

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024
FOR
THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

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**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

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**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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The Commons Conservators

The Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray Commons Conservators (whose working title is 'Chislehurst Commons') was established by the Metropolitan Commons (Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray) Supplemental Act 1888 to protect and maintain the Commons. The Conservators became a registered charity on the 10th November 1993, since when, and for ease of reference in the community, we refer to ourselves also as Trustees. We carry out our work supported by funds granted by the London Borough of Bromley (LBB), generous donations from local residents, money raised from events, small annual grants from government-sponsored bodies, occasional grants from other organisations and the help of volunteers.

Governing document and objectives

The 1888 Act sets down the responsibilities of the Board of Conservators. These responsibilities are translated into a working strategy by a 10-year Management Plan, the current one being applicable for the years 2014-2024. A revised plan is being prepared for 2025 -2035.

Location

The Trustees operate from leasehold premises situated at:

The Old Fire Station
Hawkwood Lane
Chislehurst
BR7 5PW

Organisation

During the reporting period the charity was administered by a Board composed of:

John Hayhow (Chairman)
Robert West (Treasurer and Clerk)
Ian Leonard
Alan Porter
Christine Wearn
Mary Wheeler
Sarah Harris
Patrick Phillips
Brian Knights
Jeremy Williams (appointed April 2024)
Joanna Friel – appointee of the Lord of the Manor

Staff

The Board employs two members of staff:

Mr Jonathan Harvie (Head Keeper)
Mr Toby Smith (Assistant Keeper appointed 09/2022)

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1. Board Structure and decision-making

The Board, which is required to be quorate and to meet no fewer than 2 times per annum, during the reporting period, held meetings on 6 occasions. The Board has a number of committees which are appointed by the Board and whose reports are received and reviewed by the Board:

Chairman's Committee:

It meets as required to deal with any matters arising between meetings of the Board, staff management, legal, financial and compliance matters.

Natural Environment Committee:

It is directly responsible for the implementation of the Commons 10-year Management Plan, recommending major projects to the Board, protection and enhancement of biodiversity with recording and monitoring of the flora and fauna, and formulation of policies for community use including advertising and filming on the Commons.

Verge Committee:

It has responsibility for the Protection and maintenance of the Commons' verges:

It protects the Commons from encroachment and illegal use by liaising with public utilities, the London Borough of Bromley on litter, fly-tipping, roads and paths and those whose land adjoins and have access across the Commons, monitoring and responding to Planning applications and checking the boundaries, the maintenance of footpaths and bridle paths to support ease of access for users, the maintenance of monuments on the Commons and the management of vehicles on the Commons.

External Relations and Administration Committee:

It provides the management of the relationship with our supporters, Public Relations and media, the initiation of and support for events, the organisation of fundraising activities and representation to relevant external organisations.

Information Technology Committee:

It formulates, delivers and maintains for the Trustees a unified IT Policy with specific requirements to maintain the database of supporters, ensure compliance with the Data Protection legislation and to maintain the website.

It provides safe methods for digital donations, fundraising and event online ticket sales. It ensures a smooth interaction with the web hosting service and with the broadband service provider.

Regular reports are also received from the Head Keeper. Responsibility for day-to-day management resides with the Chairman, the Chair of the Verge committee, the Treasurer, and the Head Keeper.

2. Public Benefit Statement

The main purpose of the charity is to protect and maintain the Commons for public use. All the resources of the charity are used to satisfy these aims. The Commons are open to all members of the public without charge and, subject to the bye laws, provide much needed open space for recreation and leisure. The Commons are situated in a predominately suburban setting and are therefore an important amenity for local residents. The Commons also connects together two other large areas of green space, Scadbury Park and Petts Wood, to create an interconnected green space of over 250 hectares.

If the charity did not exist, the Commons would quickly become unusable in that they would be subject to uncleared fly-tipping and litter, illegal parking and would overgrow rapidly. There is also strong evidence that encroachment from some adjoining properties would take place with the permanent loss of land. For 5 consecutive years the Commons have been awarded a Green Flag award.

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The Trustees carry out between them all the administrative, regulatory, financial and public relations tasks. External paid examiners are appointed and recourse to paid external legal assistance and administration occurs when necessary. The Trustees believe the organisation could not be leaner nor more cost effective and are satisfied that the work of the charity meets the requirements of current legislation relating to public benefit.

3. Trustees

Trustees are appointed to the Board for a period of three years and may be re-appointed for subsequent periods of 3 years. Trustees are formally appointed by the London Borough of Bromley.

All Trustees give of their time voluntarily and receive no emoluments.

We continue to seek additional Trustees who are keen supporters of the Commons and its protection and who can offer relevant skills, enthusiasm and their time.

4.COVID-19 and variants

The Board continues to be aware of the impact of any new plagues and to manage its affairs and working practices accordingly.

5. Fundraising Statement

The charity receives donations of funds from residents and businesses in the local community by way of regular donations and one-off voluntary donations, some of which are related to exceptional operational expenditure and through support of events that are managed by the Trustees and its volunteers. It also engages in raising funds through retailers via their charity support programmes and bids for funds from other non-local bodies for specific projects. When funds are raised for a specific project, we ensure that our donors are kept up to date with the progress of the project via social media and our monthly newsletters. This occurred when funds for a new truck were raised in first quarter 2022 with expected delivery March 2022. Many delays occurred with final delivery in July 2023.

All fundraising has to receive the approval of the Board and be compliant with data protection. All fundraising activity is monitored by the Board through the provision by the Treasurer of a spreadsheet of monthly reviews of income and expenditure.

Major fundraising takes place on an 'as required' basis and only after approval by the Board of the method of approach to potential donors. This will recognise the need to be clear about who we are, what we do, how any funds donated will be used and the methods by which donors can make a gift and amend a regular commitment. No undue pressure is applied and any decision to cease giving is respected and acted upon promptly. Only standing order arrangements or other methods for periodic payments organised by the donor are used for regular donations, allowing the payer to cancel at will.

We aim not to cause offence or nuisance and respect the choice of method of contact. No professional fundraisers or commercial participators are used.

6. Financial Report

Summary:

Our total incoming resources for the accounting year were 2024 £103,245 (2023 were £116,119 2022: £115,642).

After expenditure of £139,683, (2023 £100,859. 2022 £95,527) a deficit of £36,438 was recorded (compared to a surplus of £15,260 for 2023 and for 2022 a surplus of £20,115).

Capital Resources accordingly decreased to £176,652, from £213,090 in 2023.

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Income:

Income is derived mainly from Local Authority Grants, specific donations, regular donations, one-off grants, donations given at events, any income from events and Gift Aid.

The income figure for Donations of £90,543 includes:

- A Grant from the London Borough of Bromley of £36,310.
- A specific donation of £1,000 from the Chislehurst Society towards the cost of a trailer.
- One-off donations of £5,723.99 (2023 £6,740). This includes Retailers Charity schemes of £97.48, Visit Chislehurst Car Show £300, a replacement memorial bench £1,270, legacies from Jan Hendey £982, and Oota Owlett £100 a matching £300 from HSBC based on a donation from Norlands Residents Association, £400 from Wellers Solicitors towards our publishing costs and other amounts from walks, talks and a filming permission. Donations generated by the Annual Reception were £1,625.
- Regular donation income received from periodic committed payments of £35,785. The equivalent for 2023 was £38,261 and for 2022 £40,366. Sadly, some donors have died.
- Gift Aid of £9,464.15 on relevant donations. (2023 £9,801)

Trading activities of £7,205 (2023 £4,869) includes a meaningful increase from the sales of cards and other items to £1,243 but also revenues from Chislehurst Creates event 'The Magic of Nature' held in September 2023 and sponsorship received for the September 2024 event. 'A Journey Through Time'. Thus the reporting year received £5,957 being £4,222 for the 2023 event and £1,755 for the 2024 event. For expenditure associated costs arose in 2023 and 2024. The outcome for the 'The Magic of Nature' 2023 event was a profit of £5,126. The outcome for 2024 'A Journey Through Time' will be £4,640.

We also benefitted from increased interest on cash balances of £5,497(2023 £3,074) through judicious use of available deposit rates.

Expenditure:

Total operating costs were £139,683 (2023: £100,859 2022: £95,527 2021: £114,308. 2020: £97,445). Comparing 2024 with 2023 the major differences are in Vehicle and Plant maintenance and General Maintenance. For 2024 the big expense in Vehicle maintenance was due to tractor repairs which totalled £4,487.72. Within General maintenance, tree costs increased to £41,651 as we employed contractors to fell, for safety reasons, many sycamore trees owing to sooty bark disease and ash trees owing to ash dieback disease.

Tree costs for the last 12 years were as follows; **2024:** £41,651 **2023:** £17,141 **2022:** £6,750 **2021:** £5,254 **2020:** £2,250 **2019:** £8,586 **2018:** £19,008 **2017:** £1,514. **2016:** £920 **2015:** £3,158 **2014:** £5,197 **2013:** £520.

The ongoing management of Trees is discussed in more detail in Section 8 of this report.

Health and safety cost have reduced as the 2023 costs bore the costs of equipping our then new assistant keeper with the necessary clothing and equipment.

The depreciation charge for the year of £6,766 reflects the 20% charge against the cost of the truck acquired in 2023 for £31,991 and a trailer.

We are extremely grateful to all those who have responded to our fundraising requirements whether by giving a single contribution, by pledging a regular sum, remembering us in their wills and to all those who assist with and organise our fund raising events most notably 'Chislehurst Creates'. Without this help the charity would not survive.

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Balance Sheet:

Fixed Assets reflect the acquisition of the new truck and trailer in 2024 with associated depreciation. Debtors is the annual insurance premium paid in May accrued over the period post year end (2025 accounts). Cash at bank is dealt with below. Creditors are the accountant's fees (£804) for preparation of the accounts for the year, one month's value (£3,026) of the LBB grant received quarterly in advance in July 2024 and Invoices of £2,441 for the year paid after the year end. Total funds (our Net worth) employed in the business are £176,652.

Net Cash Position

As we do not take more than 30 days' credit and our debtors and creditors arise from accrual accounting then Cash at Bank of £151,987 (2023 £175,008) is a good measure of our financial solvency. After dealing with the net negative effect of debtors and creditors of £3,265, then uncommitted cash balances would decrease to £148,722. The reduction from 2023 cash balances is a consequence of the income deficiency for the year owing to tree costs.

We manage our cash reserves to provide us with 12 months' cover for operating expenses to allow us time to replace the loss of our grant and find other sources of funds. As at the time of the balance sheet date we had not been formally advised of the continuance of the grant from the London Borough of Bromley for a further 5 years, a matter that has been outstanding since April 2021. Payment nevertheless continued and was formalised until 2029 on 5th February 2025. Given the financial constraints under which Councils operate, and that our payments do not represent a statutory obligation on the Council, we believe a 12 months' reserve to be appropriate. We also wish to hold a contingent reserve for possible legal expenses and other capital items should we not be able to find additional sources of funding.

Our cash, as at the year end, is held in operating accounts with Barclays Bank, a One Year fixed account with Hampshire Trust Bank, a 95 day notice account with Cambridge and Counties Bank and a 35 day notice account with Redwood Bank. All investments are in the form of cash deposits which are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

With the generous donations and support of so many local residents, grants from community focussed organisations, much improved revenue from events, our self-imposed discipline of raising discrete funds to match capital expenditure and the continuing support of the London Borough of Bromley, the Trustees are confident that they can continue to operate satisfactorily.

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC
167 High Street
Bromley
BR1 1NJ

7. Risk Management

The Board annually reviews the Key Risks to which the Charity is subject. In addition, we aim to meet 'best practice' requirements of the Charities Commission by having in place policies with a nominated responsible Trustee for Financial Investment, Volunteers, Conflicts of Interest, the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults, social media and Bullying. Added to these are those specific to our situation such as 'Tree Inspection Policy', 'Events Policy', 'Filming Policy', 'Advertising by third parties on the Commons' and 'Unauthorised Encampment on the Commons'.

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Practical examples of policies in action are:

Our volunteer procedures where staff and volunteers are informed of the risk assessments which have been conducted for the various tasks they undertake. They are not allowed to use any equipment for which they have not been properly trained or covered by insurance.

For all events that take place on the Commons, whether by us or for our benefit, or by others with our permission, we require sight of risk assessments and Public liability insurance cover.

Insurance cover for risks associated with our operational and event activities is provided by Zurich Municipal Insurance. This provides employer's liability and public liability insurance and Trustees' indemnity insurance. The principal risk factors outside the Board's control are accidents to members of the public arising from falling trees or branches, and slips and trips due to exposed tree roots. We endeavour to mitigate these risks by means of our Tree Inspection Policy, with appropriate action taken, and clearance of vegetation around paths.

Financial Risk. The Board is reliant upon the continuation of financial support from the London Borough of Bromley (LBB) of a 5-year grant of £36,310 per annum. This Grant was due for renewal in April of 2021 and, whilst it has continued to be paid but at an amount last set in 2010, there was at the balance sheet date no formal agreement to this effect. During the year and post the year end the Board has met with the responsible parties at the LBB to obtain certainty of the grant's continued provision with signing of the Grant Agreement occurring on 5th February 2025. Such an Agreement has not been a previous requirement. The Board has agreed a policy of having at least 12 months' expenditure in reserve to meet its obligations in the event of a substantial loss of income.

The Board receives a monthly spreadsheet including income and expenditure, bank balances and proposed expenditure. The annual accounts are examined by external accountants. All funds are controlled by the Treasurer and the Chairman.

Climate Risk. We recognise the impact of climate change upon the Commons, as warmer temperatures and a lack moisture, caused by below average rainfall in the first half of a year, means that trees are constantly under stress. This allows diseases and pests to become more established. We aim to address this within our 10-Year Management Plan, with progress and relevance being reviewed annually, including that of our Tree Inspection Programme. Our knowledge is enhanced and broadened through representation on various London Borough of Bromley and other environmental green space and ecological organisations. The lack of water in the summer, due to low rainfall, impacts upon the water levels in our ponds, which are reliant upon run off from the surrounding roads, and the wildlife they support. The solutions available to address this are very limited.

Succession Planning Risk. With only two employees, we are vulnerable to staff unavailability through sickness and resignations. Our new Assistant Keeper had only joined us in September when, in December 2022, our Head Keeper suffered a serious medical condition which effectively meant he was off sick for the rest of the reporting year. It had a major impact on the operation of the Commons. An effective operation was only maintained by the excellent work of the Assistant Keeper, the Trustees and our volunteers. We are also vulnerable to the retirement of Trustees. In common with other organisations, which rely on individuals to give up their time, the concept of volunteering appears to be unfashionable.

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8. Tree Safety Management Policy Year Ending 31 August 2024

The Tree Safety Management Policy was formalised in 2013 and has been reviewed annually since then to reflect best use of resources and changes in legal and good practice requirements. It is clear that a regular inspection routine is vital, particularly where the major public roads cross the Commons. This is, however, very resource dependant, particularly in respect of volunteer time to carry out and record the inspections, and the time required to manage the tree works resulting from the inspections. The ongoing availability of this level of volunteer support is being addressed but remains uncertain.

The tree inspection work in 2024 was severely disrupted by the discovery of a major outbreak of sooty bark disease which affected a large number of sycamore trees on the Commons. This, together with the ongoing consequences of ash dieback, meant that no routine tree inspections were carried out in 2023. However, most of both Chislehurst Common and St Pauls Cray Common were subject to informal inspections during the summer and autumn while assessing the extent of both sooty bark disease and ash dieback. Most, if not all, of the high-risk areas were inspected more than once.

The outbreak of sooty bark disease, which affected a large number of sycamore trees on the Commons, meant that the cost of tree safety work increased significantly this year, even compared with 2023, and was a major drain on our finances. The cost of this year's tree safety work was £41,651, which is significantly more than the 2023 cost of £17,141, which itself was higher than usual. The tree safety costs for this year were dominated by two large work packages which together cost £25,884 and resulted in the felling of over 40 trees, nearly all of which were located close to 'A' roads and required traffic control measures. As projected in last year's report the cost of one work package was in excess of £15,000. These two work packages were probably the largest packages of tree safety work ever carried out by the Conservators. It is projected that tree safety costs will remain exceptionally high for the next two years but will decline after that.

Ash dieback is a nationwide disease which is killing large numbers of ash trees around the country. Sooty bark disease is much less common and the outbreak experienced on the Commons over this year seems to be very localised. The reasons for this are not known. The fungus can remain dormant in a tree for a long time until the tree comes under stress, such as by drought. Once the disease becomes active it can progress very quickly, killing the trees.

There was no reported or found incidence of oak processionary moth (OPM) on the Commons during 2024. The problems associated with OPM are considered to be very minor compared with ash dieback and sooty bark disease.

9. Management of natural environments, biodiversity and amenity

We manage the Commons according to our Vision Statement and our Charitable Objectives, i.e. to balance their natural environmental, biodiversity and amenity values for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public and local community, meeting their expectations for the provision of areas for quiet recreation in a natural environment.

The Natural Environment Committee (NEC) has the responsibility for such environmental management and maintaining public access and safety.

We have excellent relationships with the London Borough of Bromley and idverde, their Parks and Green Spaces contractor. We are represented on the Bromley Friends Forum and Bromley Biodiversity Partnership and contribute to the Borough Biodiversity Plan and Open Space Strategy. We were again successful in being awarded Green Flag Award status during the year, with a very favourable report from the judge. We were also proud to gain a London in Bloom Gold Award.

2024 was year 6 of the 2018-2028 Woodland Management Plan agreed with English Forests, providing an overarching document guiding our approach to the natural woodland environment and our core roles and responsibilities. We consider we are performing to the plan, and this has been confirmed by the Green Flag and London in Bloom awards.

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The NEC continues to develop and update policies and management plans, including preparation of a new over-arching 10-Year Management Plan that will become effective in 2025. Our Mowing Policy and Schedule has continued to balance competing demands of maintaining acid grassland biodiversity versus public amenity, taking into account human, equipment and cost restraints. Management of grasslands, woodlands and other habitats and biota, such as heathlands and reptiles, is increasingly informed by surveys conducted by Volunteers. Biological recording and data management are being refined and integrated with iRecord and GiGL.

Our two major ponds, Prickend Pond and Rush Pond, are prominent features of Chislehurst, with positive amenity value for residents and visitors. They are notable for their wide variety of ducks, geese and other aquatic birds and for other pond life. Bank and island management and ancillary planting by Volunteers continue to enhance the biodiversity and amenity values of both ponds. Biological and water level surveys continue to inform management of the ponds and their immediate environs.

As in past years, the management of and improvements to the Commons have relied on the work of the Head and Assistant Keepers and on the essential additional inputs of our Volunteers, to whom we continue to be very grateful. To make the best use of Volunteers, and for safety reasons at regular work sessions on Wednesday mornings, they are commonly broken up into smaller groups according to their different skills and strengths, working for example on small tree-felling and chipping or on scrub-clearance, dead-hedging, ditching or surveying. Different groups can then also be governed by more specific related Risk Assessments and Health and Safety procedures.

In addition to conducting tours and the Green Flag and London in Bloom visits, we have also hosted visits by representatives from the London Borough of Bromley and diverse, their greenspace contractors.

10. Litter, Fly-Tipping, Vehicle trespass, Roads

The use of the Commons

For the reporting period September 2023 to August 2024 13,200 Kgs of rubbish was collected (2022/23 12,172 kgs 2021/2022 18,1670 kgs .).

Fly-tipping continues to take place, and we are ever grateful to the LBB for their assistance in removing those fly-tips which are beyond our capabilities, particularly for hazardous, dangerous waste that has been fly-tipped.

As with last year, there have been very few incidents of illegal parking of vehicles by residents, or of vehicles being driven across the Common, in contravention of the bye laws.

Road improvement schemes proposed by the LBB that may affect the Commons have been limited to the proposed introduction of crossing points close to the War Memorial traffic lights. Discussions with the LBB on this scheme have started but are slow to come to fruition.

The use of unmade roads across the Commons for access purposes remains a significant issue. During the course of this year an incident occurred on one of these tracks where an elderly lady had a fall and subsequently died. This resulted in extensive discussions about the condition of the track and its relevance to the fall. The surface condition of the tracks leading to the Ramblers Rest and Cricket Ground Road are also a matter of continuing discussion between interested parties.

11. Utilities/ Requests for Access/Boundaries

A number of utilities such as telecoms, electricity and water are routed across the Commons. These utilities need to be accessed for a variety of reasons, such as inspection, installation of new cables or pipes to connect to the existing network, repairs, the addition of new telecom boxes, or emergency work. We require such work to be authorised by us to ensure that it is only done under controlled conditions, that the work does not damage or adversely affect the Commons, and proper re-instatement will take place. We are also aware that the freeholder of the Commons should require easements to be granted.

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The progress that we had hoped for in 2023 on completing new Deeds of Easement with UKPN and Openreach has not been achieved.

12. Commons Community Events and Engagement

Our regular programme of well-attended walks on the Commons has continued this year, with visits to the various habitats to see how we are managing and enhancing them, and the areas where the volunteers have been working. These walks have been a valuable means of engaging with the community but have also brought us supporters and some volunteers with particular skills and interests, which has enabled us to extend our survey work.

There are regular community events throughout the year in Chislehurst where we have taken an active part in promoting interest in the Commons. An annual family Art event which raised funds for the Commons, but had lapsed, was revived by Chislehurst Creates in September and was well-attended and much appreciated by the community. It was notable for the number of volunteers who came to help. We had a stall at the Christmas Market where we had cards, mounted photos, decorations made from pinecones and holly for sale. The annual Crowning of the May Queen took place. The local business group held a Car Show in May, in the High Street, with some exhibits and stalls on the common, and we took part with our new truck on display. At the Rotary Summer Fair, our large display stimulated a lot of discussion. We supported the London Borough of Bromley's Big Lunch initiative in June.

Since the lockdowns of 2020/2021, we have experimented with poster trails with information relating to history or biodiversity displayed through the woods to engage the community. This year, we participated in the annual Pumpkin Hunt in the High Street and offered a Bug Hunt which was displayed on posters in the woods. Another poster trail was displayed in April, an Easter Nature Quiz.

Chislehurst War Memorial is situated on the Common and a local nursery, Coolings, provides flowers for the base throughout the year. The annual Remembrance Day service takes place on the Commons.

A tradition has grown up amongst the regular dogwalkers of decorating a tree in the woods at Christmas in memory of their pets, and this attracts a lot of local interest.

A tree depicting aspects of the Commons was entered in the annual Christmas Tree Festival in Chislehurst Methodist Church, and it was later displayed in the local Sainsburys.

A talk was given at the Library, accompanied by a two-week display, and another at a local residential home. We were invited to contribute to a school project and give a talk to a class at a local Primary School.

Three Family Activity Mornings were held in August. These aimed to raise awareness of the commons and to provide interest and information. They included craft activities, a search for invertebrates with a zoologist, and a nature trail. A team from the local Library came along with a selection of books.

Attendance at the monthly meetings of Visit Chislehurst gives us links with local businesses.

We produce both Christmas cards and greetings cards for sale. They are sold at events, and in some local shops.

A local shop displays bags of bird seed which we offer for a donation, to discourage people from feeding bread to the waterfowl at the ponds.

This year various groups have been taken for a tour of the commons, including local Councillors and representatives from the Lotus Group, a charity re-locating to Chislehurst.

Newsletter and website

Our annual newsletter is published each spring. This is distributed in a printed and electronic format to all

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Friends of the Commons as a way to keep in touch with our supporters and, from feedback, is much appreciated. We were pleased to receive sponsorship again from our solicitors, Wellers, for the newsletter printing costs. Following an increase in postal rates, the newsletter was delivered by hand.

An online Newsletter, with news and photos is sent out once a month to our mailing list of over 1,000. The material is provided by Trustees, Keepers and volunteers who supply photos and specialist information. All these publications can be accessed via our website.

Storyboards about the commons, and suggestions for activities can be found on the website.

We have 4 Notice Boards situated across the Commons, with maps and information which are regularly updated with items of interest for visitors and upcoming events. In addition, leaflets with a map are available in the community ex-phone box.

Our social media presence is managed by a volunteer, and we post regularly, with material provided by Trustees and volunteers, via a nominated Trustee.

13. Friends of the Commons

The Trustees are fortunate to be supported by a growing group of people, currently numbering about 350, who contribute financially and/or with their time in maintaining the Commons. Within this number, there is a very active and growing band of volunteers who work in one of our regular volunteer conservation groups and who provide vital help for our various events.

We estimate that they and the Trustees contribute 8,000 work hours to our activities. We have also received excellent support from idverde and the LBB for our various funding bids and project development. Without the help of all these members of the local community the charity could not operate. We thank them all.

Our Annual Friends' Reception, whilst still a good money raising opportunity, was less popular than previous years with 85 attendees. There has been a declining trend in attendance post Covid. We will be considering a change in the format for 2025.

14. Working with the Freeholder

Since 2017 the freehold of Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray Commons has been owned by the Chislehurst Society. We are pleased to report that our organisations continue to work closely in ensuring the correct legal rights are granted by our respective organisations.

In addition, the Chislehurst Society, both as Freeholder and as the local Civic Society is very supportive of our work, having part-funded many of our projects over many years. In 2023 they donated towards the cost of our new truck.

We are working with the Freeholder on several matters relevant to access and safety work and, whilst our responsibilities are different, we share the common objective of protecting the Commons for current and future generations.

15. The Future

The financial position of the charity continues to be in good order albeit with a trend of declining regular donations. We enjoy a 9 year lease of our premises at The Old Fire Station from London Borough of Bromley. Whilst it was intended that the Conservators, when established by Act of Parliament in 1888, would be fully funded by the Local Parishes (whose roles are now with the London Borough of Bromley), the reality is that, since 2000, we have been receiving only part of our funding from the London Borough of Bromley. This represents a most valuable and necessary grant from the Borough, which was formalised after the reporting year end until March 2029 subject to the LBB's own financial constraints. We believe we provide good value, not least, to the financial leverage of 1-part LBB finance to 2 parts community finance. If the value of the volunteers' and Trustees' time is costed, this rises to 1:4.5.

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For The Year Ended 31 August 2024**

The grant is supplemented by donations from residents, local businesses and community organisations such as The Chislehurst Society and Chislehurst Rotary Club. Fortunately, after a lean period of five years for our own events, we have through the good offices of a volunteer group, Chislehurst Creates, re-established an Arts and Crafts Fair aimed at children which held its second event during 2024. The 2024 event contributed £4,640 to our funds.

We aim for such sources of funds to cover our operational expenses, although, along with other charities, we are in the invidious position of being charged more for our goods and services but unable to pass that on to our customers, the public. Hence why we have exerted good cost control over those costs we can influence, i.e. those excluding trees. The impact of inflation this year has not been too harsh, but 2025 will see an increase on employment costs, with the increase in minimum wage requirements, and no doubt contractors' costs as they pass on increased National Insurance charges. It places more emphasis on our ability to attract other sources of grant income and increase our regular donations to meet our operating cost.

In 2024 we enjoyed regular donor income of £35,785 (2023 £38,261. 2022 £40,366) which also provided us with Gift Aid recovery of £9,464. This was a reduction from 2023 owing mainly to attrition of our donor base as it ages. We also benefited from a specific donation of £1,000 from The Chislehurst Society. We hope we can rebuild our donor base with fund raising campaigns and a push for legacies but remain acutely aware that our donors' own financial positions are under strain as they deal with inflationary pressures on their disposable income.

Undoubtedly our biggest and growing challenge is the cost of managing our ageing woodland, with many trees reaching the end of their natural lives and climate change increasing the incidence of diseases, that is proving expensive to address. The costs of dealing with ash dieback, sooty bark disease and, no doubt, some new infestation are increasing and remain uncertain. Our grant from LBB has been at the same level since 2010, and the ability of our donors to continue their generosity may be under stress. It is our hope that the LBB will continue to appreciate that, without the Conservators and its volunteers and supporters, the cost burden they would have to bear would be three times the level of grant currently provided.

Our next biggest challenge is the identification and recruitment of new Trustees. Our current Board members' 'time resources' will continue to be challenged through dealing with issues arising from the increased pressure on the Commons from traffic and being asked to consider road changes and their impact on the Commons, surrounding development, fly-tipping, other transgressions of the Commons, ensuring that requests for track surface improvements are sympathetic to the Commons, the increased level of regulation and reporting that is required and managing exceptional events. In this respect we are pleased to welcome a new Trustee, Jeremy Williams, who is to assist us in attracting more funding from residents and large organisations. We will place further emphasis in 2025 in addressing this matter.

Chislehurst is only ten miles from the centre of London, and we are conscious of our responsibilities in maintaining such an important open space so near to a large area of population. The Board remains confident that, so long as such generous support both financial and of skills and talents from individuals and organisations continues, we can meet the challenges presented to us and be confident of carrying on our work for the present and future benefit of the community of Chislehurst.

I offer my personal thanks to those whose efforts go largely unrecognised; my Board member colleagues, who give of their personal time and skills so freely, our two Keepers Jonathan and Toby and our volunteers, who all apply their expert knowledge and graft, for keeping our Commons in such good order attracting the Green Flag Award and London in Bloom Gold award.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 4th March 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



J Hayhow - Trustee

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The Chislehurst & St. Paul's Cray Commons Conservators

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Chislehurst & St. Paul's Cray Commons Conservators (the Trust) for the year ended 31 August 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under Section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by Section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.


GRAHAM ATKIN FCA

Crane & Partners
Chartered Accountants
Leonard House
5 - 7 Newman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 1RJ

Date: 4 March 2025

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024

		2024 Unrestricted funds £	2023 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM	Notes		
Donations and legacies		54,233	104,216
London Borough of Bromley grant		36,310	-
Other trading activities	2	7,205	4,869
Investment income	3	5,497	3,064
Other income		-	3,970
Total		<u>103,245</u>	<u>116,119</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON			
Raising funds	4	6,445	2,305
Charitable activities			
Costs of protecting and conserving the commons		<u>133,238</u>	<u>98,554</u>
Total		<u>139,683</u>	<u>100,859</u>
 NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(36,438)	15,260
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward		<u>213,090</u>	<u>197,830</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>176,652</u>	<u>213,090</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

BALANCE SHEET
31 August 2024

	Notes	2024 Unrestricted funds £	2023 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	7	27,930	33,096
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	8	3,755	9,175
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>151,987</u>	<u>175,008</u>
		155,742	184,183
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	9	(7,020)	(4,189)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>148,722</u>	<u>179,994</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		176,652	213,090
NET ASSETS		<u>176,652</u>	<u>213,090</u>
FUNDS	10		
Unrestricted funds		<u>176,652</u>	<u>213,090</u>
TOTAL FUNDS		<u>176,652</u>	<u>213,090</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 4th Nov 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:


J Hayhow - Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024**

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Plant and machinery	- 33% on cost
Motor vehicles	- 20% on cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024

2. OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	2024	2023
	£	£
Fundraising events	5,962	4,399
Sale of books and cards	<u>1,243</u>	<u>470</u>
	<u>7,205</u>	<u>4,869</u>

3. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2024	2023
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>5,497</u>	<u>3,064</u>

4. RAISING FUNDS

Raising donations and legacies

	2024	2023
	£	£
Printing and stationery	1,471	1,735
Community event costs	3,954	570
Support costs	<u>1,020</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>6,445</u>	<u>2,305</u>

5. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 August 2024 nor for the year ended 31 August 2023.

Trustees' expenses

During the year 3 trustees received reimbursements to the sum of £892.36 in relation to general maintenance, community events and postage and stationery costs.

6. STAFF COSTS

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2024	2023
	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Keepers		

No employees received emoluments in excess of £60,000.

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £	Motor vehicles £	Totals £
COST			
At 1 September 2023	69,696	56,336	126,032
Additions	<u>1,600</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,600</u>
At 31 August 2024	<u>71,296</u>	<u>56,336</u>	<u>127,632</u>
DEPRECIATION			
At 1 September 2023	68,591	24,345	92,936
Charge for year	<u>368</u>	<u>6,398</u>	<u>6,766</u>
At 31 August 2024	<u>68,959</u>	<u>30,743</u>	<u>99,702</u>
NET BOOK VALUE			
At 31 August 2024	<u>2,337</u>	<u>25,593</u>	<u>27,930</u>
At 31 August 2023	<u>1,105</u>	<u>31,991</u>	<u>33,096</u>

8. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Other debtors	-	5,844
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>3,755</u>	<u>3,331</u>
	<u>3,755</u>	<u>9,175</u>

9. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Taxation and social security	748	-
Other creditors	<u>6,272</u>	<u>4,189</u>
	<u>7,020</u>	<u>4,189</u>

10. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1.9.23 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.8.24 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	198,090	(36,438)	161,652
Contingency reserve	<u>15,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,000</u>
	<u>213,090</u>	<u>(36,438)</u>	<u>176,652</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>213,090</u>	<u>(36,438)</u>	<u>176,652</u>

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024

10. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	103,245	(139,683)	(36,438)
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>103,245</u>	<u>(139,683)</u>	<u>(36,438)</u>

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1.9.22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.8.23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	182,830	15,260	198,090
Contingency reserve	<u>15,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,000</u>
	<u>197,830</u>	<u>15,260</u>	<u>213,090</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>197,830</u>	<u>15,260</u>	<u>213,090</u>

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	116,119	(100,859)	15,260
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>116,119</u>	<u>(100,859)</u>	<u>15,260</u>

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined position is as follows:

	At 1.9.22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.8.24 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	182,830	(21,178)	161,652
Contingency reserve	<u>15,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,000</u>
	<u>197,830</u>	<u>(21,178)</u>	<u>176,652</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>197,830</u>	<u>(21,178)</u>	<u>176,652</u>

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024

10. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	219,364	(240,542)	(21,178)
	<u>219,364</u>	<u>(240,542)</u>	<u>(21,178)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS			

11. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There were no related party transactions during the year.

**THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS**

**DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024**

	2024 £	2023 £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS		
Donations and legacies	53,233	57,906
Donations	36,310	-
London Borough of Bromley grant	<u>1,000</u>	<u>46,310</u>
Other grants	90,543	104,216
 Other trading activities	 5,962	 4,399
Fundraising events	<u>1,243</u>	<u>470</u>
Sale of books and cards	7,205	4,869
 Investment income	 5,497	 3,064
Deposit account interest		
 Other income	 <u>-</u>	 <u>3,970</u>
Other income	103,245	116,119
 Total incoming resources		
 EXPENDITURE		
Raising donations and legacies	1,471	1,735
Printing and stationery	<u>3,954</u>	<u>570</u>
Community event costs	5,425	2,305
 Charitable activities	 58,515	 57,641
Salaries and Nat. Insurance	7,028	7,230
Premises costs	4,848	4,627
Insurance	8,185	4,088
Vehicle and plant maintenance	46,037	19,250
General maintenance	492	882
Telephone, computer and post.	444	2,535
Health & Safety	923	1,055
Sundries	<u>6,766</u>	<u>-</u>
Plant and mach. depreciation	133,238	97,308
 Support costs		
 Governance costs	 1,020	 1,246
Accountancy and legal fees		

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

THE CHISLEHURST & ST. PAUL'S CRAY
COMMONS CONSERVATORS

DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
For The Year Ended 31 August 2024

	2024	2023
	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
Total resources expended	<u>139,683</u>	<u>100,859</u>
Net (expenditure)/income	<u>(36,438)</u>	<u>15,260</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements
