

**Public Minutes of the Conservators' Meeting held on  
Monday 5 June 2023 at 4.30pm at Manor Cottage, London SW19 5NR**

**Conservators:** Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman (DNM)  
Mr Oliver Bennett (OB)  
Mrs Sue Bucknall (SB)  
Mr David Hince (DH)  
Mr Peter Shortt (PS)  
Mr Nigel Ware (NW)

**Officers:** Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger (DCR)  
Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer (C&EO)  
Maggie May, Fundraising Manager (FM)  
Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive/Communications  
Officer (EA to CE/CO)  
Philip Warner, Management Accountant

**Members of the public:** One member of the public attended.

**ITEM**

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

**Apologies:** Mr Peter Hirsch, Conservator  
Mr Michael Johnston, Conservator

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

None

**06.23.3 WPCB Board Meetings**

- i. The Resolutions of the Public and Confidential Board Meetings of 3 April 2023 were approved.
- ii. The Minutes of the Part A(1) Board Meeting of 13 February 2023 were approved.

**06.23.4 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**06.23.5 Committee Matters**

**Finance and Investment Committee**

At their meeting on 2 May 2023, the Finance and Investment Committee agreed the appointment of Mr Nigel Ware as Chairman. This was recommended to the Board for approval. This was approved and the Conservators recorded their thanks to Mr Ware.

**Resolution**

**The Board RESOLVED to approve the appointment of Nigel Ware as Chairman of the Finance and Investment Committee.**

### **06.23.6 Levy for 2023/24**

The Board received and noted the Chairman's report.

Subsequent to a meeting on 27 March 2023 between WPCC and the Wimbledon Society on 23 March 2023, the Wimbledon Society had, of their own volition, written to the leader of Merton Council reiterating the Society's support for the Commons in general and WPCC's increase in the levy for 2023/24. The Conservators recorded their appreciation for the Society's support.

#### **Recommendation:**

**The Board noted the letter sent by the Wimbledon Society on 17 April 2023 to the Leader of Merton Council setting out the Society's support for the increase in the levy as agreed by the Conservators for 2023/24 from £32.14 to £35.96 per year for a Band D property, equivalent to 32 pence per month. The Conservators recorded their appreciation to the Society for their support.**

### **06.23.7 Operations Report**

The Board received and noted the Operations Report prepared by the WPCC staff.

The following points were reported:

**Keepers Update** - As the weather had started to improve, the number of incidents recorded had started to increase. Most notably the numbers of cyclists stopped had almost doubled compared to the previous month. This was a combination of cycling off the permitted paths and the speed of some ebikes. The latter was a matter of increasing concern with members of the public and the Keepers would, over the next few weeks, be running a cycling campaign, stopping and talking to cyclists about responsible cycling on the Commons.

In April, the Keepers had to deal with a number more notable incidents, including several of naked runners/walkers. Although not a crime, in itself, it does become a crime if it causes offence. Given the nature of the site, with many school groups visiting, the police were called and one of the runners was arrested. He was subsequently released.

On 7 May 2023, acting on information received from a member of the public, the early turn Keeper attended the scene of a burnt-out vehicle in the woods to the north of Roehampton Cricket Pitch. Police attended the scene and the vehicle was removed for forensic examination as it was believed to have been involved in an Operation Trident incident, the Metropolitan Police's operation that dealt with gang violence.

Following several requests, it has been agreed that during the summer routine the Keepers would revert to starting at 6am, including opening the Windmill Car Park. During the winter routine, opening time would revert to 7am.

During the summer, the horses normally are put out to grass for two weeks to give them a proper rest. One of the horses, Hector, had been put out early as he had an issue with his feet that needed some rest to recover properly.

**Maintenance** - The Maintenance team had been mainly carrying out routine works, including:

- mowing amenity areas, strimming and/or mowing sight lines and around bins/benches, opening up paths for public access
- locating and treating Japanese Knotweed

- tree safety work, including issues around heat stress damage to trees from last summer's heatwave
- dealing with litter and dog waste bins
- leading some volunteer activities

Additional work had included:

- Opening up an emergency access route to the Black Ring and other highly used public sites
- Replacing/upgrading horse entry points and other barriered areas
- Mowing and roping off as necessary for the coronation event and assisting with putting up the decorations
- Working with the contractor carrying out horseride restoration and drainage works
- Maintenance works to Springwell carpark including repairs to Sunset Road
- Fire Safety works – ongoing actions from the fire risk assessments including Fire Evacuation
- Signage/Posts – REMPF/Maintenance/Rangers Office sites
- Assisting with ancillary works for the wildlife garden – providing top soil and water and removing the fencing

**Crooked Billet** – The DCR reported that a licence had now been entered into with Youngs Brewery to allow deckchairs to be placed on the Common outside the Crooked Billet. As the negotiations for the licence had taken place with the head office, she had visited the pub to meet with the Acting Manager to ensure he fully understood the terms and restrictions in the licence and to understand how he would implement them.

Given the concerns raised by local residents regarding the noise of deckchairs being taken in and out of the alley, the Acting Manager had asked if the Conservators would permit some of the chairs to be taken out in the morning by staff rather than have members of the public take them out constantly throughout the day. Some rubber matting had also been ordered for the alley where the chairs are stored to help deaden the noise.

With regard to keeping the deckchairs within the boundary set out in the licence, it had been suggested that some temporary rope be put up to delineate the area. The Conservators were not keen for rope to be put up and suggested perhaps some small flags be put in the ground. This would be discussed further with the Acting Manager.

#### **ACTION: DCR**

It had also been suggested that each chair have a tag or sticker on it identifying that anyone could make use of them, not just the pub's customers.

**Events** – AEH reported that the two coronation events had been a huge success and a lot of positive feedback had been received. Forthcoming events included the annual Weekend of Nature which would include small mammal trapping, butterfly/dragonfly walk, bat and moth evening and a general nature walk; the Annual Open Meeting – 28 June; Public Evening Walk – 5 July; Commons' Open Day – 10 September 2023.

The Chairman thanked everyone involved in the coronation events for their help and support.

#### **06.23.8 Fundraising Update**

The Board received and noted the Fundraising Manager's Report.

**Coronation Event** - Donations received from the Coronation Event were as follows:

- Cash: £1,279
- Website: £410
- Tap machine: £282
- Major gift: £1,500
- A micro grant of £350 had been received from Merton Council.
- Cappagh had donated £700 to purchase new litter-picking equipment.

The figures did not include a pledged donation from a local business.

The Chairman thanked the FM for putting proper governance in place for the volunteers at the coronation event, particularly for those collecting donations. DH asked about the costs for the event. The Chairman commented that the P&L was still being finalised but indications were that the event did make a small profit.

**Footpath Appeal** - The Footpath Appeal had now raised in excess of £17,000, with an additional 44 people contributing since the last Board meeting in April. The grant application to the South Western Railway Customer and Communities Investment Fund had been successful and WPCCC had been awarded a grant of £75,000. As the project was themed on access to the Windmill, this includes a contribution of £20,000 towards the repairs and decoration of the Windmill and the installation of bike racks; the remainder of the grant will be used for the footpaths.

**Queensmere Restoration** – It was reported that the first stage of restoring Queensmere was being funded by the Mayor of London in partnership with the London Wildlife Trusts, thanks to a grant awarded through the Rewild London Fund. A specialist contractor has been appointed to carry out surveys and produce designs.

**Wimbledon Village Stables** - Wimbledon Village Stables continued their successful fundraising to invest in the equestrian facilities on the Commons. WPCCC had been chosen as the beneficiary of their annual ball in March 2023 and this year raised £5,552. It was confirmed that these donations were restricted to the equestrian facilities on the Commons.

The Board thanked the FM for all her hard work.

#### **06.23.9 Conservation Update**

The Board received and noted the Conservation and Engagement Officer's Report. He highlighted the following points:

- In order to minimise disturbance during the bird-nesting season, much of the recent habitat management on the Commons had been largely carried out by various groups of volunteers. Work had focused mainly on the heathland in areas containing isolated or small saplings around Jubilee Path, Ladies Mile and near Hookhamslade Pond. The Maintenance Team then follow up this work by reducing the remaining stumps to a safe level. In order to prevent vehicle damage to the waterlogged sites, chipping of the cut saplings will take place at a later date.
- The new orchard at Putney Lower Common was thriving, although one tree had not survived. This would be replaced in due course. A bowser had been provided as part of the donations and the trees were being regularly watered during dry periods.
- Wildlife Garden - The pond and the hard standing path have now been completed. A seed mix for the pond edge had been sown into the soil around the edge of the pond and a selection of native pond plants had been planted. Additional wild flower seed has been spread over the small mound opposite the pond. Most of the new fence had been

installed. The swallows were feeding over the pond and several butterflies, dragonflies and amphibians had been sighted.

- The Annual Conservation Report had been completed.
- The litter pick as part of the Coronation events had been very successful.
- As Merton Council were no longer holding the Walking for Health walks, the C&EO had started a local walk every three weeks. This was proving very popular. The Chairman was keen to encourage Roehampton residents to join.

The Conservators thanked the C&EO for all his hard work.

#### **06.23.10 Land Management Plan**

The C&EO gave a verbal update on the Land Management Plan.

The work on the chapters was now complete and, although there were some gaps, these would be added in time. In the meantime, he was working to ensure that the LMP was fully aligned with the Masterplan, following up with the volunteers to complete some of the summaries and general formatting.

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

SB gave a verbal update on the Friends.

She thanked everyone involved in the coronation events for all their help and work in supporting the event. She had been pleased that WPCC had worked with other local community organisations to bring everything together.

Current membership stood at: Benefactors – 54, Household – 335, Individuals – 223. She was delighted that there was a slow increase and that not too many people had left. Work was underway to follow up with those who did leave to thank them for their support, and to also thank annually those that did renew. Income for the last financial year was some £40,000.

A series of walks had been introduced and the next walk would take place on 22 June 2023 with Alan Blower and Nick Manning. The C&EO would host another walk in the Autumn.

The Art on the Commons competition continued to be popular.

The Chairman thanked SB for her work. She commented that some members were commenting that the walks sold out very quickly and thought should be given to whether it might be possible to add more walks to the programme.

#### **06.23.12 WPCC Forum/Group Meetings**

The Board received and noted the notes of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum held on 14 March 2023.

#### **AOB**

The Chairman congratulated the EA for the Commons News newsletter that had recently been delivered to levy-payers. SB commented that she had not received a copy and the EA undertook to follow this up.

The EA reported that one of the volunteers who worked with the Wimbledon Common Nature Club had recently won Merton's Young Environmental Volunteer of the Year Award 2023. Note of this would be made on the Conservators' website.

**ACTION: EA**

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

The Chairman opened up the meeting to questions from the members of the public.

The member of the public present thanked the Conservators for not agreeing to allow the Crooked Billet to put rope out to designate the area that deckchairs would be permitted. They contested much of what the current manager had said, noting that deckchairs were left out overnight and there was significant rubbish in the area.

There was still no solution to the issue about the noise being created by the deckchairs being replaced at night. Although the staff were trying to be quieter, the nature of the space meant it was still an issue. There was still glass on the grass and some people were putting deckchairs on the pavements. They were concerned about the disturbance to residents of the alms houses, particularly as the deckchairs could now be left out until 11pm. He had no input into the discussion on the licence and did not know what was included until it had been signed.

They supported the work of the Conservators and realised that the situation with the Crooked Billet was difficult. The licence caused a conflict issue within the community.

The Chairman thanked the member of the public for their comments. The Conservators had taken into consideration all the comments received from the consultation and many of the points had been incorporated. If there were any issues with the enforcement of the terms and conditions of the licence then the DCR would definitely investigate this and address it if necessary.

The member of the public commented that they were surprised the Conservators had issued a licence when the issue around the noise of the deckchairs had not been addressed. The DCR commented that now the licence was in place the Conservators had more control over the situation and asked that the Conservators and staff be given time to resolve the matter as they did not wish there be any unnecessary disturbance to the local residents.

The member of the public urged the Conservators not to rescind the licence at any time as he was concerned about possible retribution on a small number of residents.

**ACTION:** DCR to follow up the enforcement of the licence conditions with the pub manager, particularly to demarcate the area in a suitable fashion and to ensure that the chairs were to be used by members of the public (ie, not only clients of the pub). The issue of the noise with the chairs being put out was also to be followed-up with a view to finding a solution.

