

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMONS CONSERVATORS

Minutes of a meeting held in the Rackliff Centre on 17th October 2024 at 1.30pm

PRESENT:

Cllr Martin Brice
Paul Burnett
Ewen Cameron
Amii Errington
Stephen Lacey
Ian Marshall
Cllr Matthew Sankey
Cllr Jayne Sharratt
Clare Sinha
Corin Thoday
Cllr Pamela Wilkinson (Chair)

ATTENDING:

Daniel Colborne (Ranger)
David Miller (Treasurer)
Gemma Stapeley (Clerk)
Clive Evans (Friends of the Commons)
Cllr Paul Gripper (Rusthall Parish Council)

OBSERVING

David Clover
Anthony Pawson (Friends of the Commons)

APOLOGIES

Chris McHugh

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that Cllr Matthew Sankey was attending for the first time, as an elected Borough Council Conservator.

1. DECLARATION OF BUSINESS INTEREST

Cllr Sankey declared that he was a tenant of the landlord, Targetfollow.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Chris McHugh.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th June were considered and approved. A copy to be signed by the Chair and returned to the Clerk.

4. MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The minutes of the Committee meetings held since the last quarterly Conservators' meeting on 8th July, 2nd

September and 23rd September 2024 were considered and approved and would be signed by the Chair and returned to the Clerk.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Rusthall Bonfire and Fireworks

The Clerk was asked for an update and went on to explain that since the last meeting on 27th June, Officers had issued instructions to the Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee (RBFC) allowing only untreated wood pallets to be burned on the bonfire. This change removes the risk of non-specification materials finding their way onto the fire and is a best practice, which has been adopted by other bonfire event organisers, in line with Environment Agency guidance. While Officers had communicated that a change to the specification of wood was to be expected, it appears that RBFC were not expecting this and as such it can be concluded that there was a genuine miscommunication between both parties. The change to pallets is a significant change, requiring work on logistics and planning which Officers acknowledge. Disappointingly, the instruction triggered the Chair of RBFC, Lisa Coghlan, to write an unnecessary, targeted social media post, which mischaracterised the facts to a point that was considered defamatory.

A meeting took place on 20th August between the Clerk, Lisa Coghlan and the Deputy Chair of RBFC, Alison Fagan, with Cllr Paul Gripper attending to mediate. The meeting concluded that Lisa Coghlan had behaved disappointingly and was not correct in some of her actions or words, Lisa was asked for a formal apology, which was not given. As follow up, on 26th August Cllr Pamela Wilkinson, as Chair of the Conservators, issued a letter to RBFC confirming that further communication with Officers would only take place between them and Alison Fagan and that a repeat of the unacceptable communication and treatment of Officers would not be tolerated. The letter asked for reassurances on how RBFC would communicate with Officers to reduce the environmental impact of the event.

A personal letter from Lisa Coghlan was received on 22nd September and an acknowledgement letter sent in response on 3rd October from Cllr Pamela Wilkinson.

In the meantime, Officers are working well with Alison Fagan, when matters that impact the Common are discussed. Cllr Paul Gripper confirmed that RBFC were working hard to make the required changes and to ensure that the event continues to be a success.

Drainage works on Major York's Road

The Clerk and Ranger provided an update, confirming that the engineering works on Major York's Road, planned and managed by Kent County Council's (KCC) Highways Asset Management Team had been completed. The aim of the work was to reduce the risk of the River Grom being overwhelmed during significant storms and heavy rain; it was not possible to guarantee that the Pantiles would never flood again.

Running alongside the engineering works, KCC's Flood & Water Management Team have continued to work through the recommendations of the Flood Mitigation Options Appraisal for Tunbridge Wells Common, produced by Watermans Infrastructure and Environment Ltd. Both KCC Officers and the Ranger had identified that there is a culvert on the footpath along Major York's Road which is not connected to the drainage system and during significant storms the culvert overflows with water, flowing at speed and high volume down the footpath, overwhelming the Hydrorock at Law 365. As a matter of urgency KCC's Officers and consultants from Watermans are proposing to connect the culvert to a new pipe under Major York's Road to a new attenuation pond, on the Fairground car park side of the Common. The area marked for the new pond currently has poor quality scrub, which would need to be cleared, the Ranger would be leading on this aspect of the planning to ensure significant trees are protected. KCC asked permission to progress the plans and Conservators gave permission to install the pipe, two headwalls and the attenuation pond.

CThoday and MSankey expressed significant concerns about flooding of the Pantiles and Pink Alley, flagging up that the Framptons' drain was a concern. The Clerk had already had email exchanges with Jon Moore of Targetfollow and had asked him to discuss the drain and whether it was appropriately engineered with his own contacts at KCC. The Clerk and Ranger stressed the importance of reporting all blocked drains to KCC via their online reporting form.

PBurnett and CThoday discussed a dormant Flood Forum group, with PBurnett tasked with reconvening the group. PWilkinson confirmed that Mike Martin MP was aware of the issues, through her own communications with him on the matter.

Action: PBurnett to investigate restarting the Flood Forum group meetings.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT & REVIEW OF RISK REGISTER

The Ranger was thanked for all of his hard work in managing the significant number of incidents, camps and fly tips, there wasn't a particular reason for the increase that could be identified.

Accidents

Since the last meeting in June 2024, there have been no reported accidents.

Incidents

In the last quarter:

- Ongoing issue of motorcycle encroachments on Victorian Terraces, Happy Valley and The Bumps. People are now being actively encouraged to report directly and immediately to the police whilst also reporting to us.
- Theft of log barrier at St Paul's Lime Grove.
- 2 incidents of indecent exposure, 28th June on the path behind Linden Park Cricket Club and 5th August at Happy Valley.
- Significant amount of drug taking waste and syringes found on and around John Barber's bench at Happy Valley.
- 13th July, campfire lit over several days on the land north of The Forum.
- 31st July, damage to height barrier in Fir Tree Road car park.
- 8th August, removal of large tree trunk used to prevent encroachment at the end of Common View.
- 25th August, tree fell on lamppost on the desire line path coming from Fairground car park. Passed to our insurance company to assess due to significant repair costs.

Campers

In the last quarter:

- Two tents north of Sainsburys roundabout.
- Two tents adjacent to rear of Fairground car park.
- Tents behind Brighton Lake.
- Two sets of tents north of Sainsburys roundabout.
- Homeless family camped near Victoria Grove, taken to YMCA hostel by Ashleigh.
- Two separate tents by side of path running up from Law365.
- Large camp near Bumps.
- Small camp near Bumps.

Fly-tipped waste

In the last quarter:

- 3rd July, mixed waste left on the path down to the Pantiles.

- 24th July, carpet dumped on Castle Road near Romanoff Lodge. 30th July, 2 x transformers on Hungershall Park.
- 4th August, car bumpers, bed frame and mattress in Fairground car park (RCP paid for this).
- 22nd August, mixed waste including bike and two chairs on Church Avenue in Rusthall.
- 30th August, three car wheels along Hungershall Park.
- 4th September, 11 x black sacks of nitrous oxide canisters dumped by the Coach Road bin store.
- 7th September, wheelchair dumped at Bull's Hollow.
- 9th September, dead deer on side of Mount Edgcumbe Road, removed by specialist contractor due to complaints.
- 12th September, approximately 10 black sacks of cans and rubbish duped around Brighton Lake.
- 26th September, 12 cooking oil cans dumped around Bracken Cottage easement.
- 30th September, camp materials dumped on footpath alongside Langton Road.

Complaints

There were no complaints in the last quarter.

Risk Register

Full review of the Risk Register completed by the Committee on Monday 23rd September.

Insurance claims

There is one active insurance claim for the damage to the lamppost on Fairground car park. The insurance policy was renewed on 1st January 2024, with Zurich.

7. CLERK'S REPORT

Summary of volunteer hours:

Volunteer sessions	Total number of hours contributed (since last meeting)	Financial value (as per National Lottery Heritage Fund rate of £10/hour)
Ranger volunteers (every Wednesday)	86	£860
Monthly Saturday mornings	90	£900

S106 – Requests and status

As an update this is the status of our requests:

Date Requested	Property	Number of dwellings/increases in dwellings	Amount requested	Latest update
18/03/2022	WA Turners (22/00238)	94	£18,800	Awaiting decision.
11/07/2022	Showfields Estate (22/01576)	36	£3,377.75	Application approved.
05/09/2022	Cinema Site (22/02304)	166	£33,200	05/01/2023 application approved. Building in progress.

				27/11/23 – notification of developer’s intention to commence in January 2024.
15/05/24	Phillips and Eynsham House (23/01150)	44	£8,800	Awaiting decision

Public Enjoyment Plan

While the ecology of the Commons is supported through the five-year Ecological Management Plans, it is important to focus on the requirements of the Conservators (as per the 1981 Kent Act) to provide free access to the public to attend and play games and enjoy recreation on the Commons. As a result, the Clerk has drafted the beginnings of an Amenity Plan. The Committee, Clerk and Ranger all agreed to rename the proposed Amenity Plan to the Public Enjoyment Plan and collaboratively worked on objectives for the plan as follows:

1. To ensure that all users of the Commons remain safe.
2. To make sure that we are listening to what our community have to say and would like to see happen on and to the Commons.
3. To provide excellent communication with our community to help them maximise their enjoyment of the Commons.
4. To encourage and increase free use of the Commons for lawful sports and pastimes, events and activities, enabling more people to enjoy and benefit from the land.
5. To develop an enhanced education programme for young people.
6. To continuously strive for better accessibility and always have one live access project underway.
7. To work with stakeholders and third-party experts to capture essential data, information, thoughts and guidance relating to the Commons, to assist with better management and planning.

Conservators approved the objectives listed. Supported by Clare Sinha, the Clerk has created a Google forms questionnaire to seek the views of the Community on how to enhance their enjoyment of visits to the Commons. The results of the questionnaire will be reviewed and used to populate the Public Enjoyment Plan.

Action: the Clerk to bring a first draft of the Public Enjoyment Plan to the January 2025 Conservators’ meeting, for Conservator review.

Fundraising

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL):

A funding application for tools and equipment to enable scything sessions to be run with volunteers has been submitted to the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) grant scheme.

Funding for all mentoring and webinars:

The Clerk has been working with Funding for All, the Kent based charitable organisation that supports charities and voluntary sector organisations with mentoring and resources to help increase chances of fundraising success. During a mentoring session it became clear that a significant issue for Officers is a lack of staffing resource to plan, carry out and administer projects and improvements. Additional support in basic administration, data management and support to deliver the public enjoyment plan, to produce blogs for the website, social media, website updates and to design set posters and information boards would be a welcome addition. A funding application for staffing resource in terms of a part time person/hours to deliver a project should be considered in future.

Action: the Clerk and Committee to consider a funding application for staffing resource.

Project Planning

The Clerk detailed progress on two significant projects:

1. Restoration of the 101 Steps on Rusthall Common

Officers have already completed site visits with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) Conservation and Urban Design Officer, TWBC Principal Conservation Officer, KCC County Archaeologist and a possible contractor, all of whom were very supportive of the project and proposed approach. It is possible that some of the work being scoped will require planning permission and so this needs to be factored into a plan. The Ranger has been asked to develop a full project specification as a starting point.

Action: Ranger to deliver a full project specification for restoration of the 101 Steps project.

2. Ecological enhancement of Brighton Lake

At the last meeting, Conservators approved the project proposal to help enhance the ecology of Brighton Lake on Tunbridge Wells Common, since the meeting, the following actions have taken place:

- The start of discussions with neighbours, which need to be continued.
- Collation of data to form baseline surveys.
- Volunteer time clearing vegetation and litter picking
- Selection of preferred contractor, Aquamaintain based in Crawley Down, who have completed a site visit to discuss removal of curly water weed and electrofishing.

The Clerk proposed to proceed with the quote for works received from Aquamaintain as follows:

- Removal of approximately 80% of invasive curly water weed (to then be maintained by volunteers ongoing): Truxor Weed Cutting/Removal Boat with operator and banksman, including fuel and delivery: £950.00 + VAT / day.
The weed will be left to one side for 24 hours enable invertebrates to move out, the weed will then need to be collected and disposed of at additional cost,
- Electro-Fishing operation to remove as many fish from the pond as possible, 4-man team, with EA Fish removal permission applied for, transport tanks and waste disposal included: £1200.00 + VAT / day, estimated to take one day.
- Site Security and Safety - Heras Fencing, orange mesh barrier fencing and site safety signage: £115.00 + VAT / week (min. 1 week hire) Heras and mesh barrier fencing to be erected around the pond during the works to prevent any public access. Site safety signage would be installed.
- Installation of 2 x floating reedbeds (2m x 1m) includes native aquatic wetland plants, installation, anchoring with anti-grazing measures. £850 + VAT + delivery. This will help mitigate against potential algal bloom following removal of existing invasive waterweed.
- New 'No fishing' and 'No fish' signage (on the Island and by fishing spots), estimated at £300.
- Interpretation board detailing the historical context of the pond, and the ecological enhancement works. £500 estimate.

The Clerk proposed that finances for the project be taken from the Beechcroft contribution towards management of Tunbridge Wells Commons received during the Aldi deregistration process. Conservators approved the request. Conservators also approved a request to implement a communication plan, to include a letter to be delivered to all residents along the stretch of Eridge Road, opposite the pond.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The Clerk has been approached by Kier Developments, who were interested in discussing buying BNG units on the Commons. Paul Burnett and the Clerk have met with their project lead, and expressed interest, establishing

exactly what is required, and getting a better understanding of the relatively new legislation. To comply, Conservators are required to have the Commons ecologically surveyed and possible enhancement projects identified and costed, at this point a financial value to the credit can be discussed and the value to the Commons considered. Kier have agreed to pay for the survey work and take this value from the credit, if we progress. The Clerk is sourcing quotes for the ecological surveys and will revert to the Committee to discuss options once received.

Fungi walk and talk

The Clerk has organised two fungi identification walks for the Commons, led by fungi expert Martin Allison and kindly funded by the Friends of the Commons. Sessions are scheduled to take place on Tuesday 22nd October (Rusthall Common) and Wednesday 6th November (Tunbridge Wells Common), with tickets being sold via Eventbrite. Both events sold out quickly, indicating interest and demand.

Earth school

During the school summer holidays, Nature Maker's Forest School hosted two sessions of "Earth School" on the Commons with interactive eco play sessions, both of which were well received. They are back on Tunbridge Wells Common on Friday 1st November for a family Woodland Wander, places are still available. All sessions have been kindly funded by the Friends of the Commons.

Disease Resistant Elm project

Working together with Kent County Council's Plan Tree team, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent High Weald Partnership, the Clerk and Ranger are part of a project to plant a significant number of disease resistant elm trees in the Borough. The Commons have been allocated 30 feathers (small saplings) and 20 standards (6-8cm girth trees) which must be planted in specific areas to theoretically replace historical elm trees that died due to Dutch elm disease and areas where other trees have been cut down, for example ash trees affected by dieback. The project promotes the return of a beautiful tree species and encourages white-letter hairstreak butterflies that feed on elm trees, a high priority species for conservation. The Ranger has submitted planting maps and awaits further direction from the project group.

Other

- South & South-East In Bloom, gold and category winner for Commons/Open Space.
- On 3rd September Officers joined William Benson and Kent Police's Community Safety Unit Inspector Christian Mayers, to discuss anti-social behaviour on Rusthall Common and get his views on enhanced safety.
- The Langton Road speed limit extension request remains rejected by Kent County Council, but the project group continue to work to get the decision reversed.
- The Forum disabled access path has been installed.

Requests to Conservators

Since the last meeting there have been no requests to all Conservators.

8. ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT PLAN WORK SCHEDULE FOR Q3 2024/5

Work continues to progress well following the recommendations in the two Ecological Management Plans. Conservators approved the work schedule planned for quarter three 2024/5. It was noted that the flail mow collector works had taken place between the 8th and 10th of October, but as the land was very wet, obvious damage had been done to the ground by the tractor. In 2025 the scheduling of the works needs to be better managed, with contractors booked for several weeks/a month earlier to avoid this issue.

9. RANGER'S REPORT AND FINANCIAL WORK PLAN

Trees:

Ash dieback

Preliminary condition surveys took place in July and are currently taking place again to prioritise which trees need to be removed or mitigated this quarter. A plan and specification are now being drafted with a view to receiving quotes from three contractors in time for the Ranger's recommendations, to be presented and considered by the Committee on the 4th of November. Work will then be prioritised and scheduled with the chosen contractor/s.

High Value Trees (HVT)

Quotes have so far been received from one contractor (Gimble) to carry out the necessary Autumn/Winter works as identified by the external tree consultants (Living Forest) as part of their December 2023 HVT report. A second quote is now being produced. Some of the recommendations had to be expedited due to storm damage etc and the Ranger will be presenting the details and contractor quotes to the Committee on the 4th of November 2024 for approval.

Other trees

The October tree safety survey is also looking at all other trees that will require mitigation work this quarter. Continual review/monitoring will also take place as we enter Autumn and then Winter in the usual manner.

Drainage/water management:

Flood mitigation

Reducing the risk and impacts of flood events resulting from rain on the Commons is a continual goal that the Ranger takes extremely seriously. Identifying where issues are likely to occur prior to them taking place is critical and much has already been done to divert, slow down and hold onto excess water during and after storm events. The aim is to help to stop the drainage solutions and rivers downstream of the Commons from being overloaded wherever possible.

Several approaches are now being implemented as follows:

- Ensuring that the annual programme of digger work is now taking place to allow ditches to work as effectively as possible. However, it should be noted that the existing drainage ditch systems are mostly designed to evacuate excess water from the Commons. Subtle amendments are now taking place so that they can hold more water (attenuate) before allowing the water to then drain away.
- Creating small side drains and ditches along path edges to catch, hold, divert and slow the initial flow of each deluge. This is particularly important in relation to London Road, Mount Edgecumbe Road and Major York's Road catchment areas.
- Whilst not technically the responsibility of the Commons Conservators: Encouraging all relevant interested parties/neighbours/stakeholders to work to ensure that road drainage is kept clean and serviceable.
- Consultation and close engagement are ongoing with KCC Highways/Flood Team to advise regarding potential large- and small-scale solutions.

Grass management:

Short/Amenity grass areas

The new short grass contract is settling in with the service being of a higher standard this year.

Long grass areas

The relationship with the longer grass contractor is developing very well due to the operator being ecologically trained, very local and equipped with precisely the right resources. This is allowing the Ranger to increasingly focus upon important grassland/meadow areas for both aesthetic and ecological gains.

Ad-hoc grassland strimming

The addition of a third new contractor is progressing with continual improvements and helpful benefits in terms of improved time available to the Ranger to prioritise other work. Further improvement is expected into the next cutting season.

Public Engagement

The Ranger and Clerk have continued to work hard together to ensure that the community are kept fully informed and engaged wherever possible. This is bringing significant benefits in terms of public perception, knowledge and enjoyment with feedback being overwhelmingly positive.

Fir Tree Road car park

In August, works took place to rework and restore the surface of Fir Tree Road car park. Due to heavier use of the car park by nursery parents dropping off and picking up children from the cricket club, traffic diversions, very heavy rain and anti-social behaviour in the car park, additional work is required to fully restore the ground. Keith Bedford will be returning to assist with modification works, costs are reflected in the financial work plan.

Financial work plan

Conservators approved the financial work plan for quarter three 2024/5.

10. FINANCE

Finance Report

The Treasurer presented the accounts for Q2 2024/5. Net income and expenditure for the six months was £30,913, £36,004 better than the budgeted shortfall of £5,091 and £7,634 higher than for the same period last year.

Much of the positive budget variance arises under the heading of Maintenance of Commons, particularly for grass and cleared areas; this is regarded as a timing difference caused to some extent by weather conditions and is expected to be reversed over the next two quarters. Other income includes £4,569 from the East Sussex Lund Fund, part of a £15,000 grant spread over three years to fund the ecological enhancement project on the Victorian Terraces.

Contributors to the prior year variance include van costs, which did not feature last year, and payroll, with increases in line with budget.

Bank reconciliation

Conservators approved the bank reconciliation as at 30th September, it was signed by the Chair.

Internal audit action plan

The internal audit report for 2024/5, prepared by Mid Kent Audit, had been provided to Conservators at the June 2024 meeting. The Clerk and Treasurer had been given an action, to take all of the recommendations within the report and create an action plan to ensure that each recommendation was acted upon. The internal audit action plan was provided at the meeting, which included planned actions and timescales.

Action: Conservators to review progress against the internal audit action plan at the January 2025 meeting.

From 2025, a three-year contract has been signed with new internal auditors, Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd. It is the opinion of the Clerk and Treasurer that the new company will provide a more qualitative and cost-effective service. Mulberry provide an interim internal audit, scheduled for 29th November, to ensure that all procedures are correctly implemented, prior to the year-end audit, a process which appealed to the Officers.

Review and acceptance of the 2023/4 external audit

At the end of September PKF Littlejohn LLP carried out the external audit. Their work concluded that there were two except for matters:

The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review:

- The smaller authority has not restated the prior year figure in Section 2, Box 9, following a change in fixed asset valuation policy in 2023/4. Please note that the Practitioner's Guide allows smaller authorities to use any reasonable valuation method, provided that the prior year figure is restated for consistency and compatibility.
- Box 7 to 8 reconciliation incorrectly includes the net book value of fixed assets as a reconciling item. This indicates that purchases of assets have not been accounted for through Box 6 in accordance with proper practices. Please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR.

Conservators reviewed and accepted the external audit report.

Action: The Treasurer to implement changes to the accounts and accounting methods to ensure that the except for matters raised are corrected for 2024/5.

Reserves policy

The internal auditor raised the fact that the reserves policy details:

“At the December 2021 meeting of the Conservators, they agreed that the General Reserve would be kept at or above 25% of our Net Revenue Expenditure in reserves (expressed in the ratio of reserves to annual operating expenditure)”.

Instructions given by the Committee in February 2024 required Officers to prepare a budget accounting for a 30% reserve, this was not amended in the policy.

The Treasurer and Clerk would like to review the reserves policy and calculations, to then incorporate this into the Financial Procedures.

Action: Treasurer and Clerk to bring a proposal for the reserves policy to the January 2025 meeting.

Precept 2025/6 approval

The Clerk confirmed that RPI for September 2024 was 2.7% and proposed that Conservators requested the maximum precept from TWBC for 2025/6 of £221,502. Conservators approved the proposal.

Action: The Clerk to prepare a request to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for the maximum precept of £221,502 for 2025/26.

11. UPDATE FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE COMMONS

CEvans provided an update highlighting:

- The successful afternoon tea and AGM at The Spa Hotel in July.
- Earth School sessions and family walks for the community, funded by the Friends.
- Fungi walk and talk sessions, again funded by the Friends.
- Purchase of a mobile defibrillator for use on the Commons by the Ranger, particularly aimed at availability during the volunteer sessions.
- A new website for the Friends.
- A request for new Committee members to help with administration.

PWilkinson explained that Council Conservators all sent out regular newsletters to members of their community and that news from the Friends could be included, if information was sent to them.

12. MARKETING AND PR REPORT

The report highlighted that there had been articles published in the Town Crier and Rusthall Life.

The Facebook group now has 2,599 members with monthly reactions from members between 1,754 and 3,147. The most popular posts, during the quarter, related to:

1. Flooding of the Pantiles.
2. Volunteers clearing the Cold Bath, south of the Forum.
3. Opening of a cafe in the St Paul's Church Lodge adjacent to Rusthall Common.
4. Volunteers working hard on Rusthall Common.
5. Before and after photos of Ranger volunteers working in Denny Bottom.

The Instagram account has 589 followers, while the website has monthly users of between 335 and 1,200.

The Clerk did explain that marketing and PR had not been a priority due to lack of time and staffing resource, while other work and projects had been undertaken.

13. PROPOSED DATES FOR MEETINGS IN 2025

- Thursday 30th January 2025
- Thursday 24th April 2025
- Thursday 19th June 2025
- Thursday 16th Oct 2025

Action: The Clerk to book the main hall at the Rackliff Centre for the 2025 meeting dates.

14. POLICY REVIEW

Conservators approved the reviewed and amended versions of the following policies:

- Encroachment policy
- Health & Safety policy statement
- Open Spaces policy

The new Lone Worker was also approved.

Action: The Clerk to add the new versions of all of the policies to the website.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- i. Request from West Kent Diggers to start work on Site B on Rusthall Common, near Dingley Dell

Conservators were informed that KCC's County Archaeologist and Officers within TWBC's Planning Team had notified the Clerk that they were unable to support the work of Nigel Stapple of WKD Archaeology, who leads West Kent Diggers. They raised significant concerns about his methodologies, techniques and interpretation of finds. As such it was felt that Conservators could not consider the request until all parties

could find agreement and common ground. To note, Nigel is an incredibly valuable volunteer and supporter of the Commons, so all involved find this position very disappointing.

- ii. Request from Hospice in the Weald to hold their annual 10km, 5km and family fun run on Tunbridge Wells Common on 21st September 2025

Conservators approved the request.

- iii. New RCP Field Manager

The Clerk was delighted to have met the new RCP Field Manager covering Fairground car park, Bill Weir. Mr Weir seemed to be very proactive in wanting to make improvements to the car park, enquiring about new styles of bins, clearing large items of rubbish and better management of the site in general. Mr Weir had explained that the new payment meter location was still not working satisfactorily and requested a possible move to the area by the ANPR camera post. Conservators approved the request.

Action: PBurnett to coordinate planning for the payment meter move alongside the proposal for electric car charging points.

16. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

No comments were made on any planning applications during the last quarter.

MEETING ENDED

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 30th January 2025, The Rackliff Centre, Rusthall.

Agreed Actions**Outstanding actions from meeting on 27th June 2024:**

Agenda Item	Detail	Responsibility	Progress/update
5	Investigate an appropriate barrier for the junction of Cabbage Stalk Lane and the Common.	Ranger	
15	Prepare a proposal for electric car charging points.	PBurnett	

Actions from 17th October 2024:

Agenda Item	Detail	Responsibility	Progress/update
3&4	Chair to sign the minutes of the previous meetings and send to the Clerk.	Chair	Complete
5	Investigate restarting the Flood Forum group meetings.	PBurnett	
7	Bring a first draft of the Public Enjoyment Plan to the January 2025 Conservators' meeting, for Conservator review.	Clerk	
7	Consider a funding application for staffing resource.	Clerk and Committee	
7	Deliver a full project specification for restoration of the 101 Steps project.	Ranger	
10	Review progress against the internal audit action plan at the January 2025 meeting.	Conservators	
10	Implement changes to the accounts and accounting methods to ensure that the except for matters raised are corrected for 2024/5.	Treasurer	
10	Bring a proposal for the reserves policy to the January 2025 meeting.	Clerk and Treasurer	
10	Prepare a request to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for the maximum precept of £221,502 for 2025/26.	Clerk	
13	Book the main hall at the Rackliff Centre for the 2025 meeting dates.	Clerk	Complete
14	Add the new versions of all of the policies to the website.	Clerk	Complete
15ii	Coordinate planning for the payment meter move alongside the proposal for electric car charging points.	PBurnett	