

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

Chief Executive: Simon Lee



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **WPCC - Charity Commission Update**

#### **The Spencer Benches**

The Charity Commission contacted WPCC, a registered charity, on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018 in relation to concerns that had been raised by a levy payer regarding picnic benches being placed outside The Spencer public house on the charity's land. The Charity Commission confirmed that this matter was a separate matter to the ongoing Statutory Inquiry.

WPCC provided a detailed written response to the Charity Commission, which set out the process that they had followed in entering into a licence with The Spencer public house (allowing the benches to be placed on the Commons) as well as details of the licence. (Inter alia, the agreed licence established a duty on The Spencer to ensure that the benches would be available for all users of the Commons (ie, not only customers of The Spencer) and to notify users accordingly; the licence also stipulated that The Spencer would be fully responsible for the restoration of the Commons following the removal of the benches on the 31st October 2018.)

On the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2018, the Charity Commission advised WPCC's Chief Executive that having been assured that the trustees had taken appropriate professional advice and carried out due diligence in their decision making, they would not be taking any further action regarding this matter.

#### **Interim Manager**

The Charity Commission wrote to the Chairman of WPCC on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018 advising that the Charity Commission had reviewed the Commission's Order to appoint an Interim Manager and had decided under section 76(3)(g) of the Charities Act 2011 to revoke the Interim Manager with immediate effect. This decision was taken because the Interim Manager had completed his function and provided the Commission with his report.

#### **Meeting with the Charity Commission and the Statutory Inquiry**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2018, WPCC Conservators and the Chief Executive met with staff from the Investigations Monitoring and Enforcement team of the Charity Commission to discuss the priorities and areas of focus of WPCC as well as the achievements since taking office on 4 April 2018. The meeting also provided the Charity Commission with an opportunity to provide an update on the Statutory Inquiry.

WPCC's presentation included an explanation of the new governance arrangements, including the establishment of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Finance and Investment Committee and the Constitution Working Group. Conservators also provided an overview of a draft access decision framework, setting out how WPCC would allow requests for access to the Commons to be considered in a comprehensive, consistent and structured manner that respects WPCC's duties, powers and prohibitions. The Charity Commission were advised of WPCC's recently adopted Complaints and Enquiry Procedures as well as measures to improve transparency within the organisation.

Regarding the Statutory Inquiry, the Charity Commission stated that they hoped to publish the final report approximately three months after concluding the investigative phase of the Statutory Inquiry but that further delays would not be unexpected. On the 10th September 2018, the Charity Commission notified WPCC that the investigative phase had been closed and as such the final report from the Statutory Inquiry is expected in mid-December 2018, though these timescales could be further extended.

ENDS

NOTES for Editors - Wimbledon and Putney Commons is a charity managed by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC). It was established under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871. The Commons comprise some 1,140 acres across Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common.

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