



WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATORS

AND

**AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 MARCH 2024**

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 303167

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

**Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Report and Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

Contents

Reference and administrative details of the charity, its trustees and advisers	1
Conservators' report	3-29
Independent auditors' report	30-33
Statement of financial activities	34
Balance sheet	35
Statement of cash flows	36
Notes to the financial statements	37-60

The following abbreviations are used in this document.

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Report of the Conservators
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Report of the Conservators
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

WHAT WE ACHIEVED DURING THE PAST YEAR

Strategic Context

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

Our Vision

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

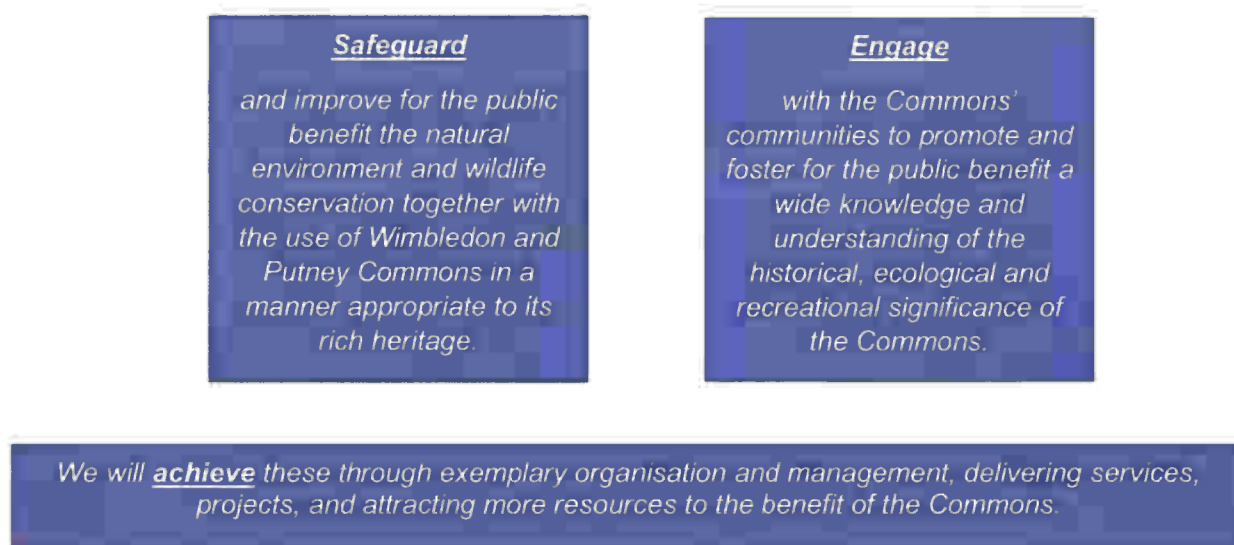


Figure 1 – WPCC Strategic Objectives

Within the Strategy, five Strategic Themes emerged:

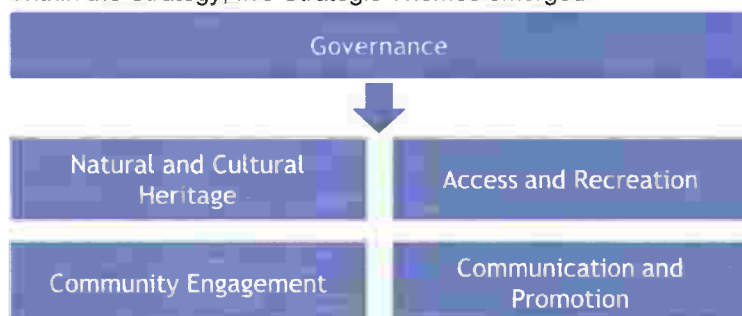


Figure 2 – Strategic Themes

Achievements and Performance 2023/24

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Governance

Potential changes to the Constitutional Framework

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

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

'The purpose of the CWG is to consider amendments necessary to WPCC's constitutional framework that will enhance WPCC's ability to achieve its fundamental purpose of preserving, protecting and enhancing the Commons for the purposes of exercise and recreation as established by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871.'

The review will identify areas where amendments to the constitutional framework are required in order to provide clarity, alignment, operational practicality and deliverability to WPCC's powers and rights and in doing so allow the organisation to consistently achieve high operational and strategic performance standards.'

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

Potential changes to the levy

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

Appointed Conservators

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

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

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

Staffing

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

Natural and Cultural Heritage

London in Bloom

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

Land Management Plan

The Commons' Land Management Plan has been written to provide a pro-active management framework which highlights the special qualities of the Commons, the importance of its landscape and to identify those areas of the site that are vulnerable or require additional attention. This management plan has been designed for anyone who has an interest in the future management of the Commons. The Commons' Land Management Plan will remain an active document which is periodically reviewed and revised as required. The ongoing use of this management plan will always consider new ideas on how the Commons could be conserved and enhanced in the future.

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

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

Management works

Heathland

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

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

Grassland

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

Wildflower meadow project at Crossroads Meadow (Putney Heath)

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

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

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

What are B-Lines?

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

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

Golf course fairways

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Report of the Conservators
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

Woodland

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

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

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

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

Ride Management

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pond Management

According to the Pond Conservation Group (1993) 'a pond is commonly defined as any water body that is between 1 m² and two hectares in area and holds water for at least four months of the year.' Working within this definition, there are currently nine ponds on the Commons of differing depths, size, and settings. Five of the Commons' ponds are located on Wimbledon Common and the other four ponds are found on Putney Heath. There are currently no ponds located on Putney Lower Common.

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Putney Lower Common

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

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

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

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

Access and Recreation

Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields

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

Path restoration

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

The four paths restored were:

1. Windmill Road footpath
2. Inner Park Ride (shared cycle route)
3. Ladies Mile (shared cycle route)
4. Green Ride (shared cycle route)

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

Community Engagement and Events

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

Volunteer Programme

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

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

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

WPCC Events

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

The six membership categories are as follows:

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

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

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

Friends Events

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

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

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

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN 2024/25

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

FINANCIAL REVIEW

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

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

Income

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

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

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

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

Expenditure

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

The main changes in expenditure relate to

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

- Property maintenance - £30,000 extra costs have been incurred across contract maintenance costs despite holding back on necessary planned maintenance.
- Support Costs reduced by £240k as a result of
 - Reduced service costs on the defined benefit pension scheme – £296,000
 - Reduction in Admin staffing costs of £56,000 driven partly by the vacancy period when recruiting to a new Chief Executive position.
 - Reduction in Insurance costs of £18,000.
 - These reductions partially offset by the Triennial election costs of £64,000 and £54,000 increase in Legal and Professional fees related largely to the public consultation on changes to the levy.

Other matters

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

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

Pension Scheme

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

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

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Fundraising

Queensmere Restoration Project

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

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

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

Coronation Events

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

Second-hand Books

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

Memorial Benches

We continued to install memorial benches during 2023/24.

Support from the local community

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Report of the Conservators
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

Reserves

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Investment Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives and Activities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

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

This requires WPCC to:

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Structure

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

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

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

Governance

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

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

The Board has four committees:

Audit and Risk Committee

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

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

Finance and Investment Committee

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Constitution Committee

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

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

Friends Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

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

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

Management

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

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

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

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

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

Pay Policy for Senior Staff

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Report of the Conservators for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

CONSERVATORS' RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Statement as to disclosure to auditors

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

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

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

Mauro Mattiuzzo (Chairman)
Elected Conservator

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 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

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

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

In our opinion the financial statements:

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

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

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.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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.

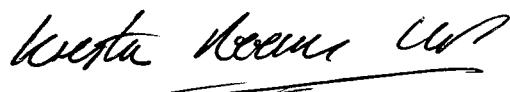
As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- 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 in an Auditors' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Kreston Reeves LLP

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Chichester

Date: 24th June 2024

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Statement of financial activities For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Balance Sheet As at 31 March 2024

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

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



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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Statement of Cash Flows For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

1. Accounting policies

1.1 General information and basis of preparation of financial statements

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

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

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

1.2 Going concern

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

1.3 Income

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Expenditure

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

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

1.5 Grants

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

1.6 Interest receivable

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

1.7 Taxation

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

1.8 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

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

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

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.9 Heritage assets

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

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

1.10 Investments

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

1.11 Debtors

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

1.12 Cash at bank and in hand

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

1.13 Liabilities and provisions

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

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

1.14 Financial instruments

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

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 2024

2. Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgment

As detailed in note 22 the Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme for the benefit of employees. The cost of operating the scheme is determined using actuarial valuations undertaken by the scheme actuary. Their valuation involves making assumptions about discount rates, future salary increases, mortality rates and future pension increases. Due to the complexity of the valuation, the underlying assumptions and the long term nature of the scheme, such estimates are subject to significant uncertainty.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions:

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

3. Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Grants and donations	88,549	98,863	187,412	244,430
Total 2023	88,891	155,539	244,430	

Legacies in the year were £nil (2023: £nil).

4. Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Levy	1,490,567	1,490,567	1,323,329
Countryside stewardship (government) grant	22,819	22,819	40,218
Sports facilities	376,841	376,841	338,115
Property rent and wayleaves	162,276	162,276	124,373
Rent from filming and fairs	26,566	26,566	25,642
Publication sales	1	1	2,647
Other grant income	-	-	18,163
Events income	-	-	9,504
Total 2024	2,079,070	2,079,070	1,881,991
Total 2023	1,881,991	1,881,991	

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

5. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Investment income	44,438	44,438	47,392
Total 2023	47,392	47,392	

In the comparative period all investment income was unrestricted.

6. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

Summary by fund type

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Conservancy activity	2,327,649	153,685	2,481,334	2,463,084
Total 2023	2,372,385	90,699	2,463,084	

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities

	Activities undertaken directly 2024 £	Support costs 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Conservancy activity	1,939,681	541,653	2,481,334	2,463,084
Total 2023	1,681,626	781,458	2,463,084	

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of direct costs

	Conserv- ancy activity 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Windmill	73,676	73,676	17,454
Keepers and Commons security	563,810	563,810	524,224
Commons maintenance	792,114	792,114	694,142
Playing fields maintenance	280,346	280,346	235,710
Property maintenance and improvements	229,735	229,735	210,096
Total 2024	<u>1,939,681</u>	<u>1,939,681</u>	<u>1,681,626</u>
Total 2023	<u>1,681,626</u>	<u>1,681,626</u>	

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

7. Analysis of expenditure by activities (continued)

Analysis of support costs

	Conserv- ancy activity 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Administration staff salaries	123,378	123,378	175,518
Audit and accountancy	17,700	17,700	16,878
Office expenses	24,341	24,341	26,997
Insurance	48,435	48,435	66,368
Utilities and services	36,984	36,984	27,690
Advertising and printing	14,200	14,200	17,190
Computer and IT support	43,588	43,588	33,126
Events	20,201	20,201	33,470
Council tax	28,898	28,898	27,451
Defined benefit pension cost in excess of contributions paid	23,000	23,000	238,000
(Profit) / loss on sale of fixed assets	(3,000)	(3,000)	(4,319)
Interest cost on pension liability	(22,000)	(22,000)	59,000
Legal fees	48,440	48,440	25,724
Professional fees	68,991	68,991	36,751
Bad debts	(624)	(624)	1,614
NLHF expenses	5,000	5,000	-
Election costs	64,121	64,121	-
Total 2024	541,653	541,653	781,458
Total 2023	781,458	781,458	

Included in support costs above are governance costs totalling £66,140 (2023: £42,602). These costs include audit, accountancy and legal fees.

8. Auditors' remuneration

The auditors' remuneration amounts to an audit fee of £12,700 (2023: £12,075) and amounts relating to non audit services of £5,000 (2023: £4,803).

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

9. Staff costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Staff Salaries		
Wages and salaries	1,035,169	975,008
Social security costs	111,377	106,940
Other pension costs	228,031	423,412
	<u>1,374,577</u>	<u>1,505,360</u>

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

	2024 No.	2023 No.
Chief Executive	1	1
Deputy Clerk and Ranger	1	1
Administration	3	3
Conservation and Engagement Officer	1	1
Security	7	7
Maintenance	8	8
Playing Fields	4	3
Property	1	1
Fundraising Manager	1	1
	<u>27</u>	<u>26</u>

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

	2024 No.	2023 No.
In the band £80,001 - £90,000	-	1

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

Total key management personnel remuneration for the year was £335,965 (2023: £346,953).

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

10. Conservator's remuneration and expenses

During the year, no Conservators received any remuneration or other benefits (2023 - £NIL).

During the year ended 31 March 2024, no Conservator expenses have been incurred (2023 - £NIL).

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

11. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold buildings £	Long-term leasehold property £	Beverley Brook WC bridge £	Commons plant and machinery £	Playing fields equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost or valuation								
At 1 April 2023	1,528,939	207,336	36,859	359,629	99,217	100,646	24,556	2,357,182
Additions	102,513	-	-	2,420	48,000	1,150	1,995	156,078
Disposals	-	-	-	(2,341)	(28,582)	-	(480)	(31,403)
Revaluations	-	(2,872)	-	-	-	-	-	(2,872)
At 31 March 2024	1,631,452	204,464	36,859	359,708	118,635	101,796	26,071	2,478,985
Depreciation								
At 1 April 2023	526,895	111,409	737	260,261	76,433	94,717	15,825	1,086,277
Charge for the year	45,026	7,069	1,473	16,648	6,736	2,736	3,801	83,489
On disposals	-	-	-	(2,341)	(22,341)	-	(480)	(25,162)
At 31 March 2024	571,921	118,478	2,210	274,568	60,828	97,453	19,146	1,144,604
Net book value								
At 31 March 2024	1,059,531	85,986	34,649	85,140	57,807	4,343	6,925	1,334,381
At 31 March 2023	1,002,044	95,927	36,122	99,368	22,784	5,929	8,731	1,270,905

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

12. Heritage assets

Assets recognised at cost

	Heritage assets 2024 £
Carrying value at 1 April 2023	164,772
Carrying value at 31 March 2024	164,772

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

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

During the year to 31 March 2024, there were no additions within the heritage assets.

13. Fixed asset investments

	Listed investments £
Cost or valuation	
At 1 April 2023	1,468,864
Disposals	(150,000)
Revaluations	134,920
At 31 March 2024	1,453,784
Net book value	
At 31 March 2024	1,453,784
At 31 March 2023	1,468,864

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

14. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	146,502	77,173
Other debtors	36,390	19,187
Prepayments and accrued income	35,169	79,848
	<u>218,061</u>	<u>176,208</u>

15. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	53,392	80,674
Other creditors	96,434	50,898
Accruals and deferred income	101,596	94,637
	<u>251,422</u>	<u>226,209</u>

16. Deferred income

	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income at 1 April 2023	40,365	40,693
Resources deferred during the year	38,330	40,365
Amounts released from previous periods	(40,365)	(40,693)
Deferred income at 31 March 2024	<u>38,330</u>	<u>40,365</u>

Deferred income at the year end related to income received in advance for licenses of £30,830, rent received in advance of £2,500 and donations of £5,000. Deferred income at the previous year end related to income received in advance for licenses of £28,840, rent received in advance of £7,500 and donations of £4,025.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

17. Provisions

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

	Provision for liabilities £
At 1 April 2023	60,673
Change in discount rate	(2,872)
Interest cost charged to expenditure	2,256
	<hr/>
	60,057
	<hr/>

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

18. Statement of funds

Statement of funds - current year

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - current year (continued)

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Unrestricted funds						
Designated funds						
Election Sinking Fund	20,004	-	-	20,004	-	40,008
General funds						
General Conservancy Fund	3,093,293	2,018,274	(2,075,385)	69,939	(58,842)	3,047,279
Defined Benefit Pension	(2,381,000)	-	(297,000)	-	2,678,000	-
	712,293	2,018,274	(2,372,385)	69,939	2,619,158	3,047,279
Total Unrestricted funds	732,297	2,018,274	(2,372,385)	89,943	2,619,158	3,087,287
Restricted funds						
Windmill Restoration Fund	19,468	24	(3,535)	-	-	15,957
Putney Lower Common maintenance	-	-	-	9,379	-	9,379
Horseride Appeal	26,355	18,617	(9,640)	-	-	35,332
Wildlife Garden Appeal	18,115	195	(14,370)	-	-	3,940
Footpath restoration	9,100	16,553	(8,782)	-	-	16,871
Beverley Brook WC Bridge Appeal	15,000	23,800	-	(36,659)	-	2,141
Beverley Brook PLC Bridge Appeal	5,509	16,223	(15,129)	(6,603)	-	-
Cricket nets	22,321	17,991	-	(40,312)	-	-

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

18. Statement of funds (continued)

Statement of funds - prior year (continued)

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers in/(out) £	Gains/ (Losses) £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Purchase of land	-	12,972	-	(12,972)	-	-
Bog restoration project	-	35,388	(35,388)	-	-	-
Orchard Putney Lower Common	-	6,631	(3,855)	(2,776)	-	-
Queensmere restoration project	-	7,145	-	-	-	7,145
	<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>848,165</u>	<u>2,173,813</u>	<u>(2,463,084)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,619,158</u>	<u>3,178,052</u>

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds - current period

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

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

19. Analysis of net assets between funds (continued)

Analysis of net assets between funds - prior period

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £
Tangible fixed assets	1,270,905	-	1,270,905
Fixed asset investments	1,468,864	-	1,468,864
Heritage assets	164,772	-	164,772
Current assets	469,628	90,765	560,393
Creditors due within one year	(226,209)	-	(226,209)
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(60,673)	-	(60,673)
Total	3,087,287	90,765	3,178,052

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

	2024 £	2023 £
Net expenditure for the period (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	(35,495)	(348,113)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	83,489	82,929
Losses/(gains) on investments	(134,920)	58,842
Dividends, interests and rents from investments	(44,438)	(47,392)
(Profit)/loss on the sale of fixed assets	(3,000)	(4,319)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(41,853)	(45,604)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	25,213	(328)
Pension fund adjustments	1,000	297,000
Interest cost on provision	2,256	1,177
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	(147,748)	(5,808)

21. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2024 £	2023 £
Cash in hand	284,038	384,185
Total cash and cash equivalents	284,038	384,185

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

22. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 April 2023	Cash flows	At 31 March 2024
	£	£	£
Cash at bank and in hand	384,185	(100,147)	284,038
	<u>384,185</u>	<u>(100,147)</u>	<u>284,038</u>

23. Pension commitments

The Charity operates a defined benefit pension scheme.

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

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

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

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

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

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

	At 31 March 2024	At 31 March 2023
	%	%
Discount rate	4.9	4.8
Future salary increases	3.9	3.9
Future pension increases	<u>2.9</u>	<u>2.9</u>

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

23. Pension commitments (continued)

	At 31 March 2024 Years	At 31 March 2023 Years
Mortality rates (in years)		
- for a male aged 65 now	20.8	21.1
- at 65 for a male aged 45 now	22.0	22.3
- for a female aged 65 now	23.3	23.5
- at 65 for a female aged 45 now	24.7	25.0

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

	At 31 March 2024 £	At 31 March 2023 £
Equities	3,850,000	4,344,000
Gilts	265,000	521,000
Property	680,000	551,000
Cash and other liquid assets	1,705,000	345,000
Diversified growth	564,000	838,000
Multi asset credit	795,000	711,000
Infrastructure	1,073,000	1,105,000
Total fair value of assets	8,932,000	8,415,000

The actual return/(loss) on scheme assets was £570,000 (2023 - £(822,000)).

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

	2024 £	2023 £
Current service cost	(220,000)	(422,000)
Net interest income/(cost)	22,000	(59,000)
Administrative expenses	(8,000)	(6,000)
Total amount recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	(206,000)	(487,000)

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

23. Pension commitments (continued)

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

	2024 £
Opening defined benefit obligation	8,068,000
Contributions by scheme participants	70,000
Benefits paid	(320,000)
Service cost	220,000
Interest expense	381,000
Change in financial assumptions	(113,000)
Change in demographic assumptions	(116,000)
Experience loss on obligation	23,000
Closing defined benefit obligation	8,213,000

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

	2024 £
Opening fair value of scheme assets	8,415,000
Interest income	403,000
Contributions by employer	205,000
Contributions by scheme participants	70,000
Return on assets	167,000
Other actuarial gain/(losses)	-
Benefits paid	(320,000)
Administration expenses	(8,000)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	8,932,000

The actuarial valuation results in an overall surplus position. Per FRS102 section 28.22 we cannot recognise a defined benefit pension asset position unless that position will result in reduced future contributions or a refund. As it is not probable that this will be the outcome, the revaluation has been restricted by £719,000 (2023: £347,000) so as not to recognise an asset on the balance sheet.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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

	2024 £	2023 £
Total actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme		
Return on assets	167,000	(1,098,000)
(Increase) in restriction of surplus	(372,000)	(347,000)
Change in financial assumptions	113,000	4,110,000
Change in demographic assumptions	116,000	279,000
Experience loss on obligation	(23,000)	(266,000)
Total	1,000	2,678,000

24. Financial instruments

	2024 £	2023 £
Financial assets		
Financial assets measured at fair value through income and expenditure	1,453,784	1,468,864

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

The gain/(loss) on these assets during the year was £134,920 (2023: £58,842).

The dividend and interest income generated by these assets during the period was £44,438 (2023: £47,392).

25. Related party transactions

The Charity has not entered into any related party transaction during the year, nor are there any outstanding balances owing between related parties and the Charity at 31 March 2024.