

## **Proposed projects for Freehold Tenant funding in 2023/24**

The Freehold Tenants are offering to fund the following projects in the coming year:

### **1. Ecological surveys and new Management Plans**

All will recall the proposal outlined at the September 2022 meeting to ask Kate Ryland of Dolphin Ecological Services to review the Commons and develop new Management Plans for both. The current Management Plan was adopted by the Conservators in March 2017 and there is renewed enthusiasm for a more relevant, defined and workable plan to take the Commons forward for the next five years.

You will be very aware of our severe shortage of ecological survey data to assist in the planning of future projects and management of the Commons. As such Kate will be able to help us create a coordinated plan to prepare all of the background research, implement surveys (with experts that she recommends) and create a robust and workable 5-year management plan.

Kate will gather data during the coming Autumn and Winter of 2022/23, including existing survey data (e.g., Ian Beavis' data), historical records and management plans, photographs and postcards. She will then help us to identify appropriate biological surveys to take place in 2023. Getting targeted survey results will help with decisions on what the overall management objectives should be, which habitats are in good condition for their important species, and which need work to enhance them. By the autumn of 2023 we would have collated data, new survey data and engagement with all the stakeholders over the management strategy, vision and objectives.

Kate will then assist us in putting together new management plans based on sound data with community and stakeholder support for both Commons. These management plans will then be brought to the Conservators for approval before implementation in 2024.

The Freehold Tenants have agreed to fund the entire project over a two year period which will include the following:

1. Review and research/data gathering;
2. Kent & Medway Biological Record request;
3. Biological surveys e.g. habitat, botanical, bats, dormice, moss & lichen, newts, lizards; and
4. New 5-year Management Plans (incorporating strategy, vision and objectives) for both Commons .

### **2. Victorian Terraces (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> terrace from Eridge Rd)**

To open up the path edges and create glades to allow more light through the canopy, to enhance biodiversity and wildlife value of flora and fauna. To improve access, aesthetics and appeal to users of the Common.

**3. Archaeological dig site**

Phase 1: clearance of the existing soil spoil and holly, laurel and ash trees to allow the community group to continue to dig around the pond area and open up light and reveal rocks.

**4. Replacement, improved signage across both Commons**

Full details of this proposal were circulated by the Clerk at the September meeting and an update is included in the Clerk's report.

**5. Cherry Laurel clearance**

A further day of cherry laurel clearance on Rusthall Common to eradicate the last of the dense patches of laurel by Alan Martin of Nature Conservation Services.

The meeting is requested to accept the proposals and authorise their implementation.