the enormous gratitude felt by the Conservators and the staff for the generous contributions that made the works possible.

Ministerial Appointment by the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871 ('the 1871 Act'), governance for the open spaces that constitute Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common ('the Commons') is provided by eight Conservators, five of whom are directly elected by the electorate from the levy-paying area and the remaining three appointed by the Secretaries of State from three government departments: Home Office, Ministry of Defence and Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Dr Ros Taylor, a retired lecturer in ecology and conservation, has served as the DEFRA-appointed conservator since April 2013 and has made an enormous contribution to the wildlife and conservation activities on the commons. On the 27th March 2019, Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, approved the re-appointment of Dr Ros Taylor for a further three year term commencing on the 25th April 2019 although it is understood that Dr Taylor, who now lives in Norfolk, intends to stand down on 25th April 2020, hopefully to pursue her commitment to environmental concerns more locally to her home.

The Chairman of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) stated:

“As the government department responsible for environmental protection, our connections with DEFRA remain as strong today as they did in 1871 when the governance structure for the management of Wimbledon and Putney Commons was created. Through her work, Dr Taylor has raised awareness of the importance of monitoring management activities and engaging with the wider commons’ community. Our annual BioBlitz weekend of nature held in June each year provides the local community with an opportunity to learn more about the Commons and its environmental importance. We are delighted that Dr Taylor has agreed to remain on the WPCC Board for another year, allowing a number of important initiatives to be further progressed under her leadership and we thank her for her commitment. Equally, we recognise her desire to pursue her interests more locally in Norfolk.”

Lord Gardiner of Kimble stated:

“I am delighted to confirm the reappointment of Dr Ros Taylor, who has worked diligently to improve wildlife and conservation in the Wimbledon and Putney Commons for a number of years. Her contributions reflect the government’s ambition set out in our flagship 25 Year Environment Plan to protect our precious natural environment for future generations.”

Dog Campaign

As part of the on-going support for the enforcement of the Commons’ Byelaws, the Conservators have endorsed a campaign to raise awareness of responsible dog ownership. This education campaign will focus on three of the most significant challenges relating to responsible dog ownership on the Commons:

- The responsibility of dog walkers to pick-up after their dogs and dispose of the waste responsibly;
- The responsibility of dog walkers to keep their dogs in sight and under effective control (owners must be able to recall their dogs on command);
- Respect for the limit of no more than four dogs in any one group of walkers.

The campaign will be launched in mid-May 2019 with posters and banners. The Commons’ Keepers will be taking a pro-active approach to raise awareness of these simple messages, which are supported by the Byelaws.

The Conservators also agreed to undertake a consultation exercise over the summer period seeking views on licence terms for the current 25 commercial dog walkers who, at present, are permitted to walk six dogs. The consultation will take views on potentially placing a limit of four dogs on all dog walkers, commercial or otherwise. The consultation will also take views on potentially requiring all commercial dog walkers on the Commons to be licensed. The Conservators are anxious to stress that they have not yet reached a view on these matters and will therefore consider all responses to the consultation very carefully before proposing any changes to the current policy.

Ecological and Monitoring Report

For the fifth consecutive year, the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, through the efforts of our dedicated volunteers and staff, have produced an annual Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Report for 2018. A copy of the report can be found [here](#)

Friends of the Commons

In an attempt to provide opportunities for collective recognition, celebration and support of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, the Conservators have formally approved the establishment of a Friends Programme. Through the programme, which will be led by the Conservators, a series of special events leading up to the 150th anniversary of the Commons in 2021 will be held. Membership will be through an annual subscription fee and the funds generated will be used to continue to protect and enhance the Commons. There will also continue to be opportunities for individuals and organisations to make one-off donations in support of specific projects.

Full details of the Friends Programme will be announced shortly including those of the formal launch event in the autumn.

Events

Over the week commencing 25th March 2019, the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Field hosted the Rosslyn Park National Schools Sevens event. From its humble beginning in 1939, the event has evolved into the world's largest school rugby tournament with some 9,000 boys and girls aged 13 to 18 competing annually and participating in over 1,500 games of rugby during the five day tournament.

Over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend, the charity held another very successful children's Easter Egg Hunt. Approximately 370 children participated in the hunt, which took place on the Common's nature trail.

On the weekend of the 27th April 2019, one of the volunteers from the Wildlife and Conservation Forum led a two-day birdsong identification event. The event was fully booked and provided an opportunity for participants to both acquire and test new skills and knowledge, culminating in a walk to practice identifying the warblers and others birds that thrive on the Commons.

Planning Objection – Illuminated Signs at Tibbets Corner

Transport for London has submitted a planning application for two illuminated signs over Tibbets Corner underpass. An objection on behalf of WPCC was submitted to the local planning authority, a copy of which may be read [here](#).

Governance

The Resolutions of the meeting of the Board of Conservators held on the 8th April 2019 have been posted on the Wimbledon and Putney Commons website [here](#).

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.

Contact: Simon Lee, Chief Executive

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Tel: 020 8788 7655, E-mail: rangersoffice@wpcc.org.uk website: www.wpcc.org.uk

