

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MITCHAM COMMON CONSERVATORS
(A Statutory Corporation constituted by the Metropolitan Commons
(Mitcham) Supplemental Act 1891)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19th March 2025 AT 7: 00PM

Present:

Mr. J. Cheetham
Ms. A. Dines
Ms. A. Fairweather
Cllr D. Johnston
Cllr. M. Johnson
Cllr M.Griffiths
Cllr. D. Tchil
Mr. N. Jones

In Attendance:

Mr. M. Boyle – Manager of Mitcham Common
Mr A. Kaufman - Merton Green Spaces Officer
Mr W.Brice - representing the Friends of Mitcham Common
Ms. L. Parry - Minute Taker

Absent:

Cllr R. Clifton
Cllr J. Gould
Cllr J. Henry
Cllr M. Whelton, Chair
Cllr. F. Zaman

1. Apologies for Absence

Anne Fairweather opened the meeting at 7:00pm and welcomed everyone. Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Gould, Cllr Clifton, Cllr Henry and Cllr Whelton. In the absence of Cllr Whelton who had a clash of commitments Anne Fairweather took the chair for the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

None declared

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th January 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate account and were duly signed and dated by the Chair.

4. **Matters Arising**

Page 2, item 4: The Manager reported that the outstanding landscaping would be completed by the end of March.

5. **Administration and Management Report**

1. Management Plan: 2024 Annual Report Conservators were in receipt of the report concerning work undertaken in the past year and the Manager drew Conservators' attention to some specific elements:

- Seeking of public sponsorship for replacement of benches: The use of QR codes to seek funding via the website had not been as successful as hoped in eliciting donations. It was recognised that a diversity of approaches for fundraising is necessary.
- Clearance of woody vegetation from one side of Arthurs Pond: Work on this has begun and will continue into this financial year.
- Discussion with Merton to upgrade the public right of way on the Gunsite sub site: The response from the planning officer is that the applicant for planning permission is very unlikely to be prepared to fund this, but a definitive answer has not been received as yet
- Countryside Stewardship Agreement: The application for a new agreement running from January 2025 was agreed. However, the Manager has been advised that Conservators should seek to include other areas within the Common in this scheme (noting that the Stewardship agreement excludes the golf course as it is designated sporting land)

2. Management Plan Key Tasks 2025.

The Manager drew attention to some key aims for the forthcoming year:

- Seasonal habitat management and maintenance of the acid grassland and heathland
- Continued development of information on the website
- Development of Wandle Vista interpretation panel in liaison with the Friends
- Byelaw signage - current signage needs to be removed and replaced
- Upgrading of the footpaths around the Bidders Pond Sub-site from BP garage to Galpins Road
- new Countryside Stewardship Agreement will need work this year to identify further land to be potentially included in a new agreement

3. Park Run proposal

Conservators were in receipt of a proposal for setting up a Park Run route on Mitcham Common. The Manager had identified the only possible route which could be offered so as not to interfere with the biodiversity of the Common.

The Manager suggested that before taking forward an agreement and eliciting Conservators' views and agreement, it would be important for Conservators to have a look at the proposed 5k route during the Spring Inspection on 18th May.

During discussion it was noted that this route does not have tarmac paths (as some park runs do) and is prone to getting wet and boggy in the winter months. The Manager said that that some capital outlay would be necessary if the project was to be taken forward. Previously the area was completely waterlogged for three months a few years ago.

It was noted that any costs for capital works would be supported by the Park Run organisation and by Merton.

Andrew Kaufman said that Merton was in favour of bringing in more opportunities for Park Runs in the Borough. Three designated runs already take place at Figges Marsh, Wimbledon Park and Morden Park and all are very well attended. Andrew said that it does take time to get a new initiative established, with a 15 - 18 month lead in period, and it was important to have site visits, talk to the organisers and identify potential issues at the outset before any decisions are made.

One of the issues to be explored would be lack of parking facilities and toilet facilities. It was recognised that the local Canons Centre also has limited capacity which is full at weekends. Conservators felt that it would be important that the users of a potential park run on the Common understand that they would need to arrive on public transport, bicycle or on foot. The Manager also asked the Friends of Mitcham Common if they could formally put forward their views by the time of the forthcoming inspection on 18th May.

It was noted that whilst the costs of any infrastructure developments for a park run would not be funded by Conservators, a Park Run would not bring in significant income, although Merton would pay the Park Run licence agreement.

RESOLVED: Manager to contact organiser from the Park Run organisation to talk through some of the issues. Views of Friends of Mitcham Common to be received by 18th May. Conservators to view the route during the forthcoming inspection on 18th May. Update on progress to be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Income and Expenditure (Until end of February 2025)

The Manager said that there were no areas of concern and nothing to flag up. There were no questions arising.

7. **Investments Portfolio and Recommendations (enclosed for Members)**

Conservators were in receipt of the updated portfolio and a communication from Richard Auld setting out the rationale for his current advice: Following the decision to divest shares in BP and Shell at the previous meeting, the sale had released £72,000 for re-investment. Mr Auld recommended that £12,000 is invested in renewables and £60,000 invested in Lloyds Preference Shares.

RESOLVED: Conservators agreed unanimously to follow the advice of Mr Auld and authorised the Manager to contact Mr Auld and ask him to go ahead with the recommendations.

8. **Friends of Mitcham Common -To report on recent activities and to raise any relevant matters**

Mr Wade Brice came to the table and presented the Friends' report:

1) On Sunday 23 March the Friends will be joined by RSPCA members for a litter pick in the area between Brookmead Road (Beddington Lane) and Redhouse Road. This was organised by Rose Chandler for the first time last year and was a success with a good turn-out.

2) The Friends have booked a stall at Mitcham Carnival on Sunday 22 June.

3) The Friends would like to thank Martin and the Conservators for allowing them to use the Ecology Centre on Saturday 26 July for their AGM/Open Day. As usual, we will be inviting the Mayor in post at the time, and of course the Conservators.

4) The Friends would like to tell you of 'Bidder 130', a project to revitalize the George Parker Bidder memorial. As you are aware, George Parker Bidder played a pivotal role in the 1891 Act, which established the Common's protection and created the Board of Conservators, serving as its inaugural president. His subsequent passing led to the erection of the memorial obelisk in 1896, marking 2026 as its 130th anniversary. For over four decades, since 1984, the Friends have maintained the memorial's immediate surroundings, including the repainting of its railings. The Bidder 130 project seeks to enhance the memorial's significance through: Ground Improvements: Flattening the surrounding area to make it accessible to all. Inscription Restoration: Ensuring the memorial's text is legible. Enhanced Signage: Installing information signs visible from both the road and on the Common, including use of QR codes and Braille. Public Awareness Campaign: Raising public awareness of the memorial's historical importance. Community Engagement: Fostering public involvement in the memorial's ongoing maintenance. We have a Committee member with expertise in funding applications, and we propose to initially explore the Heritage Lottery Fund as a potential source of support. We

respectfully request the Board of Conservators' approval to proceed with this project. To ensure a comprehensive plan, we further request a meeting with Manager Martin Boyle to discuss project details and obtain a detailed cost estimate. Subject to timely approvals and funding, we aim to commence the project this year and complete it by summer 2026, aligning with our annual Open Day and incorporating a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

On behalf of Conservators the Chair thanked Wade for the report. There was unanimous agreement that the project to revitalize the Bidder memorial was very worthwhile and Conservators were fully in support. It was agreed that Conservators will have a look at the memorial site during the inspection on 18th May. It was hoped that efforts to attract appropriate heritage funding will be successful and some potential ideas were discussed. It was agreed that the total cost for the project was likely to be in the region of £30,000.

9. Annual Programme of Meetings 2025/26 – Proposed dates

Spring Inspection: Sunday 18th May 2025

June Board Meeting: Wednesday 11th June 2025

Annual Inspection: Sunday 14th September 2025

September Board Meeting: Wednesday 24th September 2025

January Board Meeting: Wednesday 7th January 2026

March Board Meeting: Wednesday 18th March 2026

Conservators noted the proposed dates which had been set with a view to avoiding clashes with Council meetings.

10. Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust – Report from Cllr. Gould

In the absence of Cllr Gould a report on activities of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust was deferred to the next meeting

11. Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 11th June 2025

12. Any Other Business

It was noted that this was the last meeting that Anne Fairweather will be attending in her capacity as a Conservator as she was stepping down and taking on a new role with the Trustees of West Norwood Cemetery. In his absence Martin Whelton had sent a message of thanks and appreciation to Anne for her service as a Conservator and Vice Chair in the past 8 years. This was endorsed by all Conservators with a warm message from Mr Cheetham, and the Manager added his personal thanks to Anne for her support and advice during her tenure which had been very much appreciated. Anne thanked her fellow Conservators and said she had very much enjoyed her time as a Conservator.

At this point the public part of the meeting was closed, with thanks to Friends for their attendance and support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martin White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a stylized 'W'.