



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

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Report and Financial Statements
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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

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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

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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 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.

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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.

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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.

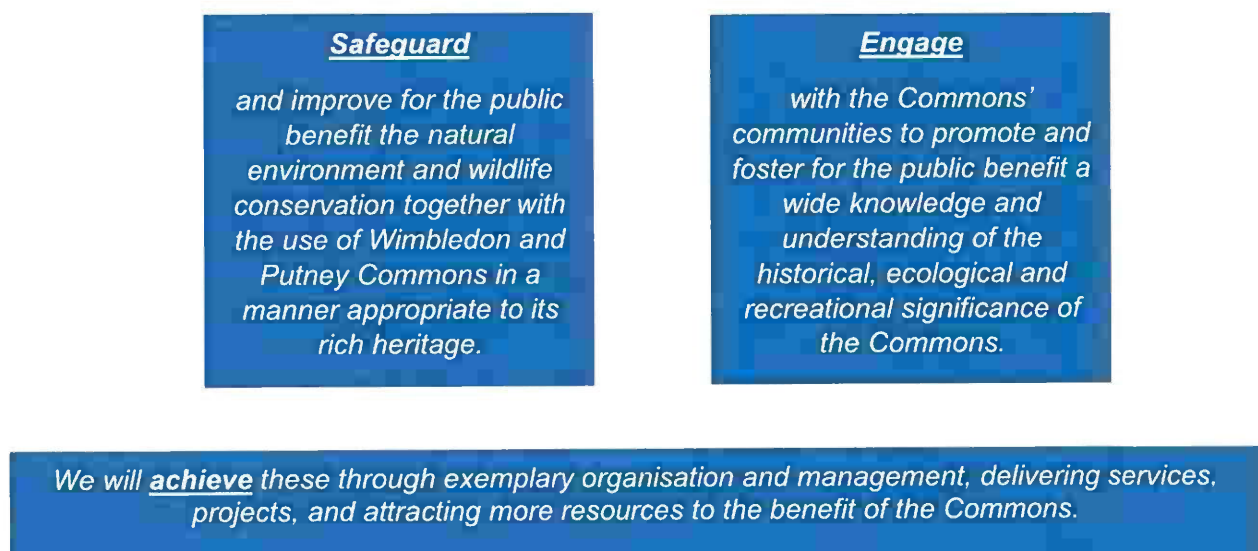


Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

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Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged:

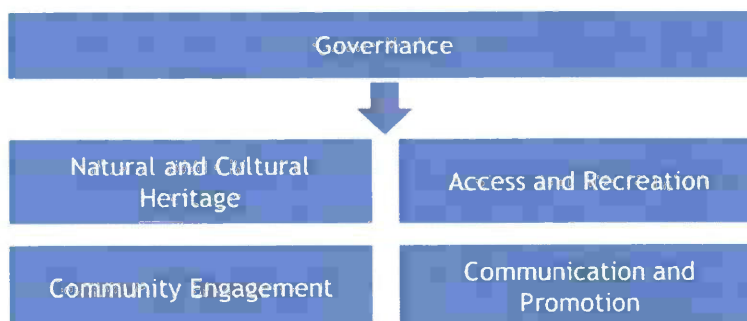


Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

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

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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,

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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

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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

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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

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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 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 beginning 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

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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 management 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.

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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.

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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.

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- 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.

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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, WPCC 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.

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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.

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	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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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	<u>1,586,610</u>

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

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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;

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- 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.

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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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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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 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;

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

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

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 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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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
		<u>2,904,541</u>	<u>3,057,911</u>
Current assets			
Debtors	13	176,208	130,604
Cash at bank and in hand		384,185	332,543
		<u>560,393</u>	<u>463,147</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	(226,209)	(208,374)
Net current assets		<u>334,184</u>	<u>254,773</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>3,238,725</u>	<u>3,312,684</u>
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		<u>3,178,052</u>	<u>3,229,165</u>
Defined benefit pension scheme asset / liability	23	-	(2,381,000)
Total net assets		<u><u>3,178,052</u></u>	<u><u>848,165</u></u>
Charity funds			
Restricted funds	18	90,765	115,868
Unrestricted funds	18	3,087,287	732,297
Total funds		<u><u>3,178,052</u></u>	<u><u>848,165</u></u>

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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 remaining balance in that restricted fund is transferred to the general fund.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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	

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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	

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

6. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Conserv- ancy 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
	<u>781,458</u>	<u>781,458</u>	<u>670,888</u>
Total 2022	<u>670,888</u>	<u>670,888</u>	

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).

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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
	<u>1,505,360</u>	<u>1,385,688</u>

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	-
	<u>26</u>	<u>22</u>

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).

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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).

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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
	<u>176,208</u>	<u>130,604</u>

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
	<u>226,209</u>	<u>208,374</u>

15. Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Accruals and deferred income	-	18,163
	<u>-</u>	<u>18,163</u>

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	<u>40,365</u>	<u>40,693</u>

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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	<u>60,673</u>

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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)	-	-

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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
	<u>115,868</u>	<u>155,539</u>	<u>(90,699)</u>	<u>(89,943)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>90,765</u>
Total of funds	<u><u>848,165</u></u>	<u><u>2,173,813</u></u>	<u><u>(2,463,084)</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>2,619,158</u></u>	<u><u>3,178,052</u></u>

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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)
	<u>145,627</u>	<u>1,888,945</u>	<u>(2,231,625)</u>	<u>(20,004)</u>	<u>929,350</u>	<u>712,293</u>
Total Unrestricted funds	<u>145,627</u>	<u>1,888,945</u>	<u>(2,231,625)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>929,350</u>	<u>732,297</u>
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)	-	-	-

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	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
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Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

24. Financial instruments

	2023 £	2022 £
Financial assets		
Financial assets measured at fair value through income and expenditure	<u>1,468,864</u>	<u>1,677,706</u>

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.