WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

England & Wales · Charity number 303167

Details

Other names	WPCC
Status	Registered
Legal form	Other
Registered	1972-04-14
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Ranger's Office Manor Cottage Windmill Road London SW19 5NR
Phone	020 8788 7655
Email	rangersoffice@wpcc.org.uk
Website	www.wpcc.org.uk

Activities

Objects: TO PRESERVE THE COMMONS AS OPEN SPACES FOR PURPOSES OF EXERCISE AND RECREATION AND OTHER PURPOSES.

Activities: The land under the jurisdiction of the Conservators is administered by the Conservators with a view to its preservation as an open space for the purposes of exercise and recreation. This is the principal object set out in the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871. It includes the management of the land and its flora and fauna.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science, Amateur Sport, Animals, Environment/conservation/heritage, Recreation
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, The General Public/mankind

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Geography

- Kingston Upon Thames
- Merton
- Wandsworth

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£2,657,320	£2,500,008	£3,205,171	26
2024-03-31	£2,310,920	£2,481,334	£3,143,557	27
2023-03-31	£2,173,813	£2,463,084	£3,178,052	26
2022-03-31	£1,969,378	£2,267,575	£848,165	22
2021-03-31	£1,871,961	£2,455,317	£217,012	22

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Mauro Mattiuzzo	Chair	2024-04-04
Christian Hansmeyer		2025-12-04
DAVID IAN BROWN		2024-04-04
Michael Frederick Johnston		2021-04-12
OLIVER BENNETT MBE		2021-02-02
Peter Shortt		2022-09-01
Susan Bucknall		2021-04-13
William Liu		2024-04-04

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WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

England & Wales - Charity number 303167

Accounts

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATORS

AND

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 303167

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

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The following abbreviations are used in this document.

WPCC or Charity	The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
1871 Act	Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871
Board	The Board of Conservators of WPCC
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
GAAP	United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme

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Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

Conservators	Oliver Bennett MBE – appointed by DEFRA January 2021; reappointed February 2024 David Brown – elected April 2024 Sue Bucknall – elected April 2021; re-elected 2024 Michael Johnston – elected April 2021; re-elected 2024 William Liu – elected April 2024 Mauro Mattiuzzo (Chairman) – elected April 2024 Peter Shortt – appointed by Ministry of Defence September 2022 Vacant - Home office appointed Conservator
Chief Executive	Colin Cooper
Principal Address	Ranger's Office Manor Cottage Windmill Road Wimbledon London SW19 5NR
Registered Charity Number	**303167**
Independent Auditors	Kreston Reeves LLP Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor 9 Donnington Park 85 Birdham Road Chichester West Sussex PO20 7AJ
Solicitors	Bates Wells 10 Queen Street Place London EC4R 1BE
Bankers	Barclays Bank plc 8 Alexandra Road Wimbledon London SW19 7JZ
Investment Advisors	CCLA Investment Management Limited One Angel Lane London EC4R 3AB

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Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

CONSERVATORS REPORT

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The last twelve months have been somewhat frustrating. I mentioned in last year's report that the Conservators had contacted DEFRA in December 2023 regarding the proposed increase in the Commons levy, following the completion of the public consultation which showed an overwhelming level of support for the increase. The calling of the general election in the Spring of 2024 led to a freezing of governmental administrative action and the election of a new Labour government, with new legislative priorities which it required to be implemented in the wake of the election, have meant that a decision on the levy increase remains outstanding. For the same reasons, the process to commence recruitment of our Home Office appointed conservator (replacing Nigel Ware, whose term expired in March 2024) has only recently been approved, which means that the Board has functioned with only seven of its complement of eight Conservators over the last twelve months.

In last year's report I stated that we had recently completed a detailed and comprehensive land management plan ('LMP'), a strategic document which set out WPCC's long-term visions and objectives for the natural environment of the Commons over the next decade, against a background of accelerating climate change and changing habitats. Over the last twelve months our conservation and maintenance teams have undertaken various heathland restoration, holly thinning and ride management works and I have been heartened by the number of positive comments we have received on how the Commons are looking. Most significantly, thanks to a grant of £130,000 from the Mayor of London's Rewild London Fund and the generosity of donors, we have been able to progress the restoration and rewilding of Queensmere Pond, as described in greater detail in the Chief Executive's report below.

Although we increased the levy for 2024/25 by RPI (and have done so again for 2025/26) our costs have continued to rise faster than our revenue with the result that, in order to balance our books, we have had to find ways of cutting costs from our budget. This has led to the postponement of capital projects and the acquisition of plant and equipment and to a freeze on some recruitment to replace departing staff members, putting an increased strain on our team and I want to express my gratitude to our staff led by our CEO, Colin Cooper, who, notwithstanding the increased demands placed on them continue to work tirelessly, with commitment and good humour.

We continue to develop our thinking on our plans to modernise and streamline our governance processes and to regularise our land and buildings in order that we can continue to comply with our fundamental duty to protect, enhance and maintain the Commons and to maintain, so far as possible, their natural aspect. Whilst we will not deviate from our obligations, so succinctly stated in the Wimbledon & Putney Commons Act 1871 (the 'Act'), to keep the Commons open, unenclosed and unbuilt on (save for buildings already then in existence), some clarification of the Act's provisions will assist us in safeguarding our holdings and in carrying out much-needed repairs and improvements to buildings. To this end we have commissioned a mapping survey of our land and buildings which is intended to reflect changes to the Commons since the original boundary plan and description was set out in the Act. That survey, together with changes to update the Act, the Commissioners Clauses Act 1847 and our byelaws in line with modern company and charities law will form the basis for a full consultation process with levy-payers which, if approved, will then be taken forward for regulatory approval, subject to funding.

Over the last twelve months we have sought to increase our engagement with organisations and groups which represent our communities, holding regular meetings with, or participating in events with, the Putney Society, the Wimbledon Society and residents' associations across Roehampton, Putney and Wimbledon. The Commons comprise a variety of diverse habitats, some of which are subject to regulatory oversight, and are geographically spread across those communities and through our liaison with those local organisations and groups we can ensure that all parts of the Commons are properly cared for and maintained and that local concerns are communicated to the Conservators and acted upon. In a similar vein, our stakeholder forum exists to provide a voice to all the user groups on the Commons.

This report is an opportunity for me to thank publicly a number of people, in addition to our staff mentioned above. First, my fellow Conservators for their commitment and dedication. Secondly, those individuals who are co-opted onto the various Board committees for their time and their wise counsel and expertise, so freely given. Our volunteers provide invaluable support (and no lack of physical effort) to our staff team

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in helping to keep the Commons so well-maintained. Last, but certainly not least, our benefactors and all our donors, including the Friends of WPCC, who have so generously helped us in our work and in funding projects such as Queensmere in these challenging financial times. We are immensely grateful to everyone who contributes towards the maintenance of our wonderful open spaces.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

The past year presented a confluence of significant challenges for the Commons, marked by financial pressures, substantial organisational change, and increasing environmental concerns across the UK, from which the Commons are not completely immune. Despite this rough terrain, considerable progress was made in key areas, and strategic adjustments now will position the charity for the future.

Financial headwinds intensified over the year, with costs rising significantly without a corresponding increase in levy income. This necessitated careful budgeting and difficult decisions. Consequently, several important Business Plan projects have been regrettably delayed until sufficient funding or financing becomes available. This includes major path and ride refurbishments, crucial for maintaining access and protecting habitats, and the eagerly awaited signage and interpretation project (which will include information signs for the Merton Suffragette Project and Wimbledon in Sporting History). The rebasing of the levy is therefore critical to addressing these funding gaps and supporting the essential upkeep valued by Commons users.

While the winter was drier than the previous year, ground conditions still presented challenges, causing degradation to paths, rides, roads, and car parks. Repairs are scheduled for the drier spring months which is necessary for this type of works. Due to current financial constraints, some paths and rides are receiving temporary patching rather than full restoration. Priority for works is determined by condition, usage levels, and the legal obligation to protect habitats within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The next major restoration planned is Scio Ride, a key route connecting Roehampton Underpass and Ponsonby Road.

The Queensmere Rewilding (restoration) project, aimed at enhancing community and ecological value, has been largely delivered thanks to a £130,000 grant from the Mayor of London's Rewild London fund, supplemented by generous donations and commemorative benches, for which we are very grateful. Spring growth of new marginal planting and reedbed promises to restore the pond as a green oasis and jewel in the crown. Options for a second phase, focusing on access enhancements and resting points on the steep hills, are being explored.

The Conservation Department is now better resourced (following Ranger Sarah Murton's move from Maintenance) to deliver the Land Management Plan, aiming to return the SSSI area (approx. 80% of the Commons) to 'favourable' ecological condition, fulfilling our legal duty under the Environment Act 2021. Further work has also commenced on mapping assets and habitats, improving species monitoring for evidence-led management, and taking initial steps to understand and reduce our carbon footprint.

We have actively deepened community ties by joining the Kingston Biodiversity Partnership and the Roehampton Partnership, and maintaining regular engagement with the Roehampton Women's Network, Putney Society, Wimbledon Society, Wimbledon Union of Residents Associations, and various residents' associations through presentations and meetings.

Recognising the financial pressures, we are investing in enhanced fundraising capacity. Fundraising Manager Maggie May returns from maternity leave next month, and Lynnie Farrant, who provided cover for the last year, is retained in a new post of Fundraising and Communications Coordinator. This dual capacity will enable us to pursue grants for capital projects (habitat/path improvements) while boosting income through appeals, legacies, and the commemorative bench scheme. The bench scheme continues to be popular (over 60 on the waiting list), providing high-quality resting places, commemorating loved ones, and generating vital funds for the Commons' upkeep.

The past year saw significant Conservator changes following the triennial elections, with three new conservators elected taking up the reins from 3 April 2024, whilst two Conservators were re-elected, along with two Appointed Conservators remaining in office (MOD and DEFRA), with the Home Office Appointed Conservator remaining unappointed for the year. Staffing changes, including the retirement of several long-serving and valued colleagues: Senior Keeper and Head Ranger Bill Rowland (41 years), Deputy Clerk and Ranger Paula Graystone (23 years), and Property Maintenance Officer Jim Hutchings (intermittent service since 1975). We also bid farewell to Jack Bye and Mark Scales.

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While presenting challenges, these departures provided an opportunity to restructure staffing to meet modern requirements, reduce overall costs, and strategically delay or pause some recruitment to reduce costs in the interim. We welcomed new Keepers Carl Lacey and Kris Newell, both with many years' service in the Household Cavalry Regiment. The mounted patrol remains essential for safety, byelaw enforcement (especially regarding fire risk on heathland and drones being flown), visibility, user engagement, and minimising ground impact and emissions compared to vehicles.

Several internal promotions strengthen our capacity: Philip Warner became part-time Chief Finance Officer, (and is now supported by a new part-time Finance Officer, Olivia McArthur), and Angela Evans-Hill, who has been with the charity for over 21 years in a variety of roles, was appointed Deputy Chief Executive, a role which replaces the now obsolete Deputy Clerk and Ranger role.

I am feeling more confident about the charity's future, particularly raising additional income to realise conservation, ride and path enhancement projects, these will be further enhanced when the rebasing of the levy is finally agreed.

'Lastly, I would like to give thanks to the hard work and dedication of all the staff and volunteer teams, who go above and beyond on a daily basis. Much of this is rarely seen by the visitors to the Commons, from early morning litter picking, emptying of bins, and removal of fly tips, to conservation work, upholding the byelaws and keeping visitors safe and organising community events.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED DURING THE PAST YEAR

Strategic Context

In June 2017, the Board approved the first ever Strategy ('the Strategy'), following a recommendation from the 2014 Governance Review. The Strategy sets out both the broad vision and specific initiatives for managing the Commons over the ten-year period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2028.

Our Vision

"Wimbledon and Putney Commons will be recognised as an exceptional and welcoming natural place for visitors where wildlife thrives".

The Strategy demonstrates the way in which the Board will play its part in making this area of South-West London a great place to live, work and visit, contributing towards a world class city. (A copy of the Strategy can be viewed on the WPCC website www.wpcc.org.uk/strategy). The Strategy identifies two overarching long-term Strategic Objectives, which remain relevant for the purposes of this Conservators' report and are set out in Figure 1 below.

Safeguard

and improve for the public benefit the natural environment and wildlife conservation together with the use of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in a manner appropriate to its rich heritage.

Engage

with the Commons' communities to promote and foster for the public benefit a wide knowledge and understanding of the historical, ecological and recreational significance of the Commons.

*We will **achieve** these through exemplary organisation and management, delivering services, projects, and attracting more resources to the benefit of the Commons.*

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Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged:

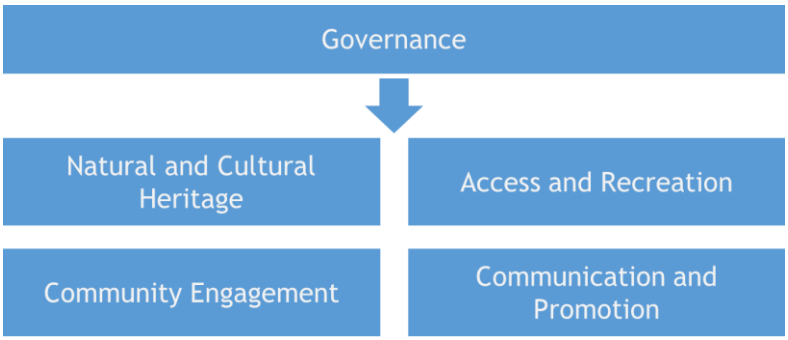

Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

Achievements and Performance 2024/2025

It is within this strategic framework that individual initiatives are progressed through the development of a three-year rolling Business Plan. In February 2025, the Board agreed the three-year Business Plan for the period up to 31 March 2028 in which 19 initiatives were agreed; progress on each of these initiatives over the past financial year is set out under each of the five Strategic Themes.

The current Board has placed a strong emphasis on planning for the long-term future of the Commons. Significant resources have been directed towards:

- developing the strategic plans which set out how the Commons will be managed for the benefit of wildlife and for people;
- putting in place the constitutional and governance framework to enable the charity to operate effectively in the 21st Century;
- securing the long-term financial resources required to ensure that WPCC can continue to manage the Commons to a very high standard.

Governance

Potential changes to the Constitutional Framework

In an effort to support the long-term planning framework for the Commons, the Board has continued to work towards clarifying and updating the charity's constitutional framework. One of the drivers for this initiative was a recognition by both the Board and the Charity Commission that certain governance arrangements for the Commons as set out in the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871 and the Commissioners Clauses Act 1847 needed to be updated. The second driver was the Board's recognition of the need to regularise and clarify certain land and building matters to enable WPCC to resolve a number of operational matters associated with managing the Commons. It is important to note that there is neither a desire nor intention of diluting or diminishing the very high level of protection that is afforded by the 1871 Act. The Conservators' desire is simply to modernise and clarify certain provisions in the legislation that govern the Commons in order to improve the day-to-day decision-making process.

The Constitution Working Group (CWG) was established by the Board in April 2018 to identify the constitutional changes required and the procedures through which any such changes could be effected. The Working Group was later made more formal and constituted as a committee.

With the Charity Commission having previously agreed that WPCC could submit an application for a section 73 scheme under the Charities Act 2011, Trustees and Officers have been working towards developing a suitable scheme for submission to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and WPCC to ensure their support. As part of this work, the Committee is developing an updated "1871" map to allow it to regularise the buildings that are currently in the Commons, and have some clarification of

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the Act's provisions to allow the charity to safeguard its holdings and carry out repairs and improvements. A mapping survey was carried out in early 2025 and the final map is nearing completion. The map will reflect changes to the Commons since the original boundary plan and description was set out in the Act.

The Board also agreed that before any application for a scheme were submitted, a public consultation on the proposed changes would be undertaken.

Potential changes to the levy

During 2024, WPCC continued to examine the case for rebasing the levy.

A founding principle of the 1871 Act is that the levy serves as the primary source of funding for the Commons. However, increasingly we are finding that the charity's income is insufficient to cover not just important work but also essential projects required to ensure that the Commons remain the safe attractive and welcoming open space that the community so values.

Following two public consultations in 2022 and 2023, the Trustees have submitted their request to DEFRA. The timing was unfortunate as it coincided with the calling of a general election and the subsequent change in government with the new Ministers having much to do in their first few months of office. During 2024, DEFRA requested further information on several occasions and the information was provided in a timely manner. In February 2025, DEFRA confirmed that a response would not be forthcoming in time to implement the changes in time for the 2024/25 financial year. At the time of writing, the matter is still outstanding and a decision awaited from Ministers.

Appointed Conservators

WPCC's governance structure stipulates that three of the eight Conservators are appointed by government departments: the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); the Home Office; and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). In line with the term for elected Conservators, appointments are for a period of three years.

Although due to stand down for personal reasons in 2024, Peter Shortt, the Ministry of Defence Conservator has agreed to continue in the role for a further term. The process for his reappointment from August 2025 is currently underway. The Home Office appointment has been vacant since Nigel Ware stood down in March 2024. Following a delay brought about by the general election and the new government assessing their priorities, the recruitment process began in March 2025 and it is hoped to have the role filled later in 2025, bringing the Board up to its full complement.

Staffing

2025/25 has been a year of more staff changes than are usually experienced by the charity. The Deputy Clerk and Ranger, Paula Graystone, retired at the end of 2024 after 23 years of service. Bill Rowland, former Senior Keeper and latterly Head Ranger at Putney Lower Common retired in August 2024 following over 40 years of service. Property Maintenance Manager, Jim Hutchings, retired at the end of January 2025, having worked for the charity on and off since 1975.

The Chief Executive has taken this opportunity to reorganise the senior leadership team to strengthen the charity's resilience moving forward. Angela Evans-Hill, who has been with the charity for over 21 years in a variety of roles, has been promoted to Deputy Chief Executive, a role which replaces the now obsolete Deputy Clerk and Ranger role. Philip Warner, previously the Management Accountant, became part-time Chief Finance Officer, and is now supported by a new part-time Finance Officer, Olivia McArthur.

The Conservation Team has been expanded with the creation of a new role of Conservation Ranger, and this position was filled by Sarah Murton, previously a member of our maintenance team, who can utilise her ecology experience to better use in this position.

The Mounted Keepers are now up to full strength with the appointment of two new Keepers, Carl Lacey and Kris Newell, both with previous experience in the Household Cavalry.

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Natural and Cultural Heritage

London in Bloom

London in Bloom is an independent charity and part of Britain in Bloom.

Focusing on the key themes of horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility and community participation, the Commons have been involved with the annual London in Bloom campaign since 2013 and each year, Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common are entered as separate entries into the category of London Commons.

During 2024, we were delighted that both entries received a Gold Award and Wimbledon Common was also voted by the London in Bloom judges as London Common of the year. Wimbledon Common has now been presented with a Gold Award at the annual London in Bloom Awards for eight consecutive years and it has also been voted winner of the London Commons category on eight separate occasions. As a separate entry, Putney Lower Common has also been presented with a Gold Award for the past eight consecutive years.

A Gold Award is presented to entries that have demonstrated an exceptionally high standard throughout the London in Bloom judging process and have consistently demonstrated both best practice and sustainable effort in all the judging criteria and objectives set by the London in Bloom campaign.

Land Management Plan

The Commons' Land Management Plan provides a pro-active management framework which highlights the special qualities of the Commons and the importance of its landscape while identifying those areas of the site that may be vulnerable to damage or require additional attention to ensure their long-term survival. It has been designed for anyone who has an interest in the future management of the Commons and will remain an active document that is periodically reviewed and updated where required.

The Commons' Land Management Plan is both aspirational and ambitious and will help to direct the management of the Commons natural resources in a way that has never been undertaken on this site before. The success of this plan will rely on the co-operation and involvement of everyone who works, volunteers or simply cares about the Commons and their future well-being.

While holistic in its approach to the management of the Commons, operationally, the Land Management Plan focuses on some of the most important habitats and areas of land on the Commons. This includes areas as heathland, grassland, woodland, valley mires and the Beverley Brook. During the first year of operation, we have been very pleased with the progress that has been made with Land Management Plan and in many areas, we have managed to exceed our initial expectations of what could be achieved.

Management Works

Heathland Management

Lowland heathland is an internationally important landscape which is listed as a priority habitat for conservation in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Lowland heathland is comprised of a mosaic of habitats that are found on extremely impoverished, acidic soils which occur in areas with mild temperatures and regular rainfall. The landscape in which lowland heathland can be found is characteristically open and dominated by low growing vegetation, with areas of bare ground, wetland and scrub. According to Natural England (2002), there is now only approximately 16% of the heathland area that previously existed in the UK in 1800.

In Greater London, lowland heathland is now limited to a very small number of sites. It is believed the coverage of lowland heathland within Greater London amounts to approximately 80 hectares with the largest single area of this habitat found on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath.

According to the Commons 2016 National Vegetation Classification Survey, the heathland distribution on the Commons is mainly located east of Inner Windmill Road and Windmill Ride south, on The Plain and on the central area of Putney Heath, north of the windmill. There are also occasional small areas of heathland associated with the golf course and towards the Wimbledon Village War Memorial.

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According to Natural England (2016), the aim of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators should be to restore the combined total extent of the Commons' European dry heaths and North Atlantic wet heaths, including its component habitats and transition to adjacent habitats, to a total extent of 48.6 hectares. It is important to note from this advice that the inclusion of component habitat types includes acid grassland, gorse, scrub, bracken and birch woodland, all of which are found on the Commons. By following the prescriptions that have been provided in the Commons' Land Management Plan, it is anticipated that the total area of heathland habitat outlined for the Commons by Natural England can be achieved.

It is important to note that as a direct consequence of the lowland heathland that is found on the Commons, since 1953, 364.5 hectares of the Commons' total area of 461 hectares have been designated a Site of Special Interest (SSSI). In 1986, the same area of land was also designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). SSSI and SAC designations are only assigned to areas of land in the UK that are especially valuable in terms of the flora, fauna, physiological or geological features that can be found on them and as a result, they are provided with a high level of legal protection.

To help protect the Commons' heathland and ensure there is no further loss of this important habitat, between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, a wide range of tasks were carried out by staff and volunteers. As prescribed in the Commons' Land Management Plan, heathland management included the following activities:

Tree removal – During 2024, the removal of invasive trees on the heathland was carried out in three areas (Jubilee Path, Centre Path and Kingsmere). On all three areas of heathland, invasive species such as Turkey oak and silver birch were cut back while most semi-mature English oak were left untouched. All felled trees have either been used to construct deadwood habitats on the heathland or they have been positioned around the perimeter of the Commons to prevent any unwanted vehicular access. Over the coming months, other sections of timber will be used to construct leaky dams along the two small streams that feed into Queensmere.

Scrub management – Cutting back of small invasive saplings is carried out throughout the year by various groups of volunteers. All cut materials are either shredded and removed from the heathland or used for dead hedging around various parts of the Commons.

Stump Grinding - During 2024, stump grinding was carried out by the WPCC Maintenance Team on three areas of heathland. This work involves using specialized machinery to grind a tree stump down to below ground level. This prevents re-growth from occurring and removes a potential hazard that can damage vehicles and machinery during future operations. It should however be noted that where large tree stumps do not pose a hazard, these are generally left on-site to naturally decay and provide important dead wood habitats.

Heather Cutting - Heather cutting is carried out to regenerate and maintain heather stands. All cut materials are removed to prevent a litter mat developing which if left on-site would suppress seedling development and add to the fertility of the soil. During October 2024, heather was cut by the WPCC Maintenance Team on The Plain. Using a specialist piece of machinery that had kindly been provided by the team at the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club, all heather and heather seed that had been collected through this work was transported to two areas of the Wimbledon Common Golf Course where soil scrapes had been created to help with the restoration of heather along the edge of the course.

Gorse cutting – Gorse cutting was carried out by volunteers where it was found to be over mature and provided a fire hazard.

Bracken control - While bracken provides food and shelter for many different species, if left un-managed, it can become invasive and dominate large areas of open ground. To help manage the coverage of bracken on the Commons heathland, each year, between July and August, the WPCC Maintenance Team carry out bracken bruising. This work involves the use of a bracken bruising roller that crushes the stem of the bracken causing it to bleed with the intention of weakening the underground rhizome system.

Firebreak Management - Wildfires are of increasing concern in the UK and while the Commons managed to escape any major fires during 2024, firebreak management remains an ongoing part of our annual heathland management programme. This job involves the Commons Maintenance Team

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mowing paths/firebreaks across the heath and areas of open grassland. These firebreaks are designed to slow down the spread of surface fires.

Heathland cut and collect - During 2024, cut and collect on the Commons heathland took place on three areas of heathland. Like other cut and collect work that is carried out on the Commons, all arisings are removed from site to prevent a litter mat developing which would suppress the development of seedlings.

Grassland Management

As with many aspects of looking after the Commons, grassland management involves a careful balancing act between the requirements people and the needs of wildlife. It is for this reason that we undertake a variety of different management approaches to looking after the various areas of grassland on the Commons.

For example, whenever necessary, road verges are kept short to ensure that sight lines are maintained along busy roads and, in some areas, selected areas of grassland with particularly high levels of recreational use are periodically mown to provide visitors with clearly identifiable areas where they can play or sit down and relax. The main areas where this management occurs are close to Wimbledon Village, opposite the Windmill and close to All Saints' Church on Putney Lower Common.

For most of the larger areas of grassland on the Commons, the focus of our management is on improving the conservation value of these sites. Without regular and ongoing care, which at the very least should include an annual programme of work where vegetation is cut and removed (also known as cut and collect) from the site, any open area of land will gradually revert to scrub and eventually woodland. On the Commons, this work is carried out through a combination of employing the services of an external contractor to cut and remove vegetation from the largest conservation grassland sites and by using our own machinery to carry out a similar programme of work on many of the other smaller and harder to access sites.

During 2024, the number of grassland sites on the Commons where cut and collect was successfully carried out exceeded what had been scheduled in the Land Management Plan and included a total of 24 areas of grassland.

Wimbledon Common Golf Course

In addition to the Commons' open areas of grassland, the grassland that surrounds the Wimbledon Common Golf Course (WCGC) is also of immense ecological value. The WCGC is a standard 18-hole course which is comprised of improved grassland (tees and greens), fairways, short acid grassland (semi-rough and rough) woodland edge, scrub and remnant heath. Along with the areas of heathland that are located around the edge of the golf course, the areas of grassland which form the semi-rough and rough provide an important reason for the Commons' SSSI and SAC designations.

As part of the Commons Land Management Plan, the vision for the WCGC is "to improve the ecological condition of the land that surrounds the immediate area of the golf course while preserving the quality of golf that can be played on site".

During the first year of the Commons' Land Management Plan, the following work was carried out around the edge of the WCGC.

Management of the woodland edge – By thinning selected areas of woodland along the edge of the golf course, it is expected that shading will be reduced leading to improved species diversity and habitat structure and the restoration of improved sightlines and public safety around the course. During 2024, small trees and overhanging branches were cut back along the edge of five fairways. These included Big Ravine, Running Deer, Queensmere, Heather and Long Butt. Follow up work in all five areas has included mowing bramble, removal of bracken and use of the Commons tractor mounted mower to blow the accumulated leaf mulch into the surrounding woodland.

Heathland Restoration (including the creation of areas of bare ground)

During 2024, two areas of bare ground were created around the edge of the WCGC (Birches and Caesar's Camp fairways). When completed, both areas of bare ground were covered with heather seed that had been collected through the mowing of mature heather on The Plain. In recent years, ten areas

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of bare ground have been created around the edge of the WCGC and in most cases, heather regeneration has occurred on these sites.

Management of acid grassland - The presence of acid grassland on the Commons forms one of the main reasons for the site's SSSI and SAC designation. Acid grassland occurs on nutrient poor, free draining acidic soils with a pH lower than 5.5. Often occurring as part of a heathland mosaic, acid grassland is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and is therefore a top priority for wildlife conservation nationally.

As the area of 'rough' around the edge of the golf course supports a high coverage of acid grassland, these areas are managed by the Commons maintenance team through a rotational programme of cut and collect. During 2024, acid grassland was cut and collected along the edge of seven fairways. Unfortunately, wet weather meant that we were unable to manage additional areas of acid grassland, but we hope to improve on this during 2025.

Monitoring of the golf course - Although a formal programme of species monitoring on the golf course has not yet been enacted, approximately twice a year, the Commons' Conservation and Engagement Officer photographs the course and ensures that fairways do not exceed 20 metres and the semi-rough either side of the fairways does not exceed a width of five metres. While this is just a formality, it allows WPCC staff to inspect the course and prepare for any future actions that may be required. During summer 2024, the course looked amazing with flourishing areas of acid grassland and heathland on display.

Covering an area of 291 hectares, which represents almost two-thirds of the total area of the Commons, woodland is the dominant habitat type found on the Commons. During the past year, woodland management on the Commons has included holly thinning, hazel coppicing, ride management, open space management, the creation of deadwood habitats and tree safety work.

Holly thinning – While holly is a valuable native species, providing both nesting opportunities for birds and a source of nectar and pollen for a wide range of invertebrates, the success of holly on the Commons has resulted in large areas of woodland becoming dominated by this single species.

During the first year of the Commons' Land Management Plan, holly thinning was carried out along one side of Queensmere and on two hectares of woodland adjacent to Jerry's Hill. Together, these two areas of holly thinning have provided the following improvements to the Commons:

- Improved public accessibility to the woodland.
- Improved security on the Commons
- Increased potential for woodland regeneration to occur.
- Improved the view from the top of the east side of Queensmere to the pond which was previously obscured by dense vegetation.
- Improved the wave action and aeriation at Queensmere which is important in helping to disperse algal species and duckweed.

Hazel coppicing – Wherever a significant number of hazel trees are found on the Commons, they are managed by WPCC staff and volunteers on a rotational basis where they are generally re-coppiced every five to seven years. While coppicing is one of the oldest woodland management techniques that is still in use today, its implementation is quite straightforward and simply involves cutting back the vertical shoots back to the stump or stool. By the following spring, new shoots will have emerged which provide an indefinite crop which in the past was harvested for a wide range of uses including fencing and tool handles. Today, all coppiced hazel on the Commons is used to create dead hedges around the site.

Although produced by artificial means, coppiced woodland helps to provide a variety of structure in a woodland setting which is of great benefit to sun loving invertebrates and other wildlife. During the first year of the Commons Land Management Plan, hazel coppicing was carried out along the edge of Robin Hood Ride and the edge of Warren Farm Ride.

Ride Management – During the beginning of 2025, ride management was carried out along the upper section of Robin Hood Ride. This is the fourth piece of ride management that has been carried out on the Commons over the past few years. Other rides have included Upper Gravelly Ride, Lower Gravelly Ride and Warren Farm Ride. On all four sites, this work has involved cutting back non-native and low-

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quality trees along the edge of the ride to approximately 15 metres. This work is carried out to reduce shading and allow increased levels of light to reach the woodland floor which in turn will lead to the development of a long interface between a dense scrub edge and other open nectar sources which are important for invertebrates and other wildlife. For all four rides where ride management has recently been carried out, the visual impact has been dramatic creating rides that are far sunnier than had previously been the case and according to some regular visitors, this work has also helped to make the Commons feel a much safer place to walk alone.

Open space management – Similar to hazel coppicing and ride management work, the creation and maintenance of woodland glades helps to enhance the biodiversity of a woodland. Offering a contrasting habitat to the closed higher canopy which is a common feature of many British woodlands, woodland glades and other open spaces within a woodland provide a refuge and a source of food to many invertebrates that may not be available in other areas of the site.

During the first year of the Land Management Plan, open space management has focused on the restoration of the Brickfield site which is located adjacent to Robin Hood Ride and the creation of open areas of woodland where holly thinning has been carried out.

Deadwood habitats - An important part of the Commons ongoing programme of woodland management is to create and retain as much standing and fallen deadwood on the Commons as possible. As noted by the Forestry Commission (2005) deadwood is a fundamental base to the woodland ecosystem with dead and rotting wood providing nest sites for birds and a very high level of insect biomass.

Over the past few years, some of the methods that have been used to maintain dead wood habitats on the Commons have included the management of monoliths (large standing deadwood), the creation of log piles, burying large pieces of timber beneath the ground and through ring barking (otherwise known as girdling) unwanted invasive nonnative species such as Turkey oak. During the first year of the Commons Land Management Plan, the creation of deadwood habitats focused on the Commons' ongoing programme of tree safety work and several large standing monoliths were created as part of the ride management along the edge of Robin Hood Ride.

Pond Management

During the first year of the Commons Land Management Plan, the focus of our pond management has been on the restoration or 're-wilding' of Queensmere. Thanks to funding from the Rewild London Fund, a comprehensive survey of Queensmere was commissioned prior to the commencement of any work. In brief, the results from this survey stated that the ecology of Queensmere was "impoverished and in poor condition".

Commissioned to inform a programme of waterbody improvements that would improve the ecology and overall functionality of Queensmere, it was clear from the surveys and studies undertaken that Queensmere required increased and focused management measures to help improve the pond in the years to come. It was considered that while small incremental management processes would bring results over time, the pond needed a significant amount of work to reverse years of ecological succession.

The report highlighted five key points that would improve the overall health of the waterbody. These included:

- Tree management – specifically canopy shading.
- Sediment – silt emanating from bank erosion and run-off.
- Management of waterfowl – impact on water quality and establishing aquatic plants.
- Access – managing both human and dog access
- Water – managing catchment rainfall.

The first key area from the report to be addressed was tree management around the perimeter of the pond as it was considered that extensive tree cover and tree related debris was negatively impacting the overall health and ecology of the waterbody. One consequence of reducing the tree canopy around the edge of Queensmere would be to significantly reduce the volume of leaf litter that falls directly into the pond. The most significant benefit of carrying out tree management close to the edge of the pond would however be that increased levels of light would provide the energy that will power the

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regeneration of the fauna and flora that should be found in this area. The reduction of the tree cover began during the beginning of November 2024 and involved the reduction of dense holly and bankside alders close to the edge of the east bank of the pond. This work was carried out by an external forestry contractor and was a continuation of the holly thinning that was carried out earlier in the year by the same contractor further up the slope towards Queensmere Fairway. With this section of woodland now largely clear of dense holly, it has been interesting to witness the increased wind movement over the pond which has increased the wave action and aeriation that should help to disperse algal species and duckweed in the future. Following the clearance of holly and bankside alders, the next stage of the tree work in this area was carried out the WPCC Maintenance Team towards the end of November 2024. This work involved further canopy thinning and extensive tree safety work.

With the tree work completed, the next stage of the restoration project involved the arrival of external contractors Aquamaintain Ltd, who had been commissioned to carry out the main part of the project.

The project brief involved the following list of work:

- Remove silt from the pond
- Construct pre-vegetated coir roll revetments around the perimeter and backfill with silt
- Relandscape the adjacent banks using removed silt
- Construct and plant a 30m by 40m reedbed
- Construct a silt trap lagoon
- Construct access points around the perimeter of the pond including a decking platform and a dog beach
- Construct a new headwall and fencing at the outlet

The canopy shading around Queensmere had resulted in almost no marginal or emergent vegetation growing in this area of the Commons, although there were a few water lilies present in the pond. Plants play an important role in the freshwater ecosystem because they provide habitat, serve as a substrate for spawning, supply food, purify the water, produce oxygen and regulate the nitrogen cycle. To provide much needed marginal vegetation to Queensmere, pre planted coir revetments have been created along two sides of the pond and backfilled with silt that has been dredged from the pond. The other main area of planting has been through the creation of a reedbed towards the inlet of the pond. Reeds have been planted into the graded silt at a rate of 10 plants per m2 and as with our other planting at Queensmere, this area will remain protected by fencing until vegetation can become well-established. As noted by the WWT (2025) "*reedbeds don't just provide a home for wildlife. They are also great at helping clean our water, filtering and purifying waste-water and providing a buffer against pollution*".

Over the coming years, it will be great to see the Queensmere reedbed flourish but in terms of keeping the water in Queensmere as clean as possible, we have also carried out some additional work on site. Firstly, the creation by Aquamaintain of a silt trap lagoon will help us to capture and remove silt before it reaches the pond. This will also be aided by multiple leaky dams that will be created by WPCC along the ditches that transport water from the plateau to the pond. These leaky dams will help to slow and retain flowing water entering the pond and collect silt and unwanted nutrients along the way. Additional benefits of using leaky dams for this work is they create refuge for micro-organisms and plant roots, offer growing sites for bryophytes and fungi and they are reasonably cheap and straightforward to construct.

Other work at Queensmere has included the creation of a dog access area near the outlet of the pond, the creation of a small island and while slightly behind schedule, a viewing platform will also be created during 2025.

Although we are immensely proud of what has been achieved so far at Queensmere, there is more planned for the future. Our plans to further enhance Queensmere and its surrounding area include the installation of two large information boards at either end of the pond, the positioning of two fixed point photography posts, additional tree safety work and the improvement to access routes around the pond.

Putney Lower Common

Putney Lower Common is separated from the main body of the Commons by just over one mile and covers an area of approximately 20 hectares (50 acres). The semi-natural landscape of Putney Lower

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Common includes areas of open grassland, woodland, a small section of the Beverley Brook and sporting facilities which include a cricket pitch, bowling club and a tennis court.

While much of the management on Putney Lower Commons is routine, during the first year of the Commons Land Management Plan, the following operations were carried out.

- Management of Japanese knotweed.
- Management of Himalayan balsam.
- Grassland cut and collect on three of the largest areas of grassland.
- Removal of two invasive tree of Heaven from along the edge of the cemetery wall.
- Reduction of overhanging branches along the edge of the Beverley Brook.
- The creation of deadwood habitats through tree safety work.

Access and Recreation

Staff continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the Commons remain accessible and safe for all visitors.

Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields

The grounds continue to host weekend community football matches and provide sporting facilities for schools.

Putney Lower Common Tennis Courts

The licence for the running of the tennis courts expired in 2024 and agreement could not be reached with the licensee over how the courts should be run moving forward. The courts have therefore remained close since July 2024. An Expression of Interest process was launched in October 2024 and five submissions were received. Following an interview process, a preferred provider was selected and discussions are underway with them on how to manage the courts moving forward given their current state of disrepair.

Community Engagement and Events

WPCC's annual programme of events is increasingly important in terms of providing opportunities for members of the local and wider communities to engage with the Commons for the purposes of education, entertainment and social interaction.

Further community engagement opportunities are being created, with staff increasingly becoming involved in local community organisations such as Our Roehampton, the Roehampton Women's Network and the Wimbledon Village Walk and Talk. The Roehampton Base Youth Group now visit regularly and the children get to experience scrub-bashing and have a tour of the Windmill and the Keeper's stables.

The Chairman, Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive have been giving a variety of presentations to local organisations and residents' associations. This provides a welcome opportunity to spread the word about the work that goes on to manage the Commons in a day-to-day basis.

Conservators and Officers are also working with the three amenity societies - Putney Society, Wimbledon Society and Our Roehampton – to forge stronger links and provide mutual support for the benefit of the local community.

Volunteer Programme

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the Commons volunteer programme has continued to provide countless benefits to the Commons and the wider community. Providing a wide range of activities on the Commons, we take immense pride that every volunteer activity that is provided is of direct benefit in helping to protect and enhance this site.

During the past year, volunteering activities that have occurred on the Commons have included the following activities:

- Sunday morning scrub bashing

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- Mid-week volunteer Estate Team
- Beverley Brook volunteer litter pickers
- Single visit volunteer groups
- Farm Bog volunteers
- Duke of Edinburgh Award litter pickers
- Membership of various forums and stakeholder groups
- Wildlife recorders
- Events volunteers
- Work experience volunteers.

WPCC Events

WPCC holds two events each year that are specifically aimed at children and their families: the Easter Egg Hunt and the Halloween Pumpkin Hunt. Both events are simple yet popular, priced to ensure that they are accessible to all (£2 entry fee) and successfully attract families that otherwise may not visit the Commons. Wooden easter eggs or pumpkins are hidden around the nature trail with children having to find them and record what they see on them. Each entrant wins a prize and a winner of an overall prize is drawn at random. The events provide both entertainment and educational opportunities to learn about the Commons. In addition, there is a colouring competition, also with prizes. Around 800 children took part in each event.

The Weekend of Nature has become a core annual event attracting people of all ages. The event is key in terms of encouraging those of the younger generation with a keen interest in nature as well as introducing the Commons' wildlife to those who may not have previously understood its importance. This year, the event started on the evening of Friday 21 June 2024 with the small mammal survey. Those taking part came back to the Commons at 6.30am on the Saturday morning. There are two nature walks on the Saturday, the Butterfly and Dragonfly Walk, followed in the evening by a very popular bat and moth evening. On Sunday a "base camp" is set up at the Ranger's Office and events include a bird walk, moth identification, a general nature walk and various stalls of interest such as macroscopy and reptiles.

It is estimated that approximately 200 people took part in these programmed events over the course of the weekend with many people stopping at the base camp where they could learn more about the Commons.

Several other nature walks were held during the year for butterfly and dragonflies in addition to three further bird walks. These walks were all well-attended with some 20 or so people joining each one. A Birdsong Workshop and Walk was held in April, giving a group of 12 people an opportunity to learn about the birdsong on the Commons.

The annual **Commons Open Day** was held on Sunday 8 September. The event was one of the biggest we have had with some 80 stalls and attractions, it was estimated that around 10,000 visitors attended with the event becoming a firm fixture in the Wimbledon and Putney social calendars. Organised by two members of staff, but with the whole team contributing, the popularity and success of this event is an enormous credit to WPCC's staff. The 2024 event also included a nature walk which was very well attended.

The annual Christmas Carols at the Windmill event was held on Saturday 14 December 2024. The occasion continues to go from strength to strength with, this year, a much larger attendance than in previous years. It was estimated that approximately 700 visitors enjoyed mince pies, hot chocolate, mulled wine and a sing-along to carols played by the Wandle Concert Band. This year was exceptional with over £2,000 (net) raised that was divided between WPCC and the Windmill Museum Trust.

2025 events began with WPCC's Winter Talk held on Tuesday 19 February. WPCC was delighted to welcome guest speaker Sam Facey from the Zoological Society of London who gave a fascinating talk on ZSL's London Water Vole Recovery Programme.

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Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

The Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons was established in September 2019 as a Conservator-led, integral part of WPCC. The Friends bring together all of those who are connected by a passion for the Commons for the purposes of fund raising and celebration of the Commons.

The Friends celebrated their 5th anniversary in 2024, having been established in 2019, and have raised more than £200,000 for WPCC in this half-decade through membership fees and fundraising events.

Income from subscriptions supports the wider work of the charity as well as supporting grant applications with contributions as matched funds. We are grateful to the dedicated Conservators and volunteers who organise events for members and the community.

The six membership categories are as follows:

- Individual Friend - £30 per year (or £3 per month)
- Individual Friend Concessionary - £15 per year (or £1.50 per month)
- Household Friend - £40 per year (or £4 per month)
- Benefactor - £250 per year (or £20 per month)
- Patron - £1,000 per year (£85 per month)
- Corporate - £5,000 per year (£420 per month)

Membership continues to rise and, at the year end, we had a total of 1,010 members, including 51 Benefactors. In 2024, Robert Holmes of Robert Holmes & Company agreed to become Patron.

In order to reduce the amount of attrition through credit/debit cards not being updated, and memberships perhaps unwittingly lapsing, a new Direct Debit payment method has been introduced as an option.

Friends Events

The Friends hosted and assisted with a busy summer programme of events including:

- A 5th birthday tea party at the London Scottish Golf Club which was attended by current members and guests.

- Visit to the Houses of Parliament, including a tour of the Jewel Tower, the Houses of Lords and Commons and a brief meet and greet with the new Wimbledon MP Paul Kohler.

- Art of Illusion fundraising event in October which raised more than £2,200 for the Queensmere Restoration Project.

- The popular Friends walks on the Commons continued, with themes ranging from birdsong to the Beatles.

- Friends volunteers were also instrumental in assisting with fundraising and community engagement at major WPCC events including the Annual Open Day and the Christmas Carols at the Windmill, where they handed out song sheets and collected cash and card donations, raising £1,370.

Going forward, the Friends will be running and manning the Christmas Carols, the Easter Egg Hunt and October's Hallowe'en Pumpkin Hunt, as well as organising the VE Day 80th anniversary commemorations in Wimbledon along with the Wimbledon Society [VE day has happened as at date of these accounts]

RunThrough Events

Following a meeting with the RunThrough events founder, the Friends have entered an agreement to supply volunteers for each RunThrough event staged on the Commons.

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The Friends first supplied volunteers to run the December 2024 Christmas Run Bag Drop, with the event organisers donating £20 per volunteer to WPCC. In addition, WPCC was gifted 20 charity places by RunThrough. Eight runners took these up, donating their entry fee directly to the charity.

WPCC have been offered 20 charity places for each RunThrough event taking place on the Commons in 2025 and the Friends have started the year by providing 10 volunteers for the April event's bag drop, earning praise for providing a first-class service.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN 2025/26

2025/26 will see the completion or continuation of a number of major projects commenced by WPCC during 2024/5. These include:

- Constitutional Reform – WPCC retains a desire to clarify and modernise certain constitutional provisions, to enable more effective governance of the charity by working with the Charity Commission, Government and politicians. The Board will continue to work to finalise its proposals for a section 73 scheme under the Charities Act 2011.
- Fundraising – It continues to remain the case that essential or important work has to be postponed due to our limited financial resources, but measures put in place over the previous fiscal year have resulted in addition fundraised income. Following the return from maternity leave of Maggie May, Fundraising Manager, we will also retain Lynnie Farrant who provided maternity cover, in a new role of Fundraising and Communications Coordinator. This additional resource will enhance our ability to increase income from fundraising in order to provide the investment necessary to protect the Commons. We will seek funds to enhance the ecological value of Farm Bog, replace signage and interpretation on the Commons working with partners to include social and sport heritage, improve more footpaths and rides to increase ease of access and secure addition funds for the second phase of the Queensmere project.
- Governing Legislation – Understand the conflicting requirements of the different legislation that applies to the Commons, such as the 1871 Act of Parliament, charity legislation and the requirements under the SSSI and SAC designations.
- Habitat restoration – undertake restoration work to Farm Bog and ecological enhancements of other important habitats and at Putney Lower Common.
- Access Improvements – Budget constraints meant that the commissioning of a hydrology study had to be delayed. This work will proceed during 2025/26 which will help us to understand the water flow through the Commons to protect paths and rides, whilst also looking at the potential for the creation of new seasonal ponds and wet woodlands. It is hoped to also achieve grant funding for further footpath repairs, particularly focusing on Putney Heath south and north of the A3.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Overview

Unrestricted Funds

The Charity has had to deal with some significant financial pressures during this last year. In terms of income, there has been a loss of some school sports related contracts, and in terms of expenditure there were pressures on utilities costs and on maintenance of properties for staff accommodation. On top of this, the Charity also suffered a loss on its investments.

In order to mitigate against these pressures, vacancies have had to be held open for longer than usual, and discretionary spend on the Charity's business plan has had to be delayed. A focus in year on fund raising has also generated considerable income from donations, notably for new memorial benches.

As a result, for the year ended 31 March 2024, the Charity's Unrestricted funds made a modest loss of only £6k.

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Restricted Funds

The Charity received significant grants and donations towards 3 key restricted funds in the year.

- Queensmere restoration - £177k of grants and donations was received to fund a major restoration of the Queensmere pond, of which £131k was spent in the year.
- Woodlands – a legacy of £30k was given to the Charity and spent on woodland habitat management.
- Archiving – a generous donation of £31k (including Gift Aid) was received to pay for archiving of some of the Charity's historic records. This will be spent in the coming year.

The Charity's Restricted Funds overall show an increase of £67k, representing the funds received in 2024/25 which are due to be spent in 25/26.

Income

Unrestricted income for the year was £2,413k, which was £201k or 9.1% higher than the previous year. The main changes in income were as follows:

- An increase in levy income of £132k (8.9% in line with RPI).
  Levy income represented 67% of the charity's total unrestricted income for the year, the same as last year.
- Income from Sports, and Rents & Licences fell by £50k (9.3%).
- Donations & Grants income increased by £94k (85%) most notably due to generous donations notably for new memorial benches.

Expenditure

Total unrestricted fund expenditure on charitable activities for the year was £2,333k which is an £6k increase on the previous year.

Despite high levels of inflation, including inflation related pay increases for staff, and significant increases in utilities costs, the Charity has managed to hold unrestricted fund expenditure overall at last year's levels by holding vacancies for longer than is usual, and by deferring spend on the long term business plan projects.

The main changes in expenditure relate to

- Direct Costs increased by £259k as a result of
  - Windmill - £63k reduction (23/24 saw a major costs of restoration works)
  - Keepers and Commons security - £103k reduction, largely due to 2 vacancies which were held through last summer.
  - Commons maintenance – £13k reduction in costs, which is a net increase principally related to inflation, less some costs of conservation now analysed separately.
  - Playing fields maintenance - £93k additional costs related to inflation and increased costs of grounds maintenance.
  - Property maintenance - £98k increase re inflation and the costs of renovations to staff accommodation.
  - Conservation - £172k. The Charity has set up a dedicated conservation team to focus on the conservation as well as the general maintenance of our natural environment.
- Support Costs totalled £431k in the year, a reduction of £111k as a result of
  - Triennial election costs of £64k incurred last year not recurring
  - Reduced Legal & Professional fees of £37k
  - Reduced net service costs on the defined benefit pension scheme of £28k
  - Reduction in Admin staffing costs of £8k driven partly by restructuring.
  - Reduction in Insurance costs of £15k

Other matters

Gains and Losses

Financial markets globally saw declines in the year, largely due to political instability in early 2025. WPCC's investment fund valuation fell £69k in 2024/25, compared to a £135k gain in the previous year.

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The actuarial loss in the defined benefit pension scheme was £27k after adjustment restricting the surplus position to nil. This figure is a technical adjustment offset by a net £27k income from interest gains.

Cash Position.

At 31 March 20254 the charity's bank balances amounted to £278k, a small £6k reduction from the balance of £284k at 31 March 2023.

By managing to contain the P&L deficit to a minimum, and a focusing on effective income recovery and significantly reducing aged Debtors, the Charity has maintained its cash position and avoided having to draw down any of its investments.

Pension Scheme

The charity is a member of the London Borough of Merton Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The scheme has an actuarial valuation every 3 years prepared to assess the funding position of the LGPS and to determine the contributions actually payable by participating employers for the following three years.

The latest triennial actuarial valuation (TAV) was published in March 2023 and set out the actuarial position at 31 March 2022 and the contributions required for the three years ending 31 March 2026 and can be inspected at https://bit.ly/MPFactuarial.

For accounting purposes, a different valuation methodology is used which is intended to aid comparison between different entities with defined benefit pension schemes. The element of the valuation methodology which causes the greatest difference between the two valuations is the discount rate used to compute the liability to pay pensions.

The TAV at 31 March 2022 used a discount rate based on the expected return of the assets in the pension fund, adjusted for risk, of 4.2% and valued WPCC's share of the LGPS as a surplus of £1,090,000.

At 31 March 2024, WPCC's share of the LGPS for accounting purposes, based on a revised discount rate of 4.9% was a net asset of £719,000. This was then restricted to nil in the financial statements, as explained in note 23.

At 31 March 2025, WPCC's share of the LGPS for accounting purposes, based on a revised discount rate of 5.75% was a net asset of £1,594,000. This was then restricted to nil in the financial statements, as explained in note 23.

GAAP in the United Kingdom requires the inclusion of a deficit on the LGPS, as calculated for accounting purposes, in WPCC's accounts. Such a deficit itself is shown as a liability on the balance sheet with a corresponding amount charged to a pension reserve. In the case of an asset in the LGPS, GAAP requires that an asset is not recognised in the financial statements unless that asset can be recovered by either a refund to WPCC or a reduction in future pension contributions.

With the accounting valuation of WPCC's share of the LGPS showing a surplus at 31 March 2024 and 2025, no pension asset/liability or reserve has been reported in the accounts. (note 23 to the financial statements)
There are however other charges to the Statement of Financial Activities and the main components for the year ended 31 March 2025 were:

· the current service cost of providing the pension	£ 221,000
· less the contributions payable to the LGPS by WPCC	£(216,000)
· notional net interest	£ (41,000)
· admin expenses	£ 9,000
· **equals total additional charges**	**£ (27,000)**
· **offset by an actuarial loss**	**£ 27,000**

While the future movement of discount rates is impossible to predict, it is possible that if inflation continues to decline, interest rates and discount rates will also decline which may result in the asset position shown by the LGPS at 31 March 2025 being transitory in nature.

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It should be noted that a pension liability included in the balance sheet does not represent a liability which is payable because, as described above, the contributions payable to the LGPS are based on the results of the TAV.

Further details of the LGPS will be found in the notes to the financial statements.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The Conservators have considered the major risks to which the charity is exposed and satisfied themselves that systems or procedures are established in order to manage those risks. The annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee will be found later in this report. Set out below are the principal risks and uncertainties to which the charity is exposed.

Despite various amendments that have been introduced over the years, the administrative provisions of the 1871 Act have not been materially updated since 1871 and this presents a risk that has been acknowledged by the Charity Commission. The Constitution Committee, originally established as a working group in 2018, continues to review the current arrangements. This is not about introducing a more permissive regime or diluting the fundamental purposes of the charity but introducing a workable set of rules to enable the organisation to fulfil its core objectives in a 21st century working environment. Before any changes are made WPCC will carry out a public consultation.

The rise in inflation continued to have a negative impact on the charity's cost base. Also, in recent years it has become apparent that the charity's overall level of income is insufficient to support the long-term preventative maintenance of both the natural and built environments. Although the charity is fortunate that its principal source of income, the levy, is linked to the Retail Price Index, the Conservators believe that there is a need to achieve a step change in the quantum of the levy. To this end, as described in previous Trustee Annual Reports, the charity carried out a public consultation in the autumn of 2023 which illustrated that there was support for an increase in the levy and a submission was made to DEFRA in December 2023. The charity keenly awaits the determination by DEFRA in order to agree a rebasing of the levy. In the event that it was not possible to secure an increase in the levy, the charity has already put in place measure to measures to seek alternative sources of income. Over the last year, the charity has reduced its cost base, through delaying recruitment, in order to bring costs into equilibrium, but this has resulted in the quality of paths and rides deteriorating.

The charity has developed a number of ambitious projects for the Commons which will necessitate the raising of grants and donations from third parties. If such funds cannot be raised, the projects may need to be curtailed or postponed.

The Commons contain a large number of buildings, many of which are over 100 years old. The age of such buildings brings the risk that unforeseen expenditure may be required to maintain the operational capability of such buildings. It has been necessary to replace the boilers and water heating and supply to showers at REMPF.

Risks to the charity's buildings and other infrastructure are managed by means of routine inspections which are aimed at identifying problems before they arise. However, given the age of such buildings and infrastructure it is inevitable that unforeseen and sometimes costly expenditure will arise from time to time.

With an estimated over a million trees on the Commons, many reaching the upper life span, the likelihood of failure?? increases. This risk is further exacerbated through many formal rides and paths, as well as informal paths across the Commons. ??reword perhaps?

FUNDRAISING

WPCC's Fundraising Manager, Maggie May, went on maternity leave in May 2024 and will return in April 2025. Maternity cover provided has been provided by Lynnie Farrant who came to the Commons from a PR background. Update para now (and covered elsewhere anyway)?

Appeals and Donations

WPCC took part in the 2024 Big Give Green Match Fund online campaign, between 18 and 25 April 2024. During this time, all donations made via our campaign page were doubled and our target of £10,000 was reached within two days, with monies raised going towards restoring the Commons.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

WPCC's first World Ranger Day appeal raised more than £3,000 in donations last July, marking the global celebration of those protecting the world's natural treasures and cultural heritage.

The monies raised enabled us to purchase specialist woodland tools to help our rangers in their work conserving and maintaining the Commons' 300 hectares of woodland, including woodland thinning, clearing invasive vegetation, tree safety work tasks and lifting heavy timbers for dead hedging.

We have also been supported by the local community: Wimbledon Village Stables once again donated more than £6,000 from their annual ball and silent auction in March. Meanwhile, Year 6 pupils from Wimbledon High School have raised more than £1,000 for a weather station on the Commons from their annual enterprise day.

Commemorative Benches
A new commemorative bench policy was drawn up by WPCC and the installation programme was stepped up to try to meet the continued demand from local residents and other interested parties and to provide greater access for visitors for Commons visitors with mobility issues.

With the conservation and maintenance teams, we identified new locations which would meet these demands but also respect the sensitive habitats within the SSSI and SAC.

Commemorative benches are a key fundraiser for the Commons, with monies raised not only covering the cost of producing and installing a bench but also contributing to the upkeep of the Commons.

New benches have been adopted and installed over the past year, notably on Rushmere Green, Green Ride and Putney Lower Commons, raising more than £100,000 over the past year.

One of these is a 'happy to chat' bench located by Rushmere Pond, with the aim of encouraging conversation and combat loneliness. Dedicated to the late Mary Purcell Cosgrave, the bench has a special plaque inviting people to sit if they are happy for others to stop and say hello.

Queensmere Project
To supplement the £130,000 grant received from the Rewild London Fund, which has covered the main restoration work carried out by Aquamaintain, WPCC has embarked on a dedicated fundraising campaign comprising:

- Individual Sponsor and Supporter Opportunities
  A limited number of commemorative benches have been offered at Queensmere, with five reserved to date. Further funds have been raised by the option of offering dedication plaques set into the handrails of the new viewing platform.

- Dedicated Fundraising and Appeal
  WPCC took part in the December 2024 Big Give Christmas Challenge raising a final sum of £11,798, thanks to donations from WPCC supporters, Friends, Benefactors and the Big Give Champion, the Reed Foundation.

Legacies/Professor Bernard Nevill
WPCC received a generous donation of £30,000 from the estate of the late Professor Nevill. One of the executors, HS Yun, proposed the Commons as a worthy recipient of the monies to be used for managing, preserving and enhancing the Commons' woodland habitats. A memorial bench has been installed on Rushmere Green, dedicated to Professor Nevill.

Corporate Donations and Support
WPCC has been supported by a number of local businesses who have donated prizes for the Open Day raffle and other fundraising events, including Wimbledon Brewery, Jeroboams, The Ivy and most notably Robert Holmes and Company, who were the headline partner of the Open Day as part of their 2024 sponsorship.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

The charity is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and adheres to its Fundraising Code of conduct. The charity received no complaints about its fundraising activities and makes every effort to ensure that any fundraising it undertakes is not unreasonably intrusive, persistent or pressurised.

Reserves

At 31 March 2024, the charity had unrestricted reserves (excluding the nil pension reserve) of £3,086k and restricted reserves of £119k.

The table below shows the calculation of the charity's free reserves:

Unrestricted reserves, (excluding pension reserve)	£3,086k
Less requirement to fund the net book value of fixed assets	£(1,547k
Free reserves	**£1,539k**

The Conservators' estimated potential requirements for reserves are set out in the table below:

	Min Requirement		**Max Requirement**
Working capital requirements based on ~3 months spend	£570k	-	£630k
Renovation works to estate buildings	£295k	-	£415k
Estimated cost of next triennial elections in 2027	£65k	-	£65k
Costs re changes to the constitutional arrangements	£45k	-	£95k
Total requirement	**£975k**	**-**	**£1,205k**

WPCC's free reserves being more than the maximum estimated requirement for reserves, means that the Charity believes it has adequate resources to meet its reserves policy.

It should be noted that the charity's estate is a substantial area which has on it a number of buildings which are over 100 years old. Consequently, it is often the case that circumstances arise which involve unforeseen expenditure. Therefore, it is the Conservators' intention to maintain high levels of reserves to cover such unforeseen expenditure.

The level of income generated by WPCC's activities in their present form is insufficient to enable the Conservators to make any significant investment in the Commons' estate. Accordingly, the Conservators are continuing to investigate ways of broadening and increasing their income base.

Pension Reserve

The pension reserve, if negative, represents the net liability in respect of the LGPS and is calculated in accordance with the specific requirements of the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The actuarial valuation of the pension scheme currently results in an overall surplus position. Per FRS102 section 28.22 we cannot recognise a defined benefit pension asset position unless that position will result in reduced future contributions or a refund. As it is not probable that this will be the outcome, the revaluation has been restricted so as not to recognise an asset on the balance sheet.

The obligation to provide pensions is being funded by regular contributions to the pension scheme out of the charity's annual income at a rate determined by the scheme's actuary.

Investment Management

CCLA Investment Management Limited (CCLA) is the charity's investment adviser with a discretionary mandate. The charity's funds are invested in the COIF Charity Investment Fund (COIF), a specialist charity fund managed by CCLA.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

The mandate given to CCLA sets out the charity's investment objectives as follows:

- A balanced attitude to risk, where the objective is to protect the real values over time but investment risk can be accepted in order to achieve this;
- A long term gross total return target of CPI +5% per annum with an annual income requirement of at least £35,000 per annum; the real value of income is required to rise in line with inflation, as far as possible.

The value of the charity's investment at 31 March 2025 was £ 1,385k, the loss on investments during the year was £ 67k and the investment income received in the year was £42k.

Going Concern

The Conservators have considered the charity's future cash flow forecasts and continue to believe that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of the financial statements. Further information is given in note 1.2 to the financial statements.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives and Activities

The 1871 Act, which can be viewed here WPCC 1871 Act (wpcc.org.uk/1871Act), incorporated the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators as a body corporate. The 1871 Act set out the Conservators' statutory functions and duties, and it conferred powers on the corporate body. Section 8 of the 1871 Act provides: -

> "There shall be a body of Conservators for carrying this Act into execution, the full number of whom shall be eight, and who are hereby incorporated by the name of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, and by that name shall be one body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal, and with power to take and hold and to dispose of (by grant, demise, or otherwise) land and other property (which body corporate is in this Act referred to as the Conservators)."

The preamble to the 1871 Act requires the Conservators to keep the Commons:

> "open and unenclosed and unbuilt on, and to protect… and preserve the same for public and local use, for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes".

In addition, the Conservators have duties under the 1871 Act:

- to preserve the natural aspect and state of the Commons;
- to protect and manage trees, heather, gorse and other vegetation;
- not to sell, lease, grant or in any manner dispose of any part of the Commons, except as expressed under the 1871 Act.

On 14 April 1972 the site was registered as a charity with its charitable objective:

> "to preserve the Commons as open spaces for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes."

Under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations 1990, as amended by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, WPCC has the power to raise a levy. This is collected by the boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston in proportion to the number of "D" Band properties in each borough within the levy-Paying area. The boroughs pass on this levy by way of an addition to the Council Tax on properties in the area.

Under Section 84 of the 1871 Act, the Conservators have the power to make byelaws to regulate and control the use of the land for which they are responsible.

Governance is prescribed within the separate Commissioners Clauses Act 1847, as amended by the 1871 Act, which deals with the constitution and regulation of the organisation.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

The Commons comprise 461 hectares (1,140 acres) and contain a wide variety of landscapes, buildings, infrastructure and visitor facilities. Unlike land that is constituted as parkland, the glory of the Commons is that they are a relic of the former manorial lands.

As stewards of the Commons and through our independent governance structure, Conservators safeguard the natural aspect and condition so that the Commons are safe, available, welcoming and accessible for all.

This requires WPCC to:

- conserve, enhance and protect the Commons' natural aspect and wildlife for present and future generations to enjoy;
- demonstrate sound governance and financial discipline by constantly reviewing operational procedures and all aspects of management;
- seek to balance the enjoyment of the majority of users who visit the Commons for informal activity and appreciation of the Commons' quiet natural aspect with the needs of groups who undertake formal and/or more rigorous recreational activities;
- improve the understanding and identity of the Commons and interpret their rich and varied heritage;
- work in partnership with stakeholders to promote and achieve the Vision;
- improve facilities used for organised recreation, sport and events;
- encourage volunteering as a rewarding activity engaging people of all ages and abilities;
- work in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Commons are a part of the UK series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reflecting the importance of their grassland and heathland habitats. Under EU conservation legislation (as applicable following Brexit), they are also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with importance for beetles and insect diversity. The Commons are also designated as Metropolitan Open Land, which affords the land the same level of protection as the Green Belt, and this designation, together with the defining provisions of the 1871 Act, provide the Commons with a very high level of protection.

Volunteering is increasingly important in the delivery of the charity's activities and there are various opportunities for people to become involved. These range from supporting practical activities, such as heathland and woodland management, estate maintenance as well as litter management. Through the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, there is a group of expert volunteers who undertake monitoring of flora and fauna contributing towards the annual Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Report.

In planning and delivering its activities, the Conservators have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. We confirm that we have complied with our duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

The Conservators, through the Audit and Risk Committee, have assessed the governance of the charity against the Charity Governance Code and have drawn up, and made significant progress with an 'action plan' in order to address any areas of non-compliance identified.

Structure

Governance is provided by a board of eight Conservators, five of whom are directly elected every three years by those local authority voters living within the levy-area and the remaining three are appointed by three government departments. Day to day management is provided by the Chief Executive and his team of 24 staff. The levy-area is defined as the area within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common in addition to the area within the old Parish of Putney. Both the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in the triennial elections are granted to all those living within the levy-area who meet the relevant criteria. The 1990 Election Byelaws supplement the requirements under the 1871 Act prescribing the timescales and procedures for undertaking the triennial elections.

Responsibility for appointing the three Conservators resides with three central government departments – currently the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence. The term of office for the appointed Conservators is also three years.

Conservators also serve as trustees of the charity and are its only members.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

Governance

The work of the charity is overseen by the Board of Conservators, more commonly today referred to as trustees in the context of the charity. The Board sets policy and is responsible for the conduct of WPCC's affairs and for ensuring that the charity operates in accordance with its founding legislation, charity law and other statutory requirements and byelaws. The role of the Board is to develop and agree the charity's vision, mission, values and strategy. The Board is responsible for implementing and monitoring the Strategy through a three-year rolling Business Plan, which includes a financial plan.

The Chairman is elected from within the Board on an annual basis. The Board meets on a bi-monthly basis or more frequently as required. The Board receives regular reports at its meetings on the financial status of the charity and monitors progress against approved budgets, the status of its investments, and reviews the Top Ten risks. Reports are also brought to the Board on operational, conservation and property matters as required.

The Board has five Committees:

Audit and Risk Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) independently to:

- monitor the integrity of the annual financial statements of WPCC, reviewing significant financial reporting issues and judgements contained in them;
- ensure effective policies and procedures and compliance systems for managing risk are in place and to review their effectiveness;
- make recommendations to the Board in all matters in relation to the external auditor;
- ensure effective procedures and safeguards are in place to monitor the prevention of fraud and corruption;
- prepare and publish an annual report of the work of the ARC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless, exceptionally, authority has been delegated to the ARC by the Board in respect of a particular matter.

Finance and Investment Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC) to:

- scrutinise and oversee all financial and investment aspects of WPCC so as to ensure short and long-term viability of WPCC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless specifically delegated by the Board**.**

Constitution Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Constitution Committee (CC) to:

- review, identify, consider and recommend to the Board amendments to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose; and
- consider and recommend the way in which any such amendments could be effected.

Friends Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Friends Committee (FC) to:

- lead on fundraising undertaken under the auspices of the Friends for WPCC; and
- organise events for and on behalf of the Friends of WPCC.

Environment and Sustainability Committee

In 2024, the Board agreed to set up a fifth Committee, the Environment and Sustainability Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to review the charity's adherence to its environmental statutory duties and responsibilities, as well as delivery of strategies and plans, holding departments and teams to account, and reporting and referring decisions to the Board of Conservators as appropriate.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Environment and Sustainability Committee (ESC) to:

- review WPCC's environmental and biodiversity obligations/duties to ensure Trustees fully understand where we have duties and need to comply
- establish a framework to review compliance with said statutory duties
- monitor the delivery of the Land Management Plan
- ensure policies and procedures and compliance systems for environmental management/sustainability are in place and are reviewed for their efficiency and effectiveness
- make recommendations to the Board of Conservators in all matters in relation to the environment, sustainability and land management
- receive monitoring information and minutes from the Wildlife and Conservation Forum
- receive monitoring information about environmental performance
- prepare and publish an annual environment/sustainability report
- report to the Board of Conservators on all matters where decisions are required unless, exceptionally, authority has been delegated to the ESC by the Board of Conservators in respect of a particular matter

Terms of Reference for the committees and the two working groups described below have been approved by the Board and are published on the WPCC website.

In addition to the committees, the Board has established two working groups:

i. The Stakeholder Group, which comprises individuals with knowledge and interest in the Commons, representing different user groups and geographies and providing views and suggestions to the Chief Executive. There are currently 20+ members of the Stakeholder Group, representing local organisations.
ii. The Wildlife and Conservation Forum, is now chaired by the Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane. The DEFRA-appointed Conservator, who has previously chaired this Forum, now chairs the ESC. The Forum is made up of staff and volunteer experts. The Forum supports the Commons' staff in their role of protecting the natural environment of the Commons and also acts as a forum for species recording.

Following their election or appointment to the Board, each Conservator receives a briefing pack outlining their role, together with information on WPCC, its founding legislation, its policies, structures and work. Every Conservator completes a register of interests and a related party transaction form, both of which are updated annually or whenever any changes occur. Each Conservator also signs a Code of Conduct which sets out procedures and duties in relation to confidentiality, conflict of interest and other matters of pertinence to charity trustees. A formal induction process is provided for each new Conservator. All Conservators are offered opportunities to learn more about WPCC's work, through individual meetings with staff and site visits.

In the interests of transparency and openness the Board resolved at its meeting held on 12 July 2021 to hold part of the Board meetings in public. Board meetings are now divided into two parts – A(1) to which the public are invited to both attend and ask questions relating to matters discussed at the meeting and A(2) which is confidential and held in private.

Summary of the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2024/25

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is a committee of the Board and its Terms of Reference were approved by the Board in May 2018 and most recently re-confirmed by the Board in January 2025. The role of the ARC is to review and scrutinise WPCC's corporate governance, financial reporting, internal controls and risk management ensuring that they support the achievement of the charity's objectives.

During 2024/25, ARC met on three occasions in addition to the joint FIC/ARC meeting to review the draft audited accounts. For the period to March 2025, the members of the Committee were Mr Peter Shortt, Appointed Conservator (Chair), elected Conservators Mr Michael Johnston and Mrs Sue Bucknall, Mrs Sarah Wilton, co-optee.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

ARC believes it has fulfilled its main duties as set out in its terms of reference as follows:

Financial - For the year ended 31 March 2025 ARC reviewed and where necessary approved the Audit Plan, compliance with accounting standards and practices, the draft WPCC financial statements, the external Auditor's Key Audit Findings report and the WPCC Annual Report. They recommended the financial statements to the Board subject to a number of amendments. ARC members are satisfied that the external auditors have received the necessary assistance from WPCC when carrying out their audit and no limitations have been placed on the scope of their work.

Internal Control, Risk Management and Compliance - At each meeting ARC reviews tender waivers and write offs, debt write offs, the top ten risks, the full Risk Register (annually) and the actions arising from previous meetings and the progress with them. In addition, ARC reviewed the process for trustees to record major gifts, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Fundraising risks, cybersecurity, conflicts of interest, the updated Employee Handbook and fire safety.

Whistleblowing - At each meeting ARC reviews any whistleblowing reports, of which there were none during 2024/25.

Charity Governance Code - ARC monitored WPCC's governance against the requirements of the Charity Governance Code and against the governance action plan which had been drawn up in 2021. Ongoing actions include:

(a) updating WPCC's constitutional arrangements. The Charity Commission's agreement that WPCC may submit an application for a section 73 scheme has resulted in work continuing to allow the charity to submit a draft scheme. The Constitution Committee is drawing together all the aspects of this work.

(b) putting in place performance measures for WPCC, which will be introduced when the key strategic documents against which we will measure ourselves (Masterplan, Land Management Plan, Fundraising Strategy and Communications Plan) are in place, and;

(c) a review of the organisation's environmental performance, which is scheduled for year two of the current Business Plan.

Minutes of ARC meetings are received by the Board. At Board meetings the ARC Chair provides a written or an oral report to the Board on significant conclusions, concerns and recommendations arising from the Committee's work. The issues highlighted to the Board this year included a full and through review of the Risk Register. A Workshop was held with all Trustees able to have an input into what they considered to be the risks facing the charity. Following this review, each of the identified risks were scored by each Trustee and an average of the scores collated in order to identify the new Top Ten Risks that are more in tune with the needs of the charity in 2025. This Risk Register will continue to be monitored annually and at each Board meeting, the ARC Chairman will raise one of the Top Ten risks and give the Trustees a deeper review of the risk and its mitigations.

ARC believes that it has, to the best of its ability, met its Terms of Reference. Once again it gratefully acknowledges the excellent support it has received from WPCC staff without which it could not have fulfilled its remit.

Management

The day-to-day management of the charity is delegated by the Board to the Chief Executive who has overall responsibility to the Board for the effective planning, performance, management, direction and leadership of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in accordance with policies and budgets set by the Board. The Chief Executive is supported by the Senior Leadership Team. Following the changes to the Senior Team during 2024/25, some of the new roles are still evolving. The current Team is made up as follows:

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Deputy Chief Executive – this is a new role that was introduced on 1 January 2025. Responsible for governance, strategy, secretariat, administration, election/appointment of Conservators and assisting the CE with HR matters, this role takes responsibility for the charity when the Chief Executive is away.

Chief Finance Officer (Part-time) – this is a new role introduced in October 2024. This role has responsibility for all the charity's finances, including preparation for Audit, and licences.

Executive Assistant/Communications Officer – the Deputy Chief Executive currently retains responsibility for much of this role including communications, office management (including reception), events, filming and administration for the Friends of WPCC.

Conservation and Engagement Officer – responsible for conservation/ecology and public engagement, including volunteers;

Fundraising Manager – responsible for developing and implementing the organisation's fundraising strategy.

Pay Policy for Senior Staff

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis. All Conservators give of their time freely and the founding 1871 Act prohibits any Conservator receiving remuneration or holding any office of profit.

The pay of staff is reviewed annually by the Board as part of its budget preparation process. The Finance and Investment Committee has a responsibility to consider staff remuneration within their Terms of Reference for the Chief Executive and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Environment and Sustainability Reporting

The Trustees recognise the vital importance of sustainability in the stewardship of this unique and ecologically significant landscape. The Commons, encompassing over 1,100 acres of woodland, heathland and grassland, play a naturally significant role in supporting biodiversity, improving air quality, and mitigating climate change. These habitats act as natural carbon sinks, contributing meaningfully to the reduction of atmospheric carbon and enhancing environmental resilience within the Greater London area.

The ecological character of the Commons is central to their sustainability value. Ancient woodlands sequester carbon through tree growth and soil processes, while open heathland and meadows support a rich diversity of flora and fauna, underpinning the ecosystem services that benefit both the environment and the surrounding communities. The protection and ongoing management of these habitats are therefore intrinsic to the charity's contribution to regional and national sustainability goals.

In addition to the natural environmental value of the Commons, the charity has taken active steps to review and enhance its own operational sustainability. In 2024, a staff-led Sustainability Forum was established, with the purpose of examining the charity's activities and identifying areas for improvement in environmental practice. This forum provides a structured platform for gathering insight, proposing actions, and embedding sustainability considerations across all aspects of the organisation's work – from grounds maintenance and vehicle use to procurement and energy consumption.

Looking ahead, the charity has engaged Savills to undertake a comprehensive Carbon Footprint Audit in 2025. This audit will provide a baseline assessment of emissions across the organisation's operations, offering clarity on the current environmental impact and supporting the development of a realistic and meaningful carbon reduction plan. The audit will also assist in setting measurable targets and identifying opportunities for further efficiencies and improvements.

Furthermore, in response to new legislation, the charity has acted to ensure full compliance with the new UK Waste Regulations introduced on 31 March 2025. This includes a thorough review of internal waste handling practices across all sites and the implementation of updated procedures to ensure proper segregation, recycling, and disposal in line with the statutory requirements.

These initiatives form part of an evolving approach to environmental governance, grounded in the Commons' foundational purpose: the preservation and protection of the land for public benefit. The

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Trustees are mindful that sustainability is not a fixed goal but a continuous journey, and they remain committed to integrating environmental responsibility throughout the charity's governance and daily operations.

In the coming year, the Sustainability Forum and the findings from the Carbon Audit will inform a broader strategy for reducing the organisation's environmental footprint. The charity will continue to prioritise nature-based solutions and low-impact practices, ensuring that the long-term management of Wimbledon and Putney Commons remains both environmentally sound and socially responsible.

Environment and Sustainability Committee Annual Report

Following a recommendation by the Chief Executive, The Board of Conservators agreed to set up an Environment and Sustainability Committee to provide more effective governance of this area of the charity's work. The ESC met for the first time in December 2024, and have met on two subsequent occasions – January and May 2025. The Chairman of the Committee, as set out in the Committee's agreed Terms of Reference, is the DEFRA appointed Conservator, currently Oliver Bennett.

In the first five months, the Committee has:

- put in place a review of WPCC's environmental and biodiversity obligations, and set up a framework to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation.
- Considered options for the possibility of biomass collection.
- Reviewed the mushroom collection policy and , with the recommendations subsequently being adopted by the Board.
- Monitored the implementation of the agreed Land Management Plan.

This oversight work will continue into 2025, along with consideration of the 1871 Act and its Byelaws, in relation to any conflicts that arises with other legislation and how best to resolve that.

CONSERVATORS' RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

The Conservators acknowledge their responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements for each financial year in accordance with Section 2 of the 1871 Act, which are required to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, surplus or deficit of the charity for that period.

The Conservators are also responsible for preparing the Report of the Conservators and the financial statements in accordance with applicable charity law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (GAAP) under FRS 102.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Conservators to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Conservators are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures, which should be disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the

provisions of the 1871 Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Statement as to disclosure to auditors

In so far as the trustees are aware at the time of approving the Conservators' Annual Report:

- There is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- The Conservators, having made enquiries of fellow Conservators and the charity's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken steps that she/he is obliged to take as a Conservator in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Approved by order of the Board of Conservators on and signed on its behalf by:

Mauro Mattiuzzo (Chairman)
Elected Conservator

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has been withdrawn.

This has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Conservators with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our Auditors' Report thereon. The Conservators are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the Conservators Report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Conservators Responsibilities Statement, the Conservators are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Conservators determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Conservators are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Conservators either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditors' Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud or error; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud or error; and to respond appropriately to those risks.

Based on our understanding of the charity and industry, and through discussion with the trustees and other management (as required by auditing standards), we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to health and safety and employment law. We considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the preparation of the financial statements such as the Statement of Recommended Practice. We communicated identified laws and regulations throughout our team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit. We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to: posting inappropriate journal entries and management bias in accounting estimates and judgemental areas of the financial statements. Audit procedures performed by the engagement team included:

- Discussions with management and assessment of known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations (including health and safety) and fraud, and review of the reports made by management; and
- Assessment of identified fraud risk factors; and
- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in its significant accounting estimates; and
- Checking and reperforming the reconciliation of key control accounts; and
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships, including related party transactions, that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud; and
- Confirmation of related parties with management, and review of transactions throughout the period to identify any previously undisclosed transactions with related parties outside the normal course of business; and
- Reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance; and
- Review of significant and unusual transactions and evaluation of the underlying financial rationale supporting the transactions; and
- Identifying and testing journal entries, in particular any manual entries made at the year end for financial statement preparation; and
- Assessment of expertise with regards to the actuarial valuation of the defined benefit pension scheme.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion of the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Conservators.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditors' Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditors' Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditors' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Kreston Reeves LLP

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Chichester

Date:

Kreston Reeves LLP are eligible to act as auditors in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Statement of financial activities
For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	3	**180,090**	**244,256**	**424,346**	187,412
Charitable activities	4	**2,190,521**	**-**	**2,190,521**	2,079,070
Investments	5	**42,453**	**-**	**42,453**	44,438
Total income		**2,413,064**	**244,256**	**2,657,320**	2,310,920
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	6,7	**2,332,955**	**167,053**	**2,500,008**	2,481,334
Total expenditure		**2,332,955**	**167,053**	**2,500,008**	2,481,334
Net income/(expenditure) before net (losses)/gains on investments		**80,109**	**77,203**	**157,312**	(170,414)
Net (losses)/gains on investments	13	**(68,698)**	**-**	**(68,698)**	134,919
Net income/(expenditure)		**11,411**	**77,203**	**88,614**	(35,495)
Transfers between funds	18	**10,000**	**(10,000)**	**-**	-
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains/(losses)		**21,411**	**67,203**	**88,614**	(35,495)
Other recognised gains/(losses):					
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme	23	**(27,000)**	**-**	**(27,000)**	1,000
Net movement in funds		**(5,589)**	**67,203**	**61,614**	(34,495)
Reconciliation of funds:	18				
Total funds brought forward		**3,091,897**	**51,660**	**3,143,557**	3,178,052
Net movement in funds		**(5,589)**	**67,203**	**61,614**	(34,495)
Total funds carried forward		**3,086,308**	**118,863**	**3,205,171**	3,143,557

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 37 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2025

	Note		2025 £		2024 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11		**1,382,251**		1,334,381
Heritage assets	12		**164,772**		164,772
Investments	13		**1,385,087**		1,453,784
			2,932,110		2,952,937
Current assets					
Debtors	14	**200,727**		218,061	
Cash at bank and in hand		**278,222**		284,038	
		478,949		502,099	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	**(145,065)**		(251,422)	
Net current assets			**333,884**		250,677
Total assets less current liabilities			**3,265,994**		3,203,614
Provisions for liabilities	17		**(60,823)**		(60,057)
Net assets excluding pension asset			**3,205,171**		3,143,557
Total net assets			**3,205,171**		3,143,557
Charity funds					
Restricted funds	18		**118,863**		51,660
Unrestricted funds	18		**3,086,308**		3,091,897
Total funds			**3,205,171**		3,143,557

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Conservators and signed on their behalf by:

Date:
Mr M Mattiuzzo
(Chair of Trustees)
Elected Conservator

The notes on pages 37 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

	Note	2025 £	2024 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash used by operating activities	20	**112,835**	(147,748)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Dividends, interests and rents from investments		**42,453**	44,438
Proceeds from the sale of tangible fixed assets		**-**	9,241
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		**(161,104)**	(156,078)
Sale of investments		**-**	150,000
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities		**(118,651)**	**47,601**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Net cash provided by financing activities		**-**	**-**
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		**(5,816)**	**(100,147)**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		**284,038**	384,185
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	21	**278,222**	284,038

The notes on pages 37 to 60 form part of these financial statements

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

1. Accounting policies

1.1 General information and basis of preparation of financial statements

WPCC is a body corporate incorporated under the 1871 Act; it is also a charity registered in England. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are included within the Conservators' report.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these financial statements. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019 and Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

WPCC constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

1.2 Going concern

The Conservators review management accounts and forecasts at each of their meetings. Also, at the beginning of each financial year a three year business plan is produced which includes financial forecasts. The Conservators believe there to be no material uncertainties affecting the charity's ability to continue operating for at least twelve months from the date of signature of these financial statements. Accordingly, the Conservators continue to believe that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of these financial statements.

1.3 Income

All income is recognised once the Charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donated services or facilities are recognised when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use of the charity of the item is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), general volunteer time is not recognised but see page 14 of the Conservators' report for more information about their contribution.

On receipt, donated professional services and facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the Charity which is the amount it would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, 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 classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Support costs are those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity.

1.5 Grants

Income from grants is recognised when the Charity has met the conditions or incurred the expenditure attached to the grant and it is probable that the grant will be received.

1.6 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

1.7 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its income and gains falling within part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that they are applied to its charitable activities.

1.8 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Freehold buildings	- 25 - 50 years
Long-term leasehold property	- Life of lease
Beverley Brook WC Bridge	- 25 years
Plant, machinery and equipment	- 3 - 10 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 5 -15 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.9 Heritage assets

The charity considers that while the lands comprising the commons are heritage assets, the buildings, other than the windmill on Wimbledon Common, are not. As more fully explained in note 12, the heritage assets are recognised in the balance sheet at cost, where it has been possible to determine cost.

Heritage assets are depreciated over their useful economic life. However, because the majority of such assets are land with an indefinite useful economic life, the element of depreciation that would apply to the remainder of the heritage assets is considered immaterial to these financial statements. Heritage assets are reviewed annually at the reporting date for indications of impairment.

1.10 Investments

Investments are recognised initially at fair value which is normally the transaction price excluding transaction costs. Subsequently, they are measured at fair value with changes recognised in 'net gains / (losses) on investments' in the Statement of Financial Activities if the shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably. Other investments are measured at cost less impairment.

1.11 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.12 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.13 Liabilities and provisions

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities as a finance cost.

1.14 Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.15 Redundancy and termination benefits

It is the Charity's policy to recognise termination benefits when they become committed, by legislation, by contractual or other agreements with employees or their representatives or by a constructive obligation or a desire to act equitably, to make payments (or provide other benefits) to employees when it terminates their employment. Termination payments do not provide the Charity with future economic benefits therefore it is the Charity's policy to recognise them as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities immediately.

1.16 Pensions

The Charity operates a defined benefits pension scheme and the pension charge is based on a full actuarial valuation. The latest full actuarial valuation was as at 31 March 2022.

Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of financial activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

1.17 Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Conservators in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Conservators for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Where donations are given with restrictions attached relating to the purchase of tangible fixed assets, the initial income is recognised as restricted income. At the point that the fixed asset is purchased the restriction has been met and so the remaining balance in that restricted fund is transferred to the general fund.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

As detailed in note 23 the Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme for the benefit of employees. The cost of operating the scheme is determined using actuarial valuations undertaken by the scheme actuary. Their valuation involves making assumptions about discount rates, future salary increases, mortality rates and future pension increases. Due to the complexity of the valuation, the underlying assumptions and the long term nature of the scheme, such estimates are subject to significant uncertainty.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions:

The annual depreciation charge for fixed assets is sensitive to changes in estimated useful lives and residual values. The useful economic lives and residual values are re-assessed annually and amended as necessary.

3. Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	**Restricted funds 2025 £**	**Total funds 2025 £**	Total funds 2024 £
Grants and donations	180,090	244,256	**424,346**	187,412
Total 2024	88,549	98,863	187,412	

Legacies in the year were £30,000 (2024: £nil).

4. Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	**Total funds 2025 £**	Total funds 2024 £
Levy	1,622,642	**1,622,642**	1,490,567
Countryside stewardship (government) grant	12,461	**12,461**	22,819
Sports facilities	338,119	**338,119**	376,841
Property rent and wayleaves	174,234	**174,234**	162,276
Rent from filming and fairs	43,065	**43,065**	26,566
Publication sales	-	**-**	1
Total 2025	2,190,521	**2,190,521**	2,079,070
Total 2024	2,079,070	2,079,070	

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

5. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Investment income	42,453	**42,453**	44,438
Total 2024	44,438	44,438	

In the comparative period all investment income was unrestricted.

6. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

Summary by fund type

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Conservancy activity	2,332,955	167,053	**2,500,008**	2,481,334
Total 2024	2,327,649	153,685	2,481,334	

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2025 £	Support costs 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Conservancy activity	2,068,696	431,312	**2,500,008**	2,481,334
Total 2024	1,939,681	541,653	2,481,334	

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of direct costs

	Conserv-ancy activity 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Windmill	10,124	**10,124**	73,676
Keepers and Commons security	460,418	**460,418**	563,810
Commons maintenance	768,772	**768,772**	792,114
Playing fields maintenance	328,812	**328,812**	280,346
Property maintenance and improvements	327,648	**327,648**	229,735
Conservation	172,922	**172,922**	-
Total 2025	2,068,696	**2,068,696**	1,939,681

Conservation costs have been separated out this year to demonstrate how much is spent on the conservation rather than just the maintenance of our natural environment.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Conserv-ancy activity 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Administration staff salaries	115,094	**115,094**	123,378
Audit and accountancy	19,100	**19,100**	17,700
Office expenses	35,131	**35,131**	24,341
Insurance	33,181	**33,181**	48,435
Utilities and services	50,350	**50,350**	36,984
Advertising and printing	12,469	**12,469**	14,200
Computer and IT support	52,731	**52,731**	43,588
Events	29,531	**29,531**	20,201
Council tax	30,514	**30,514**	28,898
Defined benefit pension cost in excess of contributions paid	14,000	**14,000**	23,000
(Profit) / loss on sale of fixed assets	-	**-**	(3,000)
Interest cost on pension liability	(41,000)	**(41,000)**	(22,000)
Legal fees	40,122	**40,122**	48,440
Professional fees	40,089	**40,089**	68,991
Bad debts	-	**-**	(624)
NLHF expenses	-	**-**	5,000
Election costs	-	**-**	64,121
Total 2025	431,312	**431,312**	541,653

Included in support costs above are governance costs totalling £59,222 (2024: £66,140). These costs include audit, accountancy and legal fees.

8. Auditors' remuneration

The auditors' remuneration amounts to an audit fee of £13,100 (2024: £12,700) and amounts relating to non audit services of £6,000 (2024: £5,000).

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

9. Staff costs

	2025 £	2024 £
Staff Salaries		
Wages and salaries	**1,077,819**	1,035,169
Social security costs	**114,040**	111,377
Other pension costs	**230,453**	228,031
	1,422,312	1,374,577

The average number of persons employed in full and part time positions by the Charity during the year was as follows:

	2025 No.	2024 No.
Chief Executive	**1**	1
Chief Financial Officer	**1**	-
Deputy Chief Executive	**1**	-
Administration	**2**	3
Conservation	**2**	1
Security	**6**	7
Maintenance	**7**	8
Playing Fields	**3**	4
Property	**1**	1
Fundraising	**2**	1
Deputy Clerk & Ranger	**-**	1
	26	27

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2025 No.	2024 No.
In the band £80,001 - £90,000	**1**	-

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day to day basis. The Senior Leadership team has been redefined in the current reporting period and now consists of the Chief Executive Officer, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Financial Officer. The prior year Senior Leadership team consisted of the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Clerk and Ranger, Conservation and Engagement Officer, Fundraising Manager and EA to the Chief Executive and Communications Officer.

Total key management personnel remuneration for the year was £218,270 (2024: £335,965).

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

10. Conservator's remuneration and expenses

During the year, no Conservators received any remuneration or other benefits (2024 - £NIL).

During the year ended 31 March 2025, expenses totalling £425 were reimbursed to 2 Conservators (2024 - £NIL). These expenses related to third party costs incurred by Conservators on behalf of the Charity for fundraising events.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

11. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold buildings £	Long-term leasehold property £	Beverley Brook WC bridge £	Commons plant and machinery £	Playing fields equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost or valuation								
At 1 April 2024	**1,631,452**	**204,464**	**36,859**	**359,708**	**118,635**	**101,796**	**26,071**	**2,478,985**
Additions	**116,919**	**-**	**-**	**34,185**	**10,000**	**-**	**-**	**161,104**
Disposals	**(16,123)**	**-**	**-**	**(38,119)**	**(22,741)**	**(8,066)**	**(12,723)**	**(97,772)**
Revaluations	**-**	**(1,826)**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**(1,826)**
At 31 March 2025	**1,732,248**	**202,638**	**36,859**	**355,774**	**105,894**	**93,730**	**13,348**	**2,540,491**
Depreciation								
At 1 April 2024	**571,921**	**118,478**	**2,210**	**274,568**	**60,828**	**97,453**	**19,146**	**1,144,604**
Charge for the year	**48,404**	**6,826**	**1,469**	**14,434**	**7,294**	**1,336**	**2,084**	**81,847**
On disposals	**(5,493)**	**-**	**-**	**(31,279)**	**(16,125)**	**(5,059)**	**(10,255)**	**(68,211)**
At 31 March 2025	**614,832**	**125,304**	**3,679**	**257,723**	**51,997**	**93,730**	**10,975**	**1,158,240**
Net book value								
At 31 March 2025	**1,117,416**	**77,334**	**33,180**	**98,051**	**53,897**	**-**	**2,373**	**1,382,251**
At 31 March 2024	1,059,531	85,986	34,649	85,140	57,807	4,343	6,925	1,334,381

The disposals in the period relate to the write off to the Statement of Financial Activities of small assets where their cost is below the Charity's current capitalisation threshold.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

12. Heritage assets

Assets recognised at cost

	Heritage assets 2025 £
Carrying value at 1 April 2024	164,772
Carrying value at 31 March 2025	164,772

As explained in note 1.9, the charity considers that its heritage assets are the lands that comprise Wimbledon and Putney Commons within the meaning of the 1871 Act, together with the windmill on Wimbledon Common. The majority of the lands were acquired under the provisions of the 1871 Act together with all the buildings thereon in return for an annuity payment to Earl Spencer which terminated in 1958. The purchase price has been treated as the cost of the heritage assets together with amounts paid to third parties to acquire additional small parcels of land subsequent to 1871. Although part of the purchase price would have been attributable to those buildings which are not heritage assets, it is not possible to determine what the appropriate allocation would have been and therefore the whole purchase price has been allocated to the heritage assets.

The Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields were acquired in the 1930s but no detailed records exist of their cost to the charity, consequently no amount is included within heritage assets in respect of the playing fields.

During the year to 31 March 2025, there were no additions within the heritage assets.

13. Fixed asset investments

	Listed investments £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 April 2024	**1,453,785**
Revaluations	**(68,698)**
At 31 March 2025	**1,385,087**
Net book value	
At 31 March 2025	**1,385,087**
At 31 March 2024	1,453,785

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

14. Debtors

	2025 £	2024 £
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	**59,389**	146,502
Other debtors	**38,963**	36,390
Prepayments and accrued income	**102,375**	35,169
	200,727	218,061

15. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade creditors	**20,865**	53,392
Other creditors	**42,327**	96,434
Accruals and deferred income	**81,873**	101,596
	145,065	251,422

16. Deferred income

	2025 £	2024 £
Deferred income at 1 April 2024	**38,330**	40,365
Resources deferred during the year	**66,356**	38,330
Amounts released from previous periods	**(38,330)**	(40,365)
Deferred income at 31 March 2025	**66,356**	38,330

Deferred income at the year end related to income received in advance for licenses of £43,057 and other deferred income of £23,299. Deferred income at the previous year end related to income received in advance for licenses of £30,830, rent received in advance of £2,500 and donations of £5,000.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

17. Provisions

The charity occupies a building which it built on land leased from a third party. Under the terms of the lease it has an obligation at the end of the lease to reinstate the land to its original state. A provision is made for this liability and the movements in the provision were as follows:

	Provision for liabilities £
At 1 April 2024	**60,057**
Charge in discount rate	**(1,826)**
Interest cost charged to expenditure	**2,592**
	60,823

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

18. Statement of funds

Statement of funds - current year

	Balance at 1 April 2024 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2025 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	-	-	-	25,235	-	25,235
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,091,897	2,413,064	(2,359,955)	(15,235)	(68,698)	3,061,073
Defined Benefit Pension	-	-	27,000	-	(27,000)	-
	3,091,897	2,413,064	(2,332,955)	(15,235)	(95,698)	3,061,073
Total Unrestricted funds	3,091,897	2,413,064	(2,332,955)	10,000	(95,698)	3,086,308
Restricted funds						
Putney Lower Common maintenance	9,379	-	-	-	-	9,379
Horseride Appeal	37,190	5,739	(13,479)	-	-	29,450
Putney Cricket nets	2,141	-	-	-	-	2,141
Bog restoration project	2,786	-	(2,133)	-	-	653
Orchard Putney Lower Common	164	-	(164)	-	-	-
Queensmere restoration project	-	177,267	(131,277)	-	-	45,990
The Woodlands fund	-	30,000	(20,000)	(10,000)	-	-
The Archiving fund	-	31,250	-	-	-	31,250

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - current year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2024 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2025 £
	51,660	244,256	(167,053)	(10,000)	-	118,863
Total of funds	3,143,557	2,657,320	(2,500,008)	-	(95,698)	3,205,171

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year

	Balance at 1 April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2024 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	40,008	-	(64,121)	24,113	-	-
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,047,279	2,212,057	(2,262,528)	(39,830)	134,919	3,091,897
Defined Benefit Pension	-	-	(1,000)	-	1,000	-
	3,047,279	2,212,057	(2,263,528)	(39,830)	135,919	3,091,897
Total Unrestricted funds	3,087,287	2,212,057	(2,327,649)	(15,717)	135,919	3,091,897
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	15,957	20,000	(35,957)	-	-	-
Putney Lower Common maintenance	9,379	-	-	-	-	9,379
Horseride Appeal	35,332	13,119	(11,261)	-	-	37,190
Wildlife Garden Appeal	3,940	276	(11,721)	7,505	-	-
Beverley Brook WC Bridge Appeal	2,141	-	-	-	-	2,141
Footpath Restoration	16,871	59,231	(79,174)	3,072	-	-
Bog restoration project	-	6,073	(3,287)	-	-	2,786
Orchard Putney Lower Common	-	164	-	-	-	164

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2024 £
Queensmere restoration project	7,145	-	(12,285)	5,140	-	-
	90,765	98,863	(153,685)	15,717	-	51,660
Total of funds	3,178,052	2,310,920	(2,481,334)	-	135,919	3,143,557

The Election Sinking fund is maintained to provide for the fees and costs of conducting the triennial election of five Conservators.

The Defined Benefit Pension fund represents the defined benefit pension scheme liability.

The Windmill Restoration fund represents the fund remaining from a Heritage Lottery Grant received for use in restoring the Windmill, on Windmill Road.

The Putney Lower Common Maintenance fund is formed of donations received for other specific purposes that have been met. The original donors have agreed that the surplus can be used exclusively for the maintenance of Putney Lower Common.

The Horseride Appeal fund includes donated income and related expenditure on the horse ride route restoration campaign started during the year ended 31 March 2018.

The Wildlife Garden Appeal fund includes donated income on the campaign to create a new wildlife garden at the Ranger's Office.

Footpath restoration - donated income in respect of repairs to paths.

Beverley Brook bridges' appeals - donated income in respect of the replacement of the bridge over the Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common and repairs to the bridge on Putney Lower Common.

Bog restoration project - grant received for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study relating to the restoration of the wetlands on the Common.

Orchard Putney Lower Common - income raised from an appeal to plant a small orchard on Putney Lower Common.

Queensmere restoration project - grant received for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study relating to the restoration of the Queensmere pond.

The Woodlands fund - legacy received for the purpose of conservation and enhancement of the woodland habitats.

The Archiving fund relates to a donation received to employ an archivist to update the WPCC archives.

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

19. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds - current year

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,382,251	-	**1,382,251**
Fixed asset investments	1,385,087	-	**1,385,087**
Heritage assets	164,772	-	**164,772**
Current assets	360,086	118,863	**478,949**
Creditors due within one year	(145,065)	-	**(145,065)**
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(60,823)	-	**(60,823)**
Total	3,086,308	118,863	**3,205,171**

Analysis of net assets between funds - prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,334,381	-	1,334,381
Fixed asset investments	1,453,784	-	1,453,784
Heritage assets	164,772	-	164,772
Current assets	450,439	51,660	502,099
Creditors due within one year	(251,422)	-	(251,422)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(60,057)	-	(60,057)
Total	3,091,897	51,660	3,143,557

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

20. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2025 **£**	2024 £
Net income/expenditure for the year (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	88,614	(35,495)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	**81,847**	83,489
Losses/(gains) on investments	**68,698**	(134,920)
Dividends, interests and rents from investments	**(42,453)**	(44,438)
(Profit)/loss on the sale of fixed assets	**-**	(3,000)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	**17,334**	(41,853)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	**(106,357)**	25,213
Pension fund adjustments	**(27,000)**	1,000
Interest cost on provision	**2,592**	2,256
Fixed assets written back to SOFA	**29,560**	-
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	**112,835**	(147,748)

21. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2025 **£**	2024 £
Cash in hand	**278,222**	284,038
Total cash and cash equivalents	**278,222**	284,038

22. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 April 2024 **£**	**Cash flows** **£**	**At 31 March 2025** **£**
Cash at bank and in hand	**284,038**	**(5,816)**	**278,222**
	284,038	**(5,816)**	**278,222**

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

23. Pension commitments

The Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme.

Retirement benefits to employees of WPCC are provided by the LGPS which is a defined benefit scheme.

The LGPS is a funded scheme, administered by the London Borough of Merton. Contributions are set every three years as a result of an actuarial valuation of the fund. There are no minimum funding requirements but the contributions are generally set to target a funding level of 100%, using actuarial assumptions.

In general, participating in a defined benefit scheme mean that the employer is exposed to a number of risks:

- Investment risk
- Interest rate risk
- Inflation risk
- Longevity risk (where members live longer than assumed)

In addition many unrelated employers participate in the London Borough of Merton scheme, and there is a potential orphan liability risk where employers who leave the Fund with insufficient resources to cover their pension obligations, will leave a deficit in the scheme that may fall on the remaining employers. There is however no way of ascertaining the potential loss, should such an event take place.

Principal actuarial assumptions at the Balance Sheet date (expressed as weighted averages):

	At 31 March 2025 %	At 31 March 2024 %
Discount rate	**5.75**	4.9
Future salary increases	**3.9**	3.9
Future pension increases	**2.9**	2.9

	At 31 March 2025 Years	At 31 March 2024 Years
Mortality rates (in years)		
- for a male aged 65 now	**20.7**	20.8
- at 65 for a male aged 45 now	**22.0**	22.0
- for a female aged 65 now	**23.3**	23.3
- at 65 for a female aged 45 now	**24.7**	24.7

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

23. Pension commitments (continued)

The Charity's share of the assets in the scheme was:

	At 31 March 2025 £	At 31 March 2024 £
Equities	**3,320,000**	3,850,000
Gilts	**252,000**	265,000
Corporate bonds	**1,403,000**	-
Property	**833,000**	680,000
Cash and other liquid assets	**572,000**	1,705,000
Diversified growth	**560,000**	564,000
Multi asset credit	**822,000**	795,000
Infrastructure	**1,116,000**	1,073,000
Total fair value of assets	**8,878,000**	8,932,000

The actual return/(loss) on scheme assets was £367,000 (2024 - £570,000).

The amounts recognised as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities are as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Current service cost	**(221,000)**	(220,000)
Net interest income/(cost)	**41,000**	22,000
Administrative expenses	**(9,000)**	(8,000)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	**(189,000)**	(206,000)

Movements in the present value of the defined benefit obligation were as follows:

	2025 £
Opening defined benefit obligation	**8,213,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**73,000**
Benefits paid	**(701,000)**
Service cost	**221,000**
Interest expense	**387,000**
Change in financial assumptions	**(870,000)**
Change in demographic assumptions	**(21,000)**
Experience loss on obligation	**(18,000)**
Closing defined benefit obligation	**7,284,000**

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

23. Pension commitments (continued)

Movements in the fair value of the Charity's share of scheme assets were as follows:

	2025 £
Opening fair value of scheme assets	**8,932,000**
Interest income	**428,000**
Contributions by employer	**216,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**73,000**
Return on assets	**(61,000)**
Benefits paid	**(701,000)**
Administration expenses	**(9,000)**
Closing fair value of scheme assets	**8,878,000**

The actuarial valuation results in an overall surplus position. Per FRS102 section 28.22 we cannot recognise a defined benefit pension asset position unless that position will result in reduced future contributions or a refund. As it is not probable that this will be the outcome, the revaluation has been restricted by £1,594,000 (2024: £719,000) so as not to recognise an asset on the balance sheet.

	2025 £	2024 £
Total actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme		
Return on assets	**(61,000)**	167,000
(Increase) in restriction of surplus	**(875,000)**	(372,000)
Change in financial assumptions	**870,000**	113,000
Change in demographic assumptions	**21,000**	116,000
Experience loss on obligation	**18,000**	(23,000)
Total	**(27,000)**	1,000

Approved by the Board of Conservators on 27 May 2025, but subject to any amendments that may be required as a result of events occurring between the release date and the Annual Open Meeting on 18 June 2025.

24. Financial instruments

	2025	2024
	£	£
Financial assets		
Financial assets measured at fair value through income and expenditure	**1,385,087**	1,453,784

The fair value of these assets is readily obtainable as there is a ready market for their sale at publicly listed prices.

The gain/(loss) on these assets during the year was (£68,698) (2024: £134,920).

The dividend and interest income generated by these assets during the period was £42,453 (2024: £44,438).

25. Related party transactions

The Charity has not entered into any related party transaction during the year, nor are there any outstanding balances owing between related parties and the Charity at 31 March 2025.

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

England & Wales - Charity number 303167

Accounts

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATORS

AND

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 303167

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Conservators from 3 April 2024	Oliver Bennett MBE – appointed by DEFRA January 2021; reappointed February 2024 David Brown – elected April 2024 Sue Bucknall – elected April 2021; re-elected 2024 Michael Johnston – elected April 2021; re-elected 2024 William Liu – elected April 2024 Mauro Mattiuzzo (Chairman) – elected April 2024 Peter Shortt – appointed by Ministry of Defence September 2022
Conservators in office during the 2023/24 Financial Year	Oliver Bennett MBE – appointed by DEFRA January 2021, reappointed February 2024 Sue Bucknall – elected April 2021; re-elected 2024 David Hince – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021; retired April 2024 Peter Hirsch – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021; retired 2024 Michael Johnston – elected April 2021; re-elected 2024 Diane Neil Mills – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021; retired April 2024 Peter Shortt – appointed by Ministry of Defence September 2022 Nigel Ware – appointed by Home Office March 2018; re-appointed March 2021. Term ended 13 March 2024
Chief Executive	Stephen Bound – until 17 May 2023 Colin Cooper – from 1 September 2023
Principal Address	Ranger's Office Manor Cottage Windmill Road Wimbledon London SW19 5NR
Registered Charity Number	**303167**
Independent Auditors	Kreston Reeves LLP Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor 9 Donnington Park 85 Birdham Road Chichester West Sussex PO20 7AJ
Solicitors	Bates Wells 10 Queen Street Place London EC4R 1BE
Bankers	Barclays Bank plc 8 Alexandra Road Wimbledon London SW19 7JZ
Investment Advisors	CCLA Investment Management Limited One Angel Lane London EC4R 3AB

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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The following abbreviations are used in this document.

WPCC or Charity	The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
1871 Act	Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871
Board	The Board of Conservators of WPCC
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
GAAP	United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

This past year has been one of considerable progress on a number of our long-term objectives as well as one of change for those responsible for both the governance and management of the charity.

As has been long since recognised, the natural landscape is the most important asset of the Commons and protecting and preserving this oasis of wilderness is a core constitutional duty of the Conservators. In support of this duty, there is a specific responsibility for the Conservators to preserve, as far as possible, the natural state of the Commons, recognising the various habitats which constitute the Commons. However, this does not mean that there should be no intervention, without which the Commons would eventually become a single, large area of woodland.

Habitats and species change and evolve over time but the speed at which the climate is changing hinders the natural adaptation process, increasing the risks of decline and loss of biodiversity. There is therefore a growing need for targeted intervention to conserve, protect and enhance the habitats of the Commons, ensuring their ecological and physical longevity.

To address these conservation needs, the year marked the completion of a comprehensive and meticulously detailed Land Management Plan (LMP), crafted and led by WPCC's Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane. The LMP is a strategic document that outlines WPCC's long-term vision and objectives for the natural environment over the next decade, emphasising the unique qualities of the Commons, the importance of landscape preservation and identification of vulnerable areas in need of special protection. Importantly, the plan seeks to balance conservation efforts with the diverse needs of visitors who frequent these natural spaces. The development of the LMP was supported by members of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum and we thank all those who gave so freely of their time to support this important initiative.

As part of building resilience in the Commons, the LMP identified the need for substantial pond restoration works, particularly in Queensmere Pond. We were therefore delighted to announce in March 2024 that we had been awarded a grant of £130,000 from the Mayor of London's Rewild London Fund. The investment will allow the rewilding of the pond and its environs, addressing the lack of ecological value in the pond, its man-made origins and its concrete banks. Works will begin in autumn 2024 and are due to be completed in April 2025.

Some six years ago, in April 2018, the newly constituted Board of Conservators of the time announced a decision to examine the potential of constitutional reform to enhance the ability of the Conservators to carry out their statutory duties of preserving, protecting and enhancing the Commons. Following 18 months of exploratory work, in December 2019, they announced they would focus such reform in three areas:

- reform of the levy;
- regularisation and clarification of provisions relating to buildings and land;
- modernisation of governance provisions.

Although work in all three areas has since made considerable progress, the focus in recent years has been on examining the case for reforming the levy, which we believe is necessary to enable us to properly fulfil our statutory responsibilities to care for and protect this much cherished asset. Following a very successful informal public consultation in autumn 2022 that tested support in principle for an increase in the levy, a formal public consultation was conducted during the autumn of 2023 to test support for a potential increase in the levy equivalent to £9.05 per year per Band D property. The consultation document was posted to all 44,500 households in the levy-paying area and responses were received from 5,969 respondents. The results indicated that a clear majority of respondents (79%) were in favour of the proposed increase with 21% of respondents expressing their opposition. The primary reasons cited by those against the increase were the current cost of living challenges and a lack of their utilisation of the Commons.

Given the high level of support and having considered the representations and comments received, in December 2023 the Conservators agreed to pursue a levy increase in line with the proposal in the consultation document and have contacted the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) about the matter. In reaching their decision, the Conservators were very cognisant of the cost of living challenges and were satisfied that all exemptions and benefits to which residents are entitled for council tax purposes will also apply to the levy.

Although the work on the levy has dominated our efforts to reform our constitution, we remain committed to also addressing the other matters mentioned above. At the same time, it is worth restating that the 1871 Act has served us well and protected the Commons for over 153 years and we assure you that this initiative is not about introducing a more permissive regime or diluting the fundamental purpose of the charity, which are absolutely immutable.

Visitors to the Commons continue to expand in both nature and number reflecting not only population growth but a growing appreciation of the value of accessible wilderness, which for many people is an experience they may otherwise never have. We welcome this growing participation and it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the harmonious way in which the diverse users have co-existed over the decades continues unabated. Much of the day-to-day management of the Commons is therefore focussed on agreeing arrangements for third party access to the Commons, ensuring that they are fair, fully compliant with our regulatory requirements and allow appropriate use of the Commons. In 2019 we developed the Access Framework to set out the relevant provisions under both the 1871 Act and charity law that govern third party access to the Commons and the document continues to serve as an invaluable guide for the organisation.

The Conservators recognise the importance of engagement with the local community and have continued to deliver over the course of the past year an active programme of events and activities, including the events led by the Friends Committee. We were particularly delighted to once again host the Annual Open Day in September 2023, following a three-year hiatus, and thank both the staff and the community for their collective effort in making this event such a great success.

In September 2023, we announced the appointment of Colin Cooper as Chief Executive of WPCC, replacing Stephen Bound, who sadly left the organisation in May 2023 following seven years of dedicated service in order to relocate to the Lake District. Colin joined WPCC from Habitats & Heritage, a charity that cares for the natural and historic environment and climate in southwest London, where he served as Chief Executive for 12 years, including predecessor organisations. He brings with him a wide knowledge of environmental and biodiversity issues, as well as experience of working with fragile and rare habitats.

The year also marked considerable change in those responsible for providing governance for the charity. Three of the elected Conservators, Diane Neil Mills, David Hince and Peter Hirsch, all of whom were first elected in 2018, decided not to stand for re-election in WPCC's 2024 election. We record our gratitude to all three for their commitment and dedication to the Commons during their terms of office. Diane Neil Mills deserves special mention. Diane served as Chairman of the Conservators throughout her six years as a Conservator. In that capacity she led a number of important initiatives including the strengthening of the charity's governance arrangements and rebasing of the levy and worked tirelessly as the public face of the Conservator board. She has been invaluable in helping me to get to grips with the role of Chairman and the continuing issues which are to be addressed. David Hince served as a key member of a number of committees including the Financial and Investment Committee and brought valuable commercial and financial acumen and experience to the Board. Peter Hirsch served on the Audit and Risk Committee throughout his tenure and in that capacity supported the committee's important function of scrutinising charity processes and identifying and mitigating risks.

In addition, one of the three appointed Conservators – Nigel Ware, appointed by the Home Office – also retired at the end of his second three-year term on 13 March 2024. We express our gratitude to Mr Ware for acting as Chair of the Finance and Investment Committee over his six years, updating the way the charity managed its financial reporting and for twice serving as Returning Officer in the Conservators' elections.

As has been said before, although the duties of the Conservators could not be better articulated than through the wonderful Victorian prose of the 1871 Act, the words fail to convey the enormity of the role. I am grateful for the commitment, time and dedication of all those with whom I serve and for those who have come before me, be they appointed by government departments or elected by levy-payers.

In closing, I would once again like to express my sincere appreciation to our tireless staff, for the upkeep, protection and day to day management of the Commons that they so capably and selflessly provide and for the patience and warmth which they have shown to me as I settle into my role. I also pay tribute to our volunteers, whether they serve as co-opted members of a committee or members of a forum, clear scrub from the heathland or contribute in other ways, many of whom do so anonymously. Regardless of the form that their contribution takes, they all give generously of their time, motivated by nothing more than a love of the Commons. Finally, I thank those who have supported us financially either in aid of a specific project or more generally, including membership of the Friends. The generosity of all our donors and the public goodwill that it represents is humbling and we are enormously grateful to everyone for their support.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

Taking up the reins in September 2023, this is my first Chief Executive's Foreword and I am delighted to lead this exceptional charity that cares for a truly wonderful Commons that are cherished and loved by the community. I would like to record my thanks to the immediate past Conservators, as well as the staff and stakeholders for making me feel so welcome and supporting my transition into the role.

Visitor numbers have remained consistently high level over the last few years. Whilst this brings benefits for well-being it does also bring challenges for the Commons and we must adapt to mitigate the increased impact on the fragile habitats and species that also call the Commons their home. The exceptionally wet winter has caused damage to valuable heathland due to widened pathways and new routes created to avoid waterlogged areas. The changing climate has made warm, wet winters more frequent, and this trend will likely continue. We are actively exploring ways to adapt the Commons, protecting public access while creating new habitats like seasonal ponds and wet woodlands.

The continued emphasis on conservation has seen a number of projects through the year aimed at improving the ecological value of the Commons. Further management of woodland has focused on allowing more light into the habitat, through holly clearance and widening of woodland rides. As roughly 75% of woodland species live on the margins of woodlands, this work is important to ensure the woodlands remain in good ecological condition. With the help of funding from Mayor's Rewild London Fund, we completed survey work and a feasibility study for the restoration of Queensmere to enhance its ecological and community value. A further application was made to the Mayor's Rewild London Fund for funds to deliver the enhancement works the study highlighted and we were notified in March we had been successful in securing £130k towards the project. I would like to thank our Fundraising Manager, Maggie May, for her sterling work in bringing this to fruition.

The Board agreed an ambitious new Land Management Plan and to support its implementation and other conservation objectives, a new post of Conservation Ranger has been created. The role has been filled internally, starting in the 2024/25 fiscal year. The role will support Peter Haldane, our Conservation and Engagement Officer.

We have also sought to increase engagement and involvement with Commons immediate neighbours, increasing representation from Roehampton on our Stakeholder Group, working with Our Roehampton and hosting visits from the Base Youth Centre in Roehampton and Wild Collective, a student group from the University of Roehampton.

Access works continued over the autumn with enhancements works to paths with Green Ride (Wimbledon Common), Windmill Road (Wimbledon Common), Inner Park Ride and Ladies Mile (Putney Heath) getting substantial upgrades. Before work started, our team researched the different types of materials that would be best suited for the Commons, particularly where the paths are crossing through the heathland landscape. Type 1 granite has been used as it is both hardwearing and in balance with the acidity of the plateau area of the Commons. Improving the paths enables those with less mobility to

access the Commons more easily and also reduces footfall on sensitive habitats. Jack Rowland, our Maintenance Manager, has also been working with the community to make some of our routes around Rushmere (AKA Wimbledon Village Green) more accessible to wheelchair and mobility scooter users.

The Commons has a rich and unique history in the sporting landscape for a number of global sports. The Rosslyn Park Schools Rugby Sevens has taken place at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields for many years, operating under an annual licence. The event is the largest rugby tournament in the world, and we are proud to host it on the Commons. Following some very wet and inclement weather, the Grounds Department worked miracles in draining and preparing the pitches. I would like to thank Gary Jepson and team for their dedication to getting the pitches playable. Through working closely with the organisers, it was judged to be the best tournament in living memory, despite the pre-tournament conditions. This year 2,276 fixtures were held on-site - an incredible feat for a five-day tournament.

High visitor numbers have also continued to impact our waste management and cleaning expenditure which increased five-fold during lockdown and has remained considerably high. In addition, like the rest of the country, we have been subject to the significant price inflation that has been experienced over the past 12 months, further straining our already limited budgets. These cost pressures, coupled with the Conservators' legal duties as charity trustees in maintaining 1140 acres of Commons designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, of which roughly 80% are designated a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), led to their decision following public consultation, to pursue rebasing the levy, which is the primary income source for the charity.

Lastly, and by no means least, I would like to pay tribute to the immediate past Chairman and Conservators for their dedication to the charity as well as the support given to the staff and myself. Following the Triennial Elections in March, where a number of Conservators chose not to stand for re-election, three new Conservators were elected and two re-elected for a second term. The new Conservators take office on 3 April 2024. I look forward to reporting to you next year on the activities we have delivered over 2024, which promises to be another exciting year for the charity, and wildlife and users of the Commons.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED DURING THE PAST YEAR

Strategic Context

In June 2017, the Board approved the first ever Strategy ('the Strategy'), following a recommendation from the 2014 Governance Review. The Strategy sets out both the broad vision and specific initiatives for managing the Commons over the ten-year period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2028.

Our Vision

"Wimbledon and Putney Commons will be recognised as an exceptional and welcoming natural place for visitors where wildlife thrives"

The Strategy demonstrates the way in which the Board will play its part in making this area of South-West London a great place to live, work and visit, contributing towards a world class city. (A copy of the Strategy can be viewed on the WPCC website www.wpcc.org.uk/strategy). The Strategy identifies two overarching long-term Strategic Objectives, which remain relevant for the purposes of this Conservators' report and are set out in Figure 1 below.

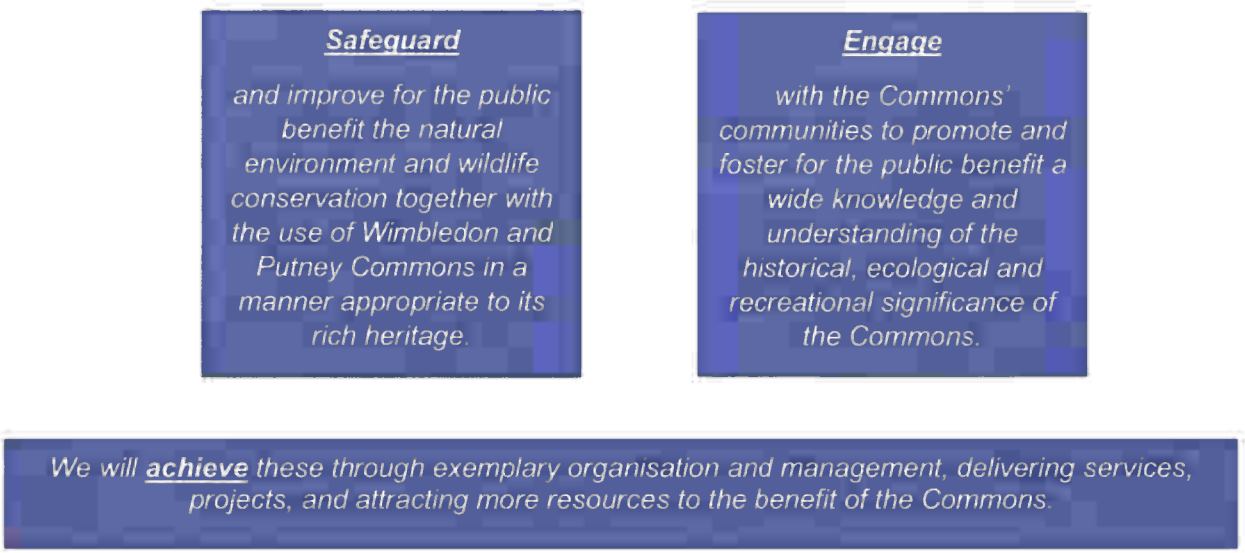

Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged:

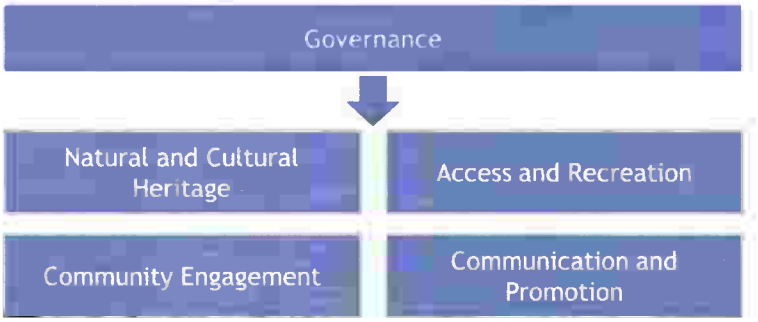

Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

Achievements and Performance 2023/24

It is within this strategic framework that individual initiatives are progressed through the development of a three-year rolling Business Plan. In April 2023, the Board agreed the three-year Business Plan for the period up to 31 March 2026 in which 16 initiatives were agreed; progress on each of these initiatives over the past financial year is set out under each of the five Strategic Themes.

The current Board has placed a strong emphasis on planning for the long-term future of the Commons. Significant resources have been directed towards:

- developing the strategic plans which set out how the Commons will be managed for the benefit of wildlife and for people;
- putting in place the constitutional and governance framework to enable the charity to operate effectively in the 21st Century;
- securing the long-term financial resources required to ensure that WPCC can continue to manage the Commons to a very high standard.

Governance

Potential changes to the Constitutional Framework

In an effort to support the long-term planning framework for the Commons, the Board has continued to work towards clarifying and updating the charity's constitutional framework. One of the drivers for this initiative was a recognition by both the Board and the Charity Commission that certain governance arrangements for the Commons as set out in the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871 and the Commissioners Clauses Act 1847 needed to be updated. The second driver was the Board's recognition of the need to regularise and clarify certain land and building matters to enable WPCC to resolve a number of operational matters associated with managing the Commons. It is important to note that there is neither a desire nor intention of diluting or diminishing the very high level of protection that is afforded by the 1871 Act. The Conservators' desire is simply to modernise and clarify certain provisions in the legislation that govern the Commons in order to improve the day-to-day decision-making process.

The Constitution Working Group (CWG) was established by the Board in April 2018 to identify the constitutional changes required and the procedures through which any such changes could be effected. The agreed Terms of Reference provide clarity of scope and purpose:

> 'The purpose of the CWG is to consider amendments necessary to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose of preserving, protecting and enhancing the Commons for the purposes of exercise and recreation as established by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871.
>
> The review will identify areas where amendments to the constitutional framework are required in order to provide clarity, alignment, operational practicality and deliverability to WPCC's powers and rights and in doing so allow the organisation to consistently achieve high operational and strategic performance standards.'

In May 2022, members of the Constitution Committee met with the Charity Commission to further discuss the need for amendments to the charity's governance arrangements and as a result of this meeting, the Charity Commission agreed that WPCC could submit an application for a section 73 scheme under the Charities Act 2011. Any scheme would require the support of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and WPCC therefore needs to engage with the department to seek its views on the amendment process. The Board also agreed that before any application for a scheme were submitted, a public consultation on the proposed changes would be undertaken.

Potential changes to the levy

During 2023, WPCC continued to examine the case for rebasing the levy.

A founding principle of the 1871 Act is that the levy serves as the primary source of funding for the Commons. However, increasingly we are finding that the charity's income is insufficient to cover not just important work but also essential projects required to ensure that the Commons remain the safe attractive and welcoming open space that the community so values.

During autumn 2022, WPCC undertook the first phase of public consultation on a potential rebasing of the levy, which was intended to test public support in principle, the public were also provided with an opportunity to comment at the Conservators' Open Meeting in November 2022. The Chairman and Chief Executive also met with local MPs and local authorities to test their support for an increase in the Levy.

Two of the three local MPs were in support of the proposal, although the local authorities raised concerns on the effect of a rise on their Council Tax and the principle of an increase during a cost of living crisis. However, with the knowledge that any discount or exemption applied to Council Tax also applied to the levy, and the positive feedback from levy payers in the first phase of public consultation, the Conservators considered that there was sufficient support for them to move ahead with the next phase of the consultation.

During the autumn of 2023, the Conservators therefore launched a formal public consultation with levy-payers on a potential rebasing of WPCC's levy. The consultation was conducted over a six-week period by means of a consultation document posted to all 44,500 households in the levy paying area. Recipients were invited to respond to the consultation online or by freepost.

The Conservators also invited key stakeholders, including the MPs for Wimbledon, Putney and Richmond Park, the local authorities of Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth, as well as the Wimbledon Society and Putney Society to make representations. Responses were received from 5,969 levy-paying households. The results indicated that a clear majority of respondents (79%) were in favour of the proposed increase with 21% (1,259 respondents) expressing their opposition. The primary reasons cited by those against the increase were the current cost of living challenges and a lack of utilisation of the Commons.

On 4 December 2023, the Conservators met to consider the results from the consultation and to decide how to proceed in respect of the levy proposal. Given the level of support and having considered the representations and comments made through the consultation process, the Conservators agreed to pursue a levy increase in line with the proposal in the consultation document and have now formally applied to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for approval for the levy rebasing. In reaching their decision, the Conservators were very cognisant of the current cost of living situation and were satisfied that all exemptions and benefits to which residents are entitled for council tax purposes will also apply to the levy. At the time of preparation of this report, a response from DEFRA is awaited.

Appointed Conservators

WPCC's governance structure stipulates that three of the eight Conservators are appointed by government departments: the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); the Home Office; and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). In line with the term for elected Conservators, appointments are for a period of three years.

Peter Shortt was appointed to the Board of Conservators by the MoD on 1 September 2022 for a three-year term. Unfortunately, personal circumstances have dictated that Mr Shortt will be standing down in 2024. Nigel Ware was appointed by the Home Office in 2018 and re-appointed in 2021. Mr Ware decided to stand down at the end of his second term on 13 March 2024.

Oliver Bennett MBE was appointed by DEFRA in 2021 and WPCC are delighted that he was re-appointed for a second term in February 2024.

Staffing

Colin Cooper was appointed Chief Executive and took up office in September 2023. The Head Keeper took early retirement in early 2024 and the Second in Command Keeper was promoted in his place. A replacement Mounted Keeper was appointed in early 2024 and will take up position in July 2024.

Natural and Cultural Heritage

London in Bloom

London in Bloom is an independent charity and part of Britain in Bloom.

Focusing on the key issues of horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility and community participation, the Commons have been involved with the annual London in Bloom campaign since 2013 and each year, Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common are entered as separate entries into the category of London Commons.

During 2023, we were delighted that both entries received a Gold Award and Wimbledon Common was also voted by the London in Bloom judges as London Common of the year.

Wimbledon Common has now been presented with a Gold Award at the annual London in Bloom Awards for seven consecutive years and it has also been voted winner of the London Commons category on seven separate occasions.

As a separate entry, Putney Lower Common has also been presented with a Gold Award for the past seven consecutive years.

A Gold Award is provided to entries that have demonstrated an exceptionally high standard throughout the London in Bloom judging process and have consistently demonstrated both best practice and sustainable effort in all the judging criteria and objectives by the London in Bloom campaign.

Land Management Plan

The Commons' Land Management Plan has been written 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 that are vulnerable or require additional attention. This management plan has been designed for anyone who has an interest in the future management of the Commons. The Commons' Land Management Plan will remain an active document which is periodically reviewed and revised as required. The ongoing use of this management plan will always consider new ideas on how the Commons could be conserved and enhanced in the future.

The Commons' Land Management Plan is both aspirational and ambitious and will direct the management of the Commons natural resources in a way that has never been undertaken on this site before. The success of this plan relies on the co-operation and involvement of everyone who works, volunteers, or simply cares about the Commons and their future well-being.

In February 2024, the Commons' Land Management Plan was agreed by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Board of Conservators and since this point, work has commenced on various elements that are contained within the plan. A copy of the Commons' Land Management Plan can be found on the Wimbledon and Putney Commons website.

Management works

Heathland

Lowland heathland is an internationally important landscape which is listed as a priority habitat for conservation in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. It is comprised of a mosaic of habitats that are found on extremely impoverished, acidic soils (pH 3.4 to 6.5) which occur in areas with mild temperatures and regular rainfall. The landscape in which lowland heathland can be found is characteristically open and dominated by low growing vegetation, with areas of bare ground, wetland, and scrub. According to Natural England (2002) there is now only 16% of the heathland area that previously existed in the UK in 1800.

In Greater London, lowland heathland is now limited to a very small number of sites. It is believed that the coverage of lowland heathland within Greater London amounts to approximately 80 hectares, with the largest single area of this habitat found on Wimbledon and Putney Commons.

According to Natural England (2016), the aim of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators should be to restore the combined total extent of the Commons' European dry heaths and North Atlantic wet heaths, including its component habitat and transitions to adjacent habitats, to a total extent of 48.6 hectares. It is important to note from this advice that the inclusion of component habitat types includes acid grassland, gorse, scrub, bracken and birch woodland, all of which are found on the Commons. By following the prescriptions that have been provided in the Commons' Land Management Plan, it is anticipated that the total area of heathland that has been outlined by Natural England can be achieved.

It is important to note that as a direct consequence of the lowland heathland that is found on the Commons, since 1953, 364.5 hectares of the Commons' total area of 461 hectares have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In 1986, this same area of land was also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). SSSI and SAC designations are only assigned to areas of land in the UK that are especially valuable in terms of the flora, fauna, physiological or geological features that can be found on them and as a result, they are provided with a high level of legal protection.

To help protect the Commons' heathland and ensure there is no further loss of this important habitat, between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, a wide range of tasks were carried out by WPCC staff and volunteers.

To help tackle the ongoing problem of woodland succession, during the past year, the Commons' Maintenance Team have carried out tree work on three main areas of the Commons' heathland. These areas include heathland near Tibbet's Corner, heathland close to the junction of Ladies Mile and Inner Park Ride and heathland just south of Hookhamslade Pond.

In addition to this, there were also 44 volunteer sessions held on the Commons' heathland that focused on cutting back invasive scrub which is an ongoing part of our heathland management programme.

The management of the Commons' heathland is however not only concerned with the control of invasive trees and scrub and as a result, during the past year a range of other tasks have also been carried out on this area of the Commons. These have included the maintenance of fire breaks, the control of water loss by blocking selected drainage channels and restoring small temporary pools, the control of bracken, the control of purple moor grass in selected areas, tree stump removal and the resurfacing of three sections of foot path which run alongside areas of heathland.

Grassland

During summer 2023, 15 areas of grassland were managed on the Commons through a programme of cut and collect. This work involves the cutting and removal of vegetation from each site, which if carried out annually, will ensure the low nutrient status of each area is maintained. This will inhibit the abundance of coarse grasses and increase the likelihood that a more diverse assemblage of grassland flora can be achieved in the future.

According to the wildlife charity, Plantlife (2024), over 97% of the UK's species rich grassland has been lost in less than a century. With these habitats providing a wide range of important services including favourable areas for pollinators, carbon storage and positive benefits for human health and well-being, the sensitive management of the Commons' various grassland sites has remained an important part of the overall management of the Commons. This work is carried out through a combination of using external contractors to cut and collect the largest grassland sites on the Commons while the Commons Maintenance Team are involved with a similar operation at some of the smaller and less accessible parts of the Commons.

During 2023, contractors were hired to cut and collect vegetation from the following areas on the Commons:

- The Plain
- Tibbet's Corner Meadow
- Centre Path Meadow
- West Place
- The grassland site opposite Westside Common (used annually by the visiting fairground).
- Wilberforce Meadow
- Putney Heath Fairground site
- Putney Lower Common Main Field
- Putney Lower Common (area between Lower Richmond Road and Queens Ride).

Grassland sites on the Commons where vegetation was cut and collected by the Commons' Maintenance Team included:

- The REMPF Memorial Ring
- The small meadow close to Centre Path meadow and adjacent to Memorial Ride.
- The small meadow adjacent to Telegraph Road (known as Crossroads Meadow)
- The Southern Pound
- The Oasis Academy
- Verges alongside Westside Common

Wildflower meadow project at Crossroads Meadow (Putney Heath)

On 20 March 2024, a wildflower planting event was held on one of the open grassland sites on Putney Heath (north of the A3). The event involved several members of the WPCC Team and pupils from Wimbledon High School and Granard Primary school which is located approximately 400 metres from the Commons.

The funding for this activity was raised by Wimbledon High School via a grant from HSBC to initiate a partnership between their school and Granard Primary school. The aim of the partnership is to bring local schools together by learning and becoming involved with their local environment.

As the selected area of grassland is located within one of Buglife's B-lines, this project provided a welcome opportunity to engage with two of the Commons' local schools and to help improve one of the Commons' small meadows.

What are B-Lines?

B-Lines are an imaginative and beautiful solution to the problem of the loss of flowers and pollinators. The B-Lines are a series of 'insect pathways' running through our countryside and towns, along which we are restoring and creating a series of wildflower-rich habitat stepping stones. They link existing wildlife areas together, creating a network, like a railway, which will weave across the UK landscape. This will provide large areas of brand-new habitat benefiting bees and butterflies– but also a host of other wildlife. (Buglife: 2024)

Wildflower seed and bulbs were sourced from a supplier that is recommended by the wildlife charity, Plantlife, and therefore all efforts were made ensure that native species of UK provenance were used on the Commons. The wildflower seed that was used for this project contains 23 different annual and perennial native wildflower species. In addition to wildflower seeds, pupils also helped to plant bulbs from several different native plants in the surrounding woodland.

Golf course fairways

In addition to the Commons' open areas of grassland, the grassland that surrounds the Wimbledon Common Golf Course (WCGC) is also of immense ecological value.

The WCGC is a standard 18-hole course which is comprised of improved grassland (tees and greens), fairways, short acid grassland (semi-rough and rough) woodland edge, scrub and remnant heath.

Along with the areas of heathland that are located around the edge of the golf course, the areas of grassland which form the semi-rough and rough provide an important reason for the Commons SSSI and SAC designations.

To help protect and enhance these areas of grassland and heathland, over the past 12 months we have reduced the coverage of invasive scrub and bramble along the edge of five of the WCGC fairways. (Please note: all the names below refer to the course names that are used by the London Scottish Golf Club).

- Fairway number 2: Big Ravine
- Fairway number 5: Queensmere
- Fairway number 7: Paradise
- Fairway number 10: Caesar's Camp
- Fairway number 17: Heather

Further work will be required along each of the fairways mentioned above to ensure that bramble and bracken does not re-colonise these open areas of ground.

Woodland

Covering an area of 291 hectares, which represents almost two-thirds of the total area of the Commons, woodland is the dominant habitat type found on Wimbledon and Putney Commons. During the past year, woodland management activities on the Commons have included holly thinning, ride management work, the creation of dead wood habitats, hazel coppicing, open glade management and tree safety work.

Holly thinning: During December 2023 and January 2024, a forestry contractor thinned holly from four hectares of woodland that is located above Queensmere and adjacent to the Queensmere and Paradise fairways. As holly is a native species provides nesting opportunities for birds and a valuable source of nectar for a wide range of invertebrates, in all areas where holly thinning has been carried out, approximately 10% of the existing holly coverage in each hectare of woodland is retained.

The recent phase of holly thinning on the Commons has achieved several important objectives:

- Holly thinning has provided a more open woodland which is of benefit to the regeneration of trees and associated woodland flora.
- Holly thinning has ensured the woodland is more accessible for visitors to the Commons.
- Holly thinning has enhanced the surrounding view of Queensmere.
- Holly thinning has increased the movement of air to Queensmere providing a healthier environment for fish and other wildlife.
- Holly thinning has improved the safety of visitors to the Commons by improving sightlines along the edge of the Wimbledon Common golf course.
- Holly thinning has reduced the amount of shading around various parts of the golf course which has reduced the need for the use of fertilizer.

Ride Management

During the beginning of 2024, the Commons' Maintenance Team carried out ride management work along one section of Warren Farm Ride and one section of Stag Ride.

This work involved coppicing targeted trees that were located within ten metres from the edge of the ride. The aim of the work has been to create a ride that is approximately 1.5 metres wider than the height of the surrounding trees. This will reduce heavy shading and allow an increased level of light to reach the woodland floor which will lead to a wider interface between a dense woodland edge and other open nectar sources which are important for invertebrates and other wildlife. As a result of the lack of historic management that has been carried out along much of the Commons' extensive network of rides, where large native trees have been found, these have been left untouched as the removal of these important natural habitats can rarely be justified.

Deadwood habitats: In Britain, approximately 1000 different species have been recorded as living in deadwood and it is considered that a woodland which is free of deadwood may be impoverished by up to a fifth of its fauna. Deadwood is therefore a fundamental component of a healthy woodland ecosystem and as a result we do our very best to ensure that as much deadwood as possible is retained on the Commons.

As in previous years, deadwood habitats were created along the edge of Warren Farm Ride and Stag Ride through burying cut timber in deep pits, stacking cut timber above ground and through tree safety work which has resulted in the creation of large standing monoliths. While both standing and fallen deadwood provide important habitats for a host of wildlife, the creation of deadwood habitats on the Commons is also of particular importance to the ongoing survival of the Stag beetle on this site. Wimbledon Common is at the heart of the south London centre of distribution for stag beetles and as such it is a qualifying species for the designation of the Commons' SAC status.

Hazel coppicing: Wherever a significant number of hazel trees are found on the Commons, they are managed by WPCC staff and volunteers on a rotational basis where they are generally re-coppiced every 5-7 years. While coppicing is one of the oldest woodland management techniques that is still in use today, its implementation is quite straight forward and simply involves cutting the vertical shoots back to the tree stump or stool. By the following spring, new shoots will have emerged which provide an indefinite crop which in the past was harvested for a wide range of uses including fencing and wooden handles for tools. Today, all coppiced materials on the Commons are used to create dead hedges around different parts of the site.

Although produced by artificial means, coppiced woodland helps to provide a variety of structure in a woodland setting which is of great benefit to sun loving invertebrates and other wildlife. During the beginning of 2024, hazel coppicing was carried out in woodland adjacent to Warren Farm Ride.

Open glade management: Like hazel coppicing and ride management work, the creation and maintenance of woodland glades helps to enhance the biodiversity of a woodland. Offering a contrasting open habitat to the closed higher canopy which is a common feature of many British woodlands, woodland glades provide a refuge and food to many important invertebrates that may not be available in other areas of the site. During the beginning of 2024, volunteers helped to cut back bramble, aspen and unwanted scrub from the Brickfield Cottage site which is located close to Robin Hood Ride.

Tree safety work: Tree safety work forms an ongoing part of the management of the Commons' trees and woodland and most of this work is carried out by the Commons' Maintenance Team.

Pond Management

According to the Pond Conservation Group (1993) 'a pond is commonly defined as any water body that is between 1 m^2 and two hectares in area and holds water for at least four months of the year.' Working within this definition, there are currently nine ponds on the Commons of differing depths, size, and settings. Five of the Commons' ponds are located on Wimbledon Common and the other four ponds are found on Putney Heath. There are currently no ponds located on Putney Lower Common.

During the past year, two refurbished duck tubes have been positioned on Kingsmere, two floating platforms have been provided with fresh bedding (also on Kingsmere), two new floating platforms have been floated on Queensmere and a pond training day was held for staff and volunteers during October 2023.

The big news of the past year however has been the announcement that we have been awarded a grant by the Rewild London Fund to take forward plans to transform Queensmere. The grant is supported by the Mayor of London in partnership with London Wildlife Trust.

Putney Lower Common

Putney Lower Common is separated from the main body of the Commons by just over one mile and covers an area of approximately 20 hectares (50 acres). The semi-natural landscape of Putney Lower Common includes large areas of open grassland, woodland, a small section of the Beverley Brook and sporting facilities which include a cricket pitch, bowling club and tennis courts.

Although Putney Lower Common forms quite a small area of the Commons, this site is looked after by a full-time member of the Commons' team.

In addition to the routine management of the Commons, over the past year the following activities were carried out on Putney Lower Common:

- Japanese knotweed was treated via stem injection on multiple areas of the Common.
- Himalayan balsam was removed from the riverbank.
- Oak Processionary Moth was managed on the Common.
- Meadow management (cut and collect) was carried out by contractors and WPCC staff on three of Putney Lower Commons larger areas of grassland.
- 12 new woodcrete bird nesting boxes were positioned at various locations on the Common.
- 700 wildflower bulbs, 100 plug plants and wildflower seed was planted on Putney Lower Common. Wildflower seed and bulbs were sourced from a supplier that is recommended by the wildlife charity, Plantlife, and therefore all efforts were made ensure that native species of UK provenance we used on the Common.

Access and Recreation

Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields

The grounds continue to host weekend community football matches and provides sporting facilities for schools.

Path restoration

During 2023 we were able to carry out improvements to four priority footpaths across the Commons. This project was funded by donations from visitors, a grant from the Chapman Charitable Trust and a major grant from South Western Railway's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund. The total raised for improving paths (including Gift Aid) was £75,716.

The four paths restored were:
1. Windmill Road footpath
2. Inner Park Ride (shared cycle route)
3. Ladies Mile (shared cycle route)
4. Green Ride (shared cycle route)

WPCC is incredibly grateful for all the support received to enable this important work which has improved four priority paths on the Commons as well as protecting the habitats that the paths travel through.

Community Engagement and Events

WPCC's annual programme of events is increasingly important in terms of providing opportunities for members of the local and wider communities to engage with the Commons for the purposes of education, entertainment and social interaction.

Further community engagement opportunities are being created, with staff increasingly becoming involved in local community organisations such as Our Roehampton, the Roehampton Women's Network and the Wimbledon Village Walk and Talk.

Art on the Commons - As part of the Commons' 150th Anniversary celebrations, the Conservators launched a picture competition in August 2021, inviting visitors to the Commons to submit photographs of the Commons with the chance to win prizes donated each month by local businesses. Given its popularity, the Competition has continued into 2023, albeit on a quarterly basis, with visitors encouraged to enter with images of each season – winter, spring, summer and autumn. This again proved to be very popular with nearly 500 entries being submitted.

Board Meetings - Following the March 2021 triennial elections, the newly constituted Board agreed that to further the objectives of openness and transparency, the non-confidential sections of Board meetings would be held in public. During 2023/24, members of the public continued to attend the non-confidential part of Board meetings and to ask questions on any of the matters being considered at that meeting. The agenda papers and minutes from these meetings are also posted on WPCC's website.

Volunteer Programme

From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the Commons' volunteer programme has continued to provide countless benefits to the Commons and to those individuals who volunteer to help on them. Providing a wide range of activities on the Commons, we take immense pride that every volunteer activity that is provided is of direct benefit in helping to protect and enhance this site.

During the past year, volunteering on the Commons has included the following activities.

- Sunday morning scrub bashing
- Mid-week volunteer Estate Team
- Beverley Brook volunteer litter pickers
- Single visit volunteer groups
- Farm Bog volunteer group
- Duke of Edinburgh Award litter pickers
- Membership of various forums and stakeholder groups
- Wildlife recorders
- Events volunteers
- Work experience volunteers.

WPCC Events

WPCC holds two events each year that are specifically aimed at children and their families: the **Easter Egg Hunt** and the **Halloween Pumpkin Hunt**. Both events are simple yet popular, priced to ensure that they are accessible to all (£2 entry fee) and successfully attract families that otherwise may not visit the Commons. Wooden easter eggs or pumpkins are hidden around the nature trail with children having to find them and record the letters on them. A winner is drawn at random. The events provide both entertainment and educational opportunities to learn about the Commons. In addition, there is a colouring competition, also with prizes. Around 1,000 children take part in both events.

The **Weekend of Nature** has become a core annual event attracting people of all ages. The event is key in terms of encouraging those of the younger generation with a keen interest in nature as well as introducing the Commons' wildlife to those who may not have previously understood its importance. This year, the event started on the evening of Friday 16 June 2023 with the small mammal survey. Those taking part came back to the Commons at 6.30am on the Saturday morning. There are two nature walks on the Saturday, the Butterfly and Dragonfly Walk, followed in the evening by a very popular bat and moth evening. On Sunday a "base camp" is set up at the Ranger's Office and events include a bird walk, moth identification, a general nature walk and various stalls of interest such as macroscopy and reptiles.

It is estimated that approximately 200 people took part in these programmed events over the course of the weekend with many people stopping at the base camp where they could learn more about the Commons.

Several other nature walks were held during the year for butterfly and dragonflies in addition to three further bird walks. These walks were all well-attended with some 20 or so people joining each one. A Birdsong Workshop and Walk was held in the April, giving a group of 15 people an opportunity to learn about the birdsong on the Commons.

Coronation Celebrations - A one-off event was held in May to mark the coronation of their Royal Highnesses, King Charles III and Camilla, Queen Consort which took place on Saturday 6 May 2023.

The first event, on the evening of Sunday 7 May, was a national "Lighting up the Nation". The Windmill was suitably illuminated in red, white and blue and provided a backdrop to a candlelit evening of music and readings that celebrated each of the four home nations.

On Monday 8 May, the Commons joined in the Big Help Out Day - as part of the celebrations, King Charles encouraged everyone to help in their local community – and as well as showcasing our own volunteering opportunities here on the Commons, we invited other local volunteer-led organisations to join us and use the opportunity to advertise the work they do and how volunteers can help them.

We were delighted to be supported by the Dons Local Action Group and the WISH Foundation along with Wandle the Womble who set off a Commons' wide litter pick and provided some fantastic AFC Wimbledon prizes, including match tickets.

The annual **Commons Open Day** was held on Sunday 10 September, the first to be held for three years with 2020 and 2021 cancelled because of Covid and 2022 cancelled due to the passing of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II just three days before. The event was one of the biggest we have had with some 80 stalls and attractions, it was estimated that around 10,000 visitors attended with the event becoming a firm fixture in the Wimbledon and Putney social calendars. Organised by two members of staff, but with the whole team contributing, the popularity and success of this event is an enormous credit to WPCC's staff.

The annual Christmas Carols at the Windmill event was held on Saturday 9 December 2023. The occasion continues to go from strength to strength with approximately 500 visitors enjoying mince pies, hot chocolate, mulled cider and a sing-along to carols played by the Wandle Concert Band. This year was exceptional with over £1,200 (net) raised that was divided between WPCC and the Windmill Museum Trust.

2024 events began with WPCC's Winter Talk held on Tuesday 6 February. WPCC was delighted to welcome guest speaker Dr Mark Spencer, an internationally respected botanist who gave a fascinating talk on the rare and important plants that are surviving on the Commons and in Richmond Park. Entitled "Wimbledon and Richmond – A Refuge for London's Botanical Gems", Dr Spencer shared some eye-opening statistics on the general decline of our native species and how important it is to ensure what remains is helped to survive.

Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

The Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons was established in September 2019 as a Conservator-led, integral part of WPCC. The Friends bring together all of those who are connected by a passion for the Commons for the purposes of fund raising and celebration of the Commons.

Income from subscriptions supports the wider work of the charity as well as supporting grant applications with contributions as matched funds. This year, funds have been allocated towards the Queensmere Restoration Project (see Fundraising update below) with Friends providing a contribution to the costs of the surveys that were carried out and also to the programme of footpath restoration carried out in 2023. We are grateful to the dedicated Conservators and volunteers who organise events for members and the community.

In addition to the existing five categories of membership, a new Individual concessionary category was introduced. This new category applies to:

- Anyone claiming state benefits including disability, unemployment or pension credit
- Full time students
- Those under 21 years of age

The six membership categories are as follows:

- Individual Friend - £30 per year (or £3 per month)
- Individual Friend Concessionary - £15 per year (or £1.50 per month)
- Household Friend - £40 per year (or £4 per month)
- Benefactor - £250 per year (or £20 per month)
- Patron - £1,000 per year (£85 per month)
- Corporate - £5,000 per year (£420 per month)

In November 2023 we launched a Friends Gift Membership, giving an opportunity to purchase a unique gift of Friends' membership to help support the Commons.

At the year end, we had a total of 588 memberships. Whilst new membership continued to rise, the cost of living crisis has affected overall membership numbers with a number being allowed to expire or actively cancelled.

Friends Events

The Friends both organise events and assist with some of the larger events taking place on the Commons.

Friends were instrumental in organising and manning the two events that the Commons hosted to mark the coronation of their Royal Highnesses, King Charles III and Camilla, Queen Consort which took place on Saturday 6 May - the national "Lighting up the Nation" celebration held on Sunday 7 May 2023 and the Big Help Out Day on Monday 8 May 2023.

The Friends also continued with their programme of local walks on the Commons, including walks to learn about birdsong, and three separate walks on some of the Commons' important habitats – woodland and heathland, as well as a tour of Putney Lower Common.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN 2024/25

2024/25 will see the completion or continuation of a number of major projects commenced by WPCC during 2022/23. These include:

- **Constitutional Reform –** WPCC retains a desire to clarify and modernise certain constitutional provisions, to enable more effective governance of the charity by working with the Charity Commission, Government and politicians. The Board will work to develop proposals for a section 73 scheme under the Charities Act 2011.
- **Fundraising –** It remains the case that essential or important work has to be postponed due to our limited financial resources and therefore we will continue to seek to increase income from fundraising in order to provide the investment necessary to protect the Commons. We will seek funds to enhance the ecological value of Farm Bog, replace signage and interpretation on the Commons working with partners to include social and sport heritage, improve more footpaths and rides to increase ease of access and secure addition funds for our Queensmere project.

- **Land Management Plan** –This will set out the longer-term vision and operational direction for conserving and enhancing habitats and populations of priority species enhancement on the Commons. In particular, the plan will set out the work required to ensure the heathland, woodland, ponds and mires found on the Commons are managed in order to preserve and improve their condition and value for wildlife. Implementing the plan will require additional staffing and financial but will return the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to favourable condition.
- **Habitat restoration** – WPCC has been successful in securing another grant from the Mayor of London's 'Rewild London' fund to carry out ecological and access enhancements to Queensmere Pond. Queensmere is one of the most popular sites on the Commons, but ecologically, its condition is poor. We also hope to undertake restoration work to Farm Bog and make ecological enhancements at Putney Lower Common.
- **Access Improvements** – We will commission a hydrology study to look at water flow through the Commons to protect paths and rides, whilst also looking at the potential for the creation of new seasonal ponds and wet woodlands.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

For the year ended 31 March 2024 the charity achieved a net increase in Unrestricted funds of £5,000 and a net decrease in Restricted Funds of £39,000.

This position close to breakeven for the year has been achieved through careful management of discretionary non pay spend during the year, the deferral of planned maintenance and capital expenditure on estate properties and a better than anticipated performance on investments.

Income

Unrestricted income for the year was £2,212,000, which was £193,000 or 9.6% higher than the previous year. The main changes in income were as follows:

- An increase in levy income of £167,000 (12.6% in line with RPI of Sept 2023). Levy income represented 67% (2023: 66%) of the charity's total unrestricted income for the year.
- Income from Sports, and Rents & Licences increased by £77k, principally due to RPI uplifts.
- Grant income reduced by £36,000 due to the loss of some Rural Payments agency grants.

With high recent levels of inflation and the need to invest in the Commons' buildings and infrastructure, the Conservators have increased the 24/25 levy to its maximum permitted level (based on 8.9% RPI in September 2023) which will generate an additional £132,000 in the coming year.

Restricted income in the year amounted to £99,000 and included grants from South West Rail of £55,000 for footpaths and £20,000 for windmill repairs.

Expenditure

Total expenditure on charitable activities for the year was £2,481,000 which is an £18,000 increase on the previous year. A large reduction in service cost charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme of £296,000 has been offset by £314,000 of other increases in expenditure.

The main changes in expenditure relate to

- Direct Costs increased by £259,000 as a result of
    - Windmill - £57,000 additional costs of restoration works (part funded by a £20,000 grant from SW Trains)
    - Keepers and Commons security - £39,000 (largely inflation)
    - Commons maintenance – £98,000 increase in costs is largely a result of £79,000 spent on footpaths (part funded by a £55,000 grant from SW Trains) together with inflationary pressures and increased spend on skips and cleaning.
    - Playing fields maintenance - £44,000 additional costs of inflation and increased staffing levels following recruitment of a new Groundsman.

- Property maintenance - £30,000 extra costs have been incurred across contract maintenance costs despite holding back on necessary planned maintenance.

- Support Costs reduced by £240k as a result of
  - Reduced service costs on the defined benefit pension scheme – £296,000
  - Reduction in Admin staffing costs of £56,000 driven partly by the vacancy period when recruiting to a new Chief Executive position.
  - Reduction in Insurance costs of £18,000.
  - These reductions partially offset by the Triennial election costs of £64,000 and £54,000 increase in Legal and Professional fees related largely to the public consultation on changes to the levy.

Other matters

Financial markets performed well during the financial year which resulted in a net gain in value of £135,000 in the charity's investments during the year ended 31 March 2024. (compared to a loss in value of £59,000 to March 2023)

At 31 March 2024 the charity's bank balances amounted to £284,000 (£384,000 at 31 March 2023).

Pension Scheme

The charity is a member of the London Borough of Merton Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The scheme has an actuarial valuation every 3 years prepared to assess the funding position of the LGPS and to determine the contributions actually payable by participating employers for the following three years.

The latest triennial actuarial valuation (TAV) was published in March 2023 and set out the actuarial position at 31 March 2022 and the contributions required for the three years ending 31 March 2026 and can be inspected at https://bit.ly/MPFactuarial.

For accounting purposes, a different valuation methodology is used which is intended to aid comparison between different entities with defined benefit pension schemes. The element of the valuation methodology which causes the greatest difference between the two valuations is the discount rate used to compute the liability to pay pensions.

The TAV at 31 March 2022 used a discount rate based on the expected return of the assets in the pension fund, adjusted for risk, of 4.2% and valued WPCC's share of the LGPS as a surplus of £1,090,000.

At 31 March 2023, WPCC's share of the LGPS for accounting purposes, based on a discount rate of 4.8% was a net asset of £347,000.

At 31 March 2024, WPCC's share of the LGPS for accounting purposes, based on a revised discount rate of 4.9% was a net asset of £719,000. This would then have been subject to the actuary's asset ceiling adjustment, reducing the net asset position by £565,000 to £154,000. This is then further restricted to nil in the financial statements, as explained in note 23.

GAAP in the United Kingdom requires the inclusion of a deficit on the LGPS, as calculated for accounting purposes, in WPCC's accounts. Such a deficit itself is shown as a liability on the balance sheet with a corresponding amount charged to a pension reserve. In the case of an asset in the LGPS, GAAP requires that an asset is not recognised in the financial statements unless that asset can be recovered by either a refund to WPCC or a reduction in future pension contributions.

With the accounting valuation of WPCC's share of the LGPS showing a surplus at 31 March 2023 and 2024, no pension asset/liability or reserve has been reported in the accounts. (note 23 to the financial statements)

There are however other charges to the Statement of Financial Activities and the main components for the year ended 31 March 2024 were:

• the current service cost of providing the pension	£ 220,000
• less the contributions payable to the LGPS by WPCC	£(205,000)
• notional net interest	£ (22,000)
• admin expenses	£ 8,000
• **equals total additional charges**	**£ 1,000**
• **offset by an actuarial gain**	**£ (1,000)**

While the future movement of discount rates is impossible to predict, it is possible that if inflation continues to decline, interest rates and discount rates will also decline which may result in the asset position shown by the LGPS at 31 March 2024 being transitory in nature.

It should be noted that a pension liability included in the balance sheet does not represent a liability which is payable because, as described above, the contributions payable to the LGPS are based on the results of the TAV.
Further details of the LGPS will be found in the notes to the financial statements.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The Conservators have considered the major risks to which the charity is exposed and satisfied themselves that systems or procedures are established in order to manage those risks. The annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee will be found later in this report. Set out below are the principal risks and uncertainties to which the charity is exposed.

Despite various amendments that have been introduced over the years, the administrative provisions of the 1871 Act have not been materially updated since 1871 and this presents a risk that has been acknowledged by the Charity Commission. The Constitution Committee, originally established as a working group in 2018, continues to review the current arrangements. This is not about introducing a more permissive regime or diluting the fundamental purposes of the charity but introducing a workable set of rules to enable the organisation to fulfil its core objectives in a 21st century working environment. The charity is continuing to look at this issue and hopes to progress it in due course. Before any changes are made WPCC will carry out a public consultation.

The rise in inflation continued to have a negative impact on the charity's cost base. Also, in recent years it has become apparent that the charity's overall level of income is insufficient to support the long-term preventative maintenance of both the natural and built environments. Although the charity is fortunate that its principal source of income, the levy, is linked to the Retail Price Index, the Conservators believe that there is a need to achieve a step change in the quantum of the levy. To this end, as described earlier in this report, the charity carried out a public consultation in the autumn of 2023 which illustrated that there was support for an increase in the levy. The charity is now in discussion with DEFRA in order to agree a rebasing of the levy. In the event that it was not possible to secure an increase in the levy, the charity would need to seek alternative sources of income and/or reduce its cost base in order to bring its future income and costs into equilibrium.

The charity has developed a number of ambitious projects for the Commons which will necessitate the raising of grants and donations from third parties. If such funds cannot be raised, the projects may need to be curtailed or postponed.

The Commons contain a large number of buildings, many of which are over 100 years old. The age of such buildings brings the risk that unforeseen expenditure may be required to maintain the operational capability of such buildings.

Risks to the charity's buildings and other infrastructure are managed by means of routine inspections which are aimed at identifying problems before they arise. However, given the age of such buildings and infrastructure it is inevitable that unforeseen and sometimes costly expenditure will arise from time to time.

Fundraising

Queensmere Restoration Project

Ponds are important havens for wildlife and Wimbledon and Putney Commons are fortunate to have nine of them. One of the largest, and most popular with visitors, is Queensmere. A man-made pond, its concrete banks and lack of marginal vegetation means there is huge potential to vastly enhance its ecological and community value.

WPCC received an initial grant in 2023 from the Mayor of London's Rewild London Fund and, along with a match funding contribution from the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, we were able to carry out surveys to better understand the pond's condition and produce plans for a project to rewild the pond and its environs. Once completed, these plans enabled us to apply for a larger grant towards the costs of implementing the project.

In March 2024 we were advised that our application was successful and that we had secured a £130,000 grant from the Rewild London Fund. This funding will support the transformation of Queensmere, enhancing its ecological value and visual appeal by the creation of reedbeds, desilting, reprofiling the banks and planting marginal vegetation. With the support of the Mayor of London in partnership with the London Wildlife Trust, we are grateful for the opportunity to improve Queensmere for all visitors and wildlife. The Funds will be received, and the work carried out, during 2024.

Coronation Events

Although not specifically a fundraising event, there was an opportunity for those attending to make a donation. A staggering £3,471 raised during the 'Lighting up the Nation' event. Merton Council supported the weekend events with a grant payment of £300 towards costs relating to the Big Help Out volunteer day. Local business, Cappagh, continued to support the charity and made a donation of £700 to support the Big Help Out Day, helping to cover the costs of purchasing new litter picking equipment.

Second-hand Books

During the 2023 Open Day, WPCC had a stall selling second-hand books that had been donated to us by a member of staff. The stall proved to be so popular that it was kept open throughout the remainder of the year. So far, this has raised around £800.

Memorial Benches

We continued to install memorial benches during 2023/24.

Support from the local community

Wimbledon Village Stables - The stables held their annual sponsored ride in September 2023 to raise funds for various charities, with 12 participants choosing to fundraise for WPCC to improve equestrian facilities on the Commons. £7,762 has been raised via JustGiving.

Windmilers - In October 2023, WPCC was presented with a cheque for £750 from the Wimbledon Windmilers, a regular sports group.

Robert Holmes & Co have continued their support of the Commons and pledged to make a donation of £2,180 to help plant the hedgerow in the Wildlife Garden and support woodland management activities as part of their tree funding programme.

The charity is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and adheres to its Fundraising Code of conduct. The charity received no complaints about its fundraising activities and makes every effort to ensure that any fundraising it undertakes is not unreasonably intrusive, persistent or pressurised.

Reserves

At 31 March 2024, the charity had unrestricted reserves (excluding the pension reserve) of £3,092k and restricted reserves of £52k.

The table below shows the calculation of the charity's free reserves:

Unrestricted reserves, excluding pension reserve per balance sheet	£3,092,000
Deduct:	
Required to fund the net book value of fixed assets	£(1,499,000)
Free reserves	**£1,593,000**

As noted earlier, the pension reserve, if negative, represents the net liability in respect of the LGPS and is calculated in accordance with the specific requirements of the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). The obligation to provide pensions is being funded by regular contributions to the pension scheme out of the charity's annual income at a rate determined by the scheme's actuary.

The Conservators' estimated potential requirements for reserves are set out in the table below:

	Min Requirement		**Max Requirement**
Provision of working capital to cover day to day fluctuations in income and expenditure and meet, in the short term, either unexpected expenses or income shortfalls (equates to ~3 months planned recurrent spend)	£570,000	-	£630,000
Renovation works to estate buildings	£295,000	-	£415,000
Estimated cost of next triennial elections in 2027	£65,000	-	£65,000
Costs associated with changes to the constitutional arrangements	£45,000	-	£95,000
		-	
Total requirement	**£975,000**	**-**	**£1,205,000**

WPCC's free reserves at 31 March 2024 of £1,593,000 are more than the total maximum estimated requirement of £1,205,000. Therefore, WPCC believes it has adequate resources to meet its reserves policy. It should be noted that the charity's estate is a substantial area which has on it a number of buildings which are in excess of 100 years old. Consequently, it is often the case that circumstances arise which involve unforeseen expenditure. Therefore, it is the Conservators' intention to maintain high levels of reserves to cover such unforeseen expenditure.

The level of income generated by WPCC's activities in their present form is insufficient to enable the Conservators to make any significant investment in the Commons' estate. Accordingly, the Conservators are continuing to investigate ways of broadening and increasing their income base.

Investment Management

CCLA Investment Management Limited (CCLA) is the charity's investment adviser with a discretionary mandate. The charity's funds are invested in the COIF Charity Investment Fund (COIF), a specialist charity fund managed by CCLA.

The mandate given to CCLA sets out the charity's investment objectives as follows:

- A balanced attitude to risk, where the objective is to protect the real values over time but investment risk can be accepted in order to achieve this;
- A long term gross total return target of CPI +5% per annum with an annual income requirement of at least £35,000 per annum; the real value of income is required to rise in line with inflation, as far as possible.

The value of the charity's investment at 31 March 2024 was £1,454k, the gain on investments during the year was £135,000 (9.2%) and the investment income received in the year amounted to £43,000 (2.9%)

The charity realised £150,000 of its investment in COIF in March of the financial year to fund its anticipated cash flow requirements in the year ahead.

The Conservators have considered the charity's future cash flow forecasts and continue to believe that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of the financial statements. Further information is given in note 1.2 to the financial statements.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives and Activities

The 1871 Act, which can be viewed here WPCC 1871 Act (wpcc.org.uk/1871Act), incorporated the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators as a body corporate. The 1871 Act set out the Conservators' statutory functions and duties, and it conferred powers on the corporate body. Section 8 of the 1871 Act provides: -

> "There shall be a body of Conservators for carrying this Act into execution, the full number of whom shall be eight, and who are hereby incorporated by the name of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, and by that name shall be one body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal, and with power to take and hold and to dispose of (by grant, demise, or otherwise) land and other property (which body corporate is in this Act referred to as the Conservators)."

The preamble to the 1871 Act requires the Conservators to keep the Commons:

> "open and unenclosed and unbuilt on, and to protect... and preserve the same for public and local use, for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes".

In addition, the Conservators have duties under the 1871 Act:

- to preserve the natural aspect and state of the Commons;
- to protect and manage trees, heather, gorse and other vegetation;
- not to sell, lease, grant or in any manner dispose of any part of the Commons, except as expressed under the 1871 Act.

On 14 April 1972 the site was registered as a charity with its charitable objective:

> "to preserve the Commons as open spaces for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes."

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations 1990, as amended by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, WPCC has the power to raise a levy. This is collected by the boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston in proportion to the number of "D" Band properties in each borough within the levy-Paying area. The boroughs pass on this levy by way of an addition to the Council Tax on properties in the area.

Under Section 84 of the 1871 Act, the Conservators have the power to make byelaws to regulate and control the use of the land for which they are responsible.

Governance is prescribed within the separate Commissioners Clauses Act 1847, as amended by the 1871 Act, that deals with the constitution and regulation of the organisation.

The Commons comprise 461 hectares (1,140 acres) and contain a wide variety of landscapes, buildings, infrastructure and visitor facilities. Unlike land that is constituted as parkland, the glory of the Commons is that they are a relic of the former manorial lands.

As stewards of the Commons and through our independent governance structure, Conservators safeguard the natural aspect and condition so that the Commons are safe, available, welcoming and accessible for all.

This requires WPCC to:

- conserve, enhance and protect the Commons' natural aspect and wildlife for present and future generations to enjoy;
- demonstrate sound governance and financial discipline by constantly reviewing operational procedures and all aspects of management;
- seek to balance the enjoyment of the majority of users who visit the Commons for informal activity and appreciation of the Commons' quiet natural aspect with the needs of groups who undertake formal and/or more rigorous recreational activities;
- improve the understanding and identity of the Commons and interpret their rich and varied heritage;
- work in partnership with stakeholders to promote and achieve the Vision;
- improve facilities used for organised recreation, sport and events;
- encourage volunteering as a rewarding activity engaging people of all ages and abilities;
- work in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Commons are a part of the UK series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reflecting the importance of their grassland and heathland habitats. Under EU conservation legislation (as applicable following Brexit), they are also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with importance for beetles and insect diversity. The Commons are also designated as Metropolitan Open Land, which affords the land the same level of protection as the Green Belt, and this designation, together with the defining provisions of the 1871 Act, provide the Commons with a very high level of protection.

Volunteering is increasingly important in the delivery of the charity's activities and there are various opportunities for people to become involved. These range from supporting practical activities, such as heathland and woodland management, estate maintenance as well as litter management. Through the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, there is a group of expert volunteers who undertake monitoring of flora and fauna contributing towards the annual Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Report.

In planning and delivering its activities, the Conservators have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. We confirm that we have complied with our duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

The Conservators, through the Audit and Risk Committee, have assessed the governance of the charity against the Charity Governance Code and have drawn up, and made significant progress with an 'action plan' in order to address any areas of non-compliance identified.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Structure

Governance is provided by a board of eight Conservators, five of whom are directly elected every three years by those local authority voters living within the levy-area and the remaining three are appointed by three government departments. The levy-area is defined as the area within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common in addition to the area within the old Parish of Putney. Both the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in the triennial elections are granted to all those living within the levy-area who meet the relevant criteria. The 1990 Election Byelaws supplement the requirements under the 1871 Act prescribing the timescales and procedures for undertaking the triennial elections.

Responsibility for appointing the three Conservators resides with three central government departments – currently the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence. The term of office for the appointed Conservators is also three years.

Conservators also serve as trustees of the charity and are its only members.

Governance

The work of the charity is overseen by the Board of Conservators, more commonly today referred to as trustees in the context of the charity. The Board sets policy and is responsible for the conduct of WPCC's affairs and for ensuring that the charity operates in accordance with its founding legislation, charity law and other statutory requirements and byelaws. The role of the Board is to develop and agree the charity's vision, mission, values and strategy. The Board is responsible for implementing and monitoring the Strategy through a three-year rolling Business Plan, which includes a financial plan.

The Chairman is elected from within the Board on an annual basis. The Board meets on a bi-monthly basis or more frequently as required. The Board receives regular reports at its meetings on the financial status of the charity and monitors progress against approved budgets, the status of its investments, and reviews the Top Ten risks. Reports are also brought to the Board on operational and property matters as required.

The Board has four committees:

Audit and Risk Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) independently to:

- monitor the integrity of the annual financial statements of WPCC, reviewing significant financial reporting issues and judgements contained in them;
- ensure effective policies and procedures and compliance systems for managing risk are in place and to review their effectiveness;
- make recommendations to the Board in all matters in relation to the external auditor;
- ensure effective procedures and safeguards are in place to monitor the prevention of fraud and corruption;
- prepare and publish an annual report of the work of the ARC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless, exceptionally, authority has been delegated to the ARC by the Board in respect of a particular matter.

Finance and Investment Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC) to:

- scrutinise and oversee all financial and investment aspects of WPCC so as to ensure short and long-term viability of WPCC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless specifically delegated by the Board.

Constitution Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Constitution Committee (CC) to:

- review, identify, consider and recommend to the Board amendments to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose; and
- consider and recommend the way in which any such amendments could be effected.

Friends Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Friends Committee (FC) to:

- lead on fundraising undertaken under the auspices of the Friends for WPCC; and
- organise events for and on behalf of the Friends of WPCC.

Terms of Reference for the committees and the two working groups described below have been approved by the Board and are published on the WPCC website.

In addition to the committees, the Board has established two working groups:

i. The Stakeholder Group, which comprises individuals with knowledge and interest in the Commons, representing different user groups and geographies and providing views and suggestions to the Chief Executive. There are currently 20 members of the Stakeholder Group, representing local organisations.
ii. The Wildlife and Conservation Forum, which is chaired by the DEFRA-appointed Conservator and is comprised of staff and volunteer experts. The forum supports the Commons' staff in their role of protecting the natural environment of the Commons.

Following their election or appointment to the Board, each Conservator receives a briefing pack outlining their role, together with information on WPCC, its founding legislation, its policies, structures and work. Every Conservator completes a register of interests and a related party transaction form, both of which are updated annually or whenever any changes occur. Each Conservator also signs a Code of Conduct which sets out procedures and duties in relation to confidentiality, conflict of interest and other matters of pertinence to charity trustees. A formal induction process is provided for each new Conservator. All Conservators are offered opportunities to learn more about WPCC's work, through individual meetings with staff and site visits.

In the interests of transparency and openness the Board resolved at its meeting held on 12 July 2021 to hold part of the Board meetings in public. Board meetings are now divided into two parts – A(1) to which the public are invited to both attend and ask questions relating to matters discussed at the meeting and A(2) which is confidential and held in private.

Summary of the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2023/24

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is a committee of the Board and its Terms of Reference were approved by the Board in May 2018 and most recently re-confirmed by the Board in June 2022. The role of the ARC is to review and scrutinise WPCC's corporate governance, financial reporting, internal controls and risk management ensuring that they support the achievement of the charity's objectives.

During 2023/24, ARC met on four occasions in addition to the joint FIC/ARC meeting to review the draft audited accounts. For the period to March 2024, the members of the Committee were Mr Peter Shortt, Appointed Conservator (Chair), Mr Peter Hirsch, Elected Conservator, Mr Michael Johnston, Elected Conservator and Mrs Sarah Wilton, co-optee.

ARC believes it has fulfilled its main duties as set out in its terms of reference as follows:

Financial - For the year ended 31 March 2024 ARC reviewed and where necessary approved the Audit Plan, compliance with accounting standards and practices, the draft WPCC financial statements, the external Auditor's Key Audit Findings report and the WPCC Annual Report. They recommended the financial statements to the Board subject to a number of amendments. ARC members are satisfied that the external auditors have received the necessary assistance from WPCC when carrying out their audit and no limitations have been placed on the scope of their work.

Internal Control, Risk Management and Compliance - At each meeting ARC reviews tender waivers and write offs, debt write offs, the top ten risks, the full Risk Register (annually) and the actions arising from previous meetings and the progress with them. In addition, ARC reviewed the process for trustees to record major gifts, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Fundraising risks, cybersecurity, conflicts of interest, the updated Employee Handbook and fire safety.

Whistleblowing - At each meeting ARC reviews any whistleblowing reports, of which there were none during 2023/24.

Charity Governance Code - ARC monitored WPCC's governance against the requirements of the Charity Governance Code https://www.charitygovernancecode.org and against the governance action plan which had been drawn up in 2021. Ongoing actions include: (a) updating WPCC's constitutional arrangements. The Charity Commission's agreement that WPCC may submit an application for a section 73 scheme mean that this can now be progressed over the next two years. (b) putting in place measures of performance for WPCC, which will now be introduced when the key strategic documents against which we will measure ourselves (Masterplan, Land Management Plan, Fundraising Strategy and Communications Plan) are in place and; (c) a review of the organisation's environmental performance, which is scheduled for year two of the current Business Plan.

Minutes of ARC meetings are received by the Board. At Board meetings the ARC Chair provides a written or an oral report to the Board on significant conclusions, concerns and recommendations arising from the Committee's work. The issues highlighted to the Board this year included the importance of having in place appropriate measures to ensure an orderly transition to a new Board post the election of March 2024, the implementation of the recommendations from the auditors in respect of the 22/23 audit, continuing issues relating to improved fire safety actions and the poor state of boilers at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields pavilion.

ARC believes that it has, to the best of its ability, met its Terms of Reference. Once again it gratefully acknowledges the excellent support it has received from WPCC staff without which it could not have fulfilled its remit.

Management

The day-to-day management of the charity is delegated by the Board to the Chief Executive who has overall responsibility to the Board for the effective planning, performance, management, direction and leadership of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in accordance with policies and budgets set by the Board. The Chief Executive is supported by the Senior Leadership Team, consisting of the:

Deputy Clerk and Ranger – responsible for finance, administration, HR and election/appointment of Conservators;

Executive Assistant/Communications Officer – responsible as executive assistant to the Chief Executive, secretariat to the Board, communications, office management (including reception), events, filming and administration for the Friends of WPCC.

Conservation and Engagement Officer – responsible for conservation/ecology and public engagement, including volunteers;

Fundraising Manager – responsible for developing and implementing the organisation's fundraising strategy.

Pay Policy for Senior Staff

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis. All Conservators give of their time freely and the founding 1871 Act prohibits any Conservator receiving remuneration or holding any office of profit.

The pay of staff is reviewed annually by the Board as part of its budget preparation process. The Finance and Investment Committee has a responsibility to consider staff remuneration within their Terms of Reference for the Chief Executive and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

CONSERVATORS' RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

The Conservators acknowledge their responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements for each financial year in accordance with Section 2 of the 1871 Act, which are required to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, surplus or deficit of the charity for that period.

The Conservators are also responsible for preparing the Report of the Conservators and the financial statements in accordance with applicable charity law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (GAAP) under FRS 102.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Conservators to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Conservators are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures, which should be disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the 1871 Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Statement as to disclosure to auditors

In so far as the trustees are aware at the time of approving the Conservators' Annual Report:

- There is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- The Conservators, having made enquiries of fellow Conservators and the charity's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken steps that she/he is obliged to take as a Conservator in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Approved by order of the Board of Conservators on 24 June 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Mauro Mattiuzzo (Chairman)
Elected Conservator

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has been withdrawn.

This has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Conservators with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our Auditors' Report thereon. The Conservators are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the Conservators Report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Conservators Responsibilities Statement, the Conservators are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Conservators determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Conservators are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Conservators either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditors' Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud or error; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud or error; and to respond appropriately to those risks.

Based on our understanding of the charity and industry, and through discussion with the trustees and other management (as required by auditing standards), we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to health and safety and employment law. We considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the preparation of the financial statements such as the Statement of Recommended Practice. We communicated identified laws and regulations throughout our team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit. We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to: posting inappropriate journal entries and management bias in accounting estimates and judgemental areas of the financial statements. Audit procedures performed by the engagement team included:

- Discussions with management and assessment of known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations (including health and safety) and fraud, and review of the reports made by management; and
- Assessment of identified fraud risk factors; and
- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in its significant accounting estimates; and
- Checking and reperforming the reconciliation of key control accounts; and
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships, including related party transactions, that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud; and
- Confirmation of related parties with management, and review of transactions throughout the period to identify any previously undisclosed transactions with related parties outside the normal course of business; and
- Reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance; and
- Review of significant and unusual transactions and evaluation of the underlying financial rationale supporting the transactions; and
- Identifying and testing journal entries, in particular any manual entries made at the year end for financial statement preparation; and
- Assessment of expertise with regards to the actuarial valuation of the defined benefit pension scheme.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion of the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Conservators.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditors' Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditors' Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditors' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Kreston Reeves LLP

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Chichester

Date: 24th June 2024

Kreston Reeves LLP are eligible to act as auditors in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

Statement of financial activities
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	3	**88,549**	**98,863**	**187,412**	244,430
Charitable activities	4	**2,079,070**	**-**	**2,079,070**	1,881,991
Investments	5	**44,438**	**-**	**44,438**	47,392
Total income		**2,212,057**	**98,863**	**2,310,920**	2,173,813
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	6,7	**2,327,649**	**153,685**	**2,481,334**	2,463,084
Total expenditure		**2,327,649**	**153,685**	**2,481,334**	2,463,084
Net expenditure before net gains/(losses) on investments		**(115,592)**	**(54,822)**	**(170,414)**	(289,271)
Net (losses)/gains on investments	13	**134,919**	**-**	**134,919**	(58,842)
Net income/(expenditure)		**19,327**	**(54,822)**	**(35,495)**	(348,113)
Transfers between funds	18	**(15,717)**	**15,717**	**-**	**-**
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains/(losses)		**3,610**	**(39,105)**	**(35,495)**	(348,113)
Other recognised gains/(losses):					
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension scheme	23	**1,000**	**-**	**1,000**	2,678,000
Net movement in funds		**4,610**	**(39,105)**	**(34,495)**	2,329,887
Reconciliation of funds:	18				
Total funds brought forward		**3,087,287**	**90,765**	**3,178,052**	848,165
Net movement in funds		**4,610**	**(39,105)**	**(34,495)**	2,329,887
Total funds carried forward		**3,091,897**	**51,660**	**3,143,557**	3,178,052

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 37 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2024

	Note		2024 £		2023 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11		**1,334,381**		1,270,905
Heritage assets	12		**164,772**		164,772
Investments	13		**1,453,784**		1,468,864
			2,952,937		2,904,541
Current assets					
Debtors	14	**218,061**		176,208	
Cash at bank and in hand		**284,038**		384,185	
		502,099		560,393	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	**(251,422)**		(226,209)	
Net current assets			**250,677**		334,184
Total assets less current liabilities			**3,203,614**		3,238,725
Provisions for liabilities	17		**(60,057)**		(60,673)
Net assets excluding pension asset			**3,143,557**		3,178,052
Total net assets			**3,143,557**		3,178,052
Charity funds					
Restricted funds	18		**51,660**		90,765
Unrestricted funds	18		**3,091,897**		3,087,287
Total funds			**3,143,557**		3,178,052

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Conservators and signed on their behalf by:

Date: 24 June 2024
Mr M Mattiuzzo
(Chair of Trustees)
Elected Conservator

The notes on pages 37 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash used by operating activities	20	**(147,748)**	(5,808)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Dividends, interests and rents from investments		**44,438**	47,392
Proceeds from the sale of tangible fixed assets		**9,241**	6,350
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		**(156,078)**	(146,292)
Sale of investments		**150,000**	150,000
Net cash provided by investing activities		**47,601**	**57,450**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Net cash provided by financing activities		**-**	**-**
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		**(100,147)**	**51,642**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		**384,185**	332,543
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	21	**284,038**	384,185

The notes on pages 37 to 60 form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

1. Accounting policies

1.1 General information and basis of preparation of financial statements

WPCC is a body corporate incorporated under the 1871 Act; it is also a charity registered in England. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are included within the Conservators' report.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these financial statements. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019 and Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

WPCC constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

1.2 Going concern

The Conservators review management accounts and forecasts at each of their meetings. Also, at the beginning of each financial year a three year business plan is produced which includes financial forecasts. The Conservators believe there to be no material uncertainties affecting the charity's ability to continue operating for at least twelve months from the date of signature of these financial statements. Accordingly, the Conservators continue to believe that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of these financial statements.

1.3 Income

All income is recognised once the Charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donated services or facilities are recognised when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use of the charity of the item is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), general volunteer time is not recognised but see page 14 of the Conservators' report for more information about their contribution.

On receipt, donated professional services and facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the Charity which is the amount it would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, 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 classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Support costs are those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity.

1.5 Grants

Income from grants is recognised when the Charity has met the conditions or incurred the expenditure attached to the grant and it is probable that the grant will be received.

1.6 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

1.7 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its income and gains falling within part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that they are applied to its charitable activities.

1.8 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Freehold buildings	- 25 - 50 years
Long-term leasehold property	- Life of lease
Beverley Brook WC Bridge	- 25 years
Plant, machinery and equipment	- 3 - 10 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 5 -15 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.9 Heritage assets

The charity considers that while the lands comprising the commons are heritage assets, the buildings, other than the windmill on Wimbledon Common, are not. As more fully explained in note 11, the heritage assets are recognised in the balance sheet at cost, where it has been possible to determine cost.

Heritage assets are depreciated over their useful economic life. However, because the majority of such assets are land with an indefinite useful economic life, the element of depreciation that would apply to the remainder of the heritage assets is considered immaterial to these financial statements. Heritage assets are reviewed annually at the reporting date for indications of impairment.

1.10 Investments

Investments are recognised initially at fair value which is normally the transaction price excluding transaction costs. Subsequently, they are measured at fair value with changes recognised in 'net gains / (losses) on investments' in the Statement of Financial Activities if the shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably. Other investments are measured at cost less impairment.

1.11 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.12 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.13 Liabilities and provisions

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities as a finance cost.

1.14 Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.15 Redundancy and termination benefits

It is the Charity's policy to recognise termination benefits when they become committed, by legislation, by contractual or other agreements with employees or their representatives or by a constructive obligation or a desire to act equitably, to make payments (or provide other benefits) to employees when it terminates their employment. Termination payments do not provide the Charity with future economic benefits therefore it is the Charity's policy to recognise them as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities immediately.

1.16 Pensions

The Charity operates a defined benefits pension scheme and the pension charge is based on a full actuarial valuation. The latest full actuarial valuation was as at 31 March 2022.

Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of financial activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

1.17 Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Conservators in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Conservators for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Where donations are given with restrictions attached relating to the purchase of tangible fixed assets, the initial income is recognised as restricted income. At the point that the fixed asset is purchased the restriction has been met and so the remaining balance in that restricted fund is transferred to the general fund.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

As detailed in note 22 the Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme for the benefit of employees. The cost of operating the scheme is determined using actuarial valuations undertaken by the scheme actuary. Their valuation involves making assumptions about discount rates, future salary increases, mortality rates and future pension increases. Due to the complexity of the valuation, the underlying assumptions and the long term nature of the scheme, such estimates are subject to significant uncertainty.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions:

The annual depreciation charge for fixed assets is sensitive to changes in estimated useful lives and residual values. The useful economic lives and residual values are re-assessed annually and amended as necessary.

3. Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Grants and donations	88,549	98,863	**187,412**	244,430
Total 2023	88,891	155,539	244,430	

Legacies in the year were £nil (2023: £nil).

4. Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Levy	1,490,567	**1,490,567**	1,323,329
Countryside stewardship (government) grant	22,819	**22,819**	40,218
Sports facilities	376,841	**376,841**	338,115
Property rent and wayleaves	162,276	**162,276**	124,373
Rent from filming and fairs	26,566	**26,566**	25,642
Publication sales	1	**1**	2,647
Other grant income	-	-	18,163
Events income	-	-	9,504
Total 2024	2,079,070	**2,079,070**	1,881,991
Total 2023	1,881,991	1,881,991	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

5. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Investment income	44,438	**44,438**	47,392
Total 2023	47,392	47,392	

In the comparative period all investment income was unrestricted.

6. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

Summary by fund type

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Conservancy activity	2,327,649	153,685	**2,481,334**	2,463,084
Total 2023	2,372,385	90,699	2,463,084	

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2024 £	Support costs 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Conservancy activity	1,939,681	541,653	**2,481,334**	2,463,084
Total 2023	1,681,626	781,458	2,463,084	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of direct costs

	Conservancy activity 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Windmill	73,676	**73,676**	17,454
Keepers and Commons security	563,810	**563,810**	524,224
Commons maintenance	792,114	**792,114**	694,142
Playing fields maintenance	280,346	**280,346**	235,710
Property maintenance and improvements	229,735	**229,735**	210,096
Total 2024	1,939,681	**1,939,681**	1,681,626
Total 2023	1,681,626	1,681,626	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Conservancy activity 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Administration staff salaries	123,378	**123,378**	175,518
Audit and accountancy	17,700	**17,700**	16,878
Office expenses	24,341	**24,341**	26,997
Insurance	48,435	**48,435**	66,368
Utilities and services	36,984	**36,984**	27,690
Advertising and printing	14,200	**14,200**	17,190
Computer and IT support	43,588	**43,588**	33,126
Events	20,201	**20,201**	33,470
Council tax	28,898	**28,898**	27,451
Defined benefit pension cost in excess of contributions paid	23,000	**23,000**	238,000
(Profit) / loss on sale of fixed assets	(3,000)	**(3,000)**	(4,319)
Interest cost on pension liability	(22,000)	**(22,000)**	59,000
Legal fees	48,440	**48,440**	25,724
Professional fees	68,991	**68,991**	36,751
Bad debts	(624)	**(624)**	1,614
NLHF expenses	5,000	**5,000**	-
Election costs	64,121	**64,121**	-
Total 2024	541,653	**541,653**	781,458
Total 2023	781,458	781,458	

Included in support costs above are governance costs totalling £66,140 (2023: £42,602). These costs include audit, accountancy and legal fees.

8. Auditors' remuneration

The auditors' remuneration amounts to an audit fee of £12,700 (2023: £12,075) and amounts relating to non audit services of £5,000 (2023: £4,803).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

9. Staff costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Staff Salaries		
Wages and salaries	**1,035,169**	975,008
Social security costs	**111,377**	106,940
Other pension costs	**228,031**	423,412
	1,374,577	1,505,360

The average number of persons employed in full and part time positions by the Charity during the year was as follows:

	2024 No.	2023 No.
Chief Executive	**1**	1
Deputy Clerk and Ranger	**1**	1
Administration	**3**	3
Conservation and Engagement Officer	**1**	1
Security	**7**	7
Maintenance	**8**	8
Playing Fields	**4**	3
Property	**1**	1
Fundraising Manager	**1**	1
	27	26

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2024 No.	2023 No.
In the band £80,001 - £90,000	**-**	1

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day to day basis. The Senior Leadership team consists of the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Clerk and Ranger, Conservation and Engagement Officer, Fundraising Manager and EA to the Chief Executive, and Communications Officer.

Total key management personnel remuneration for the year was £335,965 (2023: £346,953).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

10. Conservator's remuneration and expenses

During the year, no Conservators received any remuneration or other benefits (2023 - £NIL).

During the year ended 31 March 2024, no Conservator expenses have been incurred (2023 - £NIL).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

11. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold buildings £	Long-term leasehold property £	Beverley Brook WC bridge £	Commons plant and machinery £	Playing fields equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost or valuation								
At 1 April 2023	**1,528,939**	**207,336**	**36,859**	**359,629**	**99,217**	**100,646**	**24,556**	**2,357,182**
Additions	**102,513**	**-**	**-**	**2,420**	**48,000**	**1,150**	**1,995**	**156,078**
Disposals	**-**	**-**	**-**	**(2,341)**	**(28,582)**	**-**	**(480)**	**(31,403)**
Revaluations	**-**	**(2,872)**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**(2,872)**
At 31 March 2024	**1,631,452**	**204,464**	**36,859**	**359,708**	**118,635**	**101,796**	**26,071**	**2,478,985**
Depreciation								
At 1 April 2023	**526,895**	**111,409**	**737**	**260,261**	**76,433**	**94,717**	**15,825**	**1,086,277**
Charge for the year	**45,026**	**7,069**	**1,473**	**16,648**	**6,736**	**2,736**	**3,801**	**83,489**
On disposals	**-**	**-**	**-**	**(2,341)**	**(22,341)**	**-**	**(480)**	**(25,162)**
At 31 March 2024	**571,921**	**118,478**	**2,210**	**274,568**	**60,828**	**97,453**	**19,146**	**1,144,604**
Net book value								
At 31 March 2024	**1,059,531**	**85,986**	**34,649**	**85,140**	**57,807**	**4,343**	**6,925**	**1,334,381**
At 31 March 2023	1,002,044	95,927	36,122	99,368	22,784	5,929	8,731	1,270,905

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

12. Heritage assets

Assets recognised at cost

	Heritage assets 2024 £
Carrying value at 1 April 2023	164,772
Carrying value at 31 March 2024	164,772

As explained in note 1.9, the charity considers that its heritage assets are the lands that comprise Wimbledon and Putney Commons within the meaning of the 1871 Act, together with the windmill on Wimbledon Common. The majority of the lands were acquired under the provisions of the 1871 Act together with all the buildings thereon in return for an annuity payment to Earl Spencer which terminated in 1958. The purchase price has been treated as the cost of the heritage assets together with amounts paid to third parties to acquire additional small parcels of land subsequent to 1871. Although part of the purchase price would have been attributable to those buildings which are not heritage assets, it is not possible to determine what the appropriate allocation would have been and therefore the whole purchase price has been allocated to the heritage assets.

The Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields were acquired in the 1930s but no detailed records exist of their cost to the charity, consequently no amount is included within heritage assets in respect of the playing fields.

During the year to 31 March 2024, there were no additions within the heritage assets.

13. Fixed asset investments

	Listed investments £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 April 2023	**1,468,864**
Disposals	**(150,000)**
Revaluations	**134,920**
At 31 March 2024	**1,453,784**
Net book value	
At 31 March 2024	**1,453,784**
At 31 March 2023	1,468,864

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

14. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	**146,502**	77,173
Other debtors	**36,390**	19,187
Prepayments and accrued income	**35,169**	79,848
	218,061	176,208

15. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	**53,392**	80,674
Other creditors	**96,434**	50,898
Accruals and deferred income	**101,596**	94,637
	251,422	226,209

16. Deferred income

	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income at 1 April 2023	**40,365**	40,693
Resources deferred during the year	**38,330**	40,365
Amounts released from previous periods	**(40,365)**	(40,693)
Deferred income at 31 March 2024	**38,330**	40,365

Deferred income at the year end related to income received in advance for licenses of £30,830, rent received in advance of £2,500 and donations of £5,000. Deferred income at the previous year end related to income received in advance for licenses of £28,840, rent received in advance of £7,500 and donations of £4,025.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

17. Provisions

The charity occupies a building which it built on land leased from a third party. Under the terms of the lease it has an obligation at the end of the lease to reinstate the land to its original state. A provision is made for this liability and the movements in the provision were as follows:

	Provision for liabilities £
At 1 April 2023	**60,673**
Change in discount rate	**(2,872)**
Interest cost charged to expenditure	**2,256**
	60,057

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

18. Statement of funds

Statement of funds - current year

	Balance at 1 April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2024 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	40,008	-	(64,121)	24,113	-	-
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,047,279	2,212,057	(2,262,528)	(39,830)	134,919	3,091,897
Defined Benefit Pension	-	-	(1,000)	-	1,000	-
	3,047,279	2,212,057	(2,263,528)	(39,830)	135,919	3,091,897
Total Unrestricted funds	3,087,287	2,212,057	(2,327,649)	(15,717)	135,919	3,091,897
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	15,957	20,000	(35,957)	-	-	-
Putney Lower Common maintenance	9,379	-	-	-	-	9,379
Horseride Appeal	35,332	13,119	(11,261)	-	-	37,190
Wildlife Garden Appeal	3,940	276	(11,721)	7,505	-	-
Beverley Brook WC Bridge Appeal	2,141	-	-	-	-	2,141
Footpath Restoration	16,871	59,231	(79,174)	3,072	-	-
Bog restoration project	-	6,073	(3,287)	-	-	2,786
Orchard Putney Lower Common	-	164	-	-	-	164

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - current year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2024 £
Queensmere restoration project	7,145	-	(12,285)	5,140	-	-
	90,765	98,863	(153,685)	15,717	-	51,660
Total of funds	3,178,052	2,310,920	(2,481,334)	-	135,919	3,143,557

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	20,004	-	-	20,004	-	40,008
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,093,293	2,018,274	(2,075,385)	69,939	(58,842)	3,047,279
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,381,000)	-	(297,000)	-	2,678,000	-
	712,293	2,018,274	(2,372,385)	69,939	2,619,158	3,047,279
Total Unrestricted funds	732,297	2,018,274	(2,372,385)	89,943	2,619,158	3,087,287
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	19,468	24	(3,535)	-	-	15,957
Putney Lower Common maintenance	-	-	-	9,379	-	9,379
Horseride Appeal	26,355	18,617	(9,640)	-	-	35,332
Wildlife Garden Appeal	18,115	195	(14,370)	-	-	3,940
Footpath restoration	9,100	16,553	(8,782)	-	-	16,871
Beverley Brook WC Bridge Appeal	15,000	23,800	-	(36,659)	-	2,141
Beverley Brook PLC Bridge Appeal	5,509	16,223	(15,129)	(6,603)	-	-
Cricket nets	22,321	17,991	-	(40,312)	-	-

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Purchase of land	-	12,972	-	(12,972)	-	-
Bog restoration project	-	35,388	(35,388)	-	-	-
Orchard Putney Lower Common	-	6,631	(3,855)	(2,776)	-	-
Queensmere restoration project	-	7,145	-	-	-	7,145
	115,868	155,539	(90,699)	(89,943)	-	90,765
Total of funds	848,165	2,173,813	(2,463,084)	-	2,619,158	3,178,052

The Election Sinking fund is maintained to provide for the fees and costs of conducting the triennial election of five Conservators.

The Defined Benefit Pension fund represents the defined benefit pension scheme liability.

The Windmill Restoration fund represents the fund remaining from a Heritage Lottery Grant received for use in restoring the Windmill, on Windmill Road.

The Putney Lower Common Maintenance fund is formed of donations received for other specific purposes that have been met. The original donors have agreed that the surplus can be used exclusively for the maintenance of Putney Lower Common.

The Horseride Appeal fund includes donated income and related expenditure on the horse ride route restoration campaign started during the year ended 31 March 2018.

The Wildlife Garden Appeal fund includes donated income on the campaign to create a new wildlife garden at the Ranger's Office.

Footpath restoration - donated income in respect of repairs to paths.

Beverley Brook bridges' appeals - donated income in respect of the replacement of the bridge over the Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common and repairs to the bridge on Putney Lower Common.

Bog restoration project - grant received for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study relating to the restoration of the wetlands on the Common.

Orchard Putney Lower Common - income raised from an appeal to plant a small orchard on Putney Lower Common.

Queensmere restoration project - grant received for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study relating to the restoration of the Queensmere pond.

19. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds - current period

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,334,381	-	**1,334,381**
Fixed asset investments	1,453,784	-	**1,453,784**
Heritage assets	164,772	-	**164,772**
Current assets	450,439	51,660	**502,099**
Creditors due within one year	(251,422)	-	**(251,422)**
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(60,057)	-	**(60,057)**
Total	3,091,897	51,660	**3,143,557**

19. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Analysis of net assets between funds - prior period

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,270,905	-	1,270,905
Fixed asset investments	1,468,864	-	1,468,864
Heritage assets	164,772	-	164,772
Current assets	469,628	90,765	560,393
Creditors due within one year	(226,209)	-	(226,209)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(60,673)	-	(60,673)
Total	3,087,287	90,765	3,178,052

20. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Net expenditure for the period (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	(35,495)	(348,113)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	**83,489**	82,929
Losses/(gains) on investments	**(134,920)**	58,842
Dividends, interests and rents from investments	**(44,438)**	(47,392)
(Profit)/loss on the sale of fixed assets	**(3,000)**	(4,319)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	**(41,853)**	(45,604)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	**25,213**	(328)
Pension fund adjustments	**1,000**	297,000
Interest cost on provision	**2,256**	1,177
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	**(147,748)**	(5,808)

21. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2024 £	2023 £
Cash in hand	**284,038**	384,185
Total cash and cash equivalents	**284,038**	384,185

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

22. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 April 2023	Cash flows	At 31 March 2024
	£	£	£
Cash at bank and in hand	**384,185**	**(100,147)**	**284,038**
	384,185	**(100,147)**	**284,038**

23. Pension commitments

The Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme.

Retirement benefits to employees of WPCC are provided by the LGPS which is a defined benefit scheme.

The LGPS is a funded scheme, administered by the London Borough of Merton. Contributions are set every three years as a result of an actuarial valuation of the fund. There are no minimum funding requirements but the contributions are generally set to target a funding level of 100%, using actuarial assumptions.

In general, participating defined benefit schemes mean that the employer is exposed to a number of risks:

- Investment risk
- Interest rate risk
- Inflation risk
- Longevity risk (where members live longer than assumed)

In addition many unrelated employers participate in the London Borough of Merton scheme, and there is a potential orphan liability risk where employers who leave the Fund with insufficient resources to cover their pension obligations, will leave a deficit in the scheme that may fall on the remaining employers. There is however no way of ascertaining the potential loss, should such an event take place.

Principal actuarial assumptions at the Balance Sheet date (expressed as weighted averages):

	At 31 March 2024	At 31 March 2023
	%	%
Discount rate	**4.9**	4.8
Future salary increases	**3.9**	3.9
Future pension increases	**2.9**	2.9

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

23. Pension commitments (continued)

	At 31 March 2024 Years	At 31 March 2023 Years
Mortality rates (in years)		
- for a male aged 65 now	**20.8**	21.1
- at 65 for a male aged 45 now	**22.0**	22.3
- for a female aged 65 now	**23.3**	23.5
- at 65 for a female aged 45 now	**24.7**	25.0

The Charity's share of the assets in the scheme was:

	At 31 March 2024 £	At 31 March 2023 £
Equities	**3,850,000**	4,344,000
Gilts	**265,000**	521,000
Property	**680,000**	551,000
Cash and other liquid assets	**1,705,000**	345,000
Diversified growth	**564,000**	838,000
Multi asset credit	**795,000**	711,000
Infrastructure	**1,073,000**	1,105,000
Total fair value of assets	**8,932,000**	8,415,000

The actual return/(loss) on scheme assets was £570,000 (2023 - £(822,000)).

The amounts recognised as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities are as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Current service cost	**(220,000)**	(422,000)
Net interest income/(cost)	**22,000**	(59,000)
Administrative expenses	**(8,000)**	(6,000)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	**(206,000)**	(487,000)

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

23. Pension commitments (continued)

Movements in the present value of the defined benefit obligation were as follows:

	2024 £
Opening defined benefit obligation	**8,068,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**70,000**
Benefits paid	**(320,000)**
Service cost	**220,000**
Interest expense	**381,000**
Change in financial assumptions	**(113,000)**
Change in demographic assumptions	**(116,000)**
Experience loss on obligation	**23,000**
Closing defined benefit obligation	**8,213,000**

Movements in the fair value of the Charity's share of scheme assets were as follows:

	2024 £
Opening fair value of scheme assets	**8,415,000**
Interest income	**403,000**
Contributions by employer	**205,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**70,000**
Return on assets	**167,000**
Other actuarial gain/(losses)	**-**
Benefits paid	**(320,000)**
Administration expenses	**(8,000)**
Closing fair value of scheme assets	**8,932,000**

The actuarial valuation results in an overall surplus position. Per FRS102 section 28.22 we cannot recognise a defined benefit pension asset position unless that position will result in reduced future contributions or a refund. As it is not probable that this will be the outcome, the revaluation has been restricted by £719,000 (2023: £347,000) so as not to recognise an asset on the balance sheet.

	2024 £	2023 £
Total actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme		
Return on assets	**167,000**	(1,098,000)
(Increase) in restriction of surplus	**(372,000)**	(347,000)
Change in financial assumptions	**113,000**	4,110,000
Change in demographic assumptions	**116,000**	279,000
Experience loss on obligation	**(23,000)**	(266,000)
Total	**1,000**	2,678,000

24. Financial instruments

	2024 £	2023 £
Financial assets		
Financial assets measured at fair value through income and expenditure	**1,453,784**	1,468,864

The fair value of these assets is readily obtainable as there is a ready market for their sale at publicly listed prices.

The gain/(loss) on these assets during the year was £134,920 (2023: £58,842).

The dividend and interest income generated by these assets during the period was £44,438 (2023: £47,392).

25. Related party transactions

The Charity has not entered into any related party transaction during the year, nor are there any outstanding balances owing between related parties and the Charity at 31 March 2024.

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

England & Wales - Charity number 303167

Accounts

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATORS

AND

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 303167

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Conservators	Oliver Bennett MBE – appointed by DEFRA January 2021 Sue Bucknall – elected April 2021 David Hince – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Peter Hirsch – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Michael Johnston – elected April 2021 Diane Neil Mills (Chairman) – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Michael Rappolt – appointed by MoD May 2017; re-appointed May 2020 (on an interim basis) until August 2022 Peter Shortt – appointed by MoD September 2022 Nigel Ware – appointed by Home Office March 2018; re-appointed March 2021
Chief Executive	Stephen Bound until 17 May 2023
Principal Address	Ranger's Office Manor Cottage Windmill Road Wimbledon London SW19 5NR
Registered Charity Number	303167
Independent Auditors	Kreston Reeves LLP Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor 9 Donnington Park 85 Birdham Road Chichester West Sussex PO20 7AJ
Solicitors	Bates Wells 10 Queen Street Place London EC4R 1BE
Bankers	Barclays Bank plc 8 Alexandra Road Wimbledon London SW19 7JZ
Investment advisers	CCLA Investment Management Limited 1 Angel Lane London EC4R 3AB

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

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The following abbreviations are used in this document:

WPCC or Charity	The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
1871 Act	Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871
Board	The Board of Conservators of WPCC
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
GAAP	United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
MoD	Ministry of Defence

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

I have had the immense privilege of chairing this wonderful organisation for over five years. Although each of these years has been unique in terms of the specific challenges and opportunities, most notably the pandemic, all have been underpinned by the same enduring passion and affection that is felt by all for the Commons.

This past year will clearly be remembered as one of collective celebration, commemoration and sorrow. For alongside the long-awaited events marking the Commons' 150th anniversary, we participated in the national celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and then tragically, just three months later, marked the death of the country's longest serving monarch. The recent coronation of King Charles, a man whose commitment to the environment has in so many ways shaped his life, was celebrated through a programme of events that reflected his beliefs in the value of diversity and the importance of service to others.

Like so many important milestones in countries across the world, the celebration of WPCC's 150th anniversary was inevitably delayed by Covid. Perhaps the delay had a silver lining, however, as once the programme of events was finally underway, the occasion was marked with an outpouring of community spirit, enthusiasm and heightened sense of gratitude for the Commons. There were a number of events designed to capture the many facets of life on the Commons, of which I will highlight three:

1. Games Day – As the 1871 Act that established the Commons clearly sets out, the Commons were created for the purposes of recreation and exercise. There could not, therefore, be a more fitting way to celebrate the 150th anniversary of their creation than by bringing together representatives of the games that have been played on the Commons over the decades. Held in glorious sunshine on 22 May 2022, the event brought together over 600 participants, 50 captains and coaches, and an army of supporters collectively participating in over 12 games and activities, ranging from cricket and cross country running to lacrosse and stoolball, all in a spirit of mutual support and harmony. We are enormously grateful to all those who helped organise and support the day and to the many participants who threw themselves energetically into the events.

2. House of Commons Reception - Held in the stunning surroundings of the Houses of Parliament on the most perfect July evening, the event provided an opportunity to pay tribute to those who were instrumental in securing the future of the Commons under an Act of Parliament. We were therefore delighted to have Sir Richard Peek, a direct descendant of Sir Henry Peek, as the guest speaker, as well as descendants of Richardson Evans, the man responsible for saving 95 acres of land from development and donating them to the Commons, in attendance. The event, kindly hosted by Stephen Hammond MP, also presented an opportunity to celebrate the enduring bond between the Commons and Parliament and as always, we are most grateful to Stephen for his support.

3. Art on the Commons – Brainchild of Conservator Sue Bucknall, Chair of the Friends, this celebration of the beauty of the Commons through the seasons was created in the darkness of the pandemic, when physical contact was restricted and opportunities to collectively celebrate important milestones severely limited. The event was so successful that it has been continued into a second year and may well prove to be the most enduring legacy of the 150th celebrations.

The past year also saw the completion of a number of projects that marked the important milestones in the history of the Commons and the nation, including a bridge repair and the planting of an orchard in Putney Lower Common as well as a much-needed bridge replacement at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields. All projects were made possible thanks to the generosity of local residents and organisations and we are enormously grateful to them all for their support.

Building on the recognised need to increase the resilience of the Commons, we continued over the year to prioritise the natural environment aspects of the emerging Masterplan. Public consultation on the draft document was carried out by independent consultants in autumn 2022, which indicated strong support for all projects and particular interest in the wetland projects. The work in this area is being further progressed through the

development of a comprehensive and meticulously detailed Land Management Plan, under the leadership of our Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane. The work is supported by the Wildlife and Conservation Forum and we thank all those who give so freely of their time to support this initiative.

In addition to the natural landscape, the Masterplan also includes an evaluation of the built heritage, including an assessment of the important contribution made by the historic buildings and monuments, and the associated investment requirements. The chronic underinvestment that the built heritage has suffered reflects both a lack of funding and in some cases a lack of constitutional clarity. Constitutional reform in this area is therefore necessary to provide a sound legal basis for future investment, ideally achieved through a scheme under the Charities Act. We continue to work with the Charity Commission on this initiative, generously supported by two eminent local barristers, George Laurence KC and Francesca Quint, to whom we are indebted. I would also like to thank Asif Malik, who has recently retired from his role as Chairman of the Wimbledon Windmill Museum after five years of outstanding service. As a qualified architect with particular interest in historic buildings, Asif also made a valuable contribution as a member of the Masterplan Steering Committee and I am personally grateful to him for all that he has done for the Commons.

Over the year, we also continued to examine the case for reforming the levy, which we believe is necessary to enable us to properly fulfil our statutory responsibilities to care for and protect this much cherished asset. Through public consultation, we tested support in principle for increasing the levy with an indicative increase of £8 per year for a Band D property. Despite the economic difficulties that we as a nation face, the proposal received very strong support, a reflection of the great affection that is felt by all for the Commons. Subject to gaining support from the relevant authorities, we hope to further progress this initiative in 2023/24, including public consultation with all 41,000 households in the levy area.

In March 2023 we announced with great regret the decision of our Chief Executive, Stephen Bound, to leave the organisation in order to relocate to the Lake District. Stephen joined WPCC in 2016 as Chief Operations Manager and was promoted to the role of Chief Executive in 2021. Stephen's interest in and focus on the natural environment has been reflected in both the works that have been prioritised over the past two years and those that feature in our future habitat restoration plans. As Chief Executive, Stephen has provided both strong leadership and much valued support for the staff. On behalf of the Conservators, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to him for all he has all he has achieved over his seven years with WPCC. He will be deeply missed by Conservators, staff and all those who had the privilege to work with him.

Most of our staff are long-serving and all are totally dedicated to the Commons, and none more so than Bill Rowland, who this year celebrated 40 years with the WPCC team. Despite his formidable service record, Bill's enthusiasm, loyalty and commitment to the Commons remains as strong today as it was 40 years ago and he continues to serve as a highly valued and deeply respected member of the team.

Although the duties of the Conservators could not be better articulated than through the wonderful Victorian prose of the 1871 Act, the words fail to convey the enormity of the role. I am grateful for the commitment, time and dedication of all those with whom I serve, be they appointed by government departments or elected by levy-payers. This year, I would particularly like to thank Mike Rappolt, the MoD-appointed Conservator, who retired in August 2022 after five distinguished years. Mike will be remembered in particular for his leadership of the Audit and Risk Committee. The role has now been taken up by Peter Shortt, who brings with him extensive experience with the MoD, as well as expertise in sustainability, and we welcome him to the Board. Supporting the work of this committee for over five years has also been a dedicated and diligent member of the local community, Mrs Sarah Wilton, and I thank her for her continued contribution.

It was with deep sadness that we learned of the passing of Sir Robert Andrew on 31 January 2023. Sir Robert was one of the longest serving Conservators, being appointed by the Secretary of State for Defence in 1973 and serving continuously until his retirement in 2009 after 36 years of outstanding service. He is remembered with great respect and fondness by all those who knew him.

In closing, I would once again like to express my sincere appreciation to our tireless staff, for the upkeep, protection and day to day management of the Commons that they so capably and selflessly provide. I also pay tribute to our volunteers, whether they serve on a committee or forum, clear scrub from the heathland or contribute in another fashion, many of whom do so anonymously. Regardless of the form that their contribution takes, they all give generously of their time, motivated by nothing more than a love of the Commons. Finally, I thank those who have supported us financially either in aid of a specific project or more generally, including membership of the Friends. The generosity of all our donors and the public goodwill that it represents is humbling and we are enormously grateful to everyone for their support.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

Whilst for most of us, Covid is no longer something that governs our day to day lives, the impact on the Commons can still be seen. The large gatherings, particularly on Rushmere, which we witnessed during 2020 and 2021, were no longer a feature during 2022 but overall visitor numbers remained extremely high. No doubt this is in part due to the significant increase in dog ownership that has occurred over the past two years. It is possibly also a reflection of the cost-of-living crisis, with people looking for free or low cost activities. Whatever the causes, we are proud that the Commons play such an important role in the lives of the community and that we are able to provide people with a safe and welcoming space for relaxation and recreation. Nevertheless, the continued high visitor numbers have placed additional pressure on our resources. Path erosion and trampling of sensitive habitats remain a significant issue. Increased numbers of people (and dogs) bring higher quantities of litter and waste and our waste management expenditure which increased five-fold during lockdown has remained considerably higher than it was three years ago. In addition, like the rest of the country, we have been subject to the significant price inflation that has been experienced over the past 12 months, further straining our already limited budgets.

January 2023 saw an incredible milestone for one of our staff team. Bill Rowland, the Head Ranger at Putney Lower Common, completed his 40th year of service with WPCC. Bill joined WPCC in 1982 as a Mounted Keeper and was promoted to Senior Keeper in 1984. When the role of Head Ranger at Putney Lower Common was created, in 2014, Bill was offered and accepted the post. Bill's commitment and dedication to WPCC is exceptional, and I am incredibly grateful to him for everything he continues to do for the Commons. We are fortunate to say that Bill is not atypical; the dedication and hard work of our staff team, undertaking their increasingly busy roles, is exemplary. Their efforts are bolstered by countless volunteers and we remain extremely grateful to the increasing number of people who give their time, whether as part of organised volunteer groups or working alone carrying out wildlife surveys or clearing litter.

The Rosslyn Park Schools Rugby Sevens has taken place at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields for many years, operating under an annual licence. The event is the largest schools' rugby tournament in the world and we are proud to host it on the Commons. In March 2023, just before this year's tournament, we agreed with the organisers a five year licence to hold the event on the Commons up to and including 2027. This is fantastic news for both parties and secures much needed income from the event for WPCC in the medium term.

The continued emphasis on conservation (following a period of several years where we had to focus first on governance and then on the pandemic) has seen a number of projects through the year aimed at improving the ecological value of the Commons. Management of woodland has focused on allowing more light into the habitat, through holly clearance and widening of woodland rides. We increased the areas of the Commons being managed as wildflower meadow – and reduced the areas of amenity grassland, instead allowing grass and wildflowers to grow through the summer. With the help of funding from Natural England's 'Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme', we completed survey work and a feasibility study for the restoration of the peat bogs on the Commons.

Access works were also prioritised and autumn 2022 saw the installation of a replacement footbridge across the Beverley Brook close to the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields and restoration and reopening of the footbridge across the Beverley Brook at Putney Lower Common.

Finally, as this is my final year on the Commons, I would like to thank the community for the support they have provided for WPCC. The Commons are a fantastic resource and for those of us lucky enough to have worked here, it is so rewarding to see what an important role this beautiful open space has in enhancing local residents' quality of life.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED DURING THE PAST YEAR

Strategic Context

In June 2017, the Board approved the first ever Strategy ('the Strategy'), following a recommendation from the 2014 Governance Review. The Strategy sets out both the broad vision and specific initiatives for managing the Commons over the ten-year period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2028.

Our Vision

"Wimbledon and Putney Commons will be recognised as an exceptional and welcoming natural place for visitors where wildlife thrives"

The Strategy demonstrates the way in which the Board will play its part in making this area of south-west London a great place to live, work and visit, contributing towards a world class city. (A copy of the Strategy can be viewed at https://bit.ly/3fPF0rT.) The Strategy identifies two overarching long-term Strategic Objectives, which remain relevant for the purposes of this Conservators' report and are set out in Figure 1 below.

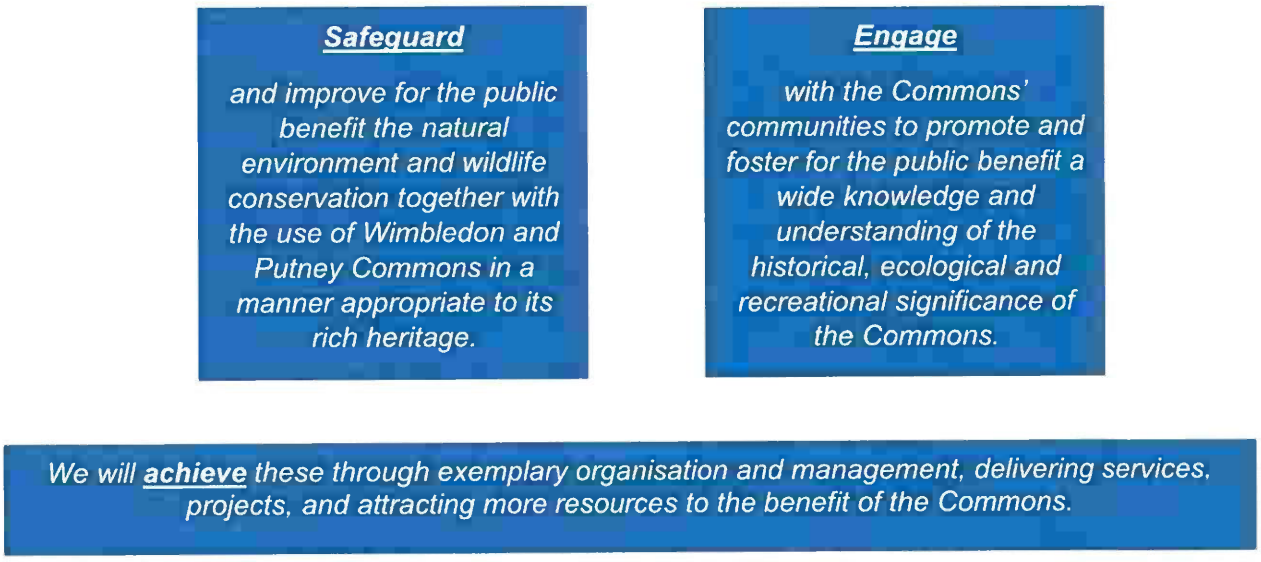

Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged:

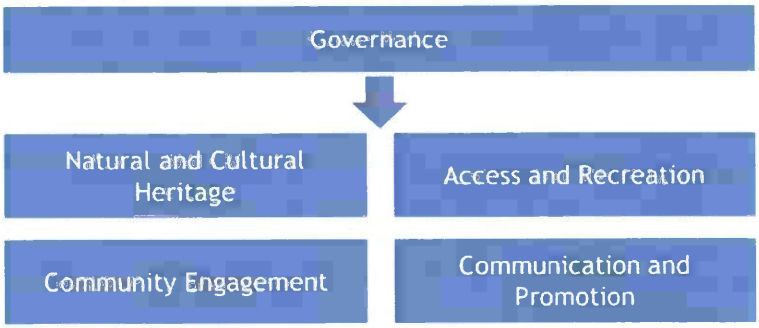

Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

Achievements and Performance 2022/23

It is within this strategic framework that individual initiatives are progressed through the development of a three-year rolling Business Plan. In April 2022, the Board agreed the three-year Business Plan for the period up to 31 March 2025 in which 28 initiatives were agreed; progress on each of these initiatives over the past financial year is set out under each of the five Strategic Themes.

The current Board has placed a strong emphasis planning for the long-term future of the Commons. Significant resources have been directed towards:

- developing the strategic plans which set out how the Commons will be managed for the benefit of wildlife and for people;
- putting in place the constitutional and governance framework to enable the charity to operate effectively in the 21st Century;
- securing the long-term financial resources required to ensure that WPCC can continue to manage the Commons to a very high standard.

Governance

Potential changes to the Constitutional Framework
In an effort to support the long-term planning framework for the Commons, the Board has continued to work towards clarifying and updating the charity's constitutional framework. One of the drivers for this initiative was a recognition by both the Board and the Charity Commission that certain governance arrangements for the Commons as set out in the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871 and the Commissioners Clauses Act 1847 needed to be updated. The second driver was the Board's recognition of the need to regularise and clarify certain land and building matters to enable WPCC to resolve a number of operational matters associated with managing the Commons. It is important to note that there is neither a desire nor intention of diluting or diminishing the very high level of protection that is afforded by the 1871 Act. The Conservators' desire is simply to modernise and clarify certain provisions in the legislation that govern the Commons in order to improve the day-to-day decision-making process.

The Constitution Working Group (CWG) was established by the Board in April 2018 to identify the constitutional changes required and the procedures through which any such changes could be effected. The agreed Terms of Reference provide clarity of scope and purpose:

> 'The purpose of the CWG is to consider amendments necessary to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose of preserving, protecting and

enhancing the Commons for the purposes of exercise and recreation as established by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871.

The review will identify areas where amendments to the constitutional framework are required in order to provide clarity, alignment, operational practicality and deliverability to WPCC's powers and rights and in doing so allow the organisation to consistently achieve high operational and strategic performance standards.'

In 2021, the Constitution Working Group was reconstituted as the Constitution Committee and following the easing of Covid restrictions, restarted its work. In May 2022, members of the Constitution Committee met with the Charity Commission to further discuss the need for amendments to the charity's governance arrangements. As a result of this meeting, the Charity Commission agreed that WPCC could submit an application for a section 73 scheme under the Charities Act 2011. Any scheme would require the support of the DCMS and WPCC is therefore in the process of trying to engage with the department to seek its views on the amendment process. The Board also agreed that before any application for a scheme is submitted, a public consultation on the proposed changes would be undertaken. The Board does not anticipate being in a position to begin a public consultation process until 2024 at the earliest.

Potential changes to the levy

Throughout the year, WPCC has been further examining the case for increasing the levy. A founding principle of the 1871 Act is that the levy serves as the primary source of funding for the Commons. However, increasingly we are finding that the charity's income is insufficient to cover not just important work but also essential projects required to ensure that the Commons remain the safe, attractive and welcoming open space that the community so values. During the autumn of 2022, WPCC undertook the first phase of public consultation on a potential increase in the levy, which was intended to test public support in principle. In order to ensure that the consultation was independent and unbiased, specialist public engagement consultants, Resources for Change, were appointed to obtain the views of existing levy payers and visitors to the Common on the principle of increasing the levy. Feedback was sought via an online questionnaire and Resources for Change also held four 'face to face' sessions on the Commons, at which members of the public could discuss their views on this matter. The matter was also the central agenda item of the Conservators' Open Meeting in November 2022, providing an opportunity for members of the public to hear the proposals in detail and to raise questions directly with the Conservators.

A total of 619 individuals responded to the consultation. Almost nine out of ten respondents to the survey supported an increase in principle of the levy. Of these, 97% agreed that a typical increase of £8 (or 25%) was acceptable, with some respondents happy to pay more.

WPCC has also been meeting through the year with local MPs and the relevant authorities to test support for an increase in the levy. Subject to securing their support, it is intended that a second phase of consultation, seeking the views of all levy-paying households on a specific proposed increase, will be undertaken during 2023/24.

Appointed Conservators

WPCC's governance structure stipulates that three of the eight Conservators are appointed by government departments: DEFRA, the Home Office and the MoD. In line with the term for elected Conservators, appointments are for a period of three years.

As previously reported, in May 2020, the first three-year term of the then Conservator appointed by the MoD, Mike Rappolt, came to an end. The current Secretary of State recognised the importance of the link between WPCC and the MoD and as such decided that the MoD appointed Conservator needed to have an established connection to the MoD. The Secretary of State therefore chose to reappoint Mr Rappolt for an interim period,

whilst a new appointee was selected. This election process was completed in August 2022 and the successful candidate, Peter Shortt, was appointed to the Board of Conservators by the MoD on 1 September 2022.

Staffing

In an effort to further support the work involved with the preparation of management and annual accounts, in January 2023, a part time Management Accountant was employed by WPCC to work alongside the Deputy Clerk and Ranger.

Natural and Cultural Heritage

London in Bloom

London in Bloom is an independent charity and part of Britain in Bloom.

Focusing on the key issues of horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility and community participation, the Commons have been involved with the annual London in Bloom campaign since 2013 and each year Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common have been entered as separate entries into the category of London Commons.

During 2022, we were delighted that both entries received a Gold Award and Wimbledon Common was also voted by the London in Bloom judges as London Common of the year.

A Gold Award is provided to entries that have demonstrated an exceptionally high standard throughout the London in Bloom judging process and have consistently demonstrated both best practice and sustainable effort in all the judging criteria and objectives provided by the London in Bloom campaign.

Land Management Plan

The Commons' Land Management Plan has been written to provide a pro-active management framework that highlights the special qualities of the Commons, including the importance of its landscape, and identifies those areas of the site that are vulnerable or require additional attention. This plan has been designed for anyone who has an interest in the future management of the Commons. The Commons' Land Management Plan will remain an active document, which is periodically reviewed and revised as required. As the plan evolves, new and innovative ideas will be considered to ensure that the Commons are conserved and enhanced in the future.

The Commons' Land Management Plan is both aspirational and ambitious and will direct the management of the Commons' natural resources in a way that has never been undertaken on this site before. The success of the Land Management Plan relies upon the cooperation and involvement of everyone who works, volunteers or simply cares about the Commons and their future prosperity. Over the past year, a huge amount of time has been spent by staff and volunteers on the preparation of the Commons' Land Management Plan and while there is still a little more work left to do before its final completion, we are confident that it will be available for people to view later in 2023.

Management Works

Heathland

Managed under the guidance of a five-year Higher-Level Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CS) with Natural England, Lowland heathland is an internationally important landscape which is listed as a priority habitat for conservation in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. At the current time, there are approximately 20 hectares of heathland on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath, all of which is located within the 365.5 hectares of the Commons that has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). SSSI and SAC designations are assigned to areas of land in the United Kingdom that are

valuable in terms of the flora, fauna, physiological or geographical features that can be found on them and as a result, these areas are provided with a high level of legal protection.

To help protect the Commons' heathland and ensure there is no further loss of this important habitat, between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, a wide range of tasks were carried out by WPCC staff and volunteers. To help tackle the ongoing threat of woodland succession, during the past year, the Commons' Maintenance Team have carried out tree work on heathland adjacent to Memorial Ride and on heathland surrounding Ladies Mile on Putney Heath.

In addition to this, there have been 56 volunteer sessions held on the Commons' heathland that have focused on cutting back invasive scrub, which is an ongoing part of our heathland management programme. While these volunteer sessions have covered many areas of the Commons' heathland, the focus for much of this activity was on the area of heathland that is located between Ladies Mile and Windmill Ride North (also known as Roehampton Ride). Following all volunteer scrub bashing events on the Commons heathland, the WPCC Maintenance Team are responsible for disposing of all cut materials and making safe all the tree stumps that have been left behind by each group of volunteers.

As well as cutting back invasive trees and scrub, during the past year, other heathland work that has been carried out by the Commons' Maintenance Team has included bracken bruising, the management of fire breaks, heather cutting (near Inner Park Ride), stump grinding (near Tibbet's Corner and Green Ride), and the creation of bare ground near Windmill Ride North and north of the A3 near to Roehampton Church School.

Grassland

There are currently 37 separate areas of grassland that are located on Wimbledon and Putney Commons. In total, these areas cover approximately 89 hectares of land. During 2022, 14 areas of grassland were managed on the Commons through a programme of cut and collect. This work involves the cutting and removal of vegetation from each grassland site, which if carried out annually, will ensure the low nutrient status of each area is maintained. This will inhibit the abundance of coarse grasses and increase the likelihood that a more diverse assemblage of grassland flora can be achieved in the future.

According to the wildlife charity Plantlife (2023) over 97% of the UK's species-rich grassland has been lost in less than a century and it now covers just 1% of land. With these habitats providing a wide range of important ecosystem services including favourable areas for pollinators, carbon storage and positive benefits for human health and well-being, the sensitive management of the Commons' various grassland sites has remained an important part of the overall management of the Commons. This work is carried out through a combination of using external contractors to mow the largest grassland sites on the Commons while the Commons' Maintenance Team is involved with the cut and collection of vegetation at some of the smaller and less accessible parts of the Commons.

During 2022, contractors were used to cut and bale vegetation from the following areas:

- The Plain (managed as part of the Commons' CS agreement with Natural England)
- Tibbet's Corner Meadow (managed as part of the Commons CS agreement with Natural England)
- Centre Path Meadow (managed as part of the Commons CS agreement with Natural England)
- West Place
- Wilberforce Meadow
- Putney Heath fairground site
- Putney Lower Common main field
- Putney Lower Common fairground site

Grassland sites on the Commons where vegetation was cut and collected by the Commons' Maintenance Team included:

- The REMPF Memorial Ring
- A small area close to the Centre Path meadow and adjacent to Memorial Ride
- The Southern Pound
- The meadow adjacent to Telegraph Road
- The Oasis Academy
- Verges along Westside Common

As with many aspects of looking after the Commons, managing the grassland sites involves a careful balancing act between the needs of wildlife and the requirements of people. Taking into consideration the aspects of sports, recreation and conservation, during 2022, the scale of mowing that took place on areas once considered to be largely recreational was dramatically reduced both in terms of the frequency of mowing and the actual area of ground that was cut.

For example, while areas close to Wimbledon Village and on Putney Lower Common were previously regularly mown during the summer for the purposes of recreation, during 2022, much smaller areas of ground were kept short for people to enjoy, leaving significantly larger swathes of uncut grassland than has ever been the case in the past.

Woodland

Covering an area of 291 hectares, representing almost two-thirds of the total area of the Commons, woodland is the dominant habitat type found on Wimbledon and Putney Commons. At the current time, all woodland management on the Commons is carried out under the guidance of a five-year Higher Level Countryside Stewardship Agreement that has been agreed by WPCC, the Forestry Commission and Natural England. During the past year, woodland management activities on the Commons have included holly thinning, ride management work, the creation of dead wood habitats, woodland thinning, the creation of woodland glades and tree safety work.

Holly thinning: From the beginning of November 2022 until the end of January 2023, a small team of forestry contractors was involved with thinning holly on the Commons. This work covered six hectares of woodland, which started close to Lower Gravelly Ride and was completed at the edge of Queensmere Fairway. As holly is a native species that provides nesting opportunities for birds and a valuable source of nectar for a wide range of invertebrates, in all areas where holly thinning has been carried out, approximately 10% of the existing holly coverage in each hectare of woodland is retained.

This recent phase of holly thinning on the Commons has achieved several important objectives:

- Provision of a more open woodland which is of benefit to the regeneration of trees and associated woodland flora;
- Reduction of the heavy shading and dense tree cover in the area surrounding the Stag Bog valley mire;
- Enhancement of the health and safety of visitors to the Commons by improving sightlines along the edge of two areas of the Wimbledon Common Golf Course; these areas include the Queensmere Fairway and Paradise Fairway.

Ride Management: During the beginning of 2023, the Commons' Maintenance Team carried out ride management work along Lower Gravelly Ride.

This work has involved coppicing targeted trees that were located up to ten metres away from the edge of the ride. The aim of this work has been to create a ride that is approximately 1.5 metres wider than the height of the surrounding trees. This will reduce heavy shading and allow an increased level of light to reach the woodland floor which will lead to a long interface between a dense woodland edge and other open nectar sources, which

are important for invertebrates and other wildlife. As a result of the lack of historic mnagement that has been carried out along much of the Commons extensive network of rides, where large native trees have been found, these have been left untouched as the removal of these important natural habitats can rarely be justified.

Deadwood habitats: In Britain, approximately 1,000 different species have been recorded as living in deadwood and it is considered that a woodland which is free of deadwood may be impoverished by up to a fifth of its fauna. Deadwood is therefore a fundamental part of a healthy woodland ecosystem and as a result we do our very best on the Commons to ensure that as much deadwood is retained on site as possible.

Similar to the previous year's ride management work that was carried out along Upper Gravelly Ride, during 2022, deadwood habitats were created along the edge of Lower Gravelly Ride through burying cut timber in deep pits, stacking cut timber above ground and through tree safety work which resulted in the creation of large standing monoliths. While both standing and fallen deadwood provide important habitats for a host of wildlife, the creation and maintenance of deadwood habitats on the Commons is also of particular importance to the ongoing survival of the stag beetle on this site. Wimbledon Common is at the heart of the south London centre of distribution for stag beetles and as such it is a qualifying species for the designation of a large part of the Commons as a SAC.

Woodland thinning: A healthy woodland should contain a full range of structures in balance which would provide a ground layer, field layer, shrub layer and canopy. By providing openings within the woodland canopy and therefore allowing light to reach the woodland floor, the provision of open space provides the opportunity for the growth of nectar bearing shrubs and flowering plants which are vital for the development of invertebrate variety and biomass. As much of the Commons woodland has developed through a process of natural succession, the result has been the establishment of large areas of even aged trees that are closely spaced together, preventing the growth of new trees and the creation of a well developed woodland structure.

To create a more diverse age structure within the Commons woodland, it is desirable for tree thinning to be carried out in the most heavily shaded areas. One method of achieving this has been through the reduction of invasive non-native tree species. On the Commons, these species include Turkey oak, sycamore, holm oak and rhododendron. During 2022, Turkey oak was selected for woodland thinning in the area of woodland that surrounds Curling Pond and Jerry's Hill on Putney Heath. Turkey oak is a fast growing species that was first introduced to Britain in 1735 and since this time, it has aggressively colonised many parts of the countryside leading to the displacement of native flora. Turkey oak is far less important to British wildlife than the native English oak and it is generally considered to be a pest for the following reasons:

- It is fast growing;
- It will hybridise with the English oak;
- It is host to the knopper gall wasp which migrates from Turkey oak to English oak where it lays eggs on the developing acorns leading to the formation of a sticky formation (gall) which can damage the acorns of the English oak and impact on its ability to reproduce successfully.

Rather than felling additional trees on the Commons, during the beginng of 2023, a programme of ring barking (also known as girdling) was carried out on selected Turkey oaks on Putney Heath. This process involves the removal of a complete band of bark from around the trunk of a tree. It is a traditional method of woodland management that has been used for centuries as a means of clearing or thinning woodland and is something that is often actively encouraged by wildlife conservationists. This method of woodland management provides a natural process which is similar to a tree dying slowly of disease which creates a rich and diverse habitat for a wide range of insects and fungi as well as woodpeckers and other woodland birds.

Creation of woodland glades: Similar to the work that has recently been carried out along the edge of Lower Gravelly Ride, the creation of woodland glades provides another important way of creating open space and structural diversity within the woodland. While much of this work has been carried out as part of the Commons

programme of holly thinning, a new woodland glade has also been created on Putney Lower Common in an area that had become heavily shaded by sycamore growth and trampled through sustained visitor pressure. To help with the recovery of this area of the Commons, temporary fencing has been used to enclose the site and a mixture of native wildflowers have been planted.

Tree safety work: Tree safety work forms an ongoing part of the manageemnt of the Commons' trees and woodland and almost all of this work is carried out by the Commons Maintenance Team. During the past year, some of the most notable tree safety work on the Commons has been carried out along Friars Avenue and along the boundary of the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields.

Putney Lower Common:

In addition to the woodland work that was carried out at Putney Lower Common, during the past year, two of the most notable tasks that have been carried out on this area of the Commons has involved the first year of cut and collect work taking place on the Main Field and on the Fairground site which is located between Queen's Ride and Lower Richmond Road and the planting of a small orchard along the edge of the Main Field opposite the Putney Town Bowling Club.

In total, 12 fruit trees were planted by WPCC staff on Putney Lower Common including six apple trees, three pear trees and three cherry trees. These trees were planted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy which is a tree planting initiative to mark the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The trees that have been planted are a living legacy and serve as a lasting tribute to Queen Elizabeth's extraordinary service to the nation; we are extremely grateful to everyone who kindly donated money to help with the creation of this orchard. Traditional orchards are listed as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat. They provide a mosaic of habitats that are of immense importance to wildlife as well as providing a visually attractive aspect within the natural landscape.

Access and Recreation

Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields

In March 2023 we entered into a five-year agreement with Rosslyn Park Rugby Club to hold the Rosslyn Park Schools Rugby Sevens tournament at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields for the next five years. This year's event was the largest yet, with over 2,000 matches being played over five days. Despite heavy rainfall in the weeks leading up to the tournament, our Grounds Manager and his team did a fantastic job of preparing the pitches and surrounding areas.

Path restoration

Thanks to a generous donation from the Elizabeth Frankland Moore and Star Foundation, along with assistance from local firm Cappagh, we were able to complete restoration of the footpath which leads from the pedestrian crossing on Putney Heath to Roehampton Church School and Holy Trinity Church.

Bridge replacement/restoration

Some years ago, WPCC was approached by Thames Hare and Hounds cross country club, whose clubhouse is situated at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing fields, with a proposal to replace the wooden footbridge that crosses the Beverley Brook and joins the pitches in front of the Pavilion to the REMPF extension fields. Following fantastic fundraising and project planning work undertaken by David Jenkins, a long-standing member of Thames Hare and Hounds, we were able to replace the bridge during autumn 2022. The new, wider bridge not only provides better access for pedestrians, but also for pushchairs and for wheelchairs.

In February 2022 we launched a public appeal to restore the footbridge at Putney Lower Common. The timber decking was rotting, becoming unsafe, and the metal girders and handrails were displaying signs of corrosion. As a result, the bridge had been closed, preventing use of the popular circular footpath around the Common. By September 2022, we had raised sufficient funds to enable us to restore the bridge. It was reopened in October 2022 and, at a small opening ceremony, renamed Bill's Bridge, in honour of Bill Rowland, the Head Ranger at Putney Lower Common, who has served WPCC for over 40 years.

Community Engagement

Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

In April 2019, the Board agreed the basis for establishing the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons as a Conservator-led, integral part of WPCC. The Friends bring together all of those who are connected by a passion for the Commons for the purposes of collective celebration and fund raising.

There are now five categories of Friends membership:

- Individual Friend - £30 per year (or £3 per month);
- Household Friend - £40 per year (or £4 per month);
- Benefactor - £250 per year (or £20 per month);
- Patron - £1,000 per year (£85 per month);
- Corporate - £5,000 per year (£420 per month).

At the year end, a total of 587 memberships had been taken up.

During 2022/23, the Friends contributed to several projects on the Commons including the restoration of the bridge at Putney Lower Common, the replacement of the wooden footbridge across the Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common and the orchard at Putney Lower Common.

150th Anniversary Events – The Friends' Committee was instrumental in organising the celebrations to mark the 150th Anniversary of Wimbledon and Putney Commons and was delighted to finally be able to hold the twice-postponed grand finale – a reception on the Pavilion Terrace at the House of Commons. As a benefit of membership, members of the Friends were able to purchase tickets in advance of them going on public sale. We are grateful to Stephen Hammond MP for hosting the event.

The Friends' Committee continues to organise a series of smaller events for its members, including a tour of the Windmill in December 2022. The walks will continue into 2023.

Volunteer Programme

From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, the Commons' volunteer programme has gone from strength to strength.

It is difficult to record exactly how many hours are contributed to the Commons each year, as many volunteers, particularly those who assist with litter picking, do so without even telling us. However, the known hours for the past year have amounted to a total of 8,030 volunteer hours compared to the previous year when 5,489 hours were recorded. This is a rise of 2,541 hours, or a remarkable additional 68 weeks of time 'donated' by the local community.

Providing a wide range of activities on the Commons, we take immense pride that every volunteer activity that is provided is of direct benefit to help protect and enhance the Commons.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

During the past year, volunteering on the Commons has included the following activities:

- Sunday morning scrub bashing;
- Mid-week volunteering group;
- Beverley Brook volunteer litter pickers;
- Single visit volunteer groups;
- Farm Bog volunteers;
- Volunteer litter pickers;
- Duke of Edinburgh litter pickers;
- Membership of various forums;
- Wildlife recording and involvement with the Commons' Land Management Plan;
- Event volunteers;
- Work experience volunteers.

Events

With all Covid restrictions lifted, events could go ahead as normal during 2022/23. However, with the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022, the Conservators and staff took the decision, as a mark of respect, to cancel the Commons Open Day, scheduled to take place two days after the Queen's passing.

The following events were held during the 2022/23 year:

April 2022

- The popular **Birdsong Identification Workshop**, led by local volunteer bird expert Les Evans-Hill, took place on 23 and 24 April 2022. The workshop was held online and the customary walk around the Commons the following morning to allow attendees to try out their new-found ID skills was able to go ahead in person this year.

May 2022

- Games Day was conceived as a way to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Act of Parliament that created the Commons 'for the purposes of exercise and recreation'. Held in glorious sunshine on 22 May 2022, the event brought together over 600 participants, 50 captains and coaches, and a small army of supporters collectively participating in over 12 games and activities, all in a spirit of mutual support and harmony: a very fitting way to mark the occasion.

June 2022

- On Thursday 2 June 2022, the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators and the Wimbledon Windmill Museum Trustees marked the occasion of the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee** and took part in the nationwide event of the lighting of beacons. Hundreds of local residents joined our celebration of the national beacon programme - though rather than light a physical beacon, we illuminated the Windmill in red and orange in tribute to the Queen.

  The evening began with two processions across the Common: the first walk began at the Wimbledon Village War Memorial and was led by Stephen Hammond, MP for Wimbledon, and the second walk, led by the Revd Joshua Rey, vicar of Holy Trinity Church, started at the Roehampton War Memorial. On arrival at the Windmill, the processions met with those who had come directly to the Windmill and everyone was handed a candle to be lit for the ceremony. The evening followed the official order of service for the evening, with several pieces of music commissioned especially for the occasion.

- Over the weekend of 17 to 19 June 2022, we held the **Bioblitz Weekend of Nature** event – this is one of WPCC's most important events that enables us to showcase the flora and fauna of the Commons, and to explain why the habitats on the Commons are nationally important.

- The **Annual Open Meeting** was held on 29 June 2022 at Roehampton Church – the first face to face meeting for three years. The Conservators presented their Annual Report and Accounts to approximately 40 attendees.

July 2022

- Some 40 members of the public joined us for our annual **Summer Evening Walk** on 5 July 2022. Led by WPCC's Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane, the walk took in the woodland clearance work that had been taking place to the south of the Commons. Peter was able to demonstrate the benefits of the work in opening up the woodland to allow more light in to benefit under storey flora and fauna.

- The Friends' Committee was at last able to complete the events to mark the 150th Anniversary that had been postponed due to Covid. The grand finale of the celebrations was a **Reception on the Terrace Pavilion at the House of Commons**, kindly hosted by Stephen Hammond, MP for Wimbledon. The evening provided an opportunity to pay tribute to those who were instrumental in securing the future of the Commons under a separate Act of Parliament in 1871 and we were therefore delighted to have Sir Richard Peek, a direct descendant of Sir Henry Peek, as the guest speaker. In his address, Sir Richard spoke of his ancestor's philanthropy that underpinned not only his quest to secure access to open space for the public but to improve health and social welfare more generally. Also in attendance were the great grandchildren of Richardson Evans, the man who led the campaign to save 95 acres of open space along the Beverley Brook and donated the land to the Commons in the early 20th century. Some 140 people attended and we are grateful to all those who supported the event.

December 2022

- We were delighted that the **Carols at the Windmill** was once again able to be held at the Windmill rather than out on the Commons. The event remained as popular as ever with some 400 people attending, all of whom thoroughly enjoyed listening to, or singing along with, the carols played by the Wandle Concert Band.

February 2023

- On 7 February 2023, we were joined by Dr Naomi Ewald as the guest speaker at our annual **Winter Talk**. Dr Ewald, Director of Policy and Research at the Freshwater Habitats Trust, gave an extremely interesting and engaging talk about the value of ponds as a habitat for wildlife, whether they are larger ponds such as we have on the Commons, down to garden ponds and even puddles that develop during wet weather.

- We are fortunate to continue to have the support of local resident Alan Blower who continued with his online talks and on 15 February 2023 gave a fascinating talk about **Games on the Commons**, revealing the history of the sports that were originally played on the Common, the achievements of the remarkable men and women from those sports, and how those sports clubs are performing today.

Other Events

- There were three Bird Walks led by two of our volunteers, Adrian Podmore and Les Evans-Hill, over the course of the year, including a birdsong walk in May 2022, and an opportunity to see some of the migrating birds that come through the Commons in September and October 2022.

- Communication via our e-Newsletters continued throughout the year with 15 newsletters published between April 2022 and March 2023. The Annual Newsletter was also delivered to all levy-payers in May 2022.

Commons Picture Competition - As part of the Commons' 150th Anniversary celebrations, the Conservators launched a picture competition in August 2021 inviting visitors to the Commons to submit photographs of the Commons with the chance to win prizes donated each month by local businesses. Running until the end of July 2022, the competition was a huge success and proved to be very popular with visitors. Over 1,500 entries were received from some 300 participants. In September 2022, an exhibition of the winning images was held in the "Gallery in the Garage" at the Ranger's Office.

Given its popularity, the Competition has continued, albeit now on a quarterly basis, with visitors encouraged to enter with images of each season – winter, spring, summer and autumn.

Board Meetings – Following the March 2021 triennial elections, the newly constituted Board agreed that to further the objectives of openness and transparency, the non-confidential sections of Board meetings would be held in public. During 2022/23, members of the public continued to attend the non-confidential part of Board meetings and to ask questions on any of the matters being considered at that meeting. The agenda papers and minutes from these meetings are also posted on WPCC's website.

Masterplan for the Commons

In September 2019, WPPC secured a grant from NLHF of £126,100 (80% of the total approved project cost of £157,200) to create a Masterplan for the Commons, articulating the way in which the landscape and built assets relate to one another, looking at interpretation, education, volunteering, visitor facilities, perimeter conditions and landscape management. Consultants Barker Langham were appointed to manage the project and their draft Masterplan was completed in July 2021. Before finalising the document, WPCC felt it essential to undertake public consultation in order to obtain the views of levy-payers and users of the Commons on the proposals set out in the Masterplan. It was decided that consultation would be undertaken in two phases, with views being sought initially on the natural habitat, access and signage elements of the plan. Views on the built environment, including monuments and buildings, would be sought at a later date, hopefully after clarification of certain constitutional provisions is achieved.

In order to ensure that the consultation was independent, Resources for Change, specialists in public engagement, were employed to lead the process. The consultation was launched on 25 September 2022 and closed on 30 November 2022. It consisted of four face to face sessions, at which Resources for Change were present on the Commons to talk to visitors and obtain their views, along with an online survey, hosted by Resources for Change. In addition, WPCC produced a web page dedicated to the consultation, providing background information, through which interested parties could access the draft Masterplan. As mentioned earlier, the Conservators' Open Meeting in November 2022 was also largely dedicated to the Masterplan and levy consultation.

A total of 619 individuals responded to the consultation. Of these, 189 responded online and a further 430 responded at the face-to-face sessions. All of the projects contained in the Masterplan received strong support, and even those with least support (signage and bike racks) were only opposed by 4% of respondents, with a further 3% unsure about the proposals. The consultation indicated that the proposed wetland projects were the most popular of those included in the Masterplan. This is reassuring, as this includes both pond restoration and bog restoration projects both of which are current fundraising priorities. The restoration of Queensmere is the major habitat restoration project within the current Business Plan.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN 2023/24

The year 2023/24 will see the completion or continuation of a number of major projects commenced by WPCC during 2022/23. These include:

- ***Constitutional Reform*** – WPCC retains a desire to clarify and modernise certain constitutional provisions to enable more effective governance of the charity by working with the Charity Commission, government and politicians to develop proposals for a section 73 scheme under the Charities Act 2011. The Board has agreed that before any application for a scheme is submitted to the Charity Commission, a public consultation on the proposed changes would be undertaken; this is not expected before 2024 at the earliest.
- ***Fundraising*** – Since the recruitment of a Fundraising Manager in January 2022, a number of successful grant applications have been made and public appeals launched. However, it remains the case that essential or important work has to be postponed due to our limited financial resources and therefore we will continue to seek to increase income from fundraising in order to provide the investment necessary to protect the Commons.
- ***Levy*** – WPCC continues to examine the case for increasing the levy, which serves as the primary source of funding for the Commons. Following the strong support for a potential increase that was indicated through the 2022 informal public consultation process, further discussions are being progressed with DEFRA, MPs and local authorities. Subject to securing the support from the relevant authorities, it is intended that a second phase of consultation, seeking the views of all levy-paying households on a specific proposed increase, will be undertaken during 2023/24.
- ***Land Management Plan*** - The Land Management Plan, which has been in development for the past two years, is nearing completion. The plan will set out the longer-term vision and operational direction for conserving and enhancing habitats and populations of priority species enhancement on the Commons. In particular, the plan will set out the work required to ensure the heathland, woodland, ponds and mires found on the Commons are managed in order to preserve and improve their condition and value for wildlife. A key medium-term goal will be returning the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to favourable condition.
- ***Habitat restoration*** – WPCC has been successful in securing a grant from the Mayor of London's 'Rewild London' fund in order to carry out survey and design work essential to the restoration of Queensmere Pond. Queensmere is one of the most popular sites on the Commons, but ecologically, its condition is poor. Restoration will make it a much more attractive site for visitors and for wildlife.
- ***Access Improvements*** – Through generous public donations and through a grant from South Western Railways Customer and Communities Fund, WPCC has secured funding for the restoration of three heavily used paths on the Commons: Inner Park ride, the Windmill Road footpath and Green Ride. All three of these routes are in very poor condition and sections can be almost impassable following heavy rainfall. Resurfacing will provide a level, dry route suitable for all users of the Commons.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The table on the next page summarises the financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2023 and shows a net excess of income over expenditure of £7,729 before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme; these additional charges do not of themselves result in a cash outflow for the charity.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Year ended 31 March 2023			*2022*
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Total income	2,018,274	155,539	2,173,813	1,973,653
Total expenditure before additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	(2,075,385)	(90,699)	(2,166,084)	(1,965,850)
Net income/(expenditure) before additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	**(57,111)**	**64,840**	**7,729**	**7,803**
Additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	(297,000)	0	(297,000)	(306,000)
Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains	(354,111)	64,840	(289,271)	(298,197)
Net gain/(loss) on investments	(58,842)	0	(58,842)	147,350
Net income/(expenditure) before other gains and losses	**(412,953)**	**64,840**	**(348,113)**	**(150,847)**
Transfer between funds	89,943	(89,943)	0	0
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	2,678,000	0	2,678,000	782,000
Net movement in funds for the year	**2,354,990**	**(25,103)**	**2,329,887**	**631,153**
Total funds brought forward	732,297	115,868	848,165	217,012
Total funds carried forward	**3,087,287**	**90,765**	**3,178,052**	**848,165**
Comprising:				
Negative pension reserve	0	0	0	(2,381,000)
Other reserves	3,087,287	90,765	**3,178,052**	3,229,165
Total funds	**3,087,287**	**90,765**	**3,178,052**	**848,165**

Income

Unrestricted income for the year was £2,018,274, which was £129,329 higher than the previous year. The main changes in income were as follows:

- An increase in levy income of £61,321. Levy income represented 66% (2022: 66%) of the charity's total unrestricted income for the year.

- An increase in property rent and wayleaves of £17,638.

In view of the high level of inflation suffered in the last year, the ongoing need to optimise the use of the charity's resources and the requirement to commit investment to the Commons' buildings and infrastructure, the Conservators have increased the 2023/24 levy to its maximum permitted level which will generate an additional £167,239 of income in the year ending 31 March 2024.

Restricted income in the year amounted to £155,539 and included £40,023 for the two Beverley Brook bridge projects, grant funding of £35,388 in respect of a feasibility study for the peat bogs restoration project, £18,617 from the horse-ride appeal, £17,991 in respect of the new cricket nets on Putney Heath and £16,553 in respect of the footpaths' restoration.

Expenditure

Total expenditure on charitable activities for the year amounted to £2,166,084 (before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme) which represented an increase of £200,234.

The charity's cost base suffered from cost inflation during the year as a result of the general increases in prices. Apart from inflation driven increases, the most significant changes in expenditure were as follows:

- Commons' maintenance costs increased by £98,316. The main elements of this increase were the recruitment of an additional member of staff, £14,370 spent on the new wildlife garden, £35,388 spent on the feasibility study for the bog restoration project and £15,129 spent on repair work to the footbridge over the Beverley Brook on Putney Lower Common.

- Expenditure on property maintenance and improvements decreased by £42,191 mainly because costs in the year ended 31 March 2022 had been higher than normal as maintenance and improvement works had been held back during the pandemic years and also £27,780 had been spent on roof repair works at the sports pavilion in that year.

- Support costs (before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme) increased by £119,569 with the most significant variations being:

    - Administration staff salaries increased by £77,209 primarily as a result of an accrual for holiday pay and the costs of employing the new Fundraising Manager for the first full year.

    - Professional fees increased by £26,024 mainly as a result of recruitment costs, the engagement of a third party data protection adviser, VAT consultancy advice and fire safety advice.

Other matters

In recent financial years, the charity has received grants and donations from third parties amounting to £89,943 for the specific purposes of enabling the charity to (a) construct a new bridge over the Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common, (b) construct new cricket nets on Putney Heath and (c) purchase additional strips of land. During the period in which the funds for these projects were being raised, the funds were treated as restricted funds but once the assets had been constructed and the land purchased, the purposes for which the grants and donations were made had been fulfilled and the funds were transferred to the General Conservancy Fund.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Financial markets were volatile during the financial year which resulted in a net loss in value of £58,842 in the charity's investments during the year ended 31 March 2023.

At 31 March 2023 the charity's bank balances amounted to £384,185 (2022: £332,543).

Pension Scheme

The charity is a member of the London Borough of Merton LGPS. The latest triennial actuarial valuation (TAV) of the LGPS was published in March 2023 and set out the actuarial position of the LGPS at 31 March 2022 and the contributions required for the three years ending 31 March 2026. At the valuation date, WPCC's share of the LGPS was assessed at 113.4% of its accrued liabilities. A copy of the 2022 actuarial valuation of the LGPS can be inspected at https://bit.ly/MPFactuarial.

The TAV is prepared to assess the funding position of the LGPS and to determine the contributions actually payable by participating employers for the ensuing three years. For accounting purposes, a different valuation methodology is used which is intended to aid comparison between different entities with defined benefit pension schemes. The element of the valuation methodology which causes the greatest difference between the two valuations is the discount rate used to compute the liability to pay pensions. The TAV at 31 March 2022 used a discount rate based on the expected return of the assets in the pension fund, adjusted for risk, of 4.2% whereas the valuation at 31 March 2022 for accounting purposes used a discount rate of 2.6%. The use of a discount rate that is calculated on a different basis and as a result is much lower than that used in the TAV resulted in WPCC's share of the LGPS recording a deficit of £2,381,000 for accounting purposes whereas the TAV showed a surplus of £1,090,000.

At 31 March 2023, WPCC's share of the LGPS for accounting purposes was a net asset of £347,000 (based on a discount rate of 4.8%), which represented a movement of £2,728,000 compared with the pension liability the previous year of £2,381,000. The changes to the asset/deficit are shown in note 23 to the financial statements.

GAAP in the United Kingdom requires the inclusion of a deficit on the LGPS, as calculated for accounting purposes, in WPCC's accounts. The deficit itself is shown as a liability on the balance sheet with a corresponding amount charged to a pension reserve. In the case of an asset in the LGPS, GAAP requires that an asset is not recognised in the financial statements unless that asset can be recovered by either a refund to WPCC or a reduction in future pension contributions. The main factor causing the movement in the pension scheme deficit has been the increase in the discount rate (which is related to upward movements in market interest rates). While the future movement of interest rates is impossible to predict, it is possible that if inflation declines, as is presently forecast, interest rates and discount rates will also decline which may result in the asset position shown by the LGPS at 31 March 2023 being transitory in nature.

The movements in the deficit or asset from year to year are charged/credited within the Statement of Financial Activities and the main components for the year ended 31 March 2023 were:

- the current service cost of providing the pension which at £422,000 was £232,000 in excess of the contributions payable to the LGPS by WPCC;
- a notional net interest charge on the defined benefit pension obligation which amounted to £59,000; and
- an actuarial gain of £3,025,000 which has been reduced to £2,678,000 in order not to recognise an asset.

It should be noted that a pension liability included in the balance sheet does not represent a liability which is payable because, as described above, the contributions payable to the LGPS are based on the results of the TAV.

Further details of the LGPS will be found in the notes to the financial statements.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The Conservators have considered the major risks to which the charity is exposed and satisfied themselves that systems or procedures are established in order to manage those risks. The annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee will be found later in this report. Set out below are the principal risks and uncertainties to which the charity is exposed.

Despite various amendments that have been introduced over the years, the administrative provisions of the 1871 Act have not been materially updated since 1871 and this presents a risk that has been acknowledged by the Charity Commission. The Constitution Committee, originally established as a working group in 2018, continues to review the current arrangements. This is not about introducing a more permissive regime or diluting the fundamental purposes of the charity but introducing a workable set of rules to enable the organisation to fulfil its core objectives in a 21st century working environment. The charity had planned to commence a public consultation process on the potential changes to the constitutional arrangements in April 2020, but the Covid restrictions and a decision by the Charity Commission to review the scope of its powers to effect constitutional reform in general meant that the process had to be postponed. As noted earlier, the Charity Commission has now stated that the charity can submit an application for a scheme under section 73 Charities Act 2011. Any scheme would require the support of DCMS and WPCC is therefore in the process of trying to engage with the department to seek its views on the amendment process. The Board also agreed that before any application for a scheme is submitted, a public consultation on the proposed changes would be undertaken. The Board does not anticipate being in a position to begin a public consultation process until 2024 at the earliest.

The rise in inflation during the last year has had a negative impact on the charity's cost base. Also, in recent years it has become apparent that the charity's overall level of income is insufficient to support the long-term preventative maintenance of both the natural and built environments. Although the charity is fortunate that its principal source of income, the levy, is linked to the Retail Price Index, the Conservators believe that there is a need to achieve a step change in the quantum of the levy. To this end, as described earlier in this report, the charity carried out a public consultation in the autumn of 2022 which illustrated that there was widespread public support for an increase in the levy. The charity is now in discussion with the relevant authorities in order to agree an increase in the levy. In the event that it was not possible to secure an increase in the levy, the charity would need to seek alternative sources of income and/or reduce its cost base in order to bring its future income and costs into equilibrium.

As described earlier in this report, the charity has developed a number of ambitious projects for the Commons which will necessitate the raising of grants and donations from third parties. If such funds cannot be raised, the projects may need to be curtailed or postponed.

The Commons contain a large number of buildings, many of which are over 100 years old. The age of such buildings brings the risk that unforeseen expenditure may be required to maintain the operational capability of such buildings.

Risks to the charity's buildings and other infrastructure are managed by means of routine inspections which are aimed at identifying problems before they arise. However, given the age of such buildings and infrastructure it is inevitable that unforeseen and sometimes costly expenditure will arise from time to time.

Fundraising

We began the year by putting into practice the new Fundraising Strategy. New grant funding has enabled habitat restoration and infrastructure improvement projects, donations have helped deliver maintenance and planting projects and we have continued to grow the Friends' subscription scheme.

A new contactless card payment machine was installed in Windmill car park in August 2022. The machine accepts donations in lieu of car parking fees. Since launch, visitors have made 231 transactions totaling £3,583. Similarly, due to the reduction in use of coins we have leased a new contactless tap machine for use in the office and at events.

The Commemorative Bench Scheme continues to provide important income for the charity as well as new furniture for visitors. In the last year, six new benches have been installed raising a total of £22,750 including Gift Aid. We would like to share our gratitude to the families that have supported the charity in memory of a loved one.

The Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons was established during 2019/20 and membership continued to grow during 2022/23. At 31 March 2023 there were 587 subscriptions (March 2022: 544) which had generated income of £40,005 including Gift Aid. Income from subscriptions supports the wider work of the charity as well as supporting grant applications with contributions as matched funds. This year, funds have been allocated towards the new orchard and the two bridge projects. We are grateful to the dedicated Conservators and volunteers who organise events for members and the community.

Fundraising to improve access

The repairs to the bridge on Putney Lower Common were funded by generous donations from visitors, the Friends of WPCC and the Putney Society. Grants totalling £5,500 were received from the Wandsworth Grant Fund and the Miles Trust for Roehampton and Putney. The total received for this appeal was £21,732.

A narrow timber bridge by Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields has been replaced with a new wider bridge. The fundraising was led by members from the Thames Hare and Hounds running club and we are grateful for the support of the Wimbledon Foundation, the London Marathon Charitable Trust, RunThrough events, Thomas's Putney Vale, and the many generous individuals who helped to raise £38,800 for the new bridge.

Building upon the success of the Inner Windmill Road and Beverley Brook Walk path improvement projects, our Access for All appeal was relaunched in December 2022 with the aim of securing funds to restore more priority paths. By 31 March 2023, the community fundraising appeal had raised £15,200 in donations including Gift Aid. We continue to apply to grant funders to enable the delivery of this work which is expected to cost in the region of £120,000.

The Wimbledon Village Stables continued their fundraising activities and this year raised £18,617 towards improving the equestrian facilities on the Commons, enabling us to invest in maintaining the horse rides and exercise rings.

Fundraising to manage conservation

A new orchard has been planted on Putney Lower Common as part of the Queen's Green Canopy, a tree planting initiative to mark Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. The planting of 12 trees was funded by donations made by visitors and the local community who together raised £6,631 for this project. Additional donations will help fund improvement projects to the wider Putney Lower Common landscape.

WPCC was awarded a grant by the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NCPGS) to deliver a Peatland 'Discovery' Project. This grant has funded a professional feasibility report that has identified, assessed, and mapped areas of potential peatland restoration on the Commons and produced peatland restoration and management plans.

The restoration of Queensmere is being supported by the Mayor of London, in partnership with the London Wildlife Trust with a grant of £14,290. The charity was successful in its application to the Rewild London Fund to support the first stage of the pond's restoration which will include professional ecological surveys, landscape designs and community engagement.

Other

The charity has registered with the Fundraising Regulator and adheres to its Fundraising Code of conduct. The charity received no complaints about its fundraising activities and makes every effort to ensure that any fundraising it undertakes is not unreasonably intrusive, persistent or pressurised.

Reserves

At 31 March 2023, the charity had unrestricted reserves (excluding the pension reserve) of £3,087,287 and restricted reserves of £90,765.

The table below shows the calculation of the charity's free reserves:

	£
Unrestricted reserves, excluding pension reserve	
Per balance sheet	3,087,287
Deduct:	
Estimated cost of next triennial elections in 2024	(65,000)
Funds required to fund the net book value of tangible fixed assets	(1,435,677)
Free reserves	**1,586,610**

As noted earlier, the pension reserve, if negative, represents the net liability in respect of the LGPS and is calculated in accordance with the specific requirements of the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). The obligation to provide pensions is being funded by regular contributions to the pension scheme out of the charity's annual income at a rate determined by the scheme's actuary.

The Conservators' estimated potential requirements for reserves are set out in the table below:

Provision of working capital to cover day to day fluctuations in income and expenditure and meet, in the short term, either unexpected expenses or income shortfalls	£545,000-£600,000
Renovation works to estate buildings	£283,000-£397,000
Costs associated with changes to the constitutional arrangements	£90,000-£140,000

This gives a total requirement of between £918,000 and £1,137,000. As described above, WPCC's free reserves at 31 March 2023 were £1,586,610, which is more than the total requirement in the table above. Therefore, WPCC believes it has adequate resources to meet its reserves policy. It should be noted that the charity's estate is a substantial area which has on it a number of buildings which are in excess of 100 years old. Consequently, it is

often the case that circumstances arise which involve unforeseen expenditure. Therefore, it is the Conservators' intention to maintain high levels of reserves to cover such unforeseen expenditure.

The level of income generated by WPCC's activities in their present form is insufficient to enable the Conservators to make any significant investment in the Commons' estate. Accordingly, the Conservators are continuing to investigate ways of broadening and increasing their income base.

Investment Management

CCLA Investment Management Limited (CCLA) is the charity's investment adviser with a discretionary mandate. The charity's funds are invested in the COIF Charity Investment Fund (COIF), a specialist charity fund managed by CCLA.

The mandate given to CCLA sets out the charity's investment objectives as follows:

- A balanced attitude to risk, where the objective is to protect the real values over time but investment risk can be accepted in order to achieve this;
- A long term gross total return target of CPI +5% per annum with an annual income requirement of at least £35,000 per annum; the real value of income is required to rise in line with inflation, as far as possible.

The total return performance of the COIF investment in the year to 31 March 2023 was -0.9% and since inception in the second quarter of 2019 the total return has been 31.8%. The corresponding figures for CPI+5% have been 15.08% and 42.32%, respectively. The value of the charity's investment at 31 March 2023 was £1,468,864 and the investment income received in the year amounted to £47,011.

The charity realised £150,000 of its investment in COIF during the second half of the financial year to fund its anticipated cash flow requirements in the year ahead.

Going Concern

The Conservators have considered the charity's future cash flow forecasts and continue to believe that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of the financial statements. Further information is given in note 1.2 to the financial statements.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives and Activities

The 1871 Act, which can be viewed at https://bit.ly/2Z6NbtO, incorporated the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators as a body corporate. The 1871 Act set out the Conservators' statutory functions and duties, and it conferred powers on the corporate body. Section 8 of the 1871 Act provides: -

> "*There shall be a body of Conservators for carrying this Act into execution, the full number of whom shall be eight, and who are hereby incorporated by the name of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, and by that name shall be one body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal, and with power to take and hold and to dispose of (by grant, demise, or otherwise) land and other property (which body corporate is in this Act referred to as the Conservators).*"

The preamble to the 1871 Act requires the Conservators to keep the Commons:

> *"open and unenclosed and unbuilt on, and to protect... and preserve the same for public and local use, for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes".*

In addition, the Conservators have duties under the 1871 Act:

- to preserve the natural aspect and state of the Commons;
- to protect and manage trees, heather, gorse and other vegetation;

- not to sell, lease, grant or in any manner dispose of any part of the Commons, except as expressed under the 1871 Act.

On 14 April 1972 the site was registered as a charity with its charitable objective:

> *"to preserve the Commons as open spaces for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes."*

Under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations 1990, as amended by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, WPCC has the power to raise a levy. This is collected by the boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston in proportion to the number of Band D equivalent properties in each borough within the levy-paying area. The boroughs pass on this levy by way of an addition to the Council Tax on properties in the area.

Under Section 84 of the 1871 Act, the Conservators have the power to make byelaws to regulate and control the use of the land for which they are responsible.

Governance is prescribed within the separate Commissioners Clauses Act 1847, as amended by the 1871 Act, that deals with the constitution and regulation of the organisation.

The Commons comprise 461 hectares (1,140 acres) and contain a wide variety of landscapes, buildings, infrastructure and visitor facilities. Unlike land that is constituted as parkland, the glory of the Commons is that they are a relic of the former manorial lands.

As stewards of the Commons and through our independent governance structure, Conservators safeguard the natural aspect and condition so that the Commons are safe, available, welcoming and accessible for all.

This requires WPCC to:

- conserve, enhance and protect the Commons' natural aspect and wildlife for present and future generations to enjoy;
- demonstrate sound governance and financial discipline by constantly reviewing operational procedures and all aspects of management;
- seek to balance the enjoyment of the majority of users who visit the Commons for informal activity and appreciation of the Commons' quiet natural aspect with the needs of groups who undertake formal and/or more rigorous recreational activities;
- improve the understanding and identity of the Commons and interpret their rich and varied heritage;
- work in partnership with stakeholders to promote and achieve the Vision;
- improve facilities used for organised recreation, sport and events;
- encourage volunteering as a rewarding activity engaging people of all ages and abilities;
- work in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Commons are a part of the UK series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reflecting the importance of their grassland and heathland habitats. Under EU conservation legislation (as applicable following Brexit), they are also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with importance for beetles and insect diversity. The Commons are also designated as Metropolitan Open Land, which affords the land the same level of protection as the Green Belt, and this designation, together with the defining provisions of the 1871 Act, provide the Commons with a very high level of protection.

Volunteering is increasingly important in the delivery of the charity's activities and there are various opportunities for people to become involved. These range from supporting practical activities, such as heathland and woodland management, estate maintenance as well as litter management. Through the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, there is a group of expert volunteers who undertake monitoring of flora and fauna contributing towards the annual Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Report.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

In planning and delivering its activities, the Conservators have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. We confirm that we have complied with our duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

The Conservators, through the Audit and Risk Committee, have assessed the governance of the charity against the Charity Governance Code and have drawn up, and made significant progress against, an 'action plan', in order to address any areas of non-compliance identified.

Structure

Governance is provided by a board of eight Conservators, five of whom are directly elected every three years by those local authority voters living within the levy-area and the remaining three are appointed by three government departments. The levy-area is defined as the area within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common in addition to the area within the old Parish of Putney. Both the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in the triennial elections are granted to all those living within the levy-area who meet the relevant criteria. The 1990 Election Byelaws supplement the requirements under the 1871 Act prescribing the timescales and procedures for undertaking the triennial elections.

Responsibility for appointing the three Conservators resides with three central government departments – currently DEFRA, the Home Office and the MoD. The term of office for the appointed Conservators is also three years.

Conservators also serve as trustees of the charity and are its only members.

Governance

The work of the charity is overseen by the Board of Conservators, more commonly today referred to as trustees in the context of the charity. The Board sets policy and is responsible for the conduct of WPCC's affairs and for ensuring that the charity operates in accordance with its founding legislation, charity law and other statutory requirements and byelaws. The role of the Board is to develop and agree the charity's vision, mission, values and strategy. The Board is responsible for implementing and monitoring the Strategy through a three-year rolling Business Plan, which includes a financial plan.

The Chairman is elected from within the Board on an annual basis. The Board meets on a bi-monthly basis or more frequently as required. The Board receives regular reports at its meetings on the financial status of the charity and monitors progress against approved budgets, the status of its investments, and reviews the Top Ten risks. Reports are also brought to the Board on operational and property matters as required.

The Board has established four committees:

Audit and Risk Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) independently to:

- monitor the integrity of the annual financial statements of WPCC, reviewing significant financial reporting issues and judgements contained in them;
- ensure effective policies and procedures and compliance systems for managing risk are in place and to review their effectiveness;
- make recommendations to the Board in all matters in relation to the external auditor;
- ensure effective procedures and safeguards are in place to monitor the prevention of fraud and corruption;
- prepare and publish an annual report of the work of the ARC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless, exceptionally, authority has been delegated to the ARC by the Board in respect of a particular matter.

Finance and Investment Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC) to:

- scrutinise and oversee all financial and investment aspects of WPCC so as to ensure short and long-term viability of WPCC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless specifically delegated by the Board.

Constitution Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Constitution Committee (CC) to:

- review, identify, consider and recommend to the Board amendments to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose; and
- consider and recommend the way in which any such amendments could be effected.

Friends Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Friends Committee (FC) to:

- lead on fundraising undertaken under the auspices of the Friends for WPPC; and
- organise events for and on behalf of the Friends of WPCC.

Terms of Reference for the committees and the two working groups described below have been approved by the Board and are published on the WPCC website.

In addition to the committees, the Board has established two working groups:

i. The Stakeholder Group, which comprises individuals with knowledge and interest in the Commons, representing different user groups and geographies and providing views and suggestions to the Board. There are currently 14 members of the Stakeholder Group, representing local organisations.
ii. The Wildlife and Conservation Forum, which is chaired by the DEFRA-appointed Conservator and is comprised of volunteer experts. The forum supports the Commons' staff in their role of protecting the natural environment of the Commons.

Following their election or appointment to the Board, each Conservator receives a briefing pack outlining their role, together with information on WPCC, its founding legislation, its policies, structures and work. Every Conservator completes a register of interests and a related party transaction form, both of which are updated annually or whenever any changes occur. Each Conservator also signs a Code of Conduct which sets out procedures and duties in relation to confidentiality, conflict of interest and other matters of pertinence to charity trustees. A formal induction process is provided for each new Conservator. All Conservators are offered opportunities to learn more about WPCC's work, through individual meetings with staff and site visits.

In the interests of transparency and openness the Board resolved at its meeting held on 12 July 2021 to hold part of the Board meetings in public. Board meetings are now divided into two parts – A(1) to which the public are invited to both attend and ask questions relating to matters discussed at the meeting and A(2) which is confidential and held in private.

Summary of the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2022/23

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is a committee of the Board and its Terms of Reference were approved by the Board in May 2018 and most recently re-confirmed by the Board in June 2022. The role of the ARC is to review and scrutinise WPCC's corporate governance, financial reporting, internal controls and risk management ensuring that they support the achievement of the charity's objectives. The full ARC report for 2022/23 can be found on the WPCC website: wpcc.org.uk/arc22-23.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

During 2022/23, ARC met on four occasions. For the period April 2022 to August 2022, the members of the Committee were Mr Michael Rappolt, Appointed Conservator (Chair), Mr Peter Hirsch, Elected Conservator, Mr Michael Johnston, Elected Conservator and Mrs Sarah Wilton, co-opted member. Mr Rappolt stood down from the Board of Conservators in August 2022 and was replaced in September 2022 by Peter Shortt, who was also elected Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee. As a result of the change in Chairman, the Committee's work plan is being reviewed and updated.

ARC believes it has fulfilled its main duties as set out in its terms of reference as follows:

Financial. For the year ended 31 March 2023 ARC reviewed and where necessary approved the Audit Plan, compliance with accounting standards and practices, the draft WPCC financial statements, the external Auditor's Key Audit Findings report and the WPCC Annual Report. They recommended the financial statements to the Board subject to a number of amendments. ARC members are satisfied that the external auditors have received the necessary assistance from WPCC when carrying out their audit and no limitations have been placed on the scope of their work.

Internal Control, Risk Management and Compliance. At each meeting ARC reviews tender waivers and write offs, debt write offs, the top ten risks, the full Risk Register (annually) and the actions arising from previous meetings and the progress with them. In addition, ARC reviewed the process for trustees to record major gifts, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Fundraising risks, cybersecurity, conflicts of interest, the updated Employee Handbook and fire safety.

Whistleblowing. At each meeting ARC reviews any whistleblowing reports, of which there were none during 2022/23.

Charity Governance Code. ARC monitored WPCC's governance against the requirements of the Charity Governance Code https://www.charitygovernancecode.org and against the governance action plan which had been drawn up in 2021. Ongoing actions include: (a) updating WPCC's constitutional arrangements. The Charity Commission's agreement that WPCC may submit an application for a section 73 scheme mean that this can now be progressed over the next two years. (b) putting in place measures of performance for WPCC, which will now be introduced when the key strategic documents against which we will measure ourselves (Masterplan, Land Management Plan, Fundraising Strategy and Communications Plan) are in place and; (c) a review of the organisation's environmental performance, which is scheduled for year two of the current Business Plan.

Minutes of ARC meetings are received by the Board. At Board meetings the ARC Chair provides a written or an oral report to the Board on significant conclusions, concerns and recommendations arising from the Committee's work. The issues highlighted to the Board this year included that an external GDPR review had been commissioned, cybersecurity and password control procedures, issues relating to improved fire safety actions and the poor state of boilers at the Richardson Evan Memorial Playing Fields pavilion.

ARC believes that it has, to the best of its ability, met its Terms of Reference. Once again it gratefully acknowledges the excellent support it has received from WPCC staff without which it could not have fulfilled its remit.

Management

The day to day management of the charity is delegated by the Board to the Chief Executive who has overall responsibility to the Board for the effective planning, performance, management, direction and leadership of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in accordance with policies and budgets set by the Board. The Chief Executive is supported by the Senior Leadership Team consisting of the:

Deputy Clerk and Ranger – responsible for finance, administration, HR and election/appointment of Conservators;

Executive Assistant/Communication Officer – responsible as executive assistant to the Chief Executive, secretariat to the Board, communications (including reception) and filming/events;

Conservation and Engagement Officer – responsible for conservation/ecology and public engagement;

Fundraising Manager – responsible for developing and implementing the organisation's fundraising strategy.

Pay Policy for Senior Staff

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the charity on a day to day basis. All Conservators give of their time freely and the founding 1871 Act prohibits any Conservator receiving remuneration or holding any office of profit.

The pay of staff is reviewed annually by the Board as part of its budget preparation process. The Finance and Investment Committee has a responsibility to consider staff remuneration within their Terms of Reference for the Chief Executive and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

CONSERVATORS' RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

The Conservators acknowledge their responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements for each financial year in accordance with Section 2 of the 1871 Act, which are required to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, surplus or deficit of the charity for that period.

The Conservators are also responsible for preparing the Report of the Conservators and the financial statements in accordance with applicable charity law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (GAAP) under FRS 102.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Conservators to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Conservators are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures, which should be disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the 1871 Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

STATEMENT AS TO DISCLOSURE TO AUDITORS

In so far as the trustees are aware at the time of approving the Conservators' Annual Report:

- There is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- The Conservators, having made enquiries of fellow Conservators and the charity's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken steps that she/he is obliged to take as a Conservator in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Approved by order of the Board of Conservators on 28th June 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Diane Neil Mills (Chairman)
Elected Conservator

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has been withdrawn.

This has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Conservators with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our Auditors' Report thereon. The Conservators are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the Conservators Report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Conservators Responsibilities Statement, the Conservators are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Conservators determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Conservators are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Conservators either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditors' Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud or error; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud or error; and to respond appropriately to those risks.

Based on our understanding of the charity and industry, and through discussion with the trustees and other management (as required by auditing standards), we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to health and safety and employment law. We considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the preparation of the financial statements such as the Statement of Recommended Practice. We communicated identified laws and regulations throughout our team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit. We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to: posting inappropriate journal entries and management bias in accounting estimates and judgemental areas of the financial statements. Audit procedures performed by the engagement team included:

- Discussions with management and assessment of known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations (including health and safety) and fraud, and review of the reports made by management; and
- Assessment of identified fraud risk factors; and
- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in its significant accounting estimates; and
- Checking and reperforming the reconciliation of key control accounts; and
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships, including related party transactions, that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud; and
- Confirmation of related parties with management, and review of transactions throughout the period to identify any previously undisclosed transactions with related parties outside the normal course of business; and
- Reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance; and
- Review of significant and unusual transactions and evaluation of the underlying financial rationale supporting the transactions; and
- Identifying and testing journal entries, in particular any manual entries made at the year end for financial statement preparation; and
- Assessment of expertise with regards to the actuarial valuation of the defined benefit pension scheme.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion of the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Conservators.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditors' Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditors' Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditors' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Kreston Reeves LLP

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Chichester

Date: 28th June 2023

Kreston Reeves LLP are eligible to act as auditors in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

Statement of financial activities
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	3	**88,891**	**155,539**	**244,430**	151,865
Charitable activities	4	**1,881,991**	**-**	**1,881,991**	1,773,759
Investments	5	**47,392**	**-**	**47,392**	48,029
Total income		**2,018,274**	**155,539**	**2,173,813**	1,973,653
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	6	**2,372,385**	**90,699**	**2,463,084**	2,271,850
Total expenditure		**2,372,385**	**90,699**	**2,463,084**	2,271,850
Net (expenditure)/income before net (losses)/gains on investments		**(354,111)**	**64,840**	**(289,271)**	(298,197)
Net (losses)/gains on investments		**(58,842)**	**-**	**(58,842)**	147,350
Net (expenditure)/income		**(412,953)**	**64,840**	**(348,113)**	(150,847)
Transfers between funds	18	**89,943**	**(89,943)**	**-**	-
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains		**(323,010)**	**(25,103)**	**(348,113)**	(150,847)
Other recognised gains:					
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension scheme	23	**2,678,000**	**-**	**2,678,000**	782,000
Net movement in funds		**2,354,990**	**(25,103)**	**2,329,887**	631,153
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		**732,297**	**115,868**	**848,165**	217,012
Net movement in funds		**2,354,990**	**(25,103)**	**2,329,887**	631,153
Total funds carried forward		**3,087,287**	**90,765**	**3,178,052**	848,165

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 39 to 61 form part of these financial statements.

Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2023

	Note		2023 £		2022 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	10		**1,270,905**		1,228,405
Heritage assets	11		**164,772**		151,800
Investments	12		**1,468,864**		1,677,706
			2,904,541		3,057,911
Current assets					
Debtors	13	**176,208**		130,604	
Cash at bank and in hand		**384,185**		332,543	
		560,393		463,147	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	**(226,209)**		(208,374)	
Net current assets			**334,184**		254,773
Total assets less current liabilities			**3,238,725**		3,312,684
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	15		**-**		(18,163)
Provisions for liabilities	17		**(60,673)**		(65,356)
Net assets excluding pension asset / liability			**3,178,052**		3,229,165
Defined benefit pension scheme asset / liability	23		**-**		(2,381,000)
Total net assets			**3,178,052**		848,165
Charity funds					
Restricted funds	18		**90,765**		115,868
Unrestricted funds	18		**3,087,287**		732,297
Total funds			**3,178,052**		848,165

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Conservators and signed on their behalf by:

Date: 28/06/23
Mrs D Neil Mills
(Chair of Trustees)
Elected Conservator

The notes on pages 39 to 61 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided/(used) by operating activities	20	**(5,808)**	43,147
Cash flows from investing activities			
Dividends, interests and rents from investments		**47,392**	48,029
Proceeds from the sale of tangible fixed assets		**6,350**	-
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		**(146,292)**	(37,563)
Sale of investments		**150,000**	100,000
Net cash provided by investing activities		**57,450**	**110,466**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Repayments of borrowing		**-**	(2,201)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		**-**	**(2,201)**
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		**51,642**	**151,412**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		**332,543**	181,131
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	21	**384,185**	332,543

The notes on pages 39 to 61 form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

1. Accounting policies

1.1 General information and basis of preparation of financial statements

WPCC is a body corporate incorporated under the 1871 Act; it is also a charity registered in England. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are included within the Conservators' report.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these financial statements. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019 and Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

WPCC constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

1.2 Going concern

The Conservators review management accounts and forecasts at each of their meetings. Also, at the beginning of each financial year a three year business plan is produced which includes financial forecasts. The Conservators believe there to be no material uncertainties affecting the charity's ability to continue operating for at least twelve months from the date of signature of these financial statements. Accordingly, the Conservators continue to believe that it is appropriate to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of these financial statements.

1.3 Income

All income is recognised once the Charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donated services or facilities are recognised when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use of the charity of the item is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), general volunteer time is not recognised but see page 14 of the Conservators' report for more information about their contribution.

On receipt, donated professional services and facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the Charity which is the amount it would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, 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 classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Support costs are those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity.

1.5 Grants

Income from grants is recognised when the Charity has met the conditions or incurred the expenditure attached to the grant and it is probable that the grant will be received.

1.6 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

1.7 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its income and gains falling within part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that they are applied to its charitable activities.

1.8 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Freehold buildings	- 25 - 50 years
Long-term leasehold property	- Life of lease
Beverley Brook WC Bridge	- 25 years
Plant, machinery and equipment	- 3 - 10 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 5 -15 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.9 Heritage assets

The charity considers that while the lands comprising the commons are heritage assets, the buildings, other than the windmill on Wimbledon Common, are not. As more fully explained in note 11, the heritage assets are recognised in the balance sheet at cost, where it has been possible to determine cost.

Heritage assets are depreciated over their useful economic life. However, because the majority of such assets are land with an indefinite useful economic life, the element of depreciation that would apply to the remainder of the heritage assets is considered immaterial to these financial statements. Heritage assets are reviewed annually at the reporting date for indications of impairment.

1.10 Investments

Investments are recognised initially at fair value which is normally the transaction price excluding transaction costs. Subsequently, they are measured at fair value with changes recognised in 'net gains / (losses) on investments' in the Statement of Financial Activities if the shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably. Other investments are measured at cost less impairment.

1.11 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.12 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.13 Liabilities and provisions

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities as a finance cost.

1.14 Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.15 Redundancy and termination benefits

It is the Charity's policy to recognise termination benefits when they become committed, by legislation, by contractual or other agreements with employees or their representatives or by a constructive obligation or a desire to act equitably, to make payments (or provide other benefits) to employees when it terminates their employment. Termination payments do not provide the Charity with future economic benefits therefore it is the Charity's policy to recognise them as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities immediately.

1.16 Pensions

The Charity operates a defined benefits pension scheme and the pension charge is based on a full actuarial valuation. The latest full actuarial valuation was as at 31 March 2022.

Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of financial activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

1.17 Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Conservators in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Conservators for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Where donations are given with restrictions attached relating to the purchase of tangible fixed assets, the initial income is recognised as restricted income. At the point that the fixed asset is purchased the restriction has been met and so the reminaining balance in that restricted fund is transferred to the general fund.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

As detailed in note 23 the Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme for the benefit of employees. The cost of operating the scheme is determined using actuarial valuations undertaken by the scheme actuary. Their valuation involves making assumptions about discount rates, future salary increases, mortality rates and future pension increases. Due to the complexity of the valuation, the underlying assumptions and the long term nature of the scheme, such estimates are subject to significant uncertainty.

The annual depreciation charge for fixed assets is sensitive to changes in estimated useful lives and residual values. The useful economic lives and residual value are re-assessed annually and amended as necessary.

3. Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Grants and donations	88,891	155,539	**244,430**	151,865
Total 2022	99,379	52,486	151,865	

Legacies in the year were £nil (2022: £nil).

4. Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Levy	1,323,329	-	**1,323,329**	1,262,008
Countryside stewardship (government) grant	40,218	-	**40,218**	31,229
Sports facilities	338,115	-	**338,115**	332,910
Property rent and wayleaves	124,373	-	**124,373**	106,735
Rent from filming and fairs	25,642	-	**25,642**	27,630
Publication sales	2,647	-	**2,647**	20
Other grant income	18,163	-	**18,163**	5,626
Events income	9,504	-	**9,504**	7,601
Total 2023	1,881,991	-	**1,881,991**	1,773,759
Total 2022	1,745,812	27,947	1,773,759	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

5. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Investment income	47,392	**47,392**	48,029
Total 2022	48,029	48,029	

In the comparative period all investment income was unrestricted.

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2023 £	Support costs 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Conservancy activity	1,681,626	781,458	**2,463,084**	2,271,850
Total 2022	1,600,962	670,888	2,271,850	

Analysis of direct costs

	Conserv-ancy Activity 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Windmill	17,454	**17,454**	6,692
Keepers and Commons security	524,224	**524,224**	514,272
Commons maintenance	694,142	**694,142**	595,826
Playing fields maintenance	235,710	**235,710**	231,885
Property maintenance and improvements	210,096	**210,096**	252,287
	1,681,626	**1,681,626**	1,600,962
Total 2022	1,600,962	1,600,962	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Conservancy Activity 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £	Total funds 2022 £
Administration staff salaries	175,518	**175,518**	98,309
Audit and accountancy	16,878	**16,878**	15,210
Office expenses	26,997	**26,997**	16,570
Insurance	66,368	**66,368**	68,520
Utilities and services	27,690	**27,690**	17,150
Advertising and printing	17,190	**17,190**	21,553
Computer and IT support	33,126	**33,126**	31,826
Events	33,470	**33,470**	11,867
Council tax	27,451	**27,451**	26,282
Defined benefit pension cost in excess of contributions paid	238,000	**238,000**	250,000
(Profit) / loss on sale of fixed assets	(4,319)	**(4,319)**	3,633
Interest cost on pension liability	59,000	**59,000**	56,000
Legal fees	25,724	**25,724**	37,311
Professional fees	36,751	**36,751**	10,727
Bad debts	1,614	**1,614**	304
NLHF expenses	-	**-**	5,626
	781,458	**781,458**	670,888
Total 2022	670,888	670,888	

Included in support costs above are governance costs totalling £42,602 (2022: £52,521). These costs include audit, accountancy and legal fees.

7. Auditors' remuneration

The auditors' remuneration amounts to an audit fee of £12,075 (2022: £10,075) and amounts relating to non audit services of £4,803 (2022: £5,135).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

8. Staff costs

	2023 £	2022 £
Staff Salaries		
Wages and salaries	**975,008**	876,071
Social security costs	**106,940**	92,638
Other pension costs	**423,412**	416,979
	1,505,360	1,385,688

The average number of persons employed in full and part time positions by the Charity during the year was as follows:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
Chief Executive	**1**	1
Deputy Clerk and Ranger	**1**	1
Administration	**3**	2
Wildlife and Conservation Officer	**1**	1
Security	**7**	7
Maintenance	**8**	6
Playing Fields	**3**	3
Property	**1**	1
Fundraising Manager	**1**	-
	26	22

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
In the band £70,001 - £80,000	**-**	1
In the band £80,001 - £90,000	**1**	-

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day to day basis. The Senior Leadership team consists of the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Clerk and Ranger, Wildlife Conservation Officer, Fundraising Manager and EA to the Chief Executive Officer.

Total key management personnel remuneration for the year was £346,953 (2022: £277,521).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

9. Conservator's remuneration and expenses

During the year, no Conservators received any remuneration or other benefits (2022 - £NIL).

During the year ended 31 March 2023, no Conservator expenses have been incurred (2022 - £NIL).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

10. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold buildings £	Long-term leasehold property £	Beverley Brook WC bridge £	Commons plant and machinery £	Playing fields equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost or valuation								
At 1 April 2022	1,452,547	213,196	-	366,158	98,017	100,646	19,464	2,250,028
Additions	76,392	-	36,859	13,777	1,200	-	5,092	133,320
Disposals	-	(5,860)	-	(20,306)	-	-	-	(26,166)
At 31 March 2023	1,528,939	207,336	36,859	359,629	99,217	100,646	24,556	2,357,182
Depreciation								
At 1 April 2022	487,982	104,433	-	261,476	70,372	87,085	10,275	1,021,623
Charge for the year	38,913	6,976	737	17,060	6,061	7,632	5,550	82,929
On disposals	-	-	-	(18,275)	-	-	-	(18,275)
At 31 March 2023	526,895	111,409	737	260,261	76,433	94,717	15,825	1,086,277
Net book value								
At 31 March 2023	1,002,044	95,927	36,122	99,368	22,784	5,929	8,731	1,270,905
At 31 March 2022	964,565	108,763	-	104,682	27,645	13,561	9,189	1,228,405

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

11. Heritage assets

Assets recognised at cost

	Heritage assets 2023 £
Carrying value at 1 April 2022	151,800
Additions	12,972
Carrying value at 31 March 2023	164,772

As explained in note 1.9, the charity considers that its heritage assets are the lands that comprise Wimbledon and Putney Commons within the meaning of the 1871 Act, together with the windmill on Wimbledon Common. The majority of the lands were acquired under the provisions of the 1871 Act together with all the buildings thereon in return for an annuity payment to Earl Spencer which terminated in 1958. The purchase price has been treated as the cost of the heritage assets together with amounts paid to third parties to acquire additional small parcels of land subsequent to 1871. Although part of the purchase price would have been attributable to those buildings which are not heritage assets, it is not possible to determine what the appropriate allocation would have been and therefore the whole purchase price has been allocated to the heritage assets.

The Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields were acquired in the 1930s but no detailed records exist of their cost to the charity, consequently no amount is included within heritage assets in respect of the playing fields.

During the year to 31 March 2023 the charity purchased some small strips of land on Wimbledon Common for consideration of £12,972.

12. Fixed asset investments

	Listed investments £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 April 2022	**1,677,706**
Disposals	**(150,000)**
Revaluations	**(58,842)**
At 31 March 2023	**1,468,864**
Net book value	
At 31 March 2023	**1,468,864**
At 31 March 2022	1,677,706

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

13. Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	**77,173**	52,492
Other debtors	**19,187**	44,381
Prepayments and accrued income	**79,848**	33,731
	176,208	130,604

14. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	**80,674**	70,518
Other creditors	**50,898**	59,235
Accruals and deferred income	**94,637**	78,621
	226,209	208,374

15. Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Accruals and deferred income	**-**	18,163

16. Deferred income

	2023 £	2022 £
Deferred income at 1 April 2022	**40,693**	40,687
Resources deferred during the year	**40,365**	21,234
Amounts released from previous periods	**(40,693)**	(21,228)
Deferred income at 31 March 2023	**40,365**	40,693

Deferred income at the year end related to income received in advance for licenses of £28,840, rent received in advance of £7,500 and donations of £4,025. Deferred income at the previous year end related to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the information centre of £19,460 and rent received in advance of £21,233.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

17. Provisions

The charity occupies a building which it built on land leased from a third party. Under the terms of the lease it has an obligation at the end of the lease to reinstate the land to its original state. A provision is made for this liability and the movements in the provision were as follows:

	Provision for liabilities £
At 1 April 2022	**65,356**
Change in discount rate	**(5,860)**
Interest cost charged to expenditure	**1,177**
At 31 March 2023	**60,673**

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

18. Statement of funds

Statement of funds - current year

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	20,004	-	-	20,004	-	40,008
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,093,293	2,018,274	(2,075,385)	69,939	(58,842)	3,047,279
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,381,000)	-	(297,000)	-	2,678,000	-
	712,293	2,018,274	(2,372,385)	69,939	2,619,158	3,047,279
Total Unrestricted funds	732,297	2,018,274	(2,372,385)	89,943	2,619,158	3,087,287
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	19,468	24	(3,535)	-	-	15,957
Putney Lower Common maintenance	-	-	-	9,379	-	9,379
Horseride Appeal	26,355	18,617	(9,640)	-	-	35,332
Wildlife Garden Appeal	18,115	195	(14,370)	-	-	3,940
Footpath restoration	9,100	16,553	(8,782)	-	-	16,871
Beverley Brook WC Bridge Appeal	15,000	23,800	-	(36,659)	-	2,141
Beverley Brook PLC Bridge Appeal	5,509	16,223	(15,129)	(6,603)	-	-
Cricket nets	22,321	17,991	-	(40,312)	-	-
Purchase of land	-	12,972	-	(12,972)	-	-

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - current year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Bog restoration project	-	35,388	(35,388)	-	-	-
Orchard Putney Lower Common	-	6,631	(3,855)	(2,776)	-	-
Queensmere restoration project	-	7,145	-	-	-	7,145
	115,868	155,539	(90,699)	(89,943)	-	90,765
Total of funds	848,165	2,173,813	(2,463,084)	-	2,619,158	3,178,052

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year

	Balance at 1 April 2021 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2022 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	-	-	-	20,004	-	20,004
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,002,627	1,888,945	(1,925,625)	(20,004)	147,350	3,093,293
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,857,000)	-	(306,000)	-	782,000	(2,381,000)
	145,627	1,888,945	(2,231,625)	(20,004)	929,350	712,293
Total Unrestricted funds	145,627	1,888,945	(2,231,625)	-	929,350	732,297
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	19,468	-	-	-	-	19,468
Horseride Appeal	28,802	26,977	(29,424)	-	-	26,355
Wildlife Garden Appeal	18,115	-	-	-	-	18,115
Beverley Brook WC Bridge Appeal	5,000	10,000	-	-	-	15,000
Footpath Restoration	-	10,000	(900)	-	-	9,100
Beverley Brook PLC Bridge Appeal	-	5,509	-	-	-	5,509
Cricket nets	-	22,321	-	-	-	22,321
NLHF Masterplan	-	5,626	(5,626)	-	-	-

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2021 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2022 £
	71,385	80,433	(35,950)	-	-	115,868
Total of funds	217,012	1,969,378	(2,267,575)	-	929,350	848,165

The Election Sinking fund is maintained to provide for the fees and costs of conducting the triennial election of five Conservators.

The Defined Benefit Pension fund represents the defined benefit pension scheme liability.

The Windmill Restoration fund represents the fund remaining from a Heritage Lottery Grant received for use in restoring the Windmill, on Windmill Road.

The Putney Lower Common Maintenance fund is formed of donations received for other specific purposes that have been met. The original donors have agreed that the surplus can be used exclusively for the maintenance of Putney Lower Common.

The Horseride Appeal fund includes donated income and related expenditure on the horse ride route restoration campaign started during the year ended 31 March 2018.

The Wildlife Garden Appeal fund includes donated income on the campaign to create a new wildlife garden at the Ranger's Office.

Footpath restoration - donated income in respect of repairs to paths.

Beverley Brook bridges' appeals - donated income in respect of the replacement of the bridge over the Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common and repairs to the bridge on Putney Lower Common.

Cricket nets - income received for the purpose of reinstating the cricket nets on Putney Heath.

Purchase of land - income received for the purpose of purchasing small strips of land on Wimbledon Common.

Bog restoration project - grant received for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study relating to the restoration of the wetlands on the Common.

Orchard Putney Lower Common - income raised from an appeal to plant a small orchard on Putney Lower Common.

Queensmere restoration project - grant received for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study relating to the restoration of the Queensmere pond.

NLHF - Masterplan fund includes the grant income from the NLHF for the new 'masterplan' and its related expenditure.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

19. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds - current year

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,270,905	-	**1,270,905**
Fixed asset investments	1,468,864	-	**1,468,864**
Heritage assets	164,772	-	**164,772**
Current assets	469,628	90,765	**560,393**
Creditors due within one year	(226,209)	-	**(226,209)**
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(60,673)	-	**(60,673)**
Total	3,087,287	90,765	**3,178,052**

Analysis of net assets between funds - prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,228,405	-	1,228,405
Fixed asset investments	1,677,706	-	1,677,706
Heritage assets	151,800	-	151,800
Current assets	347,279	115,868	463,147
Creditors due within one year	(208,374)	-	(208,374)
Creditors due in more than one year	(18,163)	-	(18,163)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(2,446,356)	-	(2,446,356)
Total	732,297	115,868	848,165

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

20. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2023 £	2022 £
Net expenditure for the year (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	**(348,113)**	(150,847)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	**82,929**	74,725
Losses/(gains) on investments	**58,842**	(147,350)
Dividends, interests and rents from investments	**(47,392)**	(48,029)
(Profit)/loss on the sale of fixed assets	**(4,319)**	3,633
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	**(45,604)**	98,383
Decrease in creditors	**(328)**	(94,218)
Pension fund adjustments	**297,000**	306,000
Interest cost on provision	**1,177**	850
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	**(5,808)**	43,147

21. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2023 £	2022 £
Cash in hand	**384,185**	332,543
Total cash and cash equivalents	**384,185**	332,543

22. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 April 2022 £	Cash flows £	At 31 March 2023 £
Cash at bank and in hand	**332,543**	**51,642**	**384,185**
	332,543	**51,642**	**384,185**

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

23. Pension commitments

The Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme.

Retirement benefits to employees of WPCC are provided by the LGPS which is a defined benefit scheme.

The LGPS is a funded scheme, administered by the London Borough of Merton. Contributions are set every three years as a result of an actuarial valuation of the fund. There are no minimum funding requirements but the contributions are generally set to target a funding level of 100%, using actuarial assumptions.

In general, participating defined benefit schemes mean that the employer is exposed to a number of risks:

- Investment risk
- Interest rate risk
- Inflation risk
- Longevity risk (where members live longer than assumed)

In addition many unrelated employers participate in the London Borough of Merton scheme, and there is a potential orphan liability risk where employers who leave the Fund with insufficient resources to cover their pension obligations, will leave a deficit in the scheme that may fall on the remaining employers. There is however no way of ascertaining the potential loss, should such an event take place.

Principal actuarial assumptions at the Balance Sheet date (expressed as weighted averages):

	At 31 March 2023 %	At 31 March 2022 %
Discount rate	**4.8**	2.60
Future salary increases	**3.9**	4.25
Future pension increases	**2.9**	3.25

	At 31 March 2023 Years	At 31 March 2022 Years
Mortality rates (in years)		
- for a male aged 65 now	**21.1**	21.2
- at 65 for a male aged 45 now	**22.3**	22.5
- for a female aged 65 now	**23.5**	23.9
- at 65 for a female aged 45 now	**25.0**	25.4

23. Pension commitments (continued)

The Charity's share of the assets in the scheme was:

	At 31 March 2023 £	At 31 March 2022 £
Equities	**4,344,000**	4,549,000
Gilts	**521,000**	989,000
Property	**551,000**	292,000
Cash and other liquid assets	**345,000**	143,000
Diversified growth	**838,000**	1,766,000
Multi asset credit	**711,000**	768,000
Infrastructure	**1,105,000**	817,000
Total fair value of assets	**8,415,000**	9,324,000

The actual return/(loss) on scheme assets was £(822,000) (2022 - £501,000).

The amounts recognised as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities are as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Current service cost	**(422,000)**	(407,000)
Interest cost	**(59,000)**	(56,000)
Administrative expenses	**(6,000)**	(10,000)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	**(487,000)**	(473,000)

Movements in the present value of the defined benefit obligation were as follows:

	2023 £
Opening defined benefit obligation	**11,705,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**66,000**
Benefits paid	**(303,000)**
Service cost	**422,000**
Interest expense	**301,000**
Change in financial assumptions	**(4,110,000)**
Change in demographic assumptions	**(279,000)**
Experience loss on obligation	**266,000**
Closing defined benefit obligation	**8,068,000**

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

23. Pension commitments (continued)

Movements in the fair value of the Charity's share of scheme assets were as follows:

	2023 £
Opening fair value of scheme assets	**9,324,000**
Interest income	**242,000**
Contributions by employer	**190,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**66,000**
Return on assets	**(1,064,000)**
Other actuarial gain/(losses)	**(34,000)**
Benefits paid	**(303,000)**
Administration expenses	**(6,000)**
Closing fair value of scheme assets	**8,415,000**

The actuarial valuation results in an overall surplus position. Per FRS102 section 28.22 we cannot recognise a defined benefit pension asset position unless that position will result in reduced future contributions or a refund. As it is not probable that this will be the outcome, the revaluation has been restricted by £347,000 so as not to recognise an asset on the balance sheet.

	2023 £	2022 £
Total actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme		
Return on assets	**(1,098,000)**	324,000
Restriction of surplus	**(347,000)**	-
Change in financial assumptions	**4,110,000**	478,000
Change in demographic assumptions	**279,000**	-
Experience loss on obligation	**(266,000)**	(20,000)
Total	**2,678,000**	782,000

24. Financial instruments

	2023 £	2022 £
Financial assets		
Financial assets measured at fair value through income and expenditure	**1,468,864**	1,677,706

The fair value of these assets is readily obtainable as there is a ready market for their sale at publicly listed prices.

The gain/(loss) on these assets during the year was £(58,842) (2022: £147,350).

The dividend and interest income generated by these assets during the period was £47,392 (2022: £48,029).

25. Related party transactions

The Charity has not entered into any related party transaction during the year, nor are there any outstanding balances owing between related parties and the Charity at 31 March 2023.

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

England & Wales - Charity number 303167

Accounts

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATORS

AND

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 303167

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Conservators	Oliver Bennett MBE – appointed by DEFRA January 2021 Sue Bucknall – elected April 2021 David Hince – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Peter Hirsch – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Michael Johnston – elected April 2021 Diane Neil Mills (Chairman) – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Michael Rappolt – appointed by Ministry of Defence May 2017; re-appointed May 2020 (on an interim basis) Nigel Ware – appointed by Home Office March 2018; re-appointed March 2021
Chief Executive	Stephen Bound
Principal Address	Ranger's Office Manor Cottage Windmill Road Wimbledon London SW19 5NR
Registered Charity Number	303167
Independent Auditors	Kreston Reeves LLP Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor 9 Donnington Park 85 Birdham Road Chichester West Sussex PO20 7AJ
Solicitors	Bates Wells 10 Queen Street Place London EC4R 1BE
Bankers	Barclays Bank plc 8 Alexandra Road Wimbledon London SW19 7JZ
Investment advisers	CCLA Investment Management Limited Senator House 85 Queen Victoria London EC4V 4ET

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

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The following abbreviations are used in this document

WPCC or Charity	The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
1871 Act	Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871
Board	The Board of Conservators of WPCC
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
GAAP	United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Although the uncertainty, apprehension and despair that has characterised the past two years seems to be slowly in retreat, one of the enduring legacies of the pandemic is the heightened sense of gratitude felt by all for the Commons, a feeling that is reinforced by the current unrest in the world.

Owing to the pandemic, the 150th anniversary of the date on which the 1871 Act that created Wimbledon and Putney Commons received Royal Assent, 16 August 2021, was marked with respect but celebrated with restraint. We are, however, delighted that our postponed programme of events to collectively commemorate this important milestone is finally underway and will now be celebrated alongside the Platinum Jubilee. Given the links between the Commons and the monarchy over the centuries, in many ways, this coincidence of celebrations could not be more fitting.

The governance arrangements set out in the 1871 Act remain critical in defining the character of the Commons. It was therefore a welcome development that the Board that was constituted following the February 2021 elections was finally able to meet in person for the very first time in October 2021. The newly constituted Board also agreed to open the non-confidential part of Board meetings to the public in support of the Conservators' longstanding objective of increasing transparency and openness wherever possible.

Although COVID has brought to the fore the importance of this unique resource, it has also exposed its fragility, particularly that of the natural landscape. In recognition of this fact, we have prioritised the natural environment aspects of the emerging Masterplan, which will provide a long-term vision for both the natural and built landscapes of the Commons. These include projects such as wetland planting around pond edges, bog improvement works, restoration and creation of meadows, opening up of horse rides, planting of native tree saplings and desilting of ponds. All will improve biodiversity and increase resilience and we are hoping to deliver a major habitat restoration or creation project over the course of the next three years.

The Masterplan also identifies the need to invest in the footpaths whilst recognising the delicate balance between facilitating access, protecting the landscape and maintaining the natural state as far as possible. There is also a recognised need to improve signage and wayfinding both to increase accessibility and protect fragile habitats. Whilst facilitating access is important, the unique opportunity provided by the Commons to develop and practice navigation skills using natural landmarks must not be lost. We are hoping to consult on the proposals for the natural landscape, including the footpaths and signage, later this year.

To support our focus on this area, we have realigned our internal resources by bolstering our maintenance team and establishing dedicated fundraising capabilities. We also continue to examine the case for reforming the levy to support our operating budget. As we have previously stated, any proposal to progress reform in this area will be subject to public consultation with key stakeholders, including levy-payers.

In addition to the natural landscape, the Masterplan also includes an evaluation of the built heritage, including an assessment of the important contribution made by the historic buildings. These include the Grade II listed Windmill and the London Scottish Golf Club, as well as the historic monuments and cottages that are dispersed across the Commons. The plan highlights the substantial investment requirements of the built heritage, particularly the Richardson Evans Pavilion, named after the man who, through public subscription, saved 95 acres of what are now playing fields from development and donated them to the Commons.

The chronic underinvestment that the built heritage has suffered is due both to a lack of funding and in some cases a lack of constitutional clarity. Constitutional reform in this area is therefore necessary to provide a sound legal basis for future investment, ideally achieved through a scheme under the Charities Act. We continue to work with the Charity Commission on this initiative, generously supported by two eminent local barristers, George Laurence QC and Francesca Quint, to whom we are indebted.

The 1871 Act very clearly sets out the duties of the Conservators but is less successful in conveying the enormity of the role. I am grateful for the commitment, time and dedication of all those with whom I serve, be they appointed by government departments or elected by levy-payers. In particular, I would like to thank Mike Rappolt, the MOD-

appointed Conservator, who will be retiring later this year having served over five years. During his tenure, he has made an important contribution to the Commons, particularly in his role of Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee, for which I am grateful. I would also like to thank Mrs Sarah Wilton who has served as an external supporter of this committee for the insights, dedication and diligence that she has brought to this role over the past four years.

Although we have all witnessed the impact of the heavy usage of the Commons over the past two years, less obvious has been the invisible impact on the staff of working in an environment of continuous uncertainty, omnipresent health risks and environmental extremes. On behalf of the Conservators, I would like to thank all of the staff for their relentless effort in providing what has always been recognised by the local community as an essential service, even though it may have taken a pandemic to persuade the government to use this form of words. Their sense of duty and commitment has never been in question and we owe them all an enormous debt of gratitude. This is particularly true as they now face an intensive period of delivering all the works and initiatives that were suspended during the pandemic in addition to the day to day management that is absolutely vital to keep the Commons functioning properly. We are particularly grateful to Stephen Bound, the Chief Executive, who has led the team during these very challenging times. As Chief Executive, he has brought a renewed focus on the natural environment and led the necessary changes to support that development.

Finally, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all of our volunteers, whether they serve on a committee or forum, don a florescent waistcoat whilst fording a stream or contribute in another fashion, including all those who support us anonymously. Regardless of the form that their contribution takes, they all give their time generously, motivated by nothing more than a passion for the Commons and a sense of community. We are also enormously grateful to those who have supported us financially either in aid of a specific project or more generally, including membership of the Friends. The generosity of all our donors is humbling and every contribution will help protect the Commons for current and future generations.

Thank you.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

Following a year dominated by COVID-19, the Commons returned to some semblance of normality. As pubs, restaurants, shops, cinemas and other forms of recreation re-opened, visitor numbers on the Commons decreased. However, the new-found importance of the Commons in peoples' lives meant that visitor numbers did not, and may not, fall to pre-COVID levels. This has had an impact on the infrastructure of the Commons with path erosion and trampling of sensitive habitats remaining a feature of concern. Increased numbers of people bring higher quantities of litter and waste – and our waste management expenditure which increased five-fold during lockdown has remained significantly higher than pre-COVID despite the easing of restrictions. As an independent charity, with limited resources, this has had a significant impact on our budgets. We created a new post of Litter and Waste Operative to focus on managing this issue and to free up our Maintenance and Keeper Teams to return to their 'normal' roles.

This was not the only recruitment which occurred during the year. The decision was taken not to recruit to the role of Chief Operations Manager when this became vacant and to use the cost savings to recruit not only the Litter and Waste Operative, but also a part-time Office Assistant and an additional member of the Maintenance Team, in order to increase our capacity to maintain both the valuable habitats on the Commons and the visitor infrastructure. As mentioned above, we also created a new post of Fundraising Manager and successfully filled the post in January 2022. This brought our staff team from 21 to 25. Once again, I have only the highest praise for the dedication and hard work of our staff team during what have been busy and uncertain times. The year also saw the recommencement of volunteering activities on the Commons following a hiatus during the pandemic and we remain incredibly grateful to all those who give their time, whether as part of organised volunteer groups or working alone carrying out wildlife surveys or clearing litter. We are also extremely grateful to outgoing Conservators, Shirley Gillbe and Sarah Jane Holden, who did not stand for re-election in 2021, but who remained in office until the newly elected Board members took up their roles in early April 2021.

2021/22 saw the return of events to the Commons. The very popular Wimbledon Bookfest held two, small scale events during the summer and the funfairs, which have been a feature of the Commons for almost a century, were able to operate once more. The Rosslyn Park Schools Rugby Sevens, the largest schools' rugby tournament in the world, returned to the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields after a two-year absence. The weekly Wimbledon Common parkrun recommenced in July 2021 along with other running events which had ceased. Running has always been an important activity on the Commons, which are home to Thames Hare and Hounds, the oldest cross-country club in the world. Income from events is vital to funding the management of the Commons and therefore their return is important to WPCC, as well as to all those who attend and/or participate.

Between 2016 and 2021 regulatory issues, particularly the Charity Commission's Statutory Inquiry and two first tier tribunals, engaged large quantities of Board and staff time. With the closure of the inquiry and other regulatory matters, the team has been able to focus squarely on the management of the Commons to serve the interests of the wildlife and the millions who visit each year. This return to normality coupled with a growing and incredibly committed staff team mean that we can look to the future with renewed optimism after a difficult and extremely challenging period.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED DURING THE PAST YEAR

Strategic Context

In June 2017, the Board approved the first ever Strategy ('the Strategy'), following a recommendation from the 2014 Governance Review. The Strategy sets out both the broad vision and specific initiatives for managing the Commons over the ten-year period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2028.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Our Vision

"Wimbledon and Putney Commons will be recognised as an exceptional and welcoming natural place for visitors where wildlife thrives"

The Strategy demonstrates the way in which the Board will play its part in making this area of South-West London a great place to live, work and visit, contributing towards a world class city. (A copy of the Strategy can be viewed at https://bit.ly/3fPF0rT.) The Strategy identifies two overarching long-term Strategic Objectives, which remain relevant for the purposes of this Conservators' report and are set out in Figure 1 below.

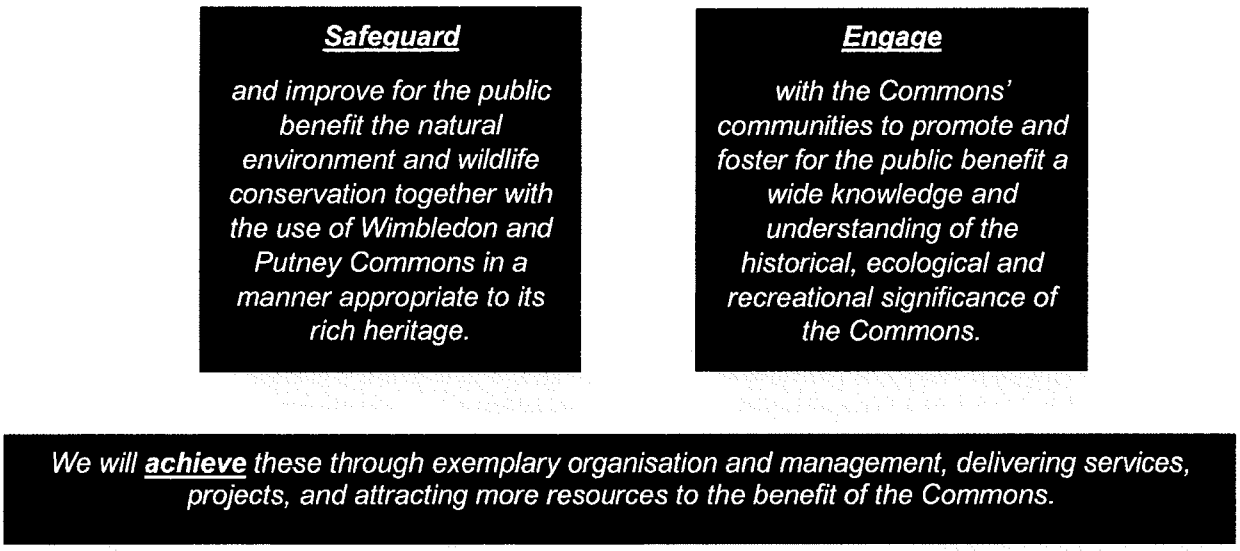

Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged:

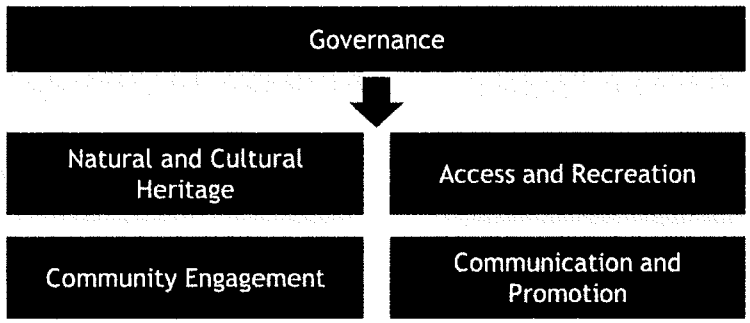

Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

Achievements and Performance 2021/22

It is within this strategic framework that individual initiatives are progressed through the development of a three-year rolling Business Plan. In June 2021, the Board agreed the three-year Business Plan for the period 1 April 2021 through 31 March 2024 in which 23 initiatives were agreed; progress on each of these initiatives over the past financial year is set out under each of the five Strategic Themes.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

The need to respond to the impact of COVID-19 has rightly been the priority for WPCC over the past two years. Although a number of the initiatives that had been included in the 2021 – 2024 Business Plan were suspended as the impact of the pandemic became clear, progress has been made in a number of areas over the course of the year ended 31 March 2022, details of which are set out below.

Governance

Appointed Conservators

WPCC's governance structure stipulates that three of the eight Conservators are appointed by government departments: the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); the Home Office; and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). In line with the term for elected Conservators, appointments are for a period of three years.

As previously reported, in May 2020, the first three-year term of the Conservator appointed by the MoD came to an end. The current Secretary of State, whilst recognising the current MoD appointed Conservator had acquitted himself well, chose not to re-appoint him for the full three-year term as he recognised the importance of the link between WPCC and the MoD and as such decided that the MoD appointed Conservator needed to have established links with the MoD. The current MoD appointed Conservator kindly agreed to continue to serve the Board until such time as a new appointment is made.

Potential Constitutional Reform

Planning for the long-term future of the Commons has been one of the Board's primary considerations and significant resources have been directed towards the work associated with clarifying and updating the charity's constitutional framework. There have been two key drivers for this; firstly, the Board recognised the need to update certain governance arrangements for the Commons as set out in the 1871 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act and the 1847 Commissioners Clauses. This observation was also made by the Charity Commission in the Statutory Inquiry Report, which stated 'the charity's governing document, which dates back to 1871, contained provisions and powers that either required modernisation and/or were not fit for purpose'. The Commission highlighted the need for a review, which they stated the Commission would support 'where appropriate'.

The second driver has been the Board's desire to develop and deliver a Masterplan for the Commons. In particular, planning for the future identified that (a) the levy was insufficient to meet the needs of the organisation and (b) regularisation and clarification of land and building matters was required to enable WPCC to resolve a number of operational matters associated with managing the Commons. It is important to note that there is neither a desire nor intention of diluting or diminishing the very high level of protection that is afforded by the 1871 Act.

The Constitution Working Group (CWG) was established by the Board in April 2018 to identify the constitutional changes required and the procedures through which any such changes could be effected. The agreed Terms of Reference provide clarity of scope and purpose:

> 'The purpose of the CWG is to consider amendments necessary to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose of preserving, protecting and enhancing the Commons for the purposes of exercise and recreation as established by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871.
>
> The review will identify areas where amendments to the constitutional framework are required in order to provide clarity, alignment, operational practicality and deliverability to WPCC's powers and rights and in doing so allow the organisation to consistently achieve high operational and strategic performance standards.'

By December 2019, much of the exploratory work had been completed and WPCC announced at its General Open Meeting its preferred option to amend certain elements of its constitution by means of a scheme under the Charity Commission and to consider amending the levy by means of a separate statutory instrument. Consultation on the proposals was designed to take place on a phased basis, commencing in spring 2020. Unfortunately,

COVID-19 restrictions precluded the ability to carry out a meaningful consultation exercise and further progress on this project through 2020/21 was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In 2021, the Constitution Working Group was reconstituted as the Constitution Committee and following the easing of COVID restrictions, restarted its work. Progress on a section 73 scheme to amend the constitution has been hampered by the decision of the Charity Commission to review the scope of its powers to effect constitutional change in general. Notwithstanding this setback, WPCC is continuing to engage with the Commission to progress this as far as possible and plans to meet with the Commission in spring 2022.

Work on amending the levy has progressed and an assessment of predicted future capital and operating expenditure has been undertaken to identify the additional income required to (a) implement and maintain selected elements of the Masterplan (b) close the gap in the existing operational budget and (c) undertake planned preventative maintenance works that are currently not carried out due to insufficient funding. The work has also assessed the impact of any potential amendment to the levy on the levy-payers in terms of affordability. This analysis is necessary to support any potential increase in the levy. WPCC has also successfully engaged with the three constituency MPs and three local authorities to set out the historical position and examine affordability data and continues to work with these key stakeholders on this important initiative.

Staff Restructure

The promotion of the Chief Operations Manager to the role of Chief Executive, which was confirmed in June 2021, provided an opportunity to look anew at the structure of the staff team. The increased use of the Commons had severely stretched the operational staff teams and highlighted the need for more 'boots on the ground'. The decision was therefore taken not to recruit to the vacant post of Chief Operations Manager but rather to prioritise the funding of additional maintenance staff and administrative support within the very busy Ranger's Office. In April 2021, a full-time Litter and Waste Operative was recruited, to focus on emptying litter bins, dog waste bins and picking up litter from across the Commons. Management of waste had begun to consume significant amounts of the time of both the Maintenance and Keeper Teams, drawing them away from their core roles. In March 2022, the new Maintenance Team Operative joined WPCC. WPCC has recognised a need for greater emphasis on the management of the important habitats found on this Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area for Conservation, whilst the increased number of visitors has created a need for greater management of visitor infrastructure. This new staff member will increase the Maintenance Team's capacity to achieve this work. Finally, the need was recognised for additional administrative support for the small management team operating out of the Ranger's Office and in January 2022 a part-time Office Assistant took up post.

Increased Fundraising Capacity

The 1871 Act is clear in that the levy is intended to serve as the primary source of funding, paid by all those who 'primarily benefit by the operation of the 1871 Act'. The revenue generated by the 42,000 households in the levy area, supplemented by the charity's other activities, no longer meets the requirements of the Commons and it is the preventative maintenance and long-term capital investment in particular that have suffered. As mentioned earlier, reform of the levy is under serious consideration but despite any increase, external funding will always be required to support major capital expenditure. In recognition therefore of the need to substantially bolster our fundraising capacity, in January 2022, WPCC recruited a Fundraising Manager to focus on bringing in new income from grants, appeals, donations, the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons and legacies to help meet the charity's investment requirements.

Natural and Cultural Heritage

London in Bloom

The Commons submitted its annual entry to London in Bloom. Providing the opportunity for communities and organisations to be recognised for the improvements they make to the environment, London in Bloom, an independent charity and part of Britain in Bloom, is focused on the key issues of horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility and community participation.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Having been involved with London in Bloom since 2013, Wimbledon and Putney Commons are proud supporters of this very special London campaign and each year Wimbledon Common (including Putney Heath) and Putney Lower Common are entered into the event separately.

In 2020 judging had to be undertaken remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions. Thankfully, 2021 saw the return of a site based judging visit. Both Wimbledon Common/Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common were presented with Gold Awards, which reflect an exceptionally high standard of management found by those who assessed the Commons.

Land Management Plan

2021/22 saw the commencement of work on the Commons' first five-year Land Management Plan. The Plan will guide the conservation and maintenance work to be undertaken across the site. It is intended that the Plan will be completed by the end of December 2022. A Steering Group, consisting of senior staff and Conservators, has been established to guide development of the Plan.

Annual Conservation Report

The Annual Conservation Report was produced by the Commons' Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane at the end of the year. This annual report has been produced since 2000 and provides a summary of the conservation, volunteering and public engagement events that have occurred on the Commons during the past year.

A copy of this report can be found on the Wimbledon and Putney Commons' website https://www.wpcc.org.uk/ConservationReport21-22

Management Works

Heathland and Acid Grassland

Managed under the guidance of a five-year Countryside Stewardship Agreement with Natural England, all areas of heathland and acid grassland on Wimbledon and Putney Commons are found within the 364.5 hectares of the Commons that have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), representing almost 80 percent of the Commons. SSSI and SAC designations are assigned to areas of land in the United Kingdom that are considered to be valuable in terms of the flora, fauna, physiological or geographical features that can be found on them and as a result, these areas are provided with a high level of legal protection.

One of the main management requirements for the heathland is removal of young trees and scrub. Much of this is undertaken by our volunteer scrub bashers and therefore the return of volunteering following the end of lockdown restrictions has been extremely important for the management of this valuable habitat. Other management within the heathland and grassland has included bracken control, the rotational cutting of gorse, the cutting back of scrub, the coppicing of large trees along the edge of two areas of heathland, removal of invasive weeds and the cut and collection of vegetation from five areas of heathland and acid grassland.

We are also working to enhance the ecological value of grassland/heathland around the edges of the golf course. In 2018, a series of scrapes was created to expose the heather seedbank which survived in the top layer of soil. Seed was also collected from elsewhere on the Commons and distributed on these scrapes. This technique has proved successful and three further (and larger) scrapes have been created within the golf course this year. The scrapes have been fenced temporarily to minimise damage by rabbits and by trampling.

At approximately six-yearly intervals, SSSI land is assessed by Natural England against six different conditions. At the current time, the heathland and acid grassland habitats that can be found on the Commons have all been classified as *'Unfavourable recovering'* which means that while various areas on the site are not yet fully conserved, all of the necessary management measures are in place. Provided that the recovery work on these areas is sustained, it is considered that the SSSI will reach favourable condition over time.

Woodlands

Covering an area of 291 hectares, representing almost two-thirds of the total area of the Commons, woodland is the dominant habitat type found on Wimbledon and Putney Commons.

To help manage the Commons' woodland, all work is carried out under the guidance of a five-year Countryside Stewardship Agreement that has been agreed by WPCC, the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

Woodland management activities had been limited during 2020 as the large numbers of visitors to the Commons during lockdown had diverted the Maintenance Team to litter and waste management. During 2021/22, the team was able once more to focus on enhancing the ecological value of the woodlands on the Commons and completed some of the largest woodland management projects seen on the site in recent years. Most of the paths (known as rides) through the woodland on the Commons are narrow, with trees growing close to either side of the ride. This allows little light to reach the woodland floor, limiting ground vegetation and associated fauna. The Maintenance Team began a programme of ride widening by clearing trees along the edge of the Upper Gravelly ride. This work has hugely increased the sunlight reaching the woodland floor and it is hoped that over the coming years these sunlit, sheltered areas will see increases in populations of woodland flora and fauna. Two small ponds have also been created within the rides with the intention of attracting amphibians, such as frogs and newts, and invertebrates such as dragonflies and damselflies.

In the area between Robin Hood Ride and Lower Gravelly Ride, approximately 7 hectares of holly have been removed from within the woodland. Whilst small quantities of holly within a woodland can be beneficial, providing shelter and a source of food for birds, too much holly creates shading, preventing ground flora and understory trees from establishing. This limits the ecological value of the woodland. Over the next two years, a further 11 hectares of holly will be removed.

Storm Eunice brought with it a significant amount of 'clear up' work for the Maintenance Team, removing fallen trees from across the Commons, particularly where these blocked paths. This work is still ongoing. In addition, the ongoing programme of tree safety works continued, aimed at minimising the risk to users of the Commons and neighbouring land from falling trees or branches. Other operations that were carried out around the Commons' woodland between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 included the planting of 1,250 small trees, the creation of deadwood habitats, selective tree thinning, the management of invasive species such as Oak Processionary Moth and Japanese Knotweed, the provision of public information, survey work and the restoration of two woodland glades.

Aquatic Management

Despite many years of asking visitors to keep dogs out of ponds, the problem persists causing disturbance to the flora and fauna of these sites. During early 2022, areas have been enclosed at Scio Pond and Hookhamslade Pond to allow marginal vegetation to grow and to prevent dogs from disturbing wildlife.

Two duck tubes installed at Kingsmere in 2020 were refurbished. Both of the tubes had been nested in last year.

On the Beverley Brook, damaged in stream berms were repaired, dead hedging was laid along sections of the path adjacent to the Brook, to allow riverside vegetation to re-establish and management of invasive species, including Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, was undertaken. Unfortunately in March 2022, a serious pollution incident occurred when a large quantity of waste oil was released into a tributary of the Brook. The oil was then washed downstream through the Common. We are extremely grateful to the environment Agency for their prompt response and the comprehensive 'clean up' work which they undertook. We do not yet know whether there will be any medium/long-term impact.

Bog restoration works undertaken include scrub bashing and dead hedging at Farm Bog and clearance of invasive vegetation at Stag Bog.

Access and Recreation

Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields

The five-year agreement signed in 2016 with London Cornish Rugby Football Club (LCRFC) for the use of facilities at the REMPF expired in August 2021. We are pleased to report that agreement was reached with LCRFC on a new five-year licence. This provides WPCC with essential income, whilst ensuring continued use of REMPF.

Path Restoration

Repeated spells of heavy rainfall and the resulting run-off had led to severe erosion to the main footpath from the Windmill Car Park to Queensmere. This narrowed the route considerably and the gullies being formed presented a significant hazard. During summer 2021, the Maintenance Team constructed a drainage sump on the western edge of the Windmill Car Park to capture the run-off, and it is piped from the chamber into an area of scrub further down the slope, and away from the footpath. The gullies which had formed over the past few years have been filled, creating safer access along one of the most popular routes on the Commons.

Community Engagement

Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

In April 2019, the Board agreed the basis for establishing the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons as a Conservator-led, integral part of WPCC. The Friends bring together all of those who are connected by a passion for the Commons for the purposes of collective celebration and fund raising.

Two additional categories of membership were added during the year:

Patron - £1,000 per year (£85 per month)
Corporate - £5,000 per year (£420 per month)

The impact of COVID 19 continued to be felt throughout the year and Friends' events that had hoped to be rescheduled from 2020/21 once again had to be postponed due to either the government restrictions in place or the high numbers of cases being recorded and the potential risk of infection to our staff and visitors.

However, in early 2022 events restarted beginning with the first of the postponed events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the creation of Wimbledon and Putney Commons. A total of 150 Friends, special guests and other supporters of the Commons joined Conservators and staff for a celebratory Afternoon Tea at the All England Lawn Tennis Club. The event was a great success and raised some £2,926 for the charity; we are grateful to the AELTC for making available the facility to us and for supporting the Commons.

Volunteer Programme

During the period in which COVID-19 restrictions were in place, all organised volunteer group activities were suspended. We were therefore very excited in spring 2021 to welcome back members of the regular volunteer groups.

The long-standing weekend 'scrub bashers' resumed their work removing invasive scrub from areas of heathland on the Commons. This is time-consuming work, which our maintenance team would struggle to find the time to complete. Scrub clearance is vital to the health of the nationally scarce heathland habitat. Approximately 50% of London's heathland is found on the Commons.

The midweek 'estate volunteers' also recommenced their work. Projects that they have undertaken in 2021/22 have included painting around the Windmill complex, hazel coppicing, clearance of invasive vegetation and scrub bashing.

A new group was also established during the past year – the Beverley Brook volunteers, who focus on keeping the brook free of litter. The river restoration work undertaken on the brook in 2018/2019 by WPCC in partnership with the South East Rivers Trust, has already seen a noticeable improvement in the ecological value of the river where it passes through Wimbledon Common. However, the berms which have been installed to recreate a natural flow of water also trap litter which has been deposited into the brook upstream. The only way of removing

this at present is to have people wade into the water and remove rubbish by hand. This is labour intensive work and having a team of volunteers to assist is invaluable.

Alongside the Beverley Brook group, the Commons were assisted by the involvement of a large number of volunteer litter pickers operating on dry land, some of whom are active on a daily basis. Covering all areas of the Commons, these individuals have provided invaluable assistance in helping to keep the Commons free of litter.

Along with the 89 young people who have helped to litter pick on the Commons as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Awards, between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, volunteer litter pickers have provided a total of 711 hours of assistance to the Commons. While this amounts to a very impressive number of hours, it should be noted that there are also many other individuals who continue to litter pick on the Commons but are either not known to us or simply do not keep us updated about the hours they spend on the Commons. It is virtually impossible to accurately guess how many hours these individuals spend litter picking on the Commons, but their efforts are hugely appreciated.

Over the past year, a total of 5,849 'known' volunteering hours (including that of the litter pickers) have been provided by individuals intent on helping WPCC to protect the Commons.

Masterplan for the Commons

In September 2019, WPPC secured a grant from NLHF of £126,100 (80% of the total approved project cost of £157,200) to create a Masterplan for the Commons, articulating the way in which the landscape and built assets relate to one another, looking at interpretation, education, volunteering, visitor facilities, perimeter conditions and landscape management.

The project was launched on 1 November 2019 and Barker Langham, a consulting firm with expertise in this area, was selected through a competitive tendering process in 2019 to manage the project. The intention was that the project would be completed by August 2020. However, when the nation went into lockdown on 23 March 2020, the project was put on hold, and neither WPCC nor the consultants were in a position to recommence work until November 2020.

Barker Langham's work on the draft Masterplan was finally completed in July 2021 and all responsibilities with the NLHF were fulfilled. The draft document sets out proposals for improving both the built and natural environment of the Commons and identifies the investment required to deliver the proposals. It had been hoped to undertake consultation on the natural environment, access, interpretation and volunteering elements of the Masterplan during 2021. However, this was delayed by a lack of external resources to undertake the process. It is intended that consultation on these elements of the Masterplan will now be undertaken in 2022, potentially in conjunction with a consultation on the levy. Consultation on the built environment elements will be deferred until greater clarity on the constitutional position is achieved.

Communication and Promotion

As with the previous financial year, 2021/22 was also disrupted by the continued impact of COVD 19, with some of the major events such as the Commons' Open Day cancelled. The planned Celebration Games Day Anniversary event and the Reception at the House of Commons to mark the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the Commons were also both postponed.

Online Events

Following the success of online events during 2020/21, we continued with these through 2021/22.

- In April and May 2021, local resident, Alan Blower, kindly provided two more opportunities to experience his virtual walk around the Ponds of Wimbledon and Putney Commons.
- The popular Birdsong Identification Workshop in April 2021 was able to take place online, although unfortunately could not be followed up with the customary Sunday morning walk.
- The Annual Open Meeting in June 2021, at which the Conservators presented their Annual Report and Accounts, was once again held via Zoom Webinar, with some 60 people attending.

- In February 2022, our regular Winter Talk stayed on Zoom and we were delighted to welcome Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation who enthralled over 80 attendees with his talk about that most spectacular and charismatic of urban birds, the Swift, noting their sad decline and what we can all do to help reverse the trend.
- In March 2022, and following on from the success of his virtual pond walk, Alan Blower kindly invited us to join him for another virtual walk - The Grand Houses of Rushmere. This 60-minute guided talk revealed the history and residents of the magnificent houses and the labourer's cottages that overlook Rushmere Pond and the surrounding area on Wimbledon Common.

Face to Face Events

As the year proceeded and the restrictions lessened, we began to hold some smaller outside events.

- In June 2021, we held a smaller than usual Bioblitz Weekend of Nature event – this is one of WPCC's most important events that enables us to showcase the wildlife of the Commons.
- In July 2021, Alan Blower held a series of three physical walks on The Grand Houses of Rushmere *(later supplemented by the virtual walk – see above).*
- The popular Bird Walks led by two of our volunteers, Adrian Podmore and Les Evans-Hill, began again in September and October 2021 bird walks, giving an opportunity to see some of the migrating birds that come through the Commons.
- The Conservators' General Open Meeting was held at the London Scottish Golf Club in November 2021 and was attended by over 40 people. At this meeting the focus is more on operational matters and the Conservators welcomed WPCC's Maintenance Manager, Jack Rowland, to talk to the audience about the varied work that he and his team carry out to keep the Commons clean and safe for visitors.
- One of the most anticipated events in our calendar is the Carols at the Windmill in early December so we were delighted that the event could go ahead again in 2021, albeit out on the Common rather than in the courtyard of the Windmill to allow visitors to spread out. We were less fortunate with the weather but the 100 or so visitors that came along thoroughly enjoyed listening to, or singing along with, the carols played by the Wandle Concert Band.

Communication via our e-Newsletters continued throughout the year with 11 newsletters published between April 2021 and March 2022. We also produced a bumper 12 page 150th Anniversary Edition of our hard-copy Newsletter which was delivered to all levy-payers.

Commons Picture Competition - As part of the Commons' 150th Anniversary celebrations, the Conservators launched a picture competition in August 2021, inviting visitors to the Commons to submit photographs of the Commons with the chance to win prizes donated each month by local businesses. The competition will continue until July 2022 and we are hoping to host an exhibition of the winning entries and many of the excellent runners-up later in the year. Up to the end of March 2022, over 1,000 entries had been received.

Board Meetings – Following the March 2021 triennial elections, the newly constituted Board agreed that to further the objectives of openness and transparency, the non-confidential sections of Board meetings would be held in public. As such, from 1 October 2021 members of the public have been welcome to attend the non-confidential part of Board meetings and to ask questions on any of the matters being considered at that meeting. The papers and minutes from these meetings are also posted on WPCC's website.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN 2022/23

It is hoped that as we move through 2022/23 and the day-to-day impact of COVD-19 on our operations recedes, we will be able to move away from the reactive approach that has been necessary through 2020/21 and return to a more strategic way of working, continuing to make progress against some of our long-term objectives. There will be particular focus on a number of key initiatives, all of which are integral to WPCC's 2022 to 2025 Business Plan.

- ***Masterplan*** – As one of the key priorities, WPCC intends to undertake a consultation on the natural environment, access, interpretation and volunteering elements of the draft Masterplan for the Commons.

- ***Constitutional Reform*** – WPCC retains a desire to clarify and modernise certain constitutional provisions, to enable more effective governance of the charity by working with the Charity Commission and politicians. When appropriate, a staged consultation will be held on any proposed changes to the charity's constitution potentially including the levy that funds the charity's work.
- ***Fundraising*** – The charity recognises the need to build its fundraising capacity to provide the investment necessary to protect the Commons and to this end has recruited a Fundraising Manager. WPCC will finalise and begin implementation of a fundraising strategy for the charity.
- ***150th Anniversary Celebration*** – Celebratory events for the 150th anniversary of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act planned for 2021 were postponed due to COVID restrictions. However, it is hoped that further events, most notably a 'Games Day' to celebrate the varied sports which have taken place on the Commons over the years and a reception at the House of Commons, to celebrate our links with Parliament, will be held.
- ***Land Management Plan*** - The Land Management Plan, development of which is in progress, will set out the longer-term vision and operational direction for conserving and enhancing habitats and populations of priority species enhancement on the Commons. In particular, the plan will set out the work required to ensure the heathland, woodland, ponds and mires found on the Commons are managed in order to preserve and improve their condition and value for wildlife. A key medium-term goal will be returning the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to favourable condition.
- ***Communications Plan*** – WPCC recognises that communications with stakeholders is vital to engaging users and neighbours of the Commons as well as potential funders of our work. During 2022/23 the charity will develop a communications plan that sets out the key messages it wishes to communicate to stakeholders and how these will be communicated.
- ***Access Improvements*** – During the year, the footbridge across the Beverley Brook at REMPF will be replaced, the footbridge across the Brook at Putney Lower Common will be repaired and reopened and the busy path route from Roehampton/Roehampton Church School to Putney Heath Road, will be resurfaced. Funding for all three of these projects has been most generously donated from individuals and organisations over the past six months and we are grateful to all those who have so kindly supported us. We also hope, through additional fundraising efforts, to invest in a number of footpaths in an effort to ensure the Commons is accessible to all.

OUR FINANCIAL POSITION

Financial Review

During the 2021/22 year, the financial results were affected by the impact of Covid and other non-recurring costs to a much lesser extent than in the previous year. The table on the next page summarises the financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2022 and indicates an excess of income over expenditure of £7,803 before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme; these additional charges do not of themselves result in a cash outflow for the charity.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

	Year ended 31 March 2022			*2021*
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Total income	1,888,945	80,433	1,969,378	1,871,961
Total expenditure before additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	(1,925,625)	(35,950)	(1,961,575)	(2,156,317)
Net income/(expenditure) before additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	(36,680)	44,483	7,803	(284,356)
Additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	(306,000)		(306,000)	(299,000)
Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains	(342,680)	44,483	(298,197)	(583,356)
Net gain on investments	147,350		147,350	279,616
Net income/(expenditure) before other gains and losses	**(195,330)**	**44,483**	**(150,847)**	**(303,740)**
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	782,000		782,000	(25,000)
Net movement in funds for the year	**586,670**	**44,483**	**631,153**	**(328,740)**
Total funds brought forward	145,627	71,385	217,012	545,752
Total funds carried forward	**732,297**	**115,868**	**848,165**	**217,012**
Comprising:				
Negative pension reserve	(2,381,000)		(2,381,000)	(2,857,000)
Other reserves	3,113,297	115,868	**3,229,165**	3,074,012
Total funds	**732,297**	**115,868**	**848,165**	**217,012**

Income

Unrestricted income for the year was £1,888,945 which was £127,925 higher than the previous year. The main changes in income were as follows:

- Income from sports facilities increased by £106,153 as a result of the reduction in pandemic related movement restrictions and was 22% above the level for the year ended 31 March 2019, being the last full year not impacted by the pandemic.
- Rent from filming and fairs increased by £21,880.
- Income from property rent and wayleaves decreased by £11,026. The main elements of this decrease were an increase in rental income of £15,459 from the temporary third party letting of a residential property and a reduction in licence fee income of £31,000 as a result of a change in tax status.
- The levy increased by £14,091 and represented 66% (2021: 71%) of the total unrestricted income of the charity in the year.

In view of the ongoing need to optimise the use of the charity's resources and recognising the requirement to commit investment to the Commons' buildings and infrastructure, the Conservators increased the 2022/23 levy to its maximum permitted level which will generate an additional £61,321 of income in the year ending 31 March 2023.

The main elements of restricted income in the year were £26,977 from the horse-ride appeal, grant funding of £22,321 in respect of the installation of cricket nets at Putney Heath, £15,509 from Beverley Brook bridge appeals, and a donation of £10,000 in respect of Putney Heath footpath restoration.

Expenditure

Total unrestricted expenditure on charitable activities for the year amounted to £1,925,625 (before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme) which represented a decrease of £104,567 over the previous year. Restricted expenditure decreased by £90,175.

The most significant changes in expenditure during the year were as follows:

- Property maintenance costs increased by £65,594 as a result of repairs to the roof at the sports pavilion which cost £27,870 and a general increase in maintenance and improvement works that had been held back during the pandemic;
- Although Commons' maintenance costs increased by a modest amount of £10,879, there were some significant changes as follows:
    - The first stage of the holly clearance project started at a cost of £34,466; the majority of this cost is being funded by the Woodland Countryside Stewardship grant.
    - Cleaning, skips and rubbish removal reduced by £15,142 from the very high level incurred during the first year of the pandemic.
    - £29,424 was spent on restoration work to the horse exercise ring.
    - Staff costs increased by £30,444 as a result of the impact of the remuneration review and recruitment
    - Expenditure on repairs and spares increased by £15,319 because of additional fleet repairs required and the increased cost of parts.

- In the previous financial year £80,000 was spent on the Beverley Brook path project.

- Support costs (before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme) decreased by £279,788 with the most significant variations being:
  - The triennial election cost of £58,250 was incurred in the previous year;
  - A reduction of £40,409 in NLHF project expenses as the largest part of the project had taken place in the two previous years;
  - Administration staff salaries and legal fees decreased by £102,277 and £94,800, respectively, as there had been substantial one-off costs in the previous year.

Other matters

The impact of the war in the Ukraine on the financial markets during the first quarter of 2022 caused a reduction in value of the charity's investments but overall, for the year ended 31 March 2022, the investments increased by £147,350.

At 31 March 2022 the charity's bank balances amounted to £332,543 (2021: £181,131).

Pension Scheme

The charity is a member of the London Borough of Merton LGPS. The latest triennial actuarial valuation (TAV) of the LGPS was published in March 2020 and set out the actuarial position of the LGPS at 31 March 2019 and the contributions required for the three years ending 31 March 2023. At the valuation date, the LGPS had assets sufficient to cover 103% of its accrued liabilities and WPCC's share of the LGPS was assessed at 104% of its accrued liabilities. A copy of the 2019 actuarial valuation can be inspected at https://bit.ly/2zEKepW.

The TAV is prepared to assess the funding position of the LGPS and to determine the contributions actually payable by participating employers for the ensuing three years. For accounting purposes, a different valuation methodology is used which is intended to aid comparison between different entities with defined benefit pension schemes. The element of the valuation methodology which causes the greatest difference between the two valuations is the discount rate used to compute the liability to pay pensions. The TAV at 31 March 2019 used a discount rate based on the expected return of the assets in the pension fund, adjusted for risk, of 4.8% whereas the valuation at 31 March 2019 for accounting purposes used a discount rate of 2.4%, based on the annualised Merrill Lynch AA rated corporate bond yield curve. The use of a discount rate that is calculated on a different basis and as a result is much lower than that used in the TAV resulted in WPCC's share of the LGPS recording a deficit of £2,713,000 for accounting purposes whereas the TAV showed a surplus of £276,000.

As at 31 March 2022, WPCC's pension deficit within the LGPS for accounting purposes (based on a discount rate of 2.6%) was £2,381,000, a decrease of £782,000 over the previous year. The changes to the deficit are shown in note 24 to the financial statements.

GAAP in the United Kingdom requires the inclusion of the deficit on the LGPS that is calculated for accounting purposes in WPCC's accounts. The deficit itself is shown as a liability on the balance sheet with a corresponding amount charged to a negative pension reserve. The movements in the deficit from year to year are charged/credited within the Statement of Financial Activities and the main components for the year ended 31 March 2022 were:

- the current service cost of providing the pension which at £407,000 was £240,000 in

excess of the contributions payable to the LGPS by WPCC;

- a notional net interest charge on the defined benefit pension obligation which amounted to £56,000; and
- an actuarial gain of £782,000.

It should be noted that the pension liability included in the balance sheet does not represent a liability which is payable because, as described above, the contributions payable to the LGPS are based on the results of the TAV.

Further details of the LGPS will be found in the notes to the financial statements.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The Conservators have considered the major risks to which the charity is exposed and satisfied themselves that systems or procedures are established in order to manage those risks. The annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee will be found later in this report. Set out below are the principal risks and uncertainties to which the charity is exposed.

The principal risk to the charity during the year has been the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on the operations of the charity has been described earlier in this report. On the assumption that the lifting of the remaining restrictions by the Government earlier in 2022 remains in place, it is anticipated that that there will be negligible impact on the charity's finances in the year 2022/23.

Despite various amendments that have been introduced over the years, the administrative provisions of the 1871 Act have not been materially updated since 1871 and this presents a risk that has been acknowledged by the Charity Commission. The Constitution Committee, originally established as a working group in 2018, continues to review the current arrangements. This is not about introducing a more permissive regime or diluting the fundamental purposes of the charity but introducing a workable set of rules to enable the organisation to fulfil its core objectives in a 21st century working environment. The charity had planned to commence a public consultation process on the potential changes to the constitutional arrangements in April 2020, but the COVID-19 restrictions and a decision by the Charity Commission to review the scope of its powers to effect constitutional reform in general meant that the process had to be postponed. As noted earlier, the Board continues to liaise with the Charity Commission on this matter.

The recent rises in inflation in the UK and elsewhere caused by price increases arising from cost pressures as economies emerge from the pandemic induced recession, particularly energy price increases, which were compounded by the effect of the war in the Ukraine, are likely to have a negative impact on the charity's costs. However, the charity is fortunate in that its principal source of income is the levy which is tied to the Retail Price Index.

As described earlier in this report, the charity has developed a number of ambitious projects for the Commons which will necessitate the raising of grants and donations from third parties. In the event that such funds cannot be raised, the projects may need to be curtailed or postponed.

The Commons contain a large number of buildings, many of which are over 100 years old. The age of such buildings brings the risk that unforeseen expenditure may be required to maintain the operational capability of such buildings.

Risks to the charity's buildings and other infrastructure are managed by means of routine inspections which are aimed at identifying problems before they arise. However, given the age of such buildings and infrastructure it is inevitable that unforeseen and sometimes costly expenditure will arise from time to time.

Fundraising

WPCC's new Fundraising Manager launched her first appeal in January 2022 to raise funds for the repair of the footbridge over the Beverley Brook in Putney Lower Common, which had been closed since early summer 2021 for safety reasons. The cost of the repairs had been identified as £15,000 and this was the target of the appeal. We are delighted to report that this figure was reached in early April 2022. There

were more than 70 separate donations to the appeal and we are incredibly grateful to everyone who supported the project. We hope to complete the repairs during summer 2022.

The Wimbledon Village Stables continued their fundraising activities in order to provide capital to invest in improvements to the equestrian facilities on the Commons including the horse rides and the exercise rings. The Stables Charity Ball, held in early March 2022, raised £15,866 for the Commons. This will fund restoration of horse rides and we intend to undertake this work during late spring/early summer 2022.

The memorial bench donation scheme, relaunched in 2018, has continued to be successful. Donations made to sponsor memorial benches during 2021/22 totalled £25,721.

WPCC received grants totalling £10,000 from the Elizabeth Frankland Moore and Star Foundation during the year. These grants have been restricted for the restoration of a footpath route on Putney Heath and this work will be undertaken during spring 2022.

In 2017, WPCC established a car park donation scheme which enabled visitors to make donations for car parking via a coin operated pay and display machine or online. Regular users can also make an annual donation of £120. During 2021/22 the donation scheme brought in income of £2,643. A new, contactless payment donation machine, which will make donating much easier, was ordered by WPCC in winter 2021/22. Current supply chain issues have meant that the machine will not be installed until July 2022.

The Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons were established during 2019/20 and membership continued to grow during 2021/22. At 31 March 2022 there were 544 subscriptions (increased from 506 at the end of March 2021) which had generated income of £44,179 including Gift Aid. This compares favourably with 2020/21 when the Friends raised £36,113. In addition, the Friends organised an Afternoon Tea event at the AELTC held in February 2022 which succeeded in raising £2,926 for the Commons.

Apart from the appeal described above in relation to the Putney Lower Common bridge, the membership scheme for and the events held by the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons and the voluntary donations scheme at the Windmill car park, the charity did not undertake any significant fundraising activities during the year and it was not subject to an undertaking to be bound by any voluntary scheme for regulating fundraising or any voluntary standard of fundraising. The charity received no complaints about its fundraising activities and makes every effort to ensure that any fundraising it undertakes is not unreasonably intrusive, persistent or pressurised.

Reserves

At 31 March 2022, the charity had unrestricted reserves (excluding the negative pension reserve of £2,381,000) of £3,113,297 and restricted reserves of £115,868.

The charity's free reserves can be analysed as follows:

	£
Unrestricted reserves, excluding negative pension reserve	
Per balance sheet	732,297
Add back negative pension reserve	2,381,000
	3,113,297
Deduct:	
Estimated cost of next triennial elections in 2021	(60,000)
Funds required to fund the net book value of tangible fixed assets	(1,380,205)
Free reserves, before negative pension reserve	**1,673,092**

As noted earlier, the negative pension reserve represents the net liability in respect of the LGPS and is calculated in accordance with the specific requirements of the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). The net liability is being funded by regular contributions to the pension scheme out of the charity's annual income at a rate determined by the scheme's actuary.

The Conservators' estimated potential requirements for reserves are set out in the table below:

Provision of working capital to cover day to day fluctuations in income and expenditure and meet, in the short term, either unexpected expenses or income shortfalls	£495,000-£550,000
Allowance for potential impact of COVID-19 if the movement and distancing restrictions were re-introduced in autumn/winter of 2022/23	£75,000-£150,000
Renovation works to estate buildings	£257,500-£360,500
Costs associated with changes to the constitutional arrangements	£116,000-£166,000

This gives a total requirement of between £943,500 and £1,226,500. As described above, WPCC's free reserves at 31 March 2022 were £1,673,092, which is more than the total requirement in the table above. Therefore, WPCC believes it has adequate resources to meet its reserves policy. It should be noted that the charity's estate is a substantial area which has on it a number of buildings which are in excess of 100 years old. Consequently, it is often the case that circumstances arise which involve unforeseen expenditure. Therefore, it is the Conservators'

intention to maintain high levels of reserves to cover such unforeseen expenditure.

The level of income generated by WPCC's activities in their present form are insufficient to enable the Conservators to make any significant investment in the Commons' estate. Accordingly, the Conservators are continuing to investigate ways of broadening and increasing their income base.

Investment Management

CCLA Investment Management Limited (CCLA) is the charity's investment adviser with a discretionary mandate. The charity's funds are invested in the COIF Charity Investment Fund (COIF), a specialist charity fund managed by CCLA.

The mandate given to CCLA sets out the charity's investment objectives as follows:

- A balanced attitude to risk, where the objective is to protect the real values over time but investment risk can be accepted in order to achieve this;
- A long term gross total return target of CPI +5% per annum with an annual income requirement of at least £35,000 per annum; the real value of income is required to rise in line with inflation, as far as possible.

The total return performance of the COIF investment in the year to 31 March 2022 was 11.6% and since inception in the second quarter of 2019 the total return has been 33.0%. The corresponding figures for CPI+5% have been 13.29% and 23.68%, respectively. The value of the charity's investment at 31 March 2022 was £1,677,706 and the investment income received in the year amounted to £48,029.

The charity realised £100,000 of its investment in COIF during the second half of the financial year to fund its anticipated cash flow requirements in the year ahead.

Going Concern

The Conservators have considered the charity's forecasts for the next three years.

If there were to be a return to lockdown restrictions as a result of a further wave or waves of COVID-19, this would have a negative impact on the level of income receivable from sports and other facilities and would result in an increase in costs in respect of litter collection and removal. On the basis of experience gained since March 2020, it is considered likely that the charity would be able to absorb the resulting reduction in net income by cost savings in other areas and, if necessary, the realisation of part of its reserves.

The significant increases in inflation in the last twelve months and the forecast further increases in the year ending 31 March 2023 are likely to have a negative effect on the charity's cost base. Although the charity is fortunate in that its primary source of income, the levy, is tied to changes in the Retail Price Index, over 30% of the charity's income is from non-levy sources and it may prove difficult to raise the rate of income from such sources sufficient to cover the cost inflation suffered by the charity.
On the basis of the foregoing, and the fact that the charity has a substantial investment portfolio, the Conservators believe that the charity has sufficient funds to continue to operate for the foreseeable future and, accordingly, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of the financial statements.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives and Activities

The 1871 Act, which can be viewed at https://bit.ly/2Z6NbtO, incorporated the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators as a body corporate. The 1871 Act set out the Conservators' statutory functions and duties, and it conferred powers on the corporate body. Section 8 of the 1871 Act provides: -

> "*There shall be a body of Conservators for carrying this Act into execution, the full number of whom shall be eight, and who are hereby incorporated by the name of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, and by that name shall be one body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal, and with power to take and hold and to dispose of (by grant, demise, or otherwise) land and other property (which body corporate is in this Act referred to as the Conservators).*"

The preamble to the 1871 Act requires the Conservators to keep the Commons:

> *"open and unenclosed and unbuilt on, and to protect... and preserve the same for public and local use, for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes".*

In addition, the Conservators have duties under the 1871 Act:

- to preserve the natural aspect and state of the Commons;
- to protect and manage trees, heather, gorse and other vegetation;
- not to sell, lease, grant or in any manner dispose of any part of the Commons, except as expressed under the 1871 Act.

On 14 April 1972 the site was registered as a charity with its charitable objective:

> *"to preserve the Commons as open spaces for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes."*

Under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations 1990, as amended by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, WPCC has the power to raise a levy. This is collected by the boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston in a proportion relevant to the number of "D" Band properties in each borough within the levy-Paying area. The boroughs pass on this levy by way of an addition to the Council Tax on properties in the area.

Under Section 84 of the 1871 Act, the Conservators have the power to make byelaws to regulate and control the use of the land for which they are responsible.

Governance is prescribed within the separate Commissioners Clauses Act 1847, as amended by the 1871 Act, that deals with the constitution and regulation of the organisation.

The Commons comprise 461 hectares (1,140 acres) and contain a wide variety of landscapes, buildings, infrastructure and visitor facilities. Unlike land that is constituted as parkland, the glory of the Commons is that they are a relic of the former manorial lands.

As stewards of the Commons and through our independent governance structure, Conservators safeguard the natural aspect and condition so that the Commons are safe, available, welcoming and accessible for all.

This requires WPCC to:

- conserve, enhance and protect the Commons' natural aspect and wildlife for present and future generations to enjoy;
- demonstrate sound governance and financial discipline by constantly reviewing operational procedures and all aspects of management;

- seek to balance the enjoyment of the majority of users who visit the Commons for informal activity and appreciation of the Commons' quiet natural aspect with the needs of groups who undertake formal and/or more rigorous recreational activities;
- improve the understanding and identity of the Commons and interpret their rich and varied heritage;
- work in partnership with stakeholders to promote and achieve the Vision;
- improve facilities used for organised recreation, sport and events;
- encourage volunteering as a rewarding activity engaging people of all ages and abilities;
- work in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Commons are a part of the UK series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reflecting the importance of their grassland and heathland habitats. Under EU conservation legislation (as applicable following Brexit), they are also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with importance for beetles and insect diversity. The Commons are also designated as Metropolitan Open Land, which affords the land the same level of protection as the Green Belt, and this designation, together with the defining provisions of the 1871 Act, provide the Commons with a very high level of protection.

Volunteering is increasingly important in the delivery of the charity's activities and there are various opportunities for people to become involved. These range from supporting practical activities, such as heathland and woodland management, estate maintenance as well as litter management. Through the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, there is a group of expert volunteers who undertake monitoring of flora and fauna contributing towards the annual Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Report.

In planning and delivering its activities, the Conservators have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. We confirm that we have complied with our duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

The Conservators, through the Audit and Risk Committee, have assessed the governance of the charity against the Charity Governance Code and have drawn up, and made significant progress against, an 'action plan, in order to address any areas of non-compliance identified.

Structure

Governance is provided by a board of eight Conservators, five of whom are directly elected every three years by those local authority voters living within the levy-area and the remaining three are appointed by three government departments. The levy-area is defined as the area within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common in addition to the area within the old Parish of Putney. Both the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in the triennial elections are granted to all those living within the levy-area who meet the relevant criteria. The 1990 Election Byelaws supplement the requirements under the 1871 Act prescribing the timescales and procedures for undertaking the triennial elections.

Responsibility for appointing the three Conservators resides with three central government departments – currently the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence. The term of office for the appointed Conservators is also three years.

Conservators also serve as trustees of the charity and are its only members.

Governance

The work of the charity is overseen by the Board of Conservators, more commonly today referred to as trustees in the context of the charity. The Board sets policy and is responsible for the conduct of WPCC's affairs and for ensuring that the charity operates in accordance with its founding legislation, charity law and other statutory requirements and byelaws. The role of the Board is to develop and agree the charity's vision, mission, values and strategy. The Board is responsible for implementing and monitoring the Strategy through a three-year rolling Business Plan, which includes a financial plan.

The Chairman is elected from within the Board on an annual basis. The Board meets on a bi-monthly basis or more frequently as required. The Board receives regular reports at its meetings on the financial status of the charity and monitors progress against approved budgets, the status of its investments, and

reviews the Top Ten risks. Reports are also brought to the Board on operational and property matters as required.

The Board has established four committees:

Audit and Risk Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) independently to:

- monitor the integrity of the annual financial statements of WPCC, reviewing significant financial reporting issues and judgements contained in them;
- ensure effective policies and procedures and compliance systems for managing risk are in place and to review their effectiveness;
- make recommendations to the Board in all matters in relation to the external auditor;
- ensure effective procedures and safeguards are in place to monitor the prevention of fraud and corruption;
- prepare and publish an annual report of the work of the ARC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless, exceptionally, authority has been delegated to the ARC by the Board in respect of a particular matter.

Finance and Investment Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC) to:

- scrutinise and oversee all financial and investment aspects of WPCC so as to ensure short and long-term viability of WPCC; and
- report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless specifically delegated by the Board.

Constitution Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Constitution Committee (CC) to:

- review, identify, consider and recommend to the Board amendments to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose; and
- consider and recommend the way in which any such amendments could be effected.

Friends Committee

On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Friends Committee (FC) to:

- lead on fundraising undertaken under the auspices of the Friends for WPPC; and
- organise events for and on behalf of the Friends of WPCC.

Terms of Reference for the committees and the two working groups described below have been approved by the Board and are published on the WPCC website.

In addition to the committees, the Board has established two working groups:

i. The Stakeholder Group, which comprises individuals with knowledge and interest in the Commons, representing different user groups and geographies and providing views and suggestions to the Board. There are currently 14 members of the Stakeholder Group, representing local organisations.
ii. The Wildlife and Conservation Forum, which is chaired by the DEFRA-appointed Conservator and is comprised of volunteer experts. The forum supports the Commons' staff in their role of protecting the natural environment of the Commons.

Following their election or appointment to the Board, each Conservator receives a briefing pack outlining their role, together with information on WPCC, its founding legislation, its policies, structures and work. Every Conservator completes a register of interests and a related party transaction form, both of which

are updated annually or whenever any changes occur. Each Conservator also signs a Code of Conduct which sets out procedures and duties in relation to confidentiality, conflict of interest and other matters of pertinence to charity trustees. A formal induction process is provided for each new Conservator. All Conservators are offered opportunities to learn more about WPCC's work, through individual meetings with staff and site visits.

In the interests of transparency and openness the Board resolved at its meeting held on 12 July 2021 to hold part of the Board meetings in public. Board meetings are now divided into two parts – A(1) to which the public are invited to both attend and ask questions relating to matters discussed at the meeting and A(2) which is confidential and held in private.

Summary of the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2021/22

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is a committee of the Board and its Terms of Reference were approved by the Board in May 2018 and most recently re-confirmed by the Board in June 2021. The role of the ARC is to review and scrutinise WPCC's corporate governance, financial reporting, internal controls and risk management ensuring that they support the achievement of the charity's objectives. The full ARC report for 2021/22 can be found on the WPCC website https://www.wpcc.org.uk/ARCreport2021-22

During 2021/22, ARC met on four occasions. The members of the Committee were Mr Michael Rappolt, Appointed Conservator (Chair), Mr Peter Hirsch, Elected Conservator, Mr Michael Johnston, Elected Conservator and Mrs Sarah Wilton, co-opted member. A risk based integrated work plan was established covering ARC's business for 2021/22 and beyond and was provided to the Board in December 2021.

ARC believes it has fulfilled its main duties as set out in its terms of reference as follows:

Financial. For the year ended 31 March 2022 ARC reviewed and where necessary approved the Audit Plan, compliance with accounting standards and practices, the draft WPCC financial statements, the external Auditor's Annual Letter and the WPCC Annual Report. They recommended the financial statements to the Board subject to a number of amendments. ARC members are satisfied that the external auditors have received the necessary assistance from WPCC when carrying out their audit and no limitations have been placed on the scope of their work.

Internal Control, Risk Management and Compliance. At each meeting ARC reviews tender waivers and write offs, debt write offs, the top ten risks, the full Risk Register (annually) and the actions arising from previous meetings and the progress with them. In addition ARC reviewed management of the WPCC internet portal; progress with the IT strategy and security; cybersecurity; contingency and disaster planning; progress on the Access framework; HR policies and practices; best recruitment practice; fraud and corruption controls; compliance with Natural England requirements; tree hazard management; Windmill safety inspections; fire safety controls; safeguarding policies and procedures; protection of personal data; benchmarking plans; licensing arrangements for personal trainers and other professional services; leaseholder/licensee compliance with legal obligations; governance of the Stakeholder Group and; the Conservators annual register of interests.

Whistleblowing. At each meeting ARC reviews any whistleblowing reports, of which there were none during 2021/22.

Charity Governance Code. ARC completed an assessment of WPCC's governance against the requirements of the Charity Governance Code https://www.charitygovernancecode.org and drew up an action plan for addressing areas of weakness. Throughout 2021/22 ARC has monitored progress against this action plan. A significant area of weakness identified was the lack of a statement or policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and as a result, the Board has recently agreed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement for the Charity. Outstanding actions include: (a) updating WPCC's constitutional arrangements. This has been delayed as it requires the assistance of the Charity Commission, which they have not been in a position to provide (b) putting in place measures of performance for WPCC, which will now be introduced when the key strategic documents against which we will measure ourselves (Masterplan, Land Management Plan, Fundraising Strategy and Communications Plan) are in place (c) a review of the organisation's environmental performance, which is scheduled for year three of the current Business Plan and; (d) a review of the Board's performance which is planned for later in 2022.

Minutes of ARC meetings are received by the Board. At Board meetings the ARC Chair provides a written or an oral report to the Board on significant conclusions, concerns and recommendations arising from the Committee's work. The issues highlighted to the Board this year included that (a) external reassurance should be sought to assess GDPR compliance (b) land ownership and use in front of the Hand in Hand needed to be clarified (c) an independent review of cybersecurity should be undertaken and that password security and protection against phishing attacks needed to be reviewed (d) that a communications plan should be developed and (e) that efficiency improvement steps should be included in the Business Plan.

ARC believes that it has, to the best of its ability, met its Terms of Reference. It gratefully acknowledges the excellent support it has received from WPCC staff without which it could not have fulfilled its remit.

Management

The day-to-day management of the charity is delegated by the Board to the Chief Executive who has overall responsibility to the Board for the effective planning, performance, management, direction and leadership of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in accordance with policies and budgets set by the Board. The Chief Executive is supported by the Senior Leadership Team consisting of the:

Deputy Clerk and Ranger – responsible for finance, administration, HR and election/appointment of Conservators;

Executive Assistant/Communication Officer – responsible as executive assistant to the Chief Executive, secretariat to the Board, communications (including reception) and filming/events;

Conservation and Engagement Officer – responsible for conservation/ecology and public engagement;

Fundraising Manager – responsible for developing and implementing the organisation's fundraising strategy.

Pay Policy for Senior Staff

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the charity on a day to day basis. All Conservators give of their time freely and the founding 1871 Act prohibits any Conservator receiving remuneration or holding any office of profit.

The pay of staff is reviewed annually by the Board as part of its budget preparation process. The Finance and Investment Committee has a responsibility to consider staff remuneration within their Terms of Reference for the Chief Executive and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

CONSERVATORS' RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

The Conservators acknowledge their responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements for each financial year in accordance with Section 2 of the 1871 Act, which are required to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, surplus or deficit of the charity for that period.

The Conservators are also responsible for preparing the Report of the Conservators and the financial statements in accordance with applicable charity law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (GAAP) under FRS 102.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Conservators to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Conservators are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures, which should be disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the 1871 Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Statement as to disclosure to auditors

In so far as the trustees are aware at the time of approving the Conservators' Annual Report:

- There is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- The Conservators, having made enquiries of fellow Conservators and the charity's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken steps that she/he is obliged to take as a Conservator in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Approved by order of the Board of Conservators on 29.06.2022 and signed on its behalf by:

Diane Neil Mills (Chairman)
Elected Conservator

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2022 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has been withdrawn.

This has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2022 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Conservators with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our Auditors' Report thereon. The Conservators are responsible for the other information contained within the Annual Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the Conservators Report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Conservators Responsibilities Statement, the Conservators are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Conservators determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Conservators are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Conservators either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditors' Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud or error; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud or error; and to respond appropriately to those risks.

Based on our understanding of the charity and industry, and through discussion with the trustees and other management (as required by auditing standards), we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to health and safety, and employment law. We considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the preparation of the financial statements such as the Statement of Recommended Practice. We communicated identified laws and regulations throughout our team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit. We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to: posting inappropriate journal entries and management bias in accounting estimates and judgemental areas of the financial statements. Audit procedures performed by the engagement team included:

- Discussions with management and assessment of known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations (including health and safety) and fraud, and review of the reports made by management and internal audit; and
- Assessment of identified fraud risk factors; and
- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in its significant accounting estimates; and
- Checking and reperforming the reconciliation of key control accounts; and
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships, including related party transactions, that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud; and
- Confirmation of related parties with management, and review of transactions throughout the period to identify any previously undisclosed transactions with related parties outside the normal course of business; and
- Reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance; and
- Review of significant and unusual transactions and evaluation of the underlying financial rationale supporting the transactions; and
- Identifying and testing journal entries, in particular any manual entries made at the year end for financial statement preparation; and
- Assessment of expertise with regards to the actuarial valuation of the defined benefit pension scheme.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Auditors' Report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditors' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Kreston Reeves LLP

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Chichester

Date: 29th June 2022

Kreston Reeves LLP are eligible to act as auditors in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

Statement of financial activities
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	3	**102,705**	**52,486**	**155,191**	87,523
Charitable activities	4	**1,738,211**	**27,947**	**1,766,158**	1,736,588
Investments	5	**48,029**	**-**	**48,029**	47,850
Total income		**1,888,945**	**80,433**	**1,969,378**	1,871,961
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	6	**2,231,625**	**35,950**	**2,267,575**	2,455,317
Total expenditure		**2,231,625**	**35,950**	**2,267,575**	2,455,317
Net (expenditure)/income before net gains on investments		**(342,680)**	**44,483**	**(298,197)**	(583,356)
Net gains/(losses) on investments		**147,350**	**-**	**147,350**	279,616
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains/(losses)		**(195,330)**	**44,483**	**(150,847)**	(303,740)
Other recognised gains/(losses):					
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme	23	**782,000**	**-**	**782,000**	(25,000)
Net movement in funds		**586,670**	**44,483**	**631,153**	(328,740)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		**145,627**	**71,385**	**217,012**	545,752
Net movement in funds		**586,670**	**44,483**	**631,153**	(328,740)
Total funds carried forward		**732,297**	**115,868**	**848,165**	217,012

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 35 to 58 form part of these financial statements.

Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2022

	Note		2022 £		2021 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	10		**1,228,405**		1,275,084
Heritage assets	11		**151,800**		151,800
Investments	12		**1,677,706**		1,630,356
			3,057,911		3,057,240
Current assets					
Debtors	13	**130,604**		228,987	
Cash at bank and in hand		**332,543**		181,131	
		463,147		410,118	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	**(208,374)**		(303,496)	
Net current assets			**254,773**		106,622
Total assets less current liabilities			**3,312,684**		3,163,862
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	15		**(18,163)**		(19,460)
Provisions for liabilities	17		**(65,356)**		(70,390)
Net assets excluding pension liability			**3,229,165**		3,074,012
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	23		**(2,381,000)**		(2,857,000)
Total net assets			**848,165**		217,012
Charity funds					
Restricted funds	18		**115,868**		71,385
Unrestricted funds	18		**732,297**		145,627
Total funds			**848,165**		217,012

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Conservators and signed on their behalf by:

Date:
Mrs D Neil Mills
(Chair of Trustees)
Elected Conservator
29.06.2022

The notes on pages 35 to 58 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided/(used) by operating activities	20	**43,147**	(185,368)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Dividends, interests and rents from investments		**48,029**	47,850
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		**(37,563)**	(7,995)
Sale of investments		**100,000**	-
Net cash provided by investing activities		**110,466**	**39,855**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Repayments of borrowing		**(2,201)**	(5,485)
Net cash used in financing activities		**(2,201)**	**(5,485)**
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		**151,412**	**(150,998)**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		**181,131**	332,129
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	21	**332,543**	181,131

The notes on pages 35 to 58 form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

1. Accounting policies

1.1 General information and basis of preparation of financial statements

WPCC is a body corporate incorporated under the 1871 Act; it is also a charity registered in England. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are included within the Conservators' report.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these financial statements. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019 and Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

WPCC constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

1.2 Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going-concern basis. The Conservators have prepared detailed cash flow forecasts to ensure the Charity can continue to operate for at least twelve months following the signing date of these financial statements.

1.3 Income

All income is recognised once the Charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donated services or facilities are recognised when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use of the charity of the item is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), general volunteer time is not recognised but see pages 5 & 11 of the Conservators' report for more information about their contribution.

On receipt, donated professional services and facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the Charity which is the amount it would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, 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 classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Support costs are those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity.

1.5 Grants

Grants received in respect of fixed assets are classified as deferred income and recognised in income over the expected useful life of the asset to which they relate.

1.6 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

1.7 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its income and gains falling within part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that they are applied to its charitable activities.

1.8 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Freehold buildings	- 25 - 50 years
Long-term leasehold property	- Life of lease
Plant, machinery and equipment	- 3 - 10 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 5-15 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.9 Heritage assets

The charity considers that while the lands comprising the commons are heritage assets, the buildings, other than the windmill on Wimbledon Common, are not. As more fully explained in note 11, the heritage assets are recognised in the balance sheet at cost, where it has been possible to determine cost.

Heritage assets are depreciated over their useful economic life. However, because the majority of such assets are land with an indefinite useful economic life, the element of depreciation that would apply to the remainder of the heritage assets is considered immaterial to these financial statements. Heritage assets are reviewed annually at the reporting date for indications of impairment.

1.10 Investments

Investments are recognised initially at fair value which is normally the transaction price excluding transaction costs. Subsequently, they are measured at fair value with changes recognised in 'net gains / (losses) on investments' in the Statement of Financial Activities if the shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably. Other investments are measured at cost less impairment.

1.11 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.12 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.13 Liabilities and provisions

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities as a finance cost.

1.14 Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.15 Finance leases and hire purchase

Assets obtained under hire purchase contracts and finance leases are capitalised as tangible fixed assets. Assets acquired by finance lease are depreciated over the shorter of the lease term and their useful lives. Assets acquired by hire purchase are depreciated over their useful lives. Finance leases are those where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership are assumed by the Charity. Obligations under such agreements are included in creditors, net of the finance charge allocated to future periods. The finance element of the rental payment is charged to the Statement of Financial Activities so as to produce a constant periodic rate of charge on the net obligation outstanding in each period.

1.16 Redundancy and termination benefits

It is the Charity's policy to recognise termination benefits when they become committed, by legislation, by contractual or other agreements with employees or their representatives or by a constructive obligation or a desire to act equitably, to make payments (or provide other benefits) to employees when it terminates their employment. Termination payments do not provide the Charity with future economic benefits therefore it is the Charity's policy to recognise them as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities immediately.

1.17 Pensions

The charity operates a defined benefits pension scheme and the pension charge is based on a full actuarial valuation. The latest full actuarial valuation was as at 31 March 2019.

Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of financial activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

1.18 Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Conservators in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Conservators for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

As detailed in note 23 the company operates a defined benefit pension scheme for the benefit of employees. The cost of operating the scheme is determined using actuarial valuations undertaken by the scheme actuary. Their valuation involves making assumptions about discount rates, future salary increases, mortality rates and future pension increases. Due to the complexity of the valuation, the underlying assumptions and the long term nature of the scheme, such estimates are subject to significant uncertainty.

The annual depreciation charge for fixed assets is sensitive to changes in estimated useful lives and residual values. The useful economic lives and residual value are re-assessed annually and amended as necessary.

3. Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
Donations				
Horseride appeal	-	26,977	**26,977**	4,906
Beverley Brook bridges' appeals	-	15,509	**15,509**	-
Footpath restoration	-	10,000	**10,000**	-
Other donations	102,705	-	**102,705**	82,617
Total 2022	102,705	52,486	**155,191**	87,523
Total 2021	82,617	4,906	87,523	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

4. Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
Levy received from councils	1,262,008	-	**1,262,008**	1,247,917
Countryside stewardship grant	31,229	-	**31,229**	36,677
Sports facilities	310,589	22,321	**332,910**	222,388
Property rent and wayleaves	106,735	-	**106,735**	117,761
Rent from filming and fairs	27,630	-	**27,630**	5,750
Logs and timber sales	-	-	**-**	50
Publication sales	20	-	**20**	10
NLHF grant	-	5,626	**5,626**	46,035
Beverley Brook path project grant	-	-	**-**	60,000
Total 2022	1,738,211	27,947	**1,766,158**	1,736,588
Total 2021	1,630,553	106,035	1,736,588	

5. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
Investment income	48,029	**48,029**	47,850
Total 2021	47,850	47,850	

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2022 £	Support costs 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
Charitable activity	1,600,962	666,613	**2,267,575**	2,455,317
Total 2021	1,515,916	939,401	2,455,317	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of direct costs

	Charitable Activities 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
Windmill	6,692	**6,692**	8,345
Keepers and Commons security	514,272	**514,272**	515,304
Commons maintenance	595,826	**595,826**	584,947
Playing fields maintenance	231,885	**231,885**	220,627
Property maintenance and improvements	252,287	**252,287**	186,693
	1,600,962	**1,600,962**	1,515,916
Total 2021	1,515,916	1,515,916	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Charitable Activities 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
NLHF expenses	5,626	**5,626**	46,035
Administration staff salaries	98,309	**98,309**	200,586
Audit and accountancy	15,210	**15,210**	16,525
Office expenses	16,570	**16,570**	8,440
Insurance	68,520	**68,520**	52,171
Utilities and services	17,150	**17,150**	15,162
Advertising and printing	21,553	**21,553**	14,799
Computer and IT support	31,826	**31,826**	24,360
Events	7,592	**7,592**	8,085
Council tax	26,282	**26,282**	24,543
Defined benefit pension cost in excess of contributions paid	250,000	**250,000**	240,000
Profit on sale of fixed assets	3,633	**3,633**	-
Interest cost on pension liability	56,000	**56,000**	59,000
Legal fees	37,311	**37,311**	132,111
Professional fees	10,727	**10,727**	28,414
Bad debts	304	**304**	10,920
Election costs	-	**-**	58,250
	666,613	**666,613**	939,401
Total 2021	939,401	939,401	

Included in support costs above are governance costs totalling £52,521 (2021: £206,886). These costs include audit and accountancy fees, legal fees and election costs.

7. Auditors' remuneration

The auditors' remuneration amounts to an audit fee of £10,075 (2021: £10,075) and amounts relating to non audit services of £5,135 (2021: £6,450).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

8. Staff costs

	2022 £	2021 £
Staff Salaries		
Wages and salaries	**876,071**	914,403
Social security costs	**92,638**	96,024
Other pension costs	**416,979**	449,497
	1,385,688	1,459,924

Total termination payments amount to £Nil (2021: £97,380) and relate to payments made to and on behalf of former WPCC employees. These payments include payments in lieu of notice; employers national insurance contributions; contributions to the defined benefit pension schemes; accrued holiday pay; and legal expenditure incurred by the former employees.

The average number of persons employed by the Charity during the year was as follows:

	2022 No.	2021 No.
Chief Executive	**1**	1
Chief Operations Manager	**-**	1
Deputy Clerk and Ranger	**1**	1
Administration	**2**	1
Wildlife and Conservation Officer	**1**	1
Security	**7**	7
Maintenance	**6**	6
Playing Fields	**3**	3
Property	**1**	1
	22	22

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2022 No.	2021 No.
In the band £60,001 - £70,000	**-**	1
In the band £70,001 - £80,000	**1**	-
In the band £110,001 - £120,000	**-**	1

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day to day basis. The Senior Leadership team consists of the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Clerk and Ranger, Wildlife Conservation Officer and EA to Chief Executive Officer.

Total key management personnel remuneration for the year was £277,521 (2021: £427,799).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

9. Conservator's remuneration and expenses

During the year, no Conservators received any remuneration or other benefits (2021 - £NIL).

During the year ended 31 March 2022, no Conservator expenses have been incurred (2021 - £NIL).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

10. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold buildings £	Long-term leasehold property £	Commons plant and machinery £	Playing fields equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost or valuation							
At 1 April 2021	**1,450,448**	**219,080**	**345,671**	**98,611**	**96,730**	**16,028**	**2,226,568**
Additions	**7,068**	**-**	**20,487**	**2,656**	**3,916**	**3,436**	**37,563**
Disposals	**(4,969)**	**(5,884)**	**-**	**(3,250)**	**-**	**-**	**(14,103)**
At 31 March 2022	**1,452,547**	**213,196**	**366,158**	**98,017**	**100,646**	**19,464**	**2,250,028**
Depreciation							
At 1 April 2021	**454,472**	**97,057**	**245,654**	**68,062**	**80,080**	**6,159**	**951,484**
Charge for the year	**35,064**	**7,375**	**15,822**	**5,343**	**7,005**	**4,116**	**74,725**
On disposals	**(1,553)**	**-**	**-**	**(3,033)**	**-**	**-**	**(4,586)**
At 31 March 2022	**487,983**	**104,432**	**261,476**	**70,372**	**87,085**	**10,275**	**1,021,623**
Net book value							
At 31 March 2022	**964,564**	**108,764**	**104,682**	**27,645**	**13,561**	**9,189**	**1,228,405**
At 31 March 2021	995,976	122,023	100,017	30,549	16,650	9,869	1,275,084

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

11. Heritage assets

Assets recognised at cost

	Heritage assets 2022 £
Carrying value at 1 April 2021	151,800
Carrying value at 31 March 2022	151,800

As explained in note 1.9, the charity considers that its heritage assets are the lands that comprise Wimbledon and Putney Commons within the meaning of the 1871 Act, together with the windmill on Wimbledon Common. The majority of the lands were acquired under the provisions of the 1871 Act together with all the buildings thereon in return for an annuity payment to Earl Spencer which terminated in 1958. The purchase price has been treated as the cost of the heritage assets together with amounts paid to third parties to acquire additional small parcels of land subsequent to 1871. Although part of the purchase price would have been attributable to those buildings which are not heritage assets, it is not possible to determine what the appropriate allocation would have been and therefore the whole purchase price has been allocated to the heritage assets.

The Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields were acquired in the 1930s but no detailed records exist of their cost to the charity, consequently no amount is included within heritage assets in respect of the playing fields.

There have been no additions to heritage assets since 1 April 2015.

12. Fixed asset investments

	Listed investments £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 April 2021	**1,630,356**
Disposals	**(100,000)**
Revaluations	**147,350**
At 31 March 2022	**1,677,706**
Net book value	
At 31 March 2022	**1,677,706**
At 31 March 2021	1,630,356

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

13. Debtors

	2022 £	2021 £
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	**52,492**	51,931
Other debtors	**44,381**	40,545
Prepayments and accrued income	**33,731**	136,511
	130,604	228,987

14. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade creditors	**70,518**	210,031
Obligations under finance lease and hire purchase contracts	**-**	2,201
Other creditors	**59,235**	49,065
Accruals and deferred income	**78,621**	42,199
	208,374	303,496

15. Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Accruals and deferred income	**18,163**	19,460

16. Deferred income

	2022 £	2021 £
Deferred income at 1 April 2021	**40,687**	22,054
Resources deferred during the year	**21,234**	19,930
Amounts released from previous periods	**(21,228)**	(1,297)
Deferred income at 31 March 2022	**40,693**	40,687

Deferred income at the year end related to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the information centre of £19,460 and rent received in advance of £21,233. Deferred income at the previous year end related to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the information centre of £20,757 and rent received in advance of £19,930.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

17. Provisions

The charity occupies a building which it built on land leased from a third party. Under the terms of the lease it has an obligation at the end of the lease to reinstate the land to its original state. A provision is made for this liability and the movements in the provision were as follows:

	Provision for liabilities £
At 1 April 2021	**70,390**
Change in discount rate	**(5,884)**
Interest cost charged to expenditure	**850**
	65,356

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

18. Statement of funds

Statement of funds - current year

	Balance at 1 April 2021 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2022 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	-	-	-	20,004	-	20,004
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,002,627	1,888,945	(1,925,625)	(20,004)	147,350	3,093,293
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,857,000)	-	(306,000)	-	782,000	(2,381,000)
	145,627	1,888,945	(2,231,625)	(20,004)	929,350	712,293
Total Unrestricted funds	145,627	1,888,945	(2,231,625)	-	929,350	732,297
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	19,468	-	-	-	-	19,468
Horseride Appeal	28,802	26,977	(29,424)	-	-	26,355
Wildlife Garden Appeal	18,115	-	-	-	-	18,115
Beverley Brook WC Bridge Appeal	5,000	10,000	-	-	-	15,000
Footpath Restoration	-	10,000	(900)	-	-	9,100
Beverley Brook PLC Bridge Appeal	-	5,509	-	-	-	5,509
E W Cricket Trust	-	22,321	-	-	-	22,321
NLHF Masterplan	-	5,626	(5,626)	-	-	-

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - current year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2021 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2022 £
	71,385	80,433	(35,950)	-	-	115,868
Total of funds	217,012	1,969,378	(2,267,575)	-	929,350	848,165

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year

	Balance at 1 April 2020 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2021 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	36,672	-	(58,250)	21,578	-	-
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	2,980,511	1,761,020	(1,971,942)	(46,578)	279,616	3,002,627
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,533,000)	-	(299,000)	-	(25,000)	(2,857,000)
	447,511	1,761,020	(2,270,942)	(46,578)	254,616	145,627
Total Unrestricted funds	484,183	1,761,020	(2,329,192)	(25,000)	254,616	145,627
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	19,558	-	(90)	-	-	19,468
Horseride Appeal	23,896	4,906	-	-	-	28,802
Wildlife Garden Appeal	18,115	-	-	-	-	18,115
NLHF - Masterplan	-	46,035	(46,035)	-	-	-
Beverley Brook path project	-	60,000	(80,000)	25,000	-	5,000
	61,569	110,941	(126,125)	25,000	-	71,385
Total of funds	545,752	1,871,961	(2,455,317)	-	254,616	217,012

The Election Sinking fund is maintained to provide for the fees and costs of conducting the triennial election of five Conservators.

The Windmill Restoration fund represents the fund remaining from a Heritage Lottery Grant received for use in restoring the Windmill, on Windmill Road.

The Defined Benefit Pension fund represents the defined benefit pension scheme liability.

The Horseride Appeal fund includes donated income and related expenditure on the horse ride route restoration campaign started during the year ended 31 March 2018.

The Wildlife Garden Appeal fund includes donated income on the campaign to create a new wildlife garden at the Ranger's Office.

NLHF - Masterplan fund includes the grant income from the NLHF for the new 'masterplan' and its related expenditure.

Beverley Brook path project - included grant income from South Western Railway's Customer and Community Improvement Fund and related expenditure for resurfacing pedestrian and cycle routes alongside the Beverley Brook.

Beverley Brook bridges' appeals - donated income in respect of repairs to bridges over the Beverley Brook on Wimbledon Common and on Putney Lower Common.

Footpath restoration - donated income in respect of repairs to paths on Putney Heath.

19. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds - current year

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,228,405	-	**1,228,405**
Fixed asset investments	1,677,706	-	**1,677,706**
Heritage assets	151,800	-	**151,800**
Current assets	347,279	115,868	**463,147**
Creditors due within one year	(208,374)	-	**(208,374)**
Creditors due in more than one year	(18,163)	-	**(18,163)**
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(2,446,356)	-	**(2,446,356)**
Total	732,297	115,868	**848,165**

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

19. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Analysis of net assets between funds - prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Restricted funds 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,275,084	-	1,275,084
Fixed asset investments	1,630,356	-	1,630,356
Heritage assets	151,800	-	151,800
Current assets	338,733	71,385	410,118
Creditors due within one year	(303,496)	-	(303,496)
Creditors due in more than one year	(19,460)	-	(19,460)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(2,927,390)	-	(2,927,390)
Total	145,627	71,385	217,012

20. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2022 £	2021 £
Net expenditure for the year (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	**(150,847)**	(303,740)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	**74,725**	74,785
(Gains)/losses on investments	**(147,350)**	(279,616)
Dividends, interests and rents from investments	**(48,029)**	(47,850)
Loss on the sale of fixed assets	**3,633**	-
Decrease in stocks	**-**	85
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	**98,383**	(80,020)
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	**(94,218)**	151,457
Pension fund adjustments	**306,000**	299,000
Interest cost on provision	**850**	531
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	**43,147**	(185,368)

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

21. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2022 £	2021 £
Cash in hand	332,543	181,131
Total cash and cash equivalents	332,543	181,131

22. Analysis of Net Funds

	At 1 April 2021 £	Cash flows £	Other non-cash changes £	At 31 March 2022 £
Cash at bank and in hand	181,131	153,613	(2,201)	332,543
Finance leases	(2,201)	-	2,201	-
	178,930	153,613	-	332,543

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

23. Pension commitments

The Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme.

Retirement benefits to employees of WPCC are provided by the LGPS which is a defined benefit scheme.

The LGPS is a funded scheme, administered by the London Borough of Merton. Contributions are set every three years as a result of an actuarial valuation of the fund. There are no minimum funding requirements but the contributions are generally set to target a funding level of 100%, using actuarial assumptions.

In general, participating defined benefit schemes mean that the employer is exposed to a number of risks:

- Investment risk
- Interest rate risk
- Inflation risk
- Longevity risk (where members live longer than assumed)

In addition many unrelated employers participate in the London Borough of Merton scheme, and there is a potential orphan liability risk where employers who leave the Fund with insufficient resources to cover their pension obligations, will leave a deficit in the scheme that may fall on the remaining employers. There is however no way of ascertaining the potential loss, should such an event take place.

Principal actuarial assumptions at the Balance Sheet date (expressed as weighted averages):

	At 31 March 2022 %	At 31 March 2021 %
Discount rate	**2.60**	2.00
Future salary increases	**4.25**	3.85
Future pension increases	**3.25**	2.85

	At 31 March 2022 Years	At 31 March 2021 Years
Mortality rates (in years)		
- for a male aged 65 now	**21.2**	21.1
- at 65 for a male aged 45 now	**22.5**	22.4
- for a female aged 65 now	**23.9**	23.9
- at 65 for a female aged 45 now	**25.4**	25.3

23. Pension commitments (continued)

The Charity's share of the assets in the scheme was:

	At 31 March 2022 £	At 31 March 2021 £
Equities	**4,549,000**	5,770,000
Gilts	**989,000**	729,000
Property	**292,000**	239,000
Cash and other liquid assets	**143,000**	341,000
Diversified growth	**1,766,000**	722,000
Multi asset credit	**768,000**	743,000
Infrastructure	**817,000**	362,000
Total fair value of assets	**9,324,000**	8,906,000

The actual return on scheme assets was £501,000 (2021 - £2,088,000).

The amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities are as follows:

	2022 £	2021 £
Current service cost	**(407,000)**	(363,000)
Past service cost	**-**	(79,000)
Interest cost	**(56,000)**	(59,000)
Administrative expenses	**(10,000)**	(8,000)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	**(473,000)**	(509,000)

Movements in the present value of the defined benefit obligation were as follows:

	2022 £
Opening defined benefit obligation	**11,763,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**58,000**
Benefits paid	**(298,000)**
Service cost	**407,000**
Past service costs	**-**
Interest expense	**233,000**
Change in financial assumptions	**(478,000)**
Change in demographic assumptions	**-**
Experience loss on obligation	**20,000**
Closing defined benefit obligation	**11,705,000**

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

23. Pension commitments (continued)

Movements in the fair value of the Charity's share of scheme assets were as follows:

	2022 £
Opening fair value of scheme assets	**8,906,000**
Interest income	**177,000**
Contributions by employer	**167,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**58,000**
Return on assets	**324,000**
Benefits paid	**(298,000)**
Administration expenses	**(10,000)**
Closing fair value of scheme assets	**9,324,000**

	2022 £	2021 £
Closing position		
Defined benefit obligation	**(11,705,000)**	(11,763,000)
Scheme assets	**9,324,000**	8,906,000
Deficit	**(2,381,000)**	(2,857,000)

	2022 £	2021 £
Total actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme		
Return on assets	**324,000**	1,945,000
Change in financial assumptions	**478,000**	(2,211,000)
Change in demographic assumptions	**-**	130,000
Experience loss on obligation	**(20,000)**	111,000
Total	**782,000**	(25,000)

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

24. Financial instruments

	2022 £	2021 £
Financial assets		
Financial assets measured at fair value through income and expenditure	**1,677,706**	1,630,357

The fair value of these assets is readily obtainable as there is a ready market for their sale at publicly listed prices.

The gain on these assets during the year was £147,350 (2021: £279,616).

The dividend and interest income generated by these assets during the period was £48,029 (2021: £47,850).

25. Related party transactions

The Charity has not entered into any related party transaction during the year (2021: none), nor are there any outstanding balances owing between related parties and the Charity at 31 March 2022 (2021: £Nil).

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

England & Wales - Charity number 303167

Accounts

WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATORS

AND

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 303167

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

Conservators	Mr O Bennett MBE – appointed by DEFRA January 2021 Mrs S Bucknall – elected April 2021 Mr D Hince – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Mr P Hirsch – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Mr Michael Johnston – elected April 2021 Mrs D Neil Mills (Chairman) – elected April 2018; re-elected April 2021 Mr M Rappolt – appointed by Ministry of Defence May 2017; re-appointed May 2020 Mr N Ware – appointed by Home Office March 2018; re-appointed March 2021
Retiring Conservators	Mrs S Gillbe – elected April 2015; re-elected April 2018 Mrs S-J Holden – elected April 2018 Dr R Taylor – appointed by DEFRA April 2013; re-appointed April 2017
Chief Executive	Mr S Lee (to December 2020) Mr S Bound (acting from January 2021; appointed from June 2021)
Principal Address	Ranger's Office Manor Cottage Windmill Road Wimbledon London SW19 5NR
Registered Charity Number	303167
Independent Auditors	Kreston Reeves LLP Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor 9 Donnington Park 85 Birdham Road Chichester West Sussex PO20 7AJ
Solicitors	Russell Cooke LLP 2 Putney Hill London SW15 6AB
Bankers	Barclays Bank plc 8 Alexandra Road Wimbledon London SW19 7JZ

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

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The following abbreviations are used in this document

WPCC or Charity	The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
1871 Act	Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871
Board	The Board of Conservators of WPCC
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The 16th of August 2021 marks 150 years since the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act received Royal Assent and this important milestone is indeed a cause for celebration. Following hard on the heels of the most stringent restriction of freedoms any of us has ever experienced, we are all acutely thankful for the unstinting efforts of the team who manage this special open space that has been a source of solace, sanctuary and inspiration to so many of us over the past months.

It is also a moment when we should pause and record our appreciation to the individuals who had the vision and foresight in 1871 to recognise that open space was at least as important to the well-being of the population as were homes and transportation. We are all beneficiaries of their efforts and we should be reflecting not only on the great physical legacy that they created, but on their determination and courage to defy convention and challenge what must have appeared to have been an inevitable outcome.

Through their efforts, they not only defeated Earl Spencer's seemingly innocuous bill to enclose a portion of the Commons, but they galvanised support for the establishment of Wimbledon and Putney Commons through a separate Act of Parliament. In doing so, they created an independent organisation funded by a local levy and defined by a unique model of governance that allowed both local and the wider public interests to be directly represented and decision-making to be fully devolved. And it is this independence that has been fundamental in preserving the character and culture that make this resource so unique. In the words of its founder, Sir Henry Peek, 'Wimbledon and Putney Commons had no parallel in the United Kingdom'.

The pandemic has not only highlighted the importance of this unique resource but also its fragility and the need to think about the way in which the Commons are managed. Recognition of this fact has played a key role in furthering the development of our Masterplan, which will provide a long-term vision for both the natural and built landscapes of the Commons.

As the nation takes its first tentative steps towards a return to normality, we will continue our focus on developing this framework and, as part of that process, allow the ideas to be tested through public consultation. Delivery of the Masterplan will however only be possible with the funding necessary to support the initiatives and we have agreed to bolster our fundraising efforts for that purpose. As we have previously stated, we are also considering a reform of the levy though despite any increase, there will always be a need for fundraising to support capital projects. Constitutional reform will also be required to provide the legal certainty necessary to underpin certain investments and our collective resolve to progress this initiative remains undiminished.

In reviewing the events of the past year, the term 'unprecedented' seems both overworked and yet wholly inadequate. Our revenue has suffered due to the restrictions limiting formal use of the Commons whilst our cost base has increased due to the increased visitor numbers. The operational focus has shifted squarely to coping with the effects of increased usage and I am immensely grateful to the staff for their relentless effort to ensure that the Commons have remained accessible to all even during the most difficult periods of the pandemic.

Despite these challenges, on a strategic level, we have made important progress in governance matters over the course of the past year. Bringing the Charity Commission's Statutory Inquiry, opened on 18 August 2016, to a close has been our highest priority and we therefore welcomed the publication of the final report on 2 July 2020. As many of you are aware, the inquiry was established to investigate the charity's governance arrangements with particular focus on the Putney Lower Common easement. It represented a challenging period in the charity's long and distinguished history. With its closure, we have been able to move on and focus on the delivery of our charitable objectives.

In support of the inquiry's underlying objectives, the Conservators openly recognised the opportunity to provide further resilience in governance related processes and over the course of the past three years have put in place measures to deliver additional clarity, structure and rigour in a number of areas including the Access Framework, the Code of Conduct and the Enquiries and Complaints Procedure (including requests submitted under the Environmental Information Regulations).

In addition, we recognised the value in clarifying certain election procedures, a matter addressed by the Commission as part of the inquiry. As a result, we developed and published Election Guidelines in advance of the March 2021 triennial elections; the guidelines proved helpful for all parties involved in the elections and despite the restrictions in place due to the pandemic, the seamless execution of the elections demonstrates their value. Home Office appointed Conservator Nigel Ware acted as Returning Officer for the elections and I would like to record my appreciation to him for executing the role so effectively.

The Commission's report also identified the scope to further clarify certain provisions of the 1871 Act. We initiated a review of the constitution in 2018 through the establishment of a working group and since then have made significant progress to identify the areas requiring amendment and the various procedures through which any changes could be effected. In December 2019, we announced that our preferred approach to constitutional reform would be through secondary legislation and that we would begin a phased consultation process on the proposal in spring 2020. Although the consultation was suspended due to the pandemic, it remains very much our view that only through meaningful consultation that allows proper debate and scrutiny will the level of public support for change to the constitution be tested.

Given my earlier comments about our constitution serving us well, I would like to reassure everyone that constitutional reform is not about introducing a more permissive regime or diluting the fundamental purposes of the charity. There is a clear mandate through our founding legislation, charitable objectives and the special designations of our sites for our duty to protect and preserve the Commons and make them available for the purposes of exercise and recreation. We are absolutely not looking to alter these.

We are fortunate to have the support in principle of the Charity Commission with this initiative although a decision by the Commission in March 2020 to review the scope of their powers to effect constitutional reform in general has delayed the process. We are also very grateful for the continuing support of two local barristers, Mr George Laurence QC and Mrs Francesca Quint, who serve as external members of the working group. Both are experts in their respective fields of open spaces and charity law and have provided invaluable assistance with this important undertaking.

The work of the Audit and Risk Committee, chaired by Conservator Mike Rappolt, has provided further scrutiny of our governance and although the committee's contribution may not be immediately obvious to the occasional visitor to the Commons, the insights provided have been invaluable in strengthening the organisation. I would also like to thank Mrs Sarah Wilton who has served as an external member of this committee for the dedication and diligence she has brought to this role and we are delighted that she has agreed to continue to support the committee.

As mentioned above, our triennial elections, normally an important part of the engagement process, were operationally flawless yet devoid of almost any physical interaction due to the pandemic. I would like to thank all of those who bravely put themselves forward as candidates, particularly in such an unfamiliar setting, and to all of those who supported the democratic process.

The elections also marked the end of term for two elected Conservators and I would like to thank Mrs Shirley Gillbe, who contributed across a wide range of areas over her six years in office, and Mrs Sarah-Jane Holden, who was instrumental in establishing the Friends' Group over her three-year term, for their loyal and generous service. Dr Rosalind Taylor, the DEFRA appointed Conservator, also retired in December 2020 having served as a Conservator and Chairman of the Wildlife and Conservation Forum since 2013. Their terms of office may have ended but their passion and support for the Commons lives on and I am grateful for their continued interest and involvement.

I would also like to thank my fellow Conservators, David Hince and Peter Hirsch, both of whom were successfully re-elected, for their support and commitment to enable the achievements of the past year to be delivered. We also welcome Oliver Bennett MBE, as the new DEFRA appointed Conservator, as well as Michael Johnston and Sue Bucknall as recently elected Conservators.

At the end of 2020, we announced with deep regret the decision of Simon Lee to retire as Chief Executive. Simon provided outstanding leadership for the Commons over the course of his six-year tenure and was instrumental in developing an ambitious long-term vision for the Commons. Simon identified the need to

develop a Masterplan to support that vision and successfully secured external funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support this major initiative. Simon also put in place procedures to ensure the efficient day-to-day management of this vast resource, ensuring that regulatory and health and safety obligations were fulfilled. The culture and ethos that continues to characterise this unique organisation owes much to Simon's willingness to lead from the front and discharge his duties with integrity, strength and quiet determination. We are enormously indebted to Simon and wish him well in the future.

To lead the organisation through the next period of the Commons' history, we are pleased to have appointed Stephen Bound as Chief Executive effective 1 June 2021. Since joining WPCC in January 2016 as Chief Operations Manager, Stephen has assumed responsibility for the day to day operations of the Commons, a role that has been particularly critical over the past 15 months. Stephen has also played an integral role in the development of the emerging Masterplan and is particularly interested in the ecological aspects of the Commons with an emphasis on ensuring that they are able to recover from the increased visitor numbers and sustain longer-term environmental change. We congratulate Stephen on his appointment and look forward to working with him in his new role.

The Chief Executive leads a team of 21 talented and dedicated staff members, all of whom have consistently demonstrated a willingness to put the interests of the Commons ahead of their own, particularly during the difficult period of the pandemic. The role served by the Commons has perhaps never been so intensely tested nor widely appreciated yet throughout this period, there has never been any doubt regarding the commitment or selflessness that defines the organisation. The trophy cabinet remains at capacity and yet there is no sense that the award-winning performance, bolstered by yet more Gold Awards during 2020, is driven by anything other than a humble pride in achieving the highest standards in the management of public open space. We are immensely grateful to all the staff for their valued service.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of those who have given freely of themselves to support the Commons through volunteering, membership of a committee or in another capacity. Some are well known to us whilst others remain anonymous but all are motivated by nothing more than a love of nature and a sense of community and I am grateful to all of them for their support and their guidance. We are also enormously indebted to those who have supported us financially either in aid of a specific project or more generally, including membership of the Friends. The generosity of all our donors and the public goodwill that it represents is humbling and we value each and every contribution.

In closing, I hope that we will take this opportunity of the 150th anniversary to celebrate the cherished open space that we are so fortunate to have on our doorstep. At the same time, I encourage everyone to take to heart the legacy that Henry Peek and others bestowed upon us, of vision, foresight and sense of purpose to ensure this precious resource remains with us and future generations forever.

Thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

The past year on the Commons has, unsurprisingly, been dominated by the impact of COVID-19. With options for recreation, relaxation and socialising limited, the Commons became a focal point for the local community in a manner not witnessed in living memory. Whilst this significantly increased the demands placed on both the staff and the infrastructure of the Commons, it also served to demonstrate their value to the mental and physical well-being of local residents.

The commitment, dedication and hard work displayed by our staff team has been exceptional. Whilst across the UK large sections of the workforce were furloughed, our staff worked throughout the pandemic to ensure the Commons remained well-maintained and safe for the thousands of people flocking to these public open spaces seeking an escape from lockdown. We also had reason to be even more grateful than usual for the support we have received from the local community in the form of volunteer time. The considerable rise in visitor numbers brought with it a significant increase in the quantities of litter being left on the Commons. Individuals and groups took it upon themselves to assist with litter picking, and the benefit this had cannot

be overstated. Despite this voluntary input, our litter and waste disposal costs rose dramatically from £23,193 in 2019/20 to £61,284 in 2020/21. This is before allowance is made for the considerable additional staff time spent managing waste and litter.

COVID-19 required other significant operational changes in order to keep our staff and visitors safe. The Ranger's Office was closed to the public for much of the year and a number of the office team worked from home in order to enable social distancing. Staff were encouraged to work alone where possible and/or safe to do so. As a precaution, our patrol horses, such an important feature of daily life on the Commons, were sent away for several months, in case the Keeper team were forced to self-isolate, leaving us without the staff to care for the animals.

The extremely wet winter that we experienced, coupled with the considerable additional footfall across the Commons, has unfortunately resulted in significant damage to some of our busier locations. Around the Windmill Car Park, large areas of ground have been so badly trampled that all vegetation has been destroyed. A number of the most well-used paths have more than doubled in width, as the increased number of users attempted to socially distance from each other.

The Government restrictions in place for large proportions of the past year have meant that the vast majority of the organised activities and events which would normally take place on the Commons were cancelled. Grassroots football and rugby came to a halt and the Rosslyn Park Schools Rugby Sevens tournament was cancelled for the second year running. Golf was played only sporadically. Running races and the weekly Parkrun disappeared. The touring funfairs and circuses, which have been part of life on the Commons for over a century, were unable to visit. Of the major events which normally form part of our annual calendar, only Wimbledon Bookfest was able to go ahead, albeit on a much-reduced scale. The loss of these events and activities had an unavoidable impact on WPCC's income. We are incredibly grateful to a number of the organisations who have long-term agreements for use of the Commons and who continued to pay their licence fees, despite not being able to use the facilities.

Inevitably, responding to the impact of COVID-19 has meant that much of the work we have undertaken through the past year has been reactive. It became necessary to place some projects on hold in order to enable us to continue (i) to ensure visitor safety and (ii) to maintain the 'natural aspect' of the Commons. Nevertheless, significant areas of work set out in the Business Plan have still been completed or progressed, despite the ongoing disruption.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED DURING THE PAST YEAR

Strategic Context

In June 2017, the Board approved the first ever Strategy ('the Strategy'), following a recommendation from the 2014 Governance Review. The Strategy sets out both the broad vision and specific initiatives for managing the Commons over the ten-year period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2028.

Our Vision

"Wimbledon and Putney Commons will be recognised as an exceptional and welcoming natural place for visitors where wildlife thrives"

The Strategy demonstrates the way in which the Board will play its part in making this area of south-west London a great place to live, work and visit, contributing towards a world class city. (A copy of the Strategy can be viewed at https://bit.ly/3fPF0rT.) The Strategy identifies two overarching long-term Strategic Objectives, which remain relevant for the purposes of this Conservators' report and are set out in Figure 1 below.

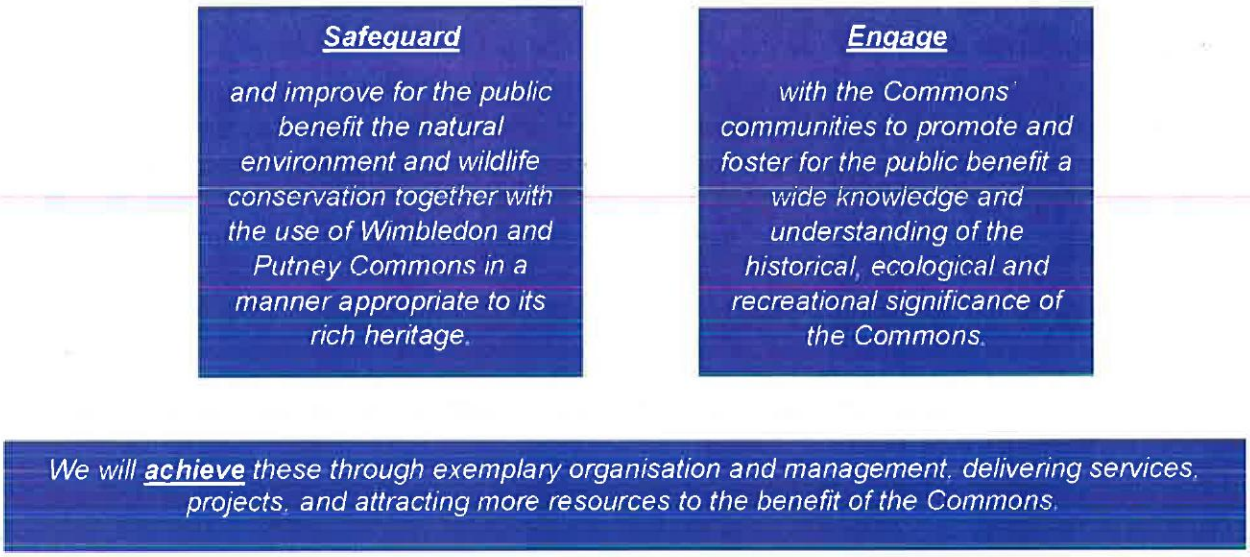

Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged:

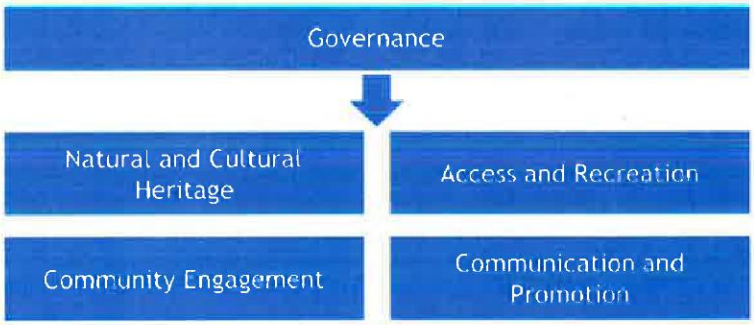

Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

Achievements and Performance 2020/21

It is within this strategic framework that individual initiatives are progressed through the development of a three-year rolling Business Plan. In April 2020, the Board agreed the three-year Business Plan for the period 1 April 2020 through 31 March 2023 in which 20 initiatives were agreed; progress on each of these initiatives over the past financial year is set out under each of the five Strategic Themes.

The need to respond to the impact of COVID-19 has rightly been the priority for WPCC over the past year. Although a number of the initiatives that had been included in the 2020 – 2023 Business Plan were suspended as the impact of the pandemic became clear, progress has been made in a number of areas over the course of the year ended 31 March 2021. The Board will formally consider the three-year Business Plan for the period 2021 to 2024 at its Board meeting in July 2021. As government restrictions are lifted and a semblance of normality returns to the Commons, the Board intends to renew the focus on a number of initiatives that have been suspended due to the pandemic.

Governance

Statutory Inquiry

The Charity Commission's Statutory Inquiry, which opened on 18 August 2016, came to a close with the publication of the Commission's Statement of Results of the Inquiry ('Inquiry Report') on 2 July 2020. Bringing the inquiry to a close had been a priority for WPCC and the charity worked closely with the Commission to support the inquiry and to ensure that measures were being put in place to strengthen WPCC's governance even whilst the inquiry was in progress.

The inquiry was established to investigate the charity's governance arrangements with particular focus on the Putney Lower Common Easement. The complexity of the matter under investigation was reflected in both the protracted timescales to complete the inquiry and the Commission's conclusions. Although it is not in anyone's interest to continue the debate, it is worth summarising the key findings, which as much as possible, adopt the wording of the Commission.

I. The Commission did not make any findings about the decision to grant the easement or the terms of that grant.

II. The inquiry found that the decision of trustees in February 2017 not to recover any funds which may have been lost was reasonable and properly taken.

III. The inquiry did not find any one individual responsible for any incorrect decision, act or omission.

IV. The inquiry found that the inability of the trustees in post between 2015 and 2018 to manage the dispute resulting from the granting of the easement was costly to the charity and evidence of mismanagement.

V. The Commission found that the administration, management and governance of the charity has now significantly improved, in particular since the elections of 2018, and the current trustees have demonstrated their ability to act collectively in the best interests of the charity.

A copy of the Inquiry Report may be found here; a copy of the Charity Commission's Media Release may be found here.

As mentioned above, in parallel with the work to support the Statutory Inquiry, we recognised the opportunity to provide further resilience in governance related processes including those in relation to third party access to the Commons. The Access Framework sets out processes for considering and structuring agreements in relation to licences, wayleaves, leases and easements between WPCC and third parties. The document was reviewed by a barrister and shared with the Charity Commission and continues to evolve as a result of ongoing experience. The framework takes into consideration both WPCC's powers and duties under the 1871 Act as well as the organisation's requirements under charity legislation, notably the Charities Act 2011 and serves as an important framework to ensure all requests for access are considered in a structured and systematic manner and are fully compliant with the relevant legislation.

Triennial Conservator Elections

Every three years, five of the eight Conservators are elected by residents, who are on the local authority electoral register and live within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common, or within the old Parish of Putney. The 2021 elections were held in March of this year, following extensive and detailed planning which commenced in July 2020. Mr Nigel Ware, the Home Office appointed Conservator, was appointed by the Board as the Returning Officer for the elections and Civica Election Services (formerly Electoral Reform Services) was engaged by WPCC to act as the election scrutineer.

As part of the Charity Commission's Statutory Inquiry, the Commission investigated complaints relating to the 2018 triennial elections. The Commission found that a lack of clear guidance relating to election procedures, for candidates, trustees and for the Returning Officer, created ambiguity and increased the scope for complaints. As a result, WPCC produced detailed Election Guidelines and Procedures, which set

out guidance for (a) the Returning Officer (b) the election scrutineers (c) candidates and (d) incumbent Conservators and (e) WPCC staff. The guidelines were published on WPCC's website at the beginning of the election process. WPCC received no complaints relating to the conduct of the 2021 elections.

Eligible voters were able to vote either online or by post and a total of 20.4% of the electorate voted, a slight reduction compared to 21.0% achieved during the 2018 election. Considering the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the elections in terms of restricting voter engagement, the participation rate was in line with expectations. Not surprisingly, the percentage of those voting electronically increased from 47% in 2018 to 55% in 2021, which not only reduced the cost of the elections for WPCC but reduced the risk of lost ballot papers and other operational difficulties.

Appointed Conservators

WPCC's governance structure stipulates that three of the eight Conservators are appointed by government departments: the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); the Home Office; and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). In line with the term for elected Conservators, appointments are for a period of three years.

In December 2020, Dr Ros Taylor, who had served as the DEFRA appointed Conservator since 2013, retired. Dr Taylor made a significant contribution to WPCC over her seven-year term, chairing the Wildlife and Conservation Forum and taking an active role in biological recording and the WPCC events programme, particularly the Bio Blitz. The Conservators and staff of WPCC are extremely grateful to Dr Taylor.

Following a thorough selection process, which followed best practice for public appointments, DEFRA confirmed the appointment of Dr Taylor's successor, Mr Oliver Bennett MBE in January 2021.

The reappointment for a further three-year term of Mr Nigel Ware, the Home Office appointed Conservator since 2018, was also confirmed in March 2021.

As previously reported, in May 2020, the first three-year term of the Conservator appointed by the MoD came to an end. The current Secretary of State, whilst recognising the current MoD appointed Conservator had acquitted himself well, chose not to re-appoint him for the full three-year term as he recognised the importance of the link between WPCC and the MoD and as such decided that the MoD appointed Conservator needed to have established links with the MoD. The current MoD appointed Conservator has therefore agreed to continue to serve the Board until such time as a new appointment is made. The recruitment process is underway though timescales remain uncertain given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the MoD's operations.

Potential Constitutional Reform

Planning for the long-term future of the Commons has been one of the Board's primary considerations and significant resources have been directed towards the work associated with updating the charity's constitutional framework. There have been two key drivers for this; firstly, the Board recognised that its governance documents, the 1871 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act and the 1847 Commissioners Clauses, do not meet the needs of a charity in the 21st century. This was echoed by the Charity Commission in the Inquiry Report, which stated 'the charity's governing document, which dates back to 1871, contained provisions and powers that either required modernisation and/or were not fit for purpose'. The Commission highlighted the need for a review, which they stated the Commission would support 'where appropriate'.

The second driver has been the Board's desire to develop and deliver a Masterplan for the Commons. In particular, planning for the future identified that (a) the levy was insufficient to meet the needs of the organisation and (b) regularisation and clarification of land and building matters was required to enable WPCC to resolve a number of operational matters associated with managing the Commons. It is important to note that there is neither a desire nor intention of diluting or diminishing the very high level of protection that is afforded by the 1871 Act.

The Constitution Working Group (CWG) was established by the Board in April 2018 to identify the constitutional changes required and the procedures through which any such changes could be effected. The agreed Terms of Reference provide clarity of scope and purpose:

> The purpose of the CWG is to consider amendments necessary to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose of preserving, protecting and enhancing the Commons for the purposes of exercise and recreation as established by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871.
>
> The review will identify areas where amendments to the constitutional framework are required in order to provide clarity, alignment, operational practicality and deliverability to WPCC's powers and rights and in doing so allow the organisation to consistently achieve high operational and strategic performance standards.'

By December 2019, much of the exploratory work had been completed and WPCC announced at its General Open Meeting its preferred option to amend certain elements of its constitution by means of a scheme under the Charity Commission and to consider amending the levy by means of a separate statutory instrument. Consultation on the proposals was designed to take place on a phased basis, commencing in spring 2020. Unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions precluded the ability to carry out a meaningful consultation exercise and further progress on this project through 2020/21 was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. In parallel with these developments, in March 2020, the Charity Commission notified WPCC that it was reviewing the scope of its powers to effect constitutional reform for charities in general under the Charities Act. An update from the Commission is awaited in order for WPCC to determine the best way in which constitutional reform may be achieved.

Remuneration Review

The review of staff remuneration, which originally commenced in 2019 but was placed on hold due to COVID-19, was completed in the first quarter of 2021. The aim of the review was to ensure that WPCC's remuneration framework recognised the contribution and commitment made by each and every member of staff and provided the appropriate opportunities for ongoing achievement, in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. This work was led on behalf of the Board by the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC), working with a specialist external consultant. The consultant reviewed WPCC's current salary arrangements and prepared a number of recommendations, which were considered by the FIC and ultimately approved by the Board. The recommendations were implemented, with minor changes, following consultation with the entire WPCC staff team.

Regulatory Issues

The Board is firmly committed to the principles of openness and transparency and has over the course of its tenure taken a number of decisions to proactively publish information that it believes is of interest and relevance to the public in relation to its decision making in both governance and operational matters. In further support of this objective, WPCC has implemented an Enquires and Complaints Process in order to establish clear timescales and processes for the handling of enquiries and complaints.

Although WPCC is not considered a public body for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), WPCC is considered a public body for the purposes of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) and fully accepts the compliance requirements inherent in that designation. At the same time, data protection legislation has understandably increased the complexity of publishing and releasing information that may be deemed to contain personal information and external legal advice is often required to consider such information requests with the associated cost implications. In accordance with EIR legislation, guidance and processes for the handling of all information requests made under EIR have been implemented and published on WPCC's website.

During 2018, WPCC received requests for information under EIR relating to two separate historic matters: (i) the enforced sale of Mill House by WPCC; and (ii) the reciprocal agreements between WPCC and the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club (RWGC). The arrangements between RWGC and WPCC provided WPCC with the

ability to build a maintenance centre in order to fulfil its duty to maintain the Commons and in exchange provided the RWGC with access to an area of the Commons for parking (whilst at the same time maintaining pedestrian access for the general public). Having considered the resources required to identify, collate, review and redact personal and other confidential data, WPCC rejected both of these requests: the first because it did not consider that it related to 'Environmental Information' and the second because the request was deemed to be vexatious. The levy-payer appealed both decisions to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and in both cases, the ICO firmly upheld WPCC's decisions. The levy-payer subsequently appealed both of the ICO's decisions to the First-tier Tribunal and, in the case of both appeals, WPCC joined the ICO as an interested party.

The First-tier Tribunal appeal hearing relating to the agreements between WPCC and the RWGC was held on 4 February 2021. The judge, in the Decision Notice published on 12 March 2021, firmly upheld the ICO's (and WPCC's) decision that the request for information was vexatious and dismissed the appeal. A copy of the Decision Notice may be found here

As explained above, WPCC fully appreciates the value of openness and transparency and supports the principle of access to information but did not consider that expending the charity's limited resources on providing this information was in the public interest, a view supported by both the ICO and the First-tier Tribunal.

The First-tier Tribunal hearing relating to the enforced sale of Mill House was held on 15 March 2021. The judge, in the Decision Notice published on 21 May 2021, firmly upheld the ICO's (and WPCC's) decision that the Information did not constitute 'Environmental Information' and dismissed the appeal. A copy of the Decision Notice may be found here.

It is important to note that the subject requests consumed a significant amount of WPCC's resources, particularly the time of both officers and Conservators. The Board remains hopeful that the very definitive and clear nature of the Decision Notices from both First-tier Tribunals will put an end to the misuse of access to information legislation and allow the organisation to focus on its charitable objectives of protecting and preserving the Commons.

Natural and Cultural Heritage

London in Bloom

Despite all of the uncertainties that accompanied the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the annual London in Bloom campaign continued undeterred.

Providing the opportunity for communities and organisations to be recognised for the improvements they make to the environment, London in Bloom, an independent charity and part of Britain in Bloom, is focused on the key issues of horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility and community participation.

Having been involved with London in Bloom since 2013, Wimbledon and Putney Commons are proud supporters of this very special London campaign and each year, Wimbledon Common and Putney Lower Common are entered into the event as two separate entries.

Evaluated during 2020 via a desk top report, both entries were presented with a Gold Award which reflects an exceptionally high standard that is demonstrated throughout all seven sections of the campaign's marking criteria.

Monitoring Report and Annual Conservation Report

As a result of the dedicated efforts of volunteers and WPCC staff, during 2020/21, the sixth consecutive annual Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Report was produced by Dr Ros Taylor, a former DEFRA appointed Conservator and the former Chairman of WPCC's Wildlife and Conservation Forum.

In addition to this report, during March 2021, the Annual Conservation Report was produced by the Commons' Conservation and Engagement Officer, Peter Haldane. This annual report has been produced since 2000 and provides a summary of the conservation, volunteering and public engagement events that have occurred on the Commons during the past year.

A copy of both reports can be found on the Wimbledon and Putney Commons website.

Management Works

Heathland and Acid Grassland

Managed under the guidance of a five-year Countryside Stewardship Agreement with Natural England, all areas of heathland and acid grassland on Wimbledon and Putney Commons are found within the 364.5 hectares of the Commons that have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). SSSI and SAC designations are assigned to areas of land in the United Kingdom that are considered to be valuable in terms of the flora, fauna, physiological or geographical features that can be found on them and as a result, these areas are provided with a high level of legal protection.

Providing a fragile and threatened array of habitats, from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, management of these areas has included Bracken control, the rotational cutting of Gorse, the cutting back of scrub, the coppicing of large trees along the edge of two areas of heathland, removal of invasive weeds and the cut and collection of vegetation from five areas of heathland and acid grassland.

At approximately six-yearly intervals, SSSI land is assessed by Natural England against six different conditions. At the current time, the heathland and acid grassland habitats that can be found on the Commons have all been classified as *'Unfavourable recovering'*
not yet fully conserved, all of the necessary management measures are in place. Provided that the recovery work on these areas is sustained, it is considered that the SSSI will reach favourable condition in time.

Unfortunately, as a result of the restrictions that accompanied COVID-19, volunteer groups were unable to contribute as much time to the Commons upkeep as they have in the past but we are hoping that 2021 will enable all of the Commons' volunteering activities to return back to and in some cases exceed pre-COVID-19 levels.

Woodlands

Covering an area of 291 hectares, woodland is the largest habitat type found on Wimbledon and Putney Commons.

To help manage the Commons' woodland, all work is carried out under the guidance of a five-year Countryside Stewardship Agreement that has been agreed by the WPCC, the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

Despite the absence of volunteer help around the Commons' woodland and the sustained level of pressure that was brought upon the Commons' full-time workforce by the events that accompanied COVID-19, a great deal of woodland management was still achieved between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Perhaps the most significant area of woodland management that was carried out on the Commons during this period involved the thinning of trees along two main rides on Putney Heath. Prior to any work being carried out along either of these rides, both areas of woodland were largely comprised of a dense cover of Holly which resulted in a very dark and even-aged section of woodland.

With the woodland edge providing the interface between the high forest and open ground, trees were thinned to approximately 10 metres away from the edges of the rides to allow increased levels of light to reach the ground which will be of great benefit to a wide range of sun loving plants and wildlife.

In addition to this work, other operations that were also carried out around the Commons' woodland between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 included tree safety work, the planting of 800 small trees, the creation of deadwood habitats, selective tree thinning, the management of invasive species such as Oak Processionary Moth and Japanese Knotweed, the provision of public information, survey work and the restoration of two woodland glades.

With both woodland glades located around the south west section of Wimbledon Common, the most significant piece of this work involved the restoration of Stag Bog which is one of three historic bogs that can be found on Wimbledon Common. From an area that had gradually been taken over by a dense cover of bramble and small trees, by the end of March 2021, Stag Bog once again contained a series of small pools and an environment that had been much improved.

Aquatic Management

Following on from the large restoration project that was carried out by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators and the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) along the Wimbledon Common section of the Beverley Brook during the latter part of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, restoration and management of the brook has continued in a number of different ways.

To help increase the diversity of vegetation that can be found along the Wimbledon Common section of the Beverley Brook, during August 2020, 5,000 small plants were planted along the edges of the brook by staff and a small number of volunteers from SERT. Including eight different species of aquatic plant, it is anticipated that these will further add to the habitat value and the overall aesthetics of this area of the Commons.

In addition to this work, regular litter picks were carried out along the Beverley Brook by staff from WPCC, invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam were removed, various wooden berms along the brook were repaired by SERT and perhaps most significantly, a long section of path between the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields (REMPF) and the bottom of Robin Hood Ride was re-surfaced during August 2020 to further improve access across the Commons.

Access and Recreation

Enhancement of the Shared-Use Pedestrian and Cycling Path

In 2019 WPCC submitted a successful application to South Western Railways' Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCIF) for £60,000 in order to resurface the section of the shared used pedestrian and cycle route which runs alongside the Beverley Brook from the REMPF Pavilion to the western end of Robin Hood Ride. Following delays due to COVID-19, work on the project was completed in September 2020. The total cost of the work was £80,000, with the remaining £20,000 provided by the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons. The path improvement complements the river restoration work undertaken to the Brook in 2018, providing access for all to the Brook to experience the riparian habitat and its ecology as it recovers.

Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields

The five-year agreement signed in 2015 with Thomas's Schools for the use of facilities at the REMPF expired in September 2020. We are pleased to report that agreement was reached with Thomas's Schools on a new five-year licence. This provides WPCC with essential income, whilst making use of the facilities at REMPF during weekdays, when they are otherwise underutilised. It includes use of parts of the pavilion, a number of pitches and also accommodates outdoor education for Thomas's pupils, helping to raise awareness amongst a new generation of the importance of wildlife and open spaces.

Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields Pavilion

In 2019, consultants If_Do were appointed to prepare a RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility Study to consider options for the redevelopment of the REMPF Pavilion. The building, originally constructed in the 1930s, is now in a poor state of repair and the facilities are outdated. Following a delay to this work due to COVID-19, the study was completed in early 2021 and the outcome is that it would be economically and operationally more viable to replace the existing building than to undertake refurbishment. Consultation on the proposals for a new building has been carried out with the regular users of REMPF and feedback has been positive. WPCC has engaged a fundraising consultant to identify potential sources of capital to fund the construction of a new pavilion.

Community Engagement

Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

In April 2019, the Board agreed the basis for establishing the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons as a Conservator-led, integral part of WPCC. The Friends bring together all of those who are connected by a passion for the Commons for the purposes of collective celebration and fund raising.

Unfortunately, events planned for the 2020/21 year were cancelled due to COVID-19 but energies are now focussed on planning a series of events during 2021/22 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the date on which the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act received Royal Assent on 16 August 1871.

Volunteer Programme

Unfortunately, as a result of COVID-19, all organised volunteer group activities were temporarily suspended for much of the period between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Despite this situation, throughout this period of time, the Commons were still assisted by the ongoing involvement of a large number of volunteer litter pickers, some of whom litter pick on the Commons on a daily basis. Covering all areas of the Commons, these individuals have provided invaluable assistance in helping to keep the Commons free of litter.

Along with the 41 young people who have helped to litter pick on the Commons as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Awards, between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, volunteer litter pickers have provided a total of 2,027 hours of assistance to the Commons.

While this amounts to a very impressive number of hours, it should be noted that there are also many other individuals who continue to litter pick on the Commons but are either not known to us or simply do not keep us updated about the hours they spend on the Commons. While it is virtually impossible to accurately guess how many hours these individuals spend litter picking on the Commons, their efforts are nonetheless, greatly appreciated by all who work on the Commons.

Although COVID-19 has meant that the level of volunteering on the Commons has been less than in previous years, volunteer litter pickers, scrub bashers, the Commons' mid-week Estate Team and wildlife recorders have, where possible, all contributed valuable assistance to the Commons over the past year.

Despite all of the disruptions and added pressures that have affected the Commons and everybody who is involved in their upkeep, over the past year, a total of 2,447 'known' volunteering hours (including that of the litter pickers) have still been provided by individuals intent on helping to protect the Commons during these difficult times.

After an extremely challenging year, we have been very excited to welcome back all of the Commons' volunteers.

Masterplan for the Commons

In September 2019, confirmation was received that WPPC had secured a grant of £126,100 (80% of the total approved project cost of £157,200) to:

- create a Masterplan for the Commons, articulating the way in which the landscape and built assets relate to one another, looking at interpretation, education, volunteering, visitor facilities, perimeter conditions and landscape management;
- create a Conservation Management Plan;
- create an Audience Development Strategy;
- create a Volunteer Development Plan;
- create an Education and Interpretation Plan;
- create a Business Plan;
- develop a fundraising strategy;
- improve leadership capacity and resilience;
- hold an event of appreciation for National Lottery players, stakeholders, consultees, general public and other fund-supported organisations.

The project was launched on 1 November 2019 and Barker Langham, a consulting firm with expertise in this area, was selected through a competitive tendering process in 2019 to manage the project. The intention was that the project would be completed by August 2020. However, when the nation went into lockdown on

23rd March 2020, the project was put on hold, and neither WPCC nor the consultants were in a position to recommence work until November 2020.

Since recommencing work on the project, Barker Langham has produced draft versions of the Masterplan, Business Plan, Interpretation Plan, Volunteer Development Plan and Built Heritage Conservation Management Plan, along with a Business Plan for the redevelopment of the REMPF Pavilion. These documents have been reviewed by the Board of Conservators and staff and are now being amended by Barker Langham to reflect the Board's comments. As stated earlier, the Board considers that undertaking public consultation with users of the Commons is essential. As COVID-19 made this extremely difficult, if not impossible, the decision has been taken that the amended documents will be considered to be 'drafts – subject to public consultation' and consultation will be undertaken with the local community over late summer 2021, when Government restrictions will hopefully have been lifted.

Mounted Keepers

Protecting the Commons so that they are available for the purposes of recreation and exercise is a core duty of WPCC. Part of this responsibility therefore involves providing public reassurance and dealing with incidents, particularly where these involve anti-social behaviour or breaches of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Byelaws. This work is carried out predominantly by the team of six Mounted Keepers, who undertake daily patrols of the Commons. Whereas the Keepers would normally record all incidents which they deal with, the huge numbers of visitors, many of whom were unfamiliar with the Commons and the byelaws, coupled with new COVID-19 related restrictions, meant the number of incidents each day was so high that recording every breach became very challenging and records for this unprecedented period in WPCC's history are therefore incomplete.

In order to mitigate against the risk of having insufficient resources to care for the horses in the event of staff shortages due to illness or self-isolation and because all the Keepers' resources needed to be directed towards implementing the COVID-19 guidance, at the beginning of lockdown in March 2020, the horses were put out to pasture and patrols were carried out on foot or in vehicles during the early part of the year. The horses returned to the Commons in August 2020 and mounted patrols recommenced.

During Autumn 2020, the Keepers trialled the use of body worn video cameras. The cameras are used to record incidents and to help to defuse confrontational situations in which, for example, individuals stopped by the Keepers for breaches of the byelaws become abusive or threatening. The trial proved to be successful and provision has been made in the 2021/22 budget for the purchase of cameras for use by the Keeper team in their day-to-day work.

Communication and Promotion

During the 2020/21 financial year, our plans for the range of events we normally hold on the Commons was severely curtailed by the Government restrictions through the lockdowns, and the measures that remained in place even when lockdowns were eased.

All our major events such as the BioBlitz Weekend of Nature, Commons Open Day, Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Pumpkin Hunt and the very popular Carols at the Windmill were cancelled. The series of walks we hold throughout the year – the five Bird Walks, the Birdsong Identification Workshop, butterfly and dragonfly walks along with the three seasonal staff-led public walks – were all also cancelled.

Given the importance of all these events in allowing us to engage with visitors, both in welcoming people to the Commons who may not otherwise visit and the opportunity some of the events provide for staff to explain the work we are carrying out and the importance of our wildlife, this was quite a blow. The BioBlitz Weekend of Nature, for example, has become a core event that attracts people of all ages and has become key in encouraging the younger generation who already have a keen interest in nature or to introduce the Commons' wildlife to those that may not have previously understood its importance.

Fortunately, several of our events were able to move to online. The Easter Egg Hunt moved to our website with Easter Eggs hidden throughout the site. Nearly 100 people took part with one person drawn at random winning an Easter Egg. We also provided an Activities with Nature page, providing links to lots of nature-related online activities for children and adults alike who could not get out during the early days of the lockdown.

The Annual Open Meeting in July 2020, at which the Conservators presented their Annual Report and Accounts, as well as the General Open Meeting in December 2020, were successfully held via Zoom

Webinar. The latter event focuses more on operational matters and we welcomed Carol Andrews, owner of the Wimbledon Village Stables, to talk about their history with the Commons.

In February 2021, our popular Winter Talk, held via Zoom, also attracted far more attendees than usual. We were delighted to welcome Edwin Mallins, the Nature Reserves Manager at the London Wildlife Trust. Edwin's talk, entitled "A London Alive with Nature", focused on nature in an urban environment and how important habitats, such as the Commons, fit in to the wider landscape as well as how we can manage land for wildlife in London today and what more could we do.

Local resident, Alan Blower, provided a welcome alternative to our usual Spring Walk, with his virtual tour of the Ponds of Wimbledon and Putney Commons. Entitled "Wimbledon Common: The Nine Ponds", this was a fascinating virtual tour following the five-mile walking route linking the nine ponds on the Common. As well as providing information about the ponds with some stunning photographs of the route, Alan also included some history of the Commons including royal celebrations, ghostly stories and the exploits of local villains. The tour also took in the five war memorials and the numerous magnificent houses that adjoin the Common including four with blue plaques. The first of Alan's talks was held for the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, with around 60 people attending, but proved to be so popular that he kindly agreed to hold a second that was open to anyone to attend; with over 400 people attending, this was a fantastic way to reach so many more people than we could ever attract to a physical walk.

Moving forward, when we can once again all meet in public, consideration will be given to continuing to hold Zoom events to allow us to reach that much wider audience.

Communication via our e-Newsletters continued throughout the year with ten newsletters published between April 2020 and March 2021. These were particularly important as a means for us to keep people updated on any restrictions that were in place, as well as providing a welcome look at the Commons for those unable to visit.

What We Want to Achieve in 2021/22

It is hoped that as we move through 2021/22 and the day-to-day impact of COVD-19 on our operations recedes, we will be able to move away from the reactive approach that has been necessary through 2020/21 and return to a more strategic way of working, continuing to make progress against some of our long-term objectives. There will be particular focus on a number of key initiatives, all of which are integral to WPCC's 2021 to 2024 Business Plan.

- ***Masterplan*** - Completion of the 'Commons for the Next Generation, Green Space for All' project, which is funded by the NLHF, will produce a draft Masterplan by summer 2021, which articulates the long-term vision for the Commons. Public consultation on the Masterplan will be undertaken during late summer 2021 with a view to finalising the Masterplan by the end of 2021.
- ***Redevelopment of the REMPF Pavilion*** – The Board recognises the importance of the pavilion at REMPF fulfilling WPCC's charitable objects and duties under the 1871 Act in relation to recreation and exercise. In addition, the pavilion is an important community resource and provides significant income for WPCC as well as providing accommodation for staff and public amenity facilities. Recent studies have confirmed that decades of under-investment have meant that the pavilion needs to be rebuilt. Planning for this, which is likely to take several years, will be progressed during 2021/22.
- ***Constitutional Reform*** - Delivery of the Masterplan will require sustainable financial capacity, operational clarity and effective governance, and the constitutional amendment process, if successful, will provide this resilience. A phased consultation to understand the views of stakeholders regarding potential amendments to WPCC's constitutional framework forms a critical part of the constitutional reform process. Due to COVID-19 and the decision by the Charity Commission to review the scope of their powers to effect constitutional reform for charities in general, this process has been delayed but we hope to recommence the process during 2021/22.
- ***Fundraising*** – The charity recognises the need to build its fundraising capacity to provide the income necessary to achieve its ambitious plans. In particular there is a need to increase income from grants and appeals. Developing a fundraising strategy that enables WPCC to achieve this aim will be a priority for 2021/22.

- ***150th Anniversary Celebration*** - Through the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons and building on the success of recent fund-raising initiatives, there is the opportunity to harness the passion and energy of the local community to support the Commons through specific projects and the upcoming celebration of the 150th anniversary will hopefully help galvanise the local community in supporting this effort.
- ***Land Management Plan***- The Land Management Plan, development of which remains in progress, will set out the longer-term vision and operational direction for conserving and enhancing habitats and populations of priority species enhancement on the Commons. In particular, the plan will set out the work required to ensure the heathland, woodland, ponds and mires found on the Commons are managed in order to preserve and improve their condition and value for wildlife. A key medium-term goal will be returning the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to favourable condition.
- ***Volunteering*** – The ambitious programme of work arising from the Land Management Plan will require additional 'hands' if we are to achieve our aims. One means of securing this extra input is through expanding the existing volunteering scheme and we are particularly interested in developing some of our volunteers so that they are capable of supervising small teams of volunteers.

OUR FINANCIAL POSITION

Financial Review

During the 2020/21 year, the financial results were affected by the impact of Covid and other non-recurring costs. The table below summarises the financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2021 and indicates an excess of expenditure over income of £284,356 before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme; these additional charges do not of themselves result in a cash outflow for the charity.

	Year ended 31 March 2021			*2020*
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
Total income	1,761,020	110,941	1,871,961	1,874,034
Total expenditure before additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension schemes	(2,030,192)	(126,125)	(2,156,317)	(1,814,465)
Net expenditure before additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	(269,172)	(15,184)	(284,356)	59,569
Additional charges in respect of defined benefit pension scheme	(299,000)	-	(299,000)	(348,000)
Net expenditure before investment gains	(568,172)	(15,184)	(583,356)	(288,431)
Net gain/(loss) on investments	279,616	-	279,616	(88,706)
Net expenditure before other gains and losses	(288,556)	(15,184)	(303,740)	(377,137)
Transfer between funds	(25,000)	25,000	-	-
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	(25,000)	-	(25,000)	528,000
Net movement in funds for the year	(338,556)	9,816	(328,740)	150,863
Total funds brought forward	484,183	61,569	545,752	394,889
Total funds carried forward	**145,627**	**71,385**	**217,012**	**545,752**
Comprising:				
Negative pension reserve	(2,857,000)	-	(2,857,000)	(2,533,000)
Other reserves	3,002,627	71,385	3,074,012	3,078,752
Total funds	**145,627**	**71,385**	**217,012**	**545,752**

Income

Unrestricted income for the year was £1,761,020 which was £12,899 lower than the previous year. The main decreases in income were £38,227 from sports facilities and £26,325 from filming and fairs, both of these reductions being caused by movement restrictions imposed by the Government to combat COVID-19. The levy increased by £29,649 and represented 71% (2020: 69%) of the total unrestricted income of the charity in the year.

In view of the ongoing need to optimise the use of the charity's resources and recognising the requirement to commit investment to the Commons' buildings and infrastructure, the Conservators increased the 2021/22 levy to its maximum permitted level which will generate an additional £14,151 of income in the year ending 31 March 2022.

The main elements of restricted income were a grant of £60,000 from South Western Railways representing 75% of the cost of upgrading the Beverley Brook path and a further grant of £46,035 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund relating to the Masterplan project.

Expenditure

Total unrestricted expenditure on charitable activities for the year amounted to £2,030,192 (before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme) which represented an increase of £292,091 over the previous year Restricted expenditure increased by £49,761.

The most significant changes in expenditure during the year were as follows:

- An increase of £160,142 in commons maintenance costs as a result of an extra £70,608 being spent on cleaning, skips and rubbish removal because of the pandemic and £80,000 relating to the cost of upgrading the Beverley Brook path;
- Support costs (before taking account of the additional charges in respect of the defined benefit pension scheme) increased by £183,885 with the most significant variations being:
    - The cost of £58,250 in respect of the triennial election;
    - A reduction of £27,198 in NLHF expenses as the largest part of the project had taken place in the prior year;
    - An increase of £90,635 in administration staff salaries where the largest increase was associated with the retirement of a senior member of staff;
    - A reduction in professional fees of £24,609 where the main factor was that the prior year figure included a one-off cost relating to the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields;
    - An increase in legal fees of £109,420 caused by an employment matter and the cost of defending two appeals made by a levy-payer against a finding of the Information Commissioner's Office in favour of the charity.

Other matters

The impact of COVID-19 on the financial markets during the first quarter of 2020 caused a reduction of the charity's investments of £89,000 during the year ended 31 March 2020. However, during 2020-21 the financial markets re-bounded and the value of the investments increased by £280,000.

At 31 March 2021 the charity's bank balances amounted to £181,131 (2020: £332,129).

Pension Scheme

The charity is a member of the London Borough of Merton LGPS. The latest triennial actuarial valuation (TAV) of the LGPS was published in March 2020 and set out the actuarial position of the LGPS at 31 March 2019 and the contributions required for the three years ending 31 March 2023. At the valuation date the LGPS had assets sufficient to cover 103% of its accrued liabilities and WPCC's share of the LGPS was assessed at 104% of its accrued liabilities. A copy of the 2019 actuarial valuation can be inspected at https://bit.ly/2zEKepW.

The TAV is prepared to assess the funding position of the LGPS and to determine the contributions actually payable by participating employers for the ensuing three years. For accounting purposes, a different valuation methodology is used which is intended to aid comparison between different entities with defined benefit pension schemes. The element of the valuation methodology which causes the greatest difference between the two valuations is the discount rate used to compute the liability to pay pensions. The TAV at 31 March 2019 used a discount rate of 4.8% whereas the valuation at 31 March 2019 for accounting purposes used a discount rate of 2.4%. The use of a discount rate that is calculated on a different basis and as a result is much lower than that used in the TAV resulted in WPCC's share of the LGPS recording a deficit of £2,713,000 for accounting purposes whereas the TAV showed a surplus of £276,000.

As at 31 March 2021 WPCC's pension deficit within the LGPS for accounting purposes was £2,857,000, an increase of £324,000 over the previous year. The changes to the deficit are shown in note 24 to the financial statements.

GAAP in the United Kingdom requires the inclusion of the deficit on the LGPS in WPCC's accounts. The deficit itself is shown as a liability on the balance sheet with a corresponding amount charged to a negative pension reserve. The movements in the deficit from year to year are charged/credited within the Statement of Financial Activities and the main components for the year ended 31 March 2021 were:

- the current service cost of providing the pension which at £363,000 was £153,000 in excess of the contributions payable to the LGPS by WPCC;
- a past service cost of £79,000;
- a notional net interest charge on the defined benefit pension obligation which amounted to £59,000; and
- an actuarial loss of £25,000.

It should be noted that the pension liability included in the balance sheet does not represent a liability which is payable because, as described above, the contributions payable to the LGPS are based on the results of the TAV.

Further details of the LGPS will be found in the notes to the financial statements.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The principal risk to the charity during the year has been the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on the operations of the charity has been described earlier in this report. The financial consequences of the pandemic for the charity in the financial year 2021/22 are difficult to determine, but on the basis that the relaxation of movement and other restrictions already announced by the Government continue as planned there is a reasonable expectation that the impact on the charity's finances for the year will be less severe than in 2020-21.

Despite various amendments that have been introduced over the years, the administrative provisions of the 1871 Act have not been materially updated since 1871 and this presents a risk that has been acknowledged by the Charity Commission. A Constitution Working Group has been established to review the current arrangements. This is not about introducing a more permissive regime or diluting the fundamental purposes of the charity but introducing a workable set of rules to enable the organisation to fulfil its core objectives in a 21st century working environment. The charity had planned to commence a public consultation process on the potential changes to the constitutional arrangements in April 2020, but

the COVID-19 restrictions meant that the process had to be postponed. As noted earlier, the Board will be considering re-instating the consultation process after discussions with the Charity Commission.

The Commons contain a large number of buildings, many of which are over 100 years old. The age of such buildings brings the risk that unforeseen expenditure may be required to maintain the operational capability of such buildings.

Risks to the charity's buildings and other infrastructure are managed by means of routine inspections which are aimed at identifying problems before they arise. However, given the age of such buildings and infrastructure it is inevitable that unforeseen and sometimes costly expenditure will arise from time to time.

Fundraising

The Wimbledon Village Stables continued their fundraising activities in order to provide capital to invest in improvements to the equestrian facilities on the Commons. A further £4,906 has been raised during the past year. This sum will be added to the total raised in previous years by the Village Stables and used to improve the drainage of and resurface the horse training ring, known as the Sandy Ring, on Wimbledon Common. This work is scheduled to be carried out in the first half of 2021/22.

The memorial bench donation scheme, relaunched in 2018, has continued to be successful. Donations made to sponsor memorial benches during 2020/21 totalled £24,255.

In 2017 WPCC established a car park donation scheme which enabled visitors to make donations for car parking via a coin operated pay and display machine or online. Regular users can also make an annual donation of £120. During 2020/21 the donation scheme brought in income of £2,894. Measure to increase the ease of donating, including through installation of contactless payment machines, are being considered.

During the summer of 2018, the Board launched a new appeal to raise £20,000 for the creation of a Wildlife Garden in front of the Ranger's Office, near to the Information Centre. The work marks the start of the enhancement of the area to make it more appealing to visitors and to create an education area for our younger visitors to see the wildlife that is attracted to the garden, learn about the flowers and plants or try their hand at pond dipping. As of 31 March 2020, £19,108 had been raised. The pressure on staff resources as a result of COVID-19 has meant that we were unable to progress this project during 2020/21. However, we are proposing to commence work in September 2021. The garden will also provide a living memorial to Mr Dave Wills, a local bird expert, who devoted a lot of his time studying the Commons' bird life and produced the annual Commons Bird Report for over 40 years.

The Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons were established during 2019/20 and membership continued to grow during 2020/21. At 31 March 2021 there were 501 subscriptions (increased from 247 at the end of March 2020) which had generated income of £36,113 including Gift Aid. This compares favourably with 2019/20 when the Friends raised £19,776. As reported above, £20,000 from the Friends scheme was used to fund the resurfacing of the Beverley Brook pedestrian cycle route.

Apart from the appeal described above in relation to the Wildlife Garden, the formation of the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons and the voluntary donations scheme at the Windmill car park, the charity did not undertake any significant fundraising activities during the year and it was not subject to an undertaking to be bound by any voluntary scheme for regulating fundraising or any voluntary standard of fundraising. The charity utilised the support of a professional fundraiser to assist with the submission of the NLHF grant and the same consultant also provided advice on the formation of the Friends' group. The charity received no complaints about its fundraising activities and makes every effort to ensure that any fundraising it undertakes is not unreasonably intrusive, persistent or pressurised.

Reserves

At 31 March 2021, the charity had unrestricted reserves (excluding the negative pension reserve of £2,857,000) of £3,002,627 and restricted reserves of £71,385.

The charity's free reserves can be analysed as follows:

	£
Unrestricted reserves, excluding negative pension reserve	3,002,627
Deduct:	
Estimated cost of next triennial elections in 2024	(60,000)
Funds required to fund the net book value of tangible fixed assets	(1,426,884)
Free reserves, before negative pension reserve	1,515,743

As noted earlier, the negative pension reserve represents the net liability in respect of the LGPS and is calculated in accordance with the specific requirements of the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). The net liability is being funded by regular contributions to the pension scheme out of the charity's annual income at a rate determined by the scheme's actuary.

The Conservators' estimated potential requirements for reserves are set out in the table below:

a.	Provision of working capital to cover day to day fluctuations in income and expenditure and meet, in the short term, either unexpected expenses or income shortfalls	£450,000 - £500,000
b.	Allowance for potential impact of COVID-19 if the movement and distancing restrictions were re-introduced in autumn/winter of 2021/22	£75,000 - £150,000
c.	Renovation works to estate buildings	£275,000 - £325,000
d.	Costs associated with changes to the constitutional arrangements (Note: The figures are subject to revision pending clarification from the Charity Commission regarding scope of its powers to effect constitutional reform for charities in general)	£85,000 - £100,000

This gives a total requirement of between £885,000 and £1,075,000. As described above, WPCC's free reserves at 31 March 2021 were £1,515,743, which is more than the total requirement in the table above. Therefore, WPCC believes it has adequate resources to meet its reserves policy. It should be noted that the charity's estate is a substantial area which has on it a number of buildings which are in excess of 100

years old. Consequently, it is often the case that circumstances arise which involve unforeseen expenditure. Therefore, it is the Conservators' intention to maintain high levels of reserves to cover such unforeseen expenditure.

The level of income generated by WPCC's activities in their present form are insufficient to enable the Conservators to make any significant investment in the Commons' estate. Accordingly, the Conservators are continuing to investigate ways of broadening and increasing their income base.

Investment Management

CCLA Investment Management Limited (CCLA) is the charity's investment adviser with a discretionary mandate. The charity's funds are invested in the COIF Charity Investment Fund (COIF), a specialist charity fund managed by CCLA.

The mandate given to CCLA sets out the charity's investment objectives as follows:

- A balanced attitude to risk, where the objective is to protect the real values over time but investment risk can be accepted in order to achieve this;
- A long term gross total return target of CPI +5% per annum with an annual income requirement of at least £35,000 per annum; the real value of income is required to rise in line with inflation, as far as possible.

The total return performance of the COIF investment in the year to 31 March 2021 was 24.3% and since inception in the second quarter of 2019 the total return has been 19.1%. The corresponding figures for CPI+5% have been 5.7% and 10.39%, respectively. The value of the charity's investment at 31 March 2021 was £1,630,356 and the Investment Income received in the year amounted to £47,713.

The charity has not needed to realise any of its investments during the year ended 31 March 2021.

Going Concern

The Conservators have considered the charity's forecasts for the next three years. If there were to be a return to severe lockdown restrictions as a result of a further wave or waves of COVID-19, this would have a negative impact on the level of income receivable from sports facilities and result in an increase in costs in respect of litter collection and removal. On the basis of experience gained since March 2020, it is considered likely that the charity would be able to absorb the resulting reduction in net income by cost savings in other areas and, if necessary, the realisation of part of its reserves. On the basis of the foregoing, the Conservators believe that the charity has sufficient funds to continue to operate for the foreseeable future and, accordingly, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in the preparation of the financial statements.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives and Activities

The 1871 Act, which can be viewed at https://bit.ly/2Z6NbtO, incorporated the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators as a body corporate. The 1871 Act set out the Conservators' statutory functions and duties, and it conferred powers on the corporate body. Section 8 of the 1871 Act provides:-

> "*There shall be a body of Conservators for carrying this Act into execution, the full number of whom shall be eight, and who are hereby incorporated by the name of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, and by that name shall be one body corporate, with perpetual succession and a common seal, and with power to take and hold and to dispose of (by grant, demise, or otherwise) land and other property (which body corporate is in this Act referred to as the Conservators).*"

The preamble to the 1871 Act requires the Conservators to keep the Commons:

> *"open and unenclosed and unbuilt on, and to protect... and preserve the same for public and local use, for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes".*

In addition, the Conservators have duties under the 1871 Act:

- to preserve the natural aspect and state of the Commons;
- to protect and manage trees, heather, gorse and other vegetation;
- not to sell, lease, grant or in any manner dispose of any part of the Commons, except as expressed under the 1871 Act.

On 14 April 1972 the site was registered as a charity with its charitable objective:

> *"to preserve the Commons as open spaces for purposes of exercise and recreation and other purposes."*

Under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) Regulations 1990, as amended by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Special Levies) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, WPCC has the power to raise a levy. This is collected by the boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston in a proportion relevant to the number of "D" Band properties in each borough within the levy-Paying area. The boroughs pass on this levy by way of an addition to the Council Tax on properties in the area.

Under Section 84 of the 1871 Act, the Conservators have the power to make byelaws to regulate and control the use of the land for which they are responsible.

Governance is prescribed within the separate Commissioners Clauses Act 1847, as amended by the 1871 Act, that deals with the constitution and regulation of the organisation.

The Commons comprise 461 hectares (1,140 acres) and contain a wide variety of landscapes, buildings, infrastructure and visitor facilities. Unlike land that is constituted as parkland, the glory of the Commons is that they are a relic of the former manorial lands.

As stewards of the Commons and through our independent governance structure, Conservators safeguard the natural aspect and condition so that the Commons are safe, available, welcoming and accessible for all.

This requires WPCC to:

- conserve, enhance and protect the Commons' natural aspect and wildlife for present and future generations to enjoy;
- demonstrate sound governance and financial discipline by constantly reviewing operational procedures and all aspects of management;
- seek to balance the enjoyment of the majority of users who visit the Commons for informal activity and appreciation of the Commons' quiet natural aspect with the needs of groups who undertake formal and/or more rigorous recreational activities;
- improve the understanding and identity of the Commons and interpret their rich and varied heritage;
- work in partnership with stakeholders to promote and achieve the Vision;
- improve facilities used for organised recreation, sport and events;
- encourage volunteering as a rewarding activity engaging people of all ages and abilities;
- work in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The Commons are a part of the UK series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) reflecting the importance of their grassland and heathland habitats. Under EU conservation legislation (as applicable following Brexit), they are also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with importance for beetles and insect diversity. The Commons are also designated as Metropolitan Open Land, which affords the land the same level of protection as the Green Belt, and this designation, together with the defining provisions of the 1871 Act, provide the Commons with a very high level of protection.

Volunteering is increasingly important in the delivery of the charity's activities and there are various opportunities for people to become involved. These range from supporting practical activities, such as

heathland and woodland management, estate maintenance as well as litter management. Through the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, there is a group of expert volunteers who undertake monitoring of flora and fauna contributing towards the annual Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Report.

In planning and delivering its activities, the Conservators have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. We confirm that we have complied with our duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

The Conservators, through the Audit and Risk Committee, have assessed the governance of the charity against the Charity Governance Code and have drawn up an 'action plan, in order to address any areas of non-compliance identified.

Structure

Governance is provided by a board of eight Conservators, five of whom are directly elected every three years by those local authority voters living within the levy-area and the remaining three are appointed by three government departments. The levy-area is defined as the area within three-quarters of a mile of Wimbledon Common in addition to the area within the old Parish of Putney. Both the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in the triennial elections is granted to all those living within the levy-area who meet the relevant criteria. The 1990 Election Byelaws supplement the requirements under the 1871 Act prescribing the timescales and procedures for undertaking the triennial elections.

Responsibility for appointing the three Conservators resides with three central government departments – currently the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence. The term of office for the appointed Conservators is also three years.

Conservators also serve as trustees of the charity and are its only members.

Governance

The work of the charity is overseen by the Board of Conservators, more commonly today referred to as trustees in the context of the charity. The Board sets policy and is responsible for the conduct of WPCC's affairs and for ensuring that the charity operates in accordance with its founding legislation, charity law and other statutory requirements and byelaws. The role of the Board is to develop and agree the charity's vision, mission, values and strategy. The Board is responsible for implementing and monitoring the Strategy through a three-year rolling Business Plan, which includes a financial plan.

The Chairman is elected from within the Board on an annual basis. The Board meets on a bi-monthly basis or more frequently as required. The Board receives regular reports at its meetings on the financial status of the charity and monitors progress against approved budgets, the status of its investments, and reviews the Top Ten risks. Reports are also brought to the Board on operational and property matters as required.

The Board has established two committees:

- Audit and Risk Committee

  On behalf of the Board, it is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) independently to:

  - monitor the integrity of the annual financial statements of WPCC, reviewing significant financial reporting issues and judgements contained in them;
  - ensure effective policies and procedures and compliance systems for managing risk are in place and to review their effectiveness;
  - make recommendations to the Board in all matters in relation to the external auditor;
  - ensure effective procedures and safeguards are in place to monitor the prevention of fraud and corruption;
  - prepare and publish an annual report of the work of the ARC; and
  - report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless, exceptionally, authority has been delegated to the ARC by the Board in respect of a particular matter.

- Finance and Investment Committee

  On behalf of the Board it is the responsibility of the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC) to:

  - scrutinise and oversee all financial and investment aspects of WPCC so as to ensure short and long-term viability of WPCC;
  - report back to the Board on all matters where decisions are required unless specifically delegated by the Board.

Terms of Reference for both the ARC and the FIC have been approved by the Board and published on the WPCC website.

As mentioned earlier, the Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons was established in 2019 and since then has been led by Conservators through an informal committee. The Board has however recently agreed to establish a formal committee for the Friends, the Terms of Reference for which are published on the WPCC website. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Friends Committee is chaired by a Conservator and includes both Conservators and external members.

In addition to the committees, the Board has established a number of working groups. The Constitution Working Group (CWG), chaired by the Chief Executive and including both Conservators and external members, has led the constitutional review process with recommendations from the group brought forward to the Board for consideration and decision.

The Board has also established a Stakeholder Group which comprises individuals with knowledge and interest in the Commons, representing different user groups and geographies and providing views and suggestions to the Board. There are currently 14 members of the Stakeholder Group, representing local organisations.

In addition to these two groups, WPCC has established a Wildlife and Conservation Forum. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the forum is chaired by the DEFRA appointed Conservator and is comprised of volunteer experts. The forum supports the Commons' staff in their role of protecting the natural environment of the Commons.

Following their election or appointment to the Board, each Conservator receives a briefing pack outlining their role, together with information on WPCC, its founding legislation, its policies, structures and work. Every Conservator completes a register of interests and a related party transaction form, both of which are updated annually or whenever any changes occur. Each Conservator also signs a Code of Conduct which sets out procedures and duties in relation to confidentiality, conflict of interest and other matters of pertinence to charity trustees. A formal induction process is provided for each new Conservator. All Conservators are offered opportunities to learn more about WPCC's work, through individual meetings with staff and site visits.

In recognition of the Charity Commission guidance of 20 March 2020 and for the purposes of maintaining good governance during the COVID-19 restrictions, the Board resolved at its April 2020 meeting to convene meetings in accordance with the provisions of the 1871 Act and to conduct such meetings through electronic conference facilities and to be bound by the Resolutions and Recommendations made, so long as every Conservator participating can hear and be heard by all other Conservators. This resolution is reaffirmed at every meeting that is held electronically.

Summary of the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2020/21

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is a committee of the Board and its Terms of Reference were approved by the Board in May 2018 and re-confirmed in December 2020. The role of the ARC is to review and scrutinise WPCC's corporate governance, financial reporting, internal controls and risk management ensuring that they support the achievement of the charity's objectives. The full ARC report for 2020/21 can be found on the WPCC website (https://www.wpcc.org.uk/downloads/arc-annual-reports/audit-and-risk-committee-annual-report-2021.pdf).

During 2020/21, ARC met on four occasions. The members of the Committee were Mr Michael Rappolt, Appointed Conservator (Chair), Mrs Shirley Gillbe, Elected Conservator until 7 April 2021, Mr Peter Hirsch, Elected Conservator, and Mrs Sarah Wilton, co-opted member. Mr Michael Johnston, an elected

Conservator, joined ARC on 12 April 2021. A risk based integrated work plan was established covering ARC's business for 2020/21 and beyond and was provided to the Board in July 2020. The work plan is ambitious and it is recognised by the Committee that the plan might not all be achieved in one calendar year particularly in the light of the current COVID-19 emergency.

ARC believes it has fulfilled its main duties as set out in its terms of reference as follows:

Financial. For the year ended 31 March 2020 ARC reviewed and where necessary approved the Audit Plan, compliance with accounting standards and practices, the draft WPCC financial statements, the external Auditor's Annual Letter and the WPCC Annual Report. They recommended the financial statements to the Board subject to a number of amendments. ARC members are satisfied that the external auditors have received the necessary assistance from WPCC when carrying out their audit and no limitations have been placed on the scope of their work.

Internal Control, Risk Management and Compliance. At each meeting ARC reviews tender waivers and write offs, debt write offs, the top ten risks, the full Risk Register (annually) and the actions arising from previous meetings and the progress with them. In addition ARC reviewed management of the WPCC internet portal; pensions processes; progress with the IT strategy and security; cybersecurity; contingency and disaster planning; progress on the Access framework; progress on the competitive tender for legal services; HR policies and practices; best recruitment practice; fraud and corruption controls; Directors' and Officers' insurance; compliance with Natural England requirements; tree hazard management; plans for serious environmental incidents; progress with the competitive tender for insurance broker services; safeguarding policies and procedures; protection of personal data; benchmarking plans; licensing arrangements for personal trainers and other professional services; leaseholder/licensee compliance with legal obligations; governance of the Stakeholder Group and; the Conservators annual register of interests.

Whistleblowing. At each meeting ARC reviews any whistleblowing reports, of which there were none during 2020/21.

Other. ARC completed an assessment of WPCC's governance against the requirements of the Charity Governance Code.

Minutes of ARC meetings are received by the Board. At Board meetings the ARC Chair provides a written or an oral report to the Board on significant conclusions, concerns and recommendations arising from the Committee's work. The issues highlighted to the Board this year included that insurance brokerage service should be re-tendered at an appropriate time, that the risk register management, processes and policy should be enhanced, that WPCC undertakes a cybersecurity review, that the Board reviews the charity's communications strategy, that the governance of the Stakeholder Group is reviewed, that the safeguarding policy is reviewed and updated, that fraud and corruption controls and policies are updated and enhanced and that the new Board considers and implements the Charity Governance Code action plan.

ARC believes that it has, to the best of its ability, met its Terms of Reference. It gratefully acknowledges the excellent support it has received from WPCC staff without which it could not have fulfilled its remit.

Management

The day-to-day management of the charity is delegated by the Board to the Chief Executive who has overall responsibility to the Board for the effective planning, performance, management, direction and leadership of Wimbledon and Putney Commons in accordance with policies and budgets set by the Board. The Chief Executive is supported by the Senior Leadership Team consisting of the:

Chief Operations Manager - responsible for direction of all operational staff and day-to-day operations;

Deputy Clerk and Ranger - responsible for finance, administration, HR and election/ appointment of Conservators;

Executive Assistant/Communication Officer – responsible as executive assistant to the Chief Executive, secretariat to the Board, communications (including reception) and filming/events;

Conservation and Engagement Officer – responsible for conservation/ecology and public engagement.

Pay Policy for Senior Staff

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the charity on a day to day basis. All Conservators give of their time freely and the founding 1871 Act prohibits any Conservator receiving remuneration or holding any office of profit.

The pay of staff is reviewed annually by the Board as part of its budget preparation process. The Finance and Investment Committee has a responsibility to consider staff remuneration within their Terms of Reference for the Chief Executive and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

CONSERVATORS' RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

The Conservators acknowledge their responsibility for the preparation of the financial statements for each financial year in accordance with Section 2 of the 1871 Act, which are required to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, surplus or deficit of the charity for that period.

The Conservators are also responsible for preparing the Report of the Conservators and the financial statements in accordance with applicable charity law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (GAAP) under FRS 102.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Conservators to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Conservators are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures, which should be disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the 1871 Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators

for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

Statement as to disclosure to auditors

In so far as the trustees are aware at the time of approving the Conservators' Annual Report:

- There is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- The Conservators, having made enquiries of fellow Conservators and the charity's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken steps that she/he is obliged to take as a Conservator in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Approved by order of the Board of Conservators on and signed on its behalf by:

Mrs D Neil Mills (Chairman)
Elected Conservator

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has been withdrawn.

This has been done in order for the accounts to provide a true and fair view in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practice effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2015.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Conservators use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Conservators with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Other information

The Conservators are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, other than the financial statements and our Auditors' Report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the Conservators Report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Conservators Responsibilities Statement, the Conservators are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Conservators determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Conservators are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Conservators either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditors' Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud or error; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud or error; and to respond appropriately to those risks.

Based on our understanding of the charity and industry, and through discussion with the trustees and other management (as required by auditing standards), we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to health and safety, and employment law. We considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the preparation of the financial statements such as the Statement of Recommended Practice. We communicated identified laws and regulations throughout our team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit. We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to: posting inappropriate journal entries and management bias in accounting estimates and judgemental areas of the financial statements. Audit procedures performed by the engagement team included:

- Discussions with management and assessment of known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations (including health and safety) and fraud, and review of the reports made by management and internal audit; and
- Assessment of identified fraud risk factors; and
- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in its significant accounting estimates; and
- Checking and reperforming the reconciliation of key control accounts; and
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships, including related party transactions, that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud; and
- Confirmation of related parties with management, and review of transactions throughout the period to identify any previously undisclosed transactions with related parties outside the normal course of business; and
- Reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance; and
- Review of significant and unusual transactions and evaluation of the underlying financial rationale supporting the transactions; and
- Identifying and testing journal entries, in particular any manual entries made at the year end for financial statement preparation; and
- Assessment of expertise with regards to the actuarial valuation of the defined benefit pension scheme.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Auditors' Report.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (continued)

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditors' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Kreston Reeves LLP

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Chichester

Date: 30th June 2021

Kreston Reeves LLP are eligible to act as auditors in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

Statement of financial activities
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Restricted funds 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	3	**100,659**	**4,906**	**105,565**	98,139
Charitable activities	4	**1,612,511**	**106,035**	**1,718,546**	1,726,357
Investments	5	**47,850**	-	**47,850**	49,538
Total income		**1,761,020**	**110,941**	**1,871,961**	1,874,034
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	6	**2,329,192**	**126,125**	**2,455,317**	2,162,465
Total expenditure		**2,329,192**	**126,125**	**2,455,317**	2,162,465
Net expenditure before net gains/(losses) on investments		**(568,172)**	**(15,184)**	**(583,356)**	(288,431)
Net gains/(losses) on investments		**279,616**	-	**279,616**	(88,706)
Net expenditure		**(288,556)**	**(15,184)**	**(303,740)**	(377,137)
Transfers between funds	19	**(25,000)**	**25,000**	-	-
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains/(losses)		**(313,556)**	**9,816**	**(303,740)**	(377,137)
Other recognised gains/(losses):					
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme		**(25,000)**	-	**(25,000)**	528,000
Net movement in funds		**(338,556)**	**9,816**	**(328,740)**	150,863
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		**484,183**	**61,569**	**545,752**	394,889
Net movement in funds		**(338,556)**	**9,816**	**(328,740)**	150,863
Total funds carried forward		**145,627**	**71,385**	**217,012**	545,752

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 38 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	10	**1,275,084**	1,347,703
Heritage assets	11	**151,800**	151,800
Investments	12	**1,630,356**	1,350,740
		3,057,240	2,850,243
Current assets			
Stocks	13	-	85
Debtors	14	**228,987**	148,967
Cash at bank and in hand		**181,131**	332,129
		410,118	481,181
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	**(303,496)**	(154,011)
Net current assets		**106,622**	327,170
Total assets less current liabilities		**3,163,862**	3,177,413
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	16	**(19,460)**	(22,973)
Provisions for liabilities	18	**(70,390)**	(75,688)
Net assets excluding pension liability		**3,074,012**	3,078,752
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	24	**(2,857,000)**	(2,533,000)
Total net assets		**217,012**	545,752
Charity funds			
Restricted funds	19	**71,385**	61,569
Unrestricted funds	19	**145,627**	484,183
Total funds		**217,012**	545,752

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Conservators and signed on their behalf by:

DC Neil Mills

Mrs D Neil Mills
(Chair of Trustees)
Elected Conservator
Date:

The notes on pages 38 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash provided/(used) by operating activities	21	**(185,368)**	39,895
Cash flows from investing activities			
Dividends, interests and rents from investments		**47,850**	49,538
Proceeds from the sale of tangible fixed assets		**-**	8,882
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		**(7,995)**	(153,474)
Proceeds from sale of investments		**-**	1,663,689
Purchase of investments		**-**	(1,563,689)
Net cash provided by investing activities		**39,855**	**4,946**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Repayments of borrowing		**(5,485)**	(5,485)
Net cash used in financing activities		**(5,485)**	**(5,485)**
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		**(150,998)**	**39,356**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		**332,129**	292,773
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	22	**181,131**	332,129

The notes on pages 38 to 60 form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. Accounting policies

1.1 General information and basis of preparation of financial statements

WPCC is a body corporate incorporated under the 1871 Act; it is also a charity registered in England. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are included within the Conservators' report.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant notes to these financial statements. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued in October 2019 and Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

WPCC constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102.

1.2 Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going-concern basis. The Conservators have prepared detailed cash flow forecasts to ensure the Charity can continue to operate for at least twelve months following the signing date of these financial statements. The majority of the Charity's income is secure, any shortfalls that may be caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will be covered by reserves and cost savings.

1.3 Income

All income is recognised once the Charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donated services or facilities are recognised when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use of the charity of the item is probable and that economic benefit can be measured reliably. In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), general volunteer time is not recognised but see pages 6 & 15 of the Conservators' report for more information about their contribution.

On receipt, donated professional services and facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the Charity which is the amount it would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, 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 classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Support costs are those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity.

1.5 Grants

Grants received in respect of fixed assets are classified as deferred income and recognised in income over the expected useful life of the asset to which they relate.

1.6 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

1.7 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its income and gains falling within part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that they are applied to its charitable activities.

1.8 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Freehold buildings	- 25 - 50 years
Long-term leasehold property	- Life of lease
Plant, machinery and equipment	- 3 - 10 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 15 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.9 Heritage assets

The charity considers that while the lands comprising the commons are heritage assets, the buildings, other than the windmill on Wimbledon Common, are not. As more fully explained in note 11, the heritage assets are recognised in the balance sheet at cost, where it has been possible to determine cost.

Heritage assets are depreciated over their useful economic life. However, because the majority of such assets are land with an indefinite useful economic life, the element of depreciation that would apply to the remainder of the heritage assets is considered immaterial to these financial statements. Heritage assets are reviewed annually at the reporting date for indications of impairment.

1.10 Investments

Investments are recognised initially at fair value which is normally the transaction price excluding transaction costs. Subsequently, they are measured at fair value with changes recognised in 'net gains / (losses) on investments' in the Statement of Financial Activities if the shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably. Other investments are measured at cost less impairment.

1.11 Stocks

This represents the stock of publications, maps, postcards, and Christmas cards at the lower figure of either cost or net realisable value at the balance sheet date. No value has been attributed to the stock held of the book 'Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath - A Natural History' as the cost of publication has already been covered by donations and sales. Future sales will be included in income as and when they occur.

1.12 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1.13 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.14 Liabilities and provisions

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities as a finance cost.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.15 Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.16 Finance leases and hire purchase

Assets obtained under hire purchase contracts and finance leases are capitalised as tangible fixed assets. Assets acquired by finance lease are depreciated over the shorter of the lease term and their useful lives. Assets acquired by hire purchase are depreciated over their useful lives. Finance leases are those where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership are assumed by the Charity. Obligations under such agreements are included in creditors, net of the finance charge allocated to future periods. The finance element of the rental payment is charged to the Statement of Financial Activities so as to produce a constant periodic rate of charge on the net obligation outstanding in each period.

1.17 Redundancy and termination benefits

It is the Charity's policy to recognise termination benefits when they become committed, by legislation, by contractual or other agreements with employees or their representatives or by a constructive obligation or a desire to act equitably, to make payments (or provide other benefits) to employees when it terminates their employment. Termination payments do not provide the Charity with future economic benefits therefore it is the Charity's policy to recognise them as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities immediately.

1.18 Pensions

The charity operates a defined benefits pension scheme and the pension charge is based on a full actuarial valuation. The latest full actuarial valuation was as at 31 March 2019.

Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of financial activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.19 Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Conservators in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Conservators for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

As detailed in note 24 the company operates a defined benefit pension scheme for the benefit of employees. The cost of operating the scheme is determined using actuarial valuations undertaken by the scheme actuary. Their valuation involves making assumptions about discount rates, future salary increases, mortality rates and future pension increases. Due to the complexity of the valuation, the underlying assumptions and the long term nature of the scheme, such estimates are subject to significant uncertainty.

The annual depreciation charge for fixed assets is sensitive to changes in estimated useful lives and residual values. The useful economic lives and residual values are re-assessed annually and amended as necessary.

3. Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Restricted funds 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
Donations				
Golf club contributions	18,042	-	**18,042**	17,569
Horseride appeal	-	4,906	**4,906**	20,408
Wildlife memorial garden appeal	-	-	-	6,474
Other donations	82,617	-	**82,617**	53,688
Total 2021	100,659	4,906	**105,565**	98,139
Total 2020	71,257	26,882	98,139	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

4. Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Restricted funds 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
Levy received from councils	1,247,917	-	**1,247,917**	1,218,268
Countryside stewardship grant	36,677	-	**36,677**	13,283
Sports facilities	204,346	-	**204,346**	242,573
Property rent and wayleaves	117,761	-	**117,761**	132,665
Rent from filming and fairs	5,750	-	**5,750**	32,075
Logs and timber sales	50	-	**50**	13,766
Publication sales	10	-	**10**	494
NLHF grant	-	46,035	**46,035**	73,233
Beverley Brook path project grant	-	60,000	**60,000**	-
Total 2021	1,612,511	106,035	**1,718,546**	1,726,357
Total 2020	1,653,124	73,233	1,726,357	

5. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
Investment income	47,850	**47,850**	49,538
Total 2020	49,538	49,538	

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2021 £	Support costs 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
Charitable activity	1,515,916	939,401	**2,455,317**	2,162,465
Total 2020	1,357,949	804,516	2,162,465	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of direct costs

	Charitable Activities 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
Windmill	8,345	**8,345**	9,225
Keepers and Commons security	515,304	**515,304**	490,629
Commons maintenance	584,947	**584,947**	424,805
Playing fields maintenance	220,627	**220,627**	254,076
Property maintenance and improvements	186,693	**186,693**	179,214
	1,515,916	**1,515,916**	1,357,949
Total 2020	1,357,949	1,357,949	

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Charitable Activities 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £	Total funds 2020 £
NLHF expenses	46,035	**46,035**	73,233
Administration staff salaries	200,586	**200,586**	109,951
Audit and accountancy	16,525	**16,525**	19,247
Office expenses	8,440	**8,440**	23,552
Insurance	52,171	**52,171**	33,783
Utilities and services	15,162	**15,162**	19,188
Advertising and printing	14,799	**14,799**	16,213
Computer and IT support	24,360	**24,360**	29,126
Events	8,085	**8,085**	17,473
Council tax	24,543	**24,543**	24,466
Defined benefit pension cost in excess of contributions paid	240,000	**240,000**	285,000
Profit on sale of fixed assets	-	-	(7,430)
Interest cost on pension liability	59,000	**59,000**	63,000
Legal fees	132,111	**132,111**	22,691
Professional fees	28,414	**28,414**	53,023
Deficit funding contribution to defined benefit pension scheme	-	-	22,000
Bad debts	10,920	**10,920**	-
Election costs	58,250	**58,250**	-
	939,401	**939,401**	804,516
Total 2020	804,516	804,516	

Included in support costs above are governance costs totalling £211,161 (2020: £41,938). These costs include audit and accountancy fees, legal fees and election costs.

7. Auditors' remuneration

The auditors' remuneration amounts to an audit fee of £10,075 (2020: £9,825) and amounts relating to non audit services of £6,450 (2020: £9,422).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

8. Staff costs

	2021 £	2020 £
Staff Salaries		
Wages and salaries	**914,403**	863,508
Social security costs	**96,024**	86,520
Other pension costs	**449,497**	444,549
	1,459,924	1,394,577

Total termination payments amount to £97,380 (2020: £nil) and relate to payments made to and on behalf of former WPCC employees. These payments include payments in lieu of notice; employers national insurance contributions; contributions to the defined benefit pension schemes; accrued holiday pay; and legal expenditure incurred by the former employees.

The average number of persons employed by the Charity during the year was as follows:

	2021 No.	2020 No.
Chief Executive	**1**	1
Chief Operations Manager	**1**	1
Deputy Clerk and Ranger	**1**	1
Administration	**1**	1
Wildlife and Conservation Officer	**1**	1
Security	**7**	7
Maintenance	**6**	7
Playing Fields	**3**	3
Property	**1**	1
	22	23

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2021 No.	2020 No.
In the band £60,001 - £70,000	**1**	-
In the band £80,001 - £90,000	**-**	1
In the band £110,001 - £120,000	**1**	-

The Board considers that the Conservators and Senior Leadership Team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day to day basis. The Senior Leadership team consists of the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Manager, Deputy Clerk and Ranger, Conservation & Engagement Officer and PA to Chief Executive Officer and Communications Officer.

Total key management personnel remuneration for the year was £427,799 (2020: £336,281).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

9. Conservator's remuneration and expenses

During the year, no Conservators received any remuneration or other benefits (2020 - £NIL).

During the year ended 31 March 2021, no Conservator expenses have been incurred (2020 - £NIL).

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

10. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold buildings £	Long-term leasehold property £	Commons plant and machinery £	Playing fields equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost or valuation							
At 1 April 2020	**1,450,449**	**224,909**	**345,672**	**93,616**	**93,730**	**16,028**	**2,224,404**
Additions	**-**	**-**	**-**	**4,995**	**3,000**	**-**	**7,995**
Disposals	**-**	**(5,829)**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**(5,829)**
At 31 March 2021	**1,450,449**	**219,080**	**345,672**	**98,611**	**96,730**	**16,028**	**2,226,570**
Depreciation							
At 1 April 2020	**419,601**	**89,308**	**228,919**	**62,980**	**73,739**	**2,154**	**876,701**
Charge for the year	**34,871**	**7,749**	**16,735**	**5,082**	**6,341**	**4,007**	**74,785**
At 31 March 2021	**454,472**	**97,057**	**245,654**	**68,062**	**80,080**	**6,161**	**951,486**
Net book value							
At 31 March 2021	**995,977**	**122,023**	**100,018**	**30,549**	**16,650**	**9,867**	**1,275,084**
At 31 March 2020	1,030,848	135,601	116,753	30,636	19,991	13,874	1,347,703

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

11. Heritage assets

Assets recognised at cost

	Heritage assets 2021 £
Carrying value at 1 April 2020	151,800
Carrying value at 31 March 2021	151,800

As explained in note 1.9, the charity considers that its heritage assets are the lands that comprise Wimbledon and Putney Commons within the meaning of the 1871 Act, together with the windmill on Wimbledon Common. The majority of the lands were acquired under the provisions of the 1871 Act together with all the buildings thereon in return for an annuity payment to Earl Spencer which terminated in 1958. The purchase price has been treated as the cost of the heritage assets together with amounts paid to third parties to acquire additional small parcels of land subsequent to 1871. Although part of the purchase price would have been attributable to those buildings which are not heritage assets, it is not possible to determine what the appropriate allocation would have been and therefore the whole purchase price has been allocated to the heritage assets.

The Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields were acquired in the 1930s but no detailed records exist of their cost to the charity, consequently no amount is included within heritage assets in respect of the playing fields.

There have been no additions to heritage assets since 1 April 2015.

12. Fixed asset investments

	Listed investments £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 April 2020	**1,350,740**
Revaluations	**279,616**
At 31 March 2021	**1,630,356**
Net book value	
At 31 March 2021	**1,630,356**
At 31 March 2020	1,350,740

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

13. Stocks

	2021 £	2020 £
Finished goods and goods for resale	-	85

14. Debtors

	2021 £	2020 £
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	**51,803**	86,866
Other debtors	**40,673**	47,033
Prepayments and accrued income	**136,511**	15,068
	228,987	148,967

15. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2021 £	2020 £
Trade creditors	**210,031**	72,397
Obligations under finance lease and hire purchase contracts	**2,201**	5,470
Other creditors	**49,065**	49,063
Accruals and deferred income	**42,199**	27,081
	303,496	154,011

16. Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year

	2021 £	2020 £
Net obligations under finance lease and hire purchase contracts	-	2,216
Accruals and deferred income	**19,460**	20,757
	19,460	22,973

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

17. Deferred income

	2021 £	2020 £
Deferred income at 1 April 2020	**22,054**	33,351
Resources deferred during the year	**19,930**	-
Amounts released from previous periods	**(1,297)**	(11,297)
Deferred income at 31 March 2021	**40,687**	22,054

Deferred income at the year end related to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the information centre of £20,757 and rent received in advance of £19,930. Deferred income at the previous year end related to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the information centre of £22,054.

18. Provisions

The charity occupies a building which it built on land leased from a third party. Under the terms of the lease it has an obligation at the end of the lease to reinstate the land to its original state. A provision is made for this liability and the movements in the provision were as follows:

	Provision for liabilities £
At 1 April 2020	**75,688**
Change in discount rate	**(5,829)**
Interest cost charged to expenditure	**531**
	70,390

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

19. Statement of funds

Statement of funds - current year

	Balance at 1 April 2020 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2021 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	36,672	-	(58,250)	21,578	-	-
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	2,980,511	1,761,020	(1,971,942)	(46,578)	279,616	3,002,627
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,533,000)	-	(299,000)	-	(25,000)	(2,857,000)
	447,511	1,761,020	(2,270,942)	(46,578)	254,616	145,627
Total Unrestricted funds	484,183	1,761,020	(2,329,192)	(25,000)	254,616	145,627
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	19,558	-	(90)	-	-	19,468
Horseride Appeal	23,896	4,906	-	-	-	28,802
Wildlife Garden Appeal	18,115	-	-	-	-	18,115
NLHF - Masterplan	-	46,035	(46,035)	-	-	-
Bridge repairs	-	-	-	5,000	-	5,000
Beverley Brook path project	-	60,000	(80,000)	20,000	-	-
	61,569	110,941	(126,125)	25,000	-	71,385
Total of funds	545,752	1,871,961	(2,455,317)	-	254,616	217,012

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

19. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year

	Balance at 1 April 2019 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/out £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2020 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	18,336	-	-	18,336	-	36,672
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,051,735	1,773,919	(1,738,101)	(18,336)	(88,706)	2,980,511
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,713,000)	-	(348,000)	-	528,000	(2,533,000)
	338,735	1,773,919	(2,086,101)	(18,336)	439,294	447,511
Total Unrestricted funds	357,071	1,773,919	(2,086,101)	-	439,294	484,183
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	20,624	-	(1,066)	-	-	19,558
Footpath Appeal	1,072	-	(1,072)	-	-	-
Horseride Appeal	3,488	20,408	-	-	-	23,896
Wildlife Garden Appeal	12,634	6,474	(993)	-	-	18,115
NLHF - Masterplan	-	73,233	(73,233)	-	-	-
	37,818	100,115	(76,364)	-	-	61,569
Total of funds	394,889	1,874,034	(2,162,465)	-	439,294	545,752

The Election Sinking fund is maintained to provide for the fees and costs of conducting the triennial election of five Conservators.

The Windmill Restoration fund represents the fund remaining from a Heritage Lottery Grant received for use in restoring the Windmill, on Windmill Road.

The Defined Benefit Pension fund represents the defined benefit pension scheme liability.

The Footpath Appeal fund includes the donated income and related expenditure on the footpath restoration campaign run during the year ended 31 March 2018.

The Horseride Appeal fund includes donated income and related expenditure on the horse ride route restoration campaign started during the year ended 31 March 2018.

The Wildlife Garden Appeal fund includes donated income on the campaign to create a new wildlife garden at the Ranger's Office.

NLHF - Masterplan fund includes the grant income from the NLHF for the new 'masterplan' and its related expenditure.

Beverley Brook path project - includes grant income from South Western Railway's Customer and Community Improvement Fund and related expenditure for resurfacing pedestrian and cycle routes alongside the Beverley Brook.

Bridge repairs - donated income in respect of repairs to a bridge over the Beverley Brook.

20. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds - current year

	Unrestricted funds 2021 £	Restricted funds 2021 £	Total funds 2021 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,275,084	-	**1,275,084**
Fixed asset investments	1,630,356	-	**1,630,356**
Heritage assets	151,800	-	**151,800**
Current assets	338,733	71,385	**410,118**
Creditors due within one year	(303,496)	-	**(303,496)**
Creditors due in more than one year	(19,460)	-	**(19,460)**
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(2,927,390)	-	**(2,927,390)**
Total	145,627	71,385	**217,012**

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

20. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Analysis of net assets between funds - prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2020 £	Restricted funds 2020 £	Total funds 2020 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,347,703	-	1,347,703
Fixed asset investments	1,350,740	-	1,350,740
Heritage assets	151,800	-	151,800
Current assets	419,612	61,569	481,181
Creditors due within one year	(154,011)	-	(154,011)
Creditors due in more than one year	(22,973)	-	(22,973)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(2,608,688)	-	(2,608,688)
Total	484,183	61,569	545,752

21. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2021 £	2020 £
Net expenditure for the year (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	**(303,740)**	(377,137)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	**74,785**	66,332
(Gains)/losses on investments	**(279,616)**	88,706
Dividends, interests and rents from investments	**(47,850)**	(49,538)
Loss/(profit) on the sale of fixed assets	-	(7,430)
Decrease in stocks	**85**	-
Increase in debtors	**(80,020)**	(61,273)
Increase in creditors	**151,457**	31,283
Pension fund adjustments	**299,000**	348,000
Interest cost on provision	**531**	952
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	**(185,368)**	39,895

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

22. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2021 £	2020 £
Cash in hand	181,131	332,129
Total cash and cash equivalents	181,131	332,129

23. Analysis of Net Funds

	At 1 April 2020 £	Cash flows £	Finance leases £	At 31 March 2021 £
Cash at bank and in hand	332,129	(145,513)	(5,485)	181,131
Finance leases	(7,686)	-	5,485	(2,201)
	324,443	(145,513)	-	178,930

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

24. Pension commitments

The Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme.

Retirement benefits to employees of WPCC are provided by the LGPS which is a defined benefit scheme.

The LGPS is a funded scheme, administered by the London Borough of Merton. Contributions are set every three years as a result of an actuarial valuation of the fund. There are no minimum funding requirements but the contributions are generally set to target a funding level of 100%, using actuarial assumptions.

In general, participating defined benefit schemes mean that the employer is exposed to a number of risks:

- Investment risk
- Interest rate risk
- Inflation risk
- Longevity risk (where members live longer than assumed)

In addition many unrelated employers participate in the London Borough of Merton scheme, and there is a potential orphan liability risk where employers who leave the Fund with insufficient resources to cover their pension obligations, will leave a deficit in the scheme that may fall on the remaining employers. There is however no way of ascertaining the potential loss, should such an event take place.

Principal actuarial assumptions at the Balance Sheet date (expressed as weighted averages):

	At 31 March 2021 %	At 31 March 2020 %
Discount rate	**2.00**	2.35
Future salary increases	**3.85**	2.95
Future pension increases	**2.85**	1.95

	At 31 March 2021 Years	At 31 March 2020 Years
Mortality rates (in years)		
- for a male aged 65 now	**21.1**	21.4
- at 65 for a male aged 45 now	**22.4**	22.8
- for a female aged 65 now	**23.9**	24
- at 65 for a female aged 45 now	**25.3**	25.5

24. Pension commitments (continued)

The Charity's share of the assets in the scheme was:

	At 31 March 2021 £	At 31 March 2020 £
Equities	**5,770,000**	4,101,000
Gilts	**729,000**	887,000
Property	**239,000**	241,000
Cash and other liquid assets	**341,000**	36,000
Diversified growth	**722,000**	627,000
Multi asset credit	**743,000**	596,000
Infrastructure	**362,000**	425,000
Total fair value of assets	**8,906,000**	6,913,000

The actual return on scheme assets was £2,088,000 (2020 - £(310,000)).

The amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities are as follows:

	2021 £	2020 £
Current service cost	**(363,000)**	(340,000)
Past service cost	**(79,000)**	(99,000)
Interest cost	**(59,000)**	(63,000)
Administrative expenses	**(8,000)**	(7,000)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	**(509,000)**	(509,000)

Movements in the present value of the defined benefit obligation were as follows:

	2021 £
Opening defined benefit obligation	**9,446,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**61,000**
Benefits paid	**(358,000)**
Service cost	**363,000**
Past service costs	**79,000**
Interest expense	**202,000**
Change in financial assumptions	**2,211,000**
Change in demographic assumptions	**(130,000)**
Experience loss on obligation	**(111,000)**
Closing defined benefit obligation	**11,763,000**

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

24. Pension commitments (continued)

Movements in the fair value of the Charity's share of scheme assets were as follows:

	2021 £
Opening fair value of scheme assets	**6,913,000**
Interest income	**143,000**
Contributions by employer	**210,000**
Contributions by scheme participants	**61,000**
Return on assets	**1,945,000**
Benefits paid	**(358,000)**
Administration expenses	**(8,000)**
Closing fair value of scheme assets	**8,906,000**

	2021 £	2020 £
Closing position		
Defined benefit obligation	**(11,763,000)**	(9,446,000)
Scheme assets	**8,906,000**	6,913,000
Deficit	**(2,857,000)**	(2,533,000)

	2021 £	2020 £
Total actuarial gains on defined benefit pension scheme		
Return on assets	**1,945,000**	(482,000)
Other actuarial gains	**-**	78,000
Change in financial assumptions	**(2,211,000)**	888,000
Change in demographic assumptions	**130,000**	554,000
Experience loss on obligation	**111,000**	(510,000)
Total	**(25,000)**	528,000

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

25. Financial instruments

	2021 £	2020 £
Financial assets		
Financial assets measured at fair value through income and expenditure	**1,630,357**	1,350,740

The fair value of these assets is readily obtainable as there is a ready market for their sale at publicly listed prices.

The gain on these assets during the year was £279,616 (2020: £88,706 loss).

The dividend and interest income generated by these assets during the period was £47,850 (2020: £49,538).

26. Related party transactions

The Charity has not entered into any related party transaction during the year (2020: £nil) nor are there any outstanding balances owing between related parties and the Charity at 31 March 2021 (2020: £nil).