



Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

Levy Consultation Report December 2023

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Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators 2023 Levy Consultation Report

Summary

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators ('WPCC' or the 'Conservators') conducted a six-week consultation on a proposal to raise the existing levy paid by local residents to fund the upkeep and maintenance of Wimbledon and Putney Commons. WPCC invited responses from all 44,500 households in the levy-paying area.

Responses were received from 5,969 levy-paying households, representing a response rate of 13%. The results indicate that the majority of respondents (79%) are in favour of the proposed levy increase. The remaining 21% of respondents do not support the proposal.

A significant proportion (33%) of respondents provided additional comments with their response. These comments included views on other funding options, as well as suggestions regarding the maintenance, use and management of the Commons. The feedback received is summarised in detail in this report.

Several key stakeholders, including the London Boroughs of Merton, Kingston and Wandsworth; the three local MPs (Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon), Fleur Anderson (Putney) and Sarah Olney (Richmond Park)); and the two local civic societies (Wimbledon and Putney) were also invited to formally respond to the consultation. All responses received from key stakeholders are published in Appendix 2 to this report.

Introduction

Wimbledon and Putney Commons, comprising Wimbledon Common (including Putney Heath and the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields) and Putney Lower Common, collectively known as the 'Commons', comprise 1,140 acres of open, green space. The rarity of certain habitats means that around 80% of the Commons are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI') and large parts are also designated as a Special Area of Conservation ('SAC').

The body responsible for managing the Commons, the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators ('WPCC'), was established through an Act of Parliament in 1871. WPCC was created with the explicit purpose of safeguarding the Commons, ensuring they remain 'open, unenclosed and unbuilt on'. WPCC has a duty to protect, conserve and restore the unique mixture of woodland, heathland, grassland and wetland habitats, playing a vital role in preserving natural habitats and providing recreational spaces for the local community. WPCC is also registered as a charity.

To ensure the continued preservation of the Commons, legislation imposes a levy on those living in properties within three-quarters of a mile of the perimeter of Wimbledon Common, measured by the most direct route along roads or footpaths, or within the old Parish of Putney

as it was in 1871. In the 2022/23 financial year, the levy contributed £1.3 million of the total £2.2 million cost of managing the Commons.

The authority to impose the existing levy is contained in regulations made in 1990. Since that time, London has experienced a nearly 30% increase in population, resulting in greater usage of the Commons. This has led to an increased strain on the Commons infrastructure and associated management costs. For instance, waste clearance costs in the last year alone were almost triple pre-pandemic levels. In addition, the way in which WPCC works has had to change over the last 30 years, with added responsibilities for visitor health and safety, tree and building safety, data protection and charity management. The existing levy has been increased by inflation since 1990 but is no longer sufficient to meet the increased cost of managing and maintaining the Commons. Importantly the 1990 regulations provide for a fixed total amount which is increased by inflation each year; there is no extra increase built into the aggregate amount to reflect any increase in the population.

WPCC engaged independent consultants to conduct an informal consultation in the autumn of 2022 to test support for increasing the levy. At that time, 89% of respondents agreed that the levy should be increased. Following this informal consultation and in accordance with a phased approach to the overall consultation process that the Conservators had publicly set out in late 2019, WPCC agreed to undertake a consultation of all households in the levy-paying area.

Consultation Process

Levy-Paying Households

WPCC engaged an external organisation, Civica Election Services, to carry out a consultation on the proposal to pursue an increase in the levy to raise approximately £375,000 in additional income per year. It is proposed that additional funds would be used to support the annual costs associated with the Commons' Masterplan, balance WPCC's operating budget, and finance works to buildings and landscapes that have been deferred due to budget constraints.

The consultation was launched online on 8 September 2023 and ran for approximately six weeks, closing on Sunday 29 October 2023. The consultation documents were sent by post to all 44,500 households in the levy-paying area on 8 September 2023 to ensure all respondents would have at least six weeks to respond. Participants were given the option to respond either online or by freepost return envelope using a unique reference number which enabled a single, anonymous response per household.

The documents sent to levy-payers consisted of a Consultation Document (Appendix 1), which set out the details of the proposed levy increase, including setting out the proposed increase applicable to properties in each Council Tax Band (contained in 'Table A'). For example, for a property in Council Tax Band D, the proposed increase would amount to £9.05 per year.

The consultation question was:

'Do you support the proposed levy increase as set out in Table A of the consultation document?'

Households were able to respond to this question with either a 'yes' or 'no' and provide any additional comments in a free text box.

The consultation was publicised in a range of ways, including by:

- A media release circulated by WPCC on 5 September 2023;
- A series of posts on WPCC's Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and NextDoor accounts announcing the launch of the consultation, notice of public meetings and reminders to respond;
- Notices posted on more than 30 public noticeboards situated around the Commons;
- Two e-Newsletters sent to the Commons' mailing list in September and October 2023;
- Letters sent by WPCC to a variety of stakeholders requesting they promote the consultation among their membership and/or constituents.

Four public meetings were held during the consultation period (three in person and one online) to provide levy-payers with an opportunity to learn more about the levy proposal and ask questions.

At the launch of the consultation, a 'Question and Answer' section was published on the consultation page of WPCC's website, along with the Consultation Document. Questions that arose throughout the consultation period, including at public meetings, were added to the 'Question and Answer' page throughout the consultation period.

Key Stakeholders

Eight key stakeholders were also invited to formally respond to the consultation, including the three constituency MPs, the three local authorities into which the levy-paying area extends and two civic societies. A list of stakeholders invited to respond to the consultation and the responses received are set out in Appendix 2.

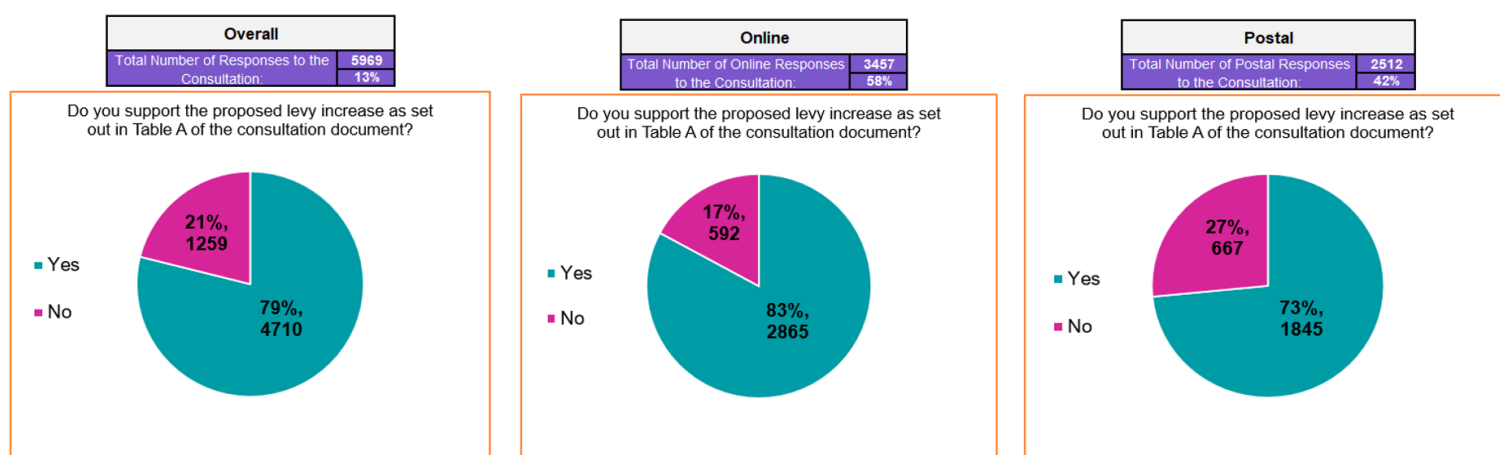
Consultation Outcome

The consultation received 5,969 responses, representing 13% of levy-paying households. Statistically, this response rate was assessed as highly representative, meaning if the consultation were repeated, there is a 95% probability that it would produce approximately the same result.¹

A clear majority of respondents (79%, or 4,710 households) were supportive of the proposed levy increase. Only 21% (1,259) of respondents did not support the proposal.

¹ As independently assessed by Civica Election Services

Of all consultation responses, 58% responded online and 42% responded via post. There was little variation between responses provided online or via post.



Additional Comments from Levy-Paying Households

Approximately one third (33%) of respondents chose to provide additional comments. Civica Election Services undertook a qualitative analysis of the responses provided. All comments were categorised and allocated a theme. All feedback provided has also been reviewed by WPCC. Broadly, the comments:

- Express support for the proposal/offer reasons for support;
- Express a lack of support for the proposal/offer reasons for lack of support;
- Offer suggestions or views on the funding of the Commons;
- Offer suggestions or views regarding the maintenance, management and use of the Commons, or provide comments and questions regarding governance, communication, information access and other miscellaneous matters.

Comments in Support of the Proposal

Approximately 35% of respondents who provided additional comments expressed support for the proposal, with many providing reasons for their support. The comments indicate that levy-payers value the Commons and feel fortunate to reside close by, with many highlighting benefits to their health and wellbeing.

Examples include:

'Our open spaces are invaluable community resources and I wholly support the proposed levy increase to protect and improve our Commons.'

'I think this is a small price to pay for the privilege of living so close to such a remarkable open wild space.'

'I walk around the common every morning before work which makes a huge positive impact on my physical and mental health. Although my personal outgoings are increasing significantly, this is such a minor increase I have no issue with it.'

In addition, a number of respondents expressed concerns that the proposed levy increase would not be sufficient, or indicated they would be willing to support an even higher increase than that proposed.

Examples include:

'I fully support the levy increase and would support a higher one. I love the commons - they are a sanctuary and a haven to escape to. I am very supportive of the work of the WPCC team and would be supportive of more ambitious proposals in terms of managing impacts of climate change. Thank you very much to the WPCC team for all that you do.'

'I'm surprised that the additional £375k is enough.'

'I'd willingly pay 2 or 3 times the proposed increase to maintain the Commons as an SSSI. Not just for local residents.'

WPCC's Response

WPCC was encouraged by feedback reflecting on the importance of the Commons to the local community.

The proposed levy increase was calculated based on the minimum sum WPCC needs to achieve the plans set out in the Consultation Document. WPCC understands residents may have concerns that the proposed increase will not be sufficient to meet the needs set out, however, in arriving at the proposed figure, WPCC has also taken into account the impact the proposed increase will have on individual households in recognition of cost of living pressures. The proposed increase assumes WPCC will continue to rely on grants and donations to fund one-off major project costs in the Masterplan.

Comments Opposed to the Proposal

Many respondents who indicated they were not supportive of the proposal provided additional comments reflecting their opposition, representing 14% of all additional comments. Of the respondents who provided reasons for not supporting the proposal, the majority (78%) cited financial pressures including the rising cost of living. Other respondents were unsupportive of the proposal as they do not visit the Commons.

Examples include:

'I am not supporting this levy increase under the increasing cost of living challenges.'

'We do not support the increased levy and do not support the levy at all, as we do not use the commons, it is as unjust as if you were to charge the congestion charge when we don't drive. Hundreds of people come from far and wide to use the commons and don't have to pay, so why should we?'

Some respondents indicated they would support a levy increase at a lower level than proposed, or suggested the increase be staggered over several years.

Examples:

'Would support an increased levy at a lower rate than proposed.'

'Must the increase be done in one year or can proposed total cost not be broken down over two years to support in living crisis/ease impact?'

WPCC's Response

WPCC understands the rising cost of living is placing increased pressure on households. The impact of the proposed levy increase on households was taken into account when considering the proposed figure so that the increase proposed is the minimum WPCC feel is necessary to achieve the work set out in the Consultation Document. The levy is set by WPCC each year. WPCC is committed to keeping the levy under review to ensure it raises only what is needed to protect and maintain the Commons.

WPCC has considered suggestions to stagger the increase over several years and is of the view that this option will not be sufficient to meet the current needs both financially and operationally of the organisation.

Funding Suggestions

Approximately 40% of all additional comments provided included suggestions related to WPCC's funding sources and management. While some respondents suggested WPCC should pursue other options instead of or in addition to an increase in the levy, 58% of these suggestions were made by levy-paying households who expressed support for the proposed levy increase. This indicates that, whilst the majority of respondents support the increased levy, many of those who do also believe WPCC should continue to explore options to fund the Commons in addition to the levy.

The majority of funding suggestions urged WPCC to explore increasing the levy-paying area (23%) or introducing charges for car parking (23%). Other suggestions included hosting commercial events, campaigning more vigorously for donations, seeking additional support from sporting clubs, charging commercial dog walkers, seeking centralised funding and grants, reducing governance expenditure, delaying planned works and requiring a premium levy contribution by those in higher Council Tax Bands.

Examples:

'Why is the levy still limited to residents within three quarters of a mile of the Commons when a majority of users are likely to live beyond that footprint. Is that 19th Century viewpoint on 'Commons accessibility' still relevant to today? Levy-payers should be entitled to free parking if such charges are introduced.'

'I am sure the levy increase is the right short term solution, but increasing the levy-paying area must be the right long term solution, which should be part of the Master Plan, with time and resources allocated to achieve this objective.'

'The levy (with the proposed increase) is extremely good value for money. I would support extending the levy-paying area but do see the process would be lengthy and complex. Charging for car parking (and noted there is no express power) would be fine if it was very easy to pay; at the moment by the time I've parked and am out of car I've kind of lost sight of the pay machines. I agree with the Conservators' approach to increased commercialisation.'

WPCC's Response

WPCC welcomes the suggestions received from local residents. Difficulties with potential expansion of the levy-paying area and the introduction of car parking charges were outlined in the Consultation Document, however, WPCC acknowledges the views of levy-payers and will continue to explore these options in the longer term.

Many of the suggestions made are already implemented by WPCC and contribute to the annual budget. These include charging for commercial use of the commons, seeking voluntary contributions from visitors, seeking contributions from sports clubs and applying for funding grants. Some respondents provided specific suggestions regarding, for example, the collection of donations or engagement with local businesses that WPCC have found particularly useful and will explore further.

WPCC will continue to investigate and, where appropriate, pursue alternative sources of funding for the Commons and will ensure any increases in non-levy funding are taken into account when setting the levy each year. While it is useful to understand levy-payers' views on funding management, and several helpful suggestions have been proposed, WPCC is of the view that these suggestions will not address the current funding difficulties.

A summary of comments containing funding suggestions, and WPCC's response to those suggestions, is contained in Appendix 3.

Comments Regarding Maintenance and Management of the Commons and Other Matters

Many responses contained feedback regarding the management of the Commons, including suggested proposals for future works and projects as well as comments on the Masterplan.

For example, some respondents were supportive of the proposed levy increase, but requested maintenance improvements to specific paths in their response.

These additional comments include, among other things, requests to:

- improve cycling infrastructure
- discourage cycling
- construct a children's play area
- increase engagement with school children
- improve mobile network coverage
- install CCTV
- improve specific paths, signage, ponds and access ways and install more bins
- request maintenance of paths to clear brambles and nettles and grass
- leave paths and signage as they are due to concerns about the impact of increased usage
- require dogs to be kept on leads or walked in specific areas
- not introduce any restrictions on dog walking
- invest in sports facilities and social infrastructure

In addition, a number of respondents asked general queries, or requested further information and transparency about the work being done on the Commons and the governance structure and accounts of WPCC.

Several others expressed an interest in volunteering with the Commons or providing additional financial donations to support the work of WPCC.

WPCC's Response

While many of the comments regarding the management of the Commons go beyond the scope of the levy proposal, WPCC welcomes this engagement from levy-payers and is committed to listening to feedback. All comments have been reviewed and will be taken into account when planning future initiatives.

WPCC are grateful that many respondents also expressed an interest in supporting the Commons further. Those respondents are encouraged to visit WPCC's website to make a donation, join the 'Friends of Wimbledon and Putney Commons' or register to volunteer.

Key Stakeholder Responses

Seven responses to the consultation were received from key stakeholders. All key stakeholder responses are published in Appendix 2 and summarised below.

The Wimbledon Society

The Wimbledon Society agreed that raising the levy is necessary to protect the Commons and to ensure that residents of Wimbledon and Putney and beyond have access to the Commons and the area is managed and maintained appropriately for future generations. However, they also made suggestions to provide longer term funding. These were:

- for the Commons to formally register as recipients for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be introduced from 2024;
- that WPCC make a case for the funding of all large, open spaces in London to be the responsibility of the GLA by way of a precept.

Stephen Hammond MP

Stephen Hammond MP responded in support of the proposal, noting the Commons are hugely loved and used by his constituents. He urged WPCC not to put great weight on submissions about how the levy will affect local people's cost of living, noting the levy will increase by only 17p per week (for a Band D property).

Sarah Olney MP

Sarah Olney MP responded in support of the proposal. She wrote that the projects to protect the biodiversity of the area, the restoration of wetlands and the maintenance of the SSSI are essential parts of wider conservation efforts. While noting the additional pressures on residents' finances, she expressed the view that the proposed increases of between 12 pence to 34 pence a week was modest given the benefits it would bring.

The Putney Society

The Putney Society responded in support of the proposal and stressed that the benefit of the Commons to the mental and physical health of the Putney and Roehampton residents cannot be overestimated. The Putney Society believe that the increase in the levy is better than any further commercialisation of the Commons. However, they did state that not all levy-payers benefit from the Commons to the same extent as others and encouraged more outreach work from the Conservators.

LB of Wandsworth

The LB of Wandsworth expressed opposition to the proposal, citing concerns about high inflation and the cost of living crisis for residents. The LB of Wandsworth offered cooperative assistance to WPCC to assist in managing the commons effectively.

LB of Merton

The LB of Merton expressed opposition to the proposal on the basis of the cost of living crisis. The LB of Merton have offered continued constructive support to WPCC to effectively maintain the Commons.

Fleur Anderson MP

Fleur Anderson MP expressed opposition to the proposal, raising concerns about the effect and timing of the proposal on lower income families in Roehampton, Putney and Southfields due to the cost of living crisis.

WPCC's Response

WPCC is grateful for all feedback provided and is committed to maintaining an open dialogue with all key stakeholders.

WPCC has met with the Wimbledon Society to discuss their feedback. In respect of the suggestion to register as a recipient of BNG funding, this is something WPCC are currently exploring, however any funding received is not anticipated to be sufficiently timely or certain to address the current funding shortfall.

In respect of the suggestion that open spaces in London be funded by the GLA, WPCC maintains an ongoing dialogue with relevant authorities regarding the management of open spaces and will continue to do so. In addition, WPCC already applies for funding grants from local and other authorities where appropriate to fund planned works.

WPCC has approached both LB Merton and LB Wandsworth with regard to their offers of assistance in finding efficiencies in the management of the Commons. While WPCC is committed to working collaboratively with key stakeholders to benefit the Commons, at this stage, neither LB Merton nor LB Wandsworth have provided any further detail on their offers of assistance for WPCC to consider. WPCC will continue to explore offers of assistance.

Conclusions

Given the high level of support among levy-paying households, WPCC has decided to continue to pursue a levy increase in line with the existing proposal. WPCC will also continue to explore other measures to increase funds and reduce costs. While grateful for the views and suggestions made in this regard, WPCC is of the view that none of the alternative suggestions put forward are likely to address the current shortage of funds.

It is important to note that the levy is set by WPCC each year based on the needs of the charity. Historically, WPCC has not always charged the maximum permitted levy. If the levy is increased, but funding from other sources increases in future, WPCC could reduce the levy accordingly in subsequent years.

At present, the maximum permissible levy is set out in regulations. These regulations can only be amended by the Secretary of State. As the proposed levy increase exceeds the current

statutory permitted maximum, WPCC will now provide the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with the results of this consultation for its consideration.

WPCC will continue to provide updates to levy-payers and the wider community through the WPCC website and social media channels.



Wimbledon and Putney Commons CONSULTATION ON THE LEVY

This document provides households in the levy-paying area with information about a proposal to change the levy to fund the sustainable management of the Commons.

You have received this document because your household is within the levy-paying area and we are seeking your views. Please read on to learn about our proposal and then respond to this consultation.

About the Commons

Comprising 1,140 acres of open green space, Wimbledon and Putney Commons provide a wilderness to explore, the opportunity to enjoy nature with its health and wellbeing benefits and an open space for exercise and recreation.

The rarity of certain habitats – particularly the ancient heathland – means that around 80% of the Commons were designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1953, making the Commons one of the UK's most important protected landscapes. In 2005, large parts were also made a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in recognition of their internationally important habitats and species. As a result, Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC), the body that owns and manages the Commons, has a duty to protect, conserve and restore the unique mixture of woodland, heathland, grassland and wetland habitats. We want to ensure they continue to thrive for the benefit of current and future generations.

WPCC was created by an Act of Parliament in 1871 and was subsequently registered as a local independent charity.

The Act protects the Commons to ensure that they remain 'open, unenclosed and unbuilt on' so that they can continue to be enjoyed for outdoor recreation and exercise. The charity's trustees (known as Conservators) oversee the management of the Commons, with day-to-day operations carried out by a dedicated team of 25 staff. This unique governance structure was created in 1871 following a dispute between the local community and the then Lord of the Manor, Earl Spencer, who had tried to enclose most of the Commons and sell off the rest for development. A community campaign led to the passing of the Act to preserve the Commons for the public benefit. It placed a small levy on those living close to the Commons to help pay for their upkeep.

Green spaces in London have never been more important. Yet today, with a larger population surrounding the Commons, the charity is facing immense pressures. WPCC is therefore proposing to increase the levy to help meet the current and future challenges facing the Commons.

**We are asking for your views
on this proposal.**



Wimbledon and Putney Commons include Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath, Putney Lower Common and Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields. Visit wpcc.org.uk/nature to find out more about their habitats.

How the Commons are funded

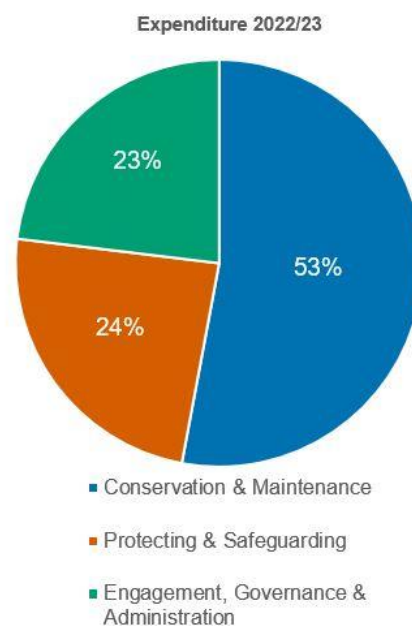
The upkeep of the Commons is mainly funded by a levy on those living in properties within three quarters of a mile of the perimeter of Wimbledon Common, measured by the most direct route along roads or footpaths, or within the old Parish of Putney as it was in 1871. Additional funds are raised through sports, donations and grants, filming, small events, investment income, rental income and commercial licences. The levy is set by the charity but is collected for the charity by the local councils, Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston.

The cost of the levy for each household is determined by the Council Tax Band in which your property falls. For a Band D property, the cost for the 2023/24 financial year is £35.96, which is £3 per month or 69 pence per week. If you receive any exemption or discount to your Council Tax, this will also apply to the levy.

How the charity spends its money

The contributions that levy payers make are spent on the conservation, maintenance and management of the Commons for the benefit of the local community. In 2022/23, the levy raised **£1.3m** of the **£2.2m** cost of managing the Commons.

- **Conservation and Maintenance:** maintaining the internationally important heathland, woodland and grasslands; improving the infrastructure for visitors such as paths, facilities and litter clearing; and maintaining the playing fields and amenity areas
- **Protecting and Safeguarding:** ensuring that the Commons remain safe and pleasant for our visitors; preventing vandalism, encroachment, misuse and damage
- **Engagement, Governance and Administration:** managing communications, fundraising, events and charity governance; processing of licence fees, permits, and leading stakeholder engagement



Why is the levy being reviewed?

WPCC's power to issue a levy is contained in legislation made in 1990. Since 1990, London has seen an increase in population of almost 30% resulting in greater usage of the Commons with an associated increase in maintenance costs. The way in which we have to work has materially changed over recent years with added responsibilities for visitor health and safety, tree and building safety, data protection and charity management.

Since Covid, the community has come to depend more and more on local open spaces. This is welcomed but has increased the wear and tear on the infrastructure and resulted in greater management issues and more litter to manage. In the last year alone, we had to spend £59,000 on waste clearance, almost three times as much as prior to Covid.

The levy has been increased in line with inflation since 1990 but these added pressures mean that this is no longer sufficient to cover the costs of properly maintaining the buildings, paths and car parks, or fully protect the SSSI habitats, and we are having to use our reserves to fund our current operations, which is not sustainable. The playing fields, which are an important source of revenue,

are at capacity and the sports pavilion is desperately in need of investment. With climate change and further population growth likely to cause additional challenges for the SSSI and for maintaining the Commons, we are limited in what we can currently do to prepare for this.

In 2017, WPCC developed the first ever long-term strategy for the Commons. The strategy recognised the need for the development of a Masterplan to identify the long-term investment requirements of the Commons. Funded by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Masterplan has been developed in two stages, with the first stage focussing on the natural environment and the second stage on the built environment. Although most of the one-off costs associated with the Masterplan will need to be funded by external grants and donations, the ongoing costs will have to be met from WPCC's operating budget, which at present is insufficient to fund these needs.

The level of the levy was last reviewed in 1990. WPCC is now proposing to increase the levy to preserve the Commons for current and future generations.

What are we proposing?

We are proposing to increase the levy to raise approximately £375,000 per year in additional income to help secure the long-term future of the Commons' natural environment and facilities. The funds would support the annual costs associated with the Commons' Masterplan, balance WPCC's operating budget, and finance works to buildings and the landscape that have been deferred due to budget constraints.

For a property in Council Tax Band D, the proposed increase would amount to approximately £9.05* per year, which is the equivalent of 75 pence per month or 17 pence per week.

Table A sets out the proposed annual increase for properties in each Council Tax Band. To find out the band of your property, go to: <https://www.gov.uk/council-tax-bands> or alternatively ring the Valuation Office Agency on 03000 501 501 Monday to Friday, 9am to 4:30pm.

If you are not liable to pay Council Tax, then you will not be affected by the proposed increase as you do not pay the levy.

**The proposed increase is in addition to any annual inflationary increase.*

Table A	
Band	Increase
A	£6.03/year
B	£7.04/year
C	£8.04/year
D	£9.05/year
E	£11.06/year
F	£13.07/year
G	£15.08/year
H	£18.10/year

The difference this additional income would make

An increase in the levy would help us to achieve the projects identified in the Masterplan, such as:

- Improve the paths, rides and cycle routes to facilitate access
- Improve signage and wayfinding to improve the visitor experience
- Manage the woodlands to protect and increase the plants and animals
- Restore wetlands to protect nationally rare species, increase resilience to climate change and help reduce carbon emissions
- Protect and enhance the internationally important heathland
- Improve the ponds and Beverley Brook as valuable habitats for wildlife
- Manage and create wildflower meadows to improve biodiversity

One of our key aims is to improve the condition of the SSSI, which has faced significant pressure in recent decades. Doing this will not only make it better for wildlife, but it will also enhance the Commons' natural beauty so that they remain a wonderful place for you and future generations to visit.

Consideration of alternative sources of income

WPCC manages the charity's finances carefully, working to both increase income and reduce costs. Non-urgent expenditure has been delayed and restraint is exercised with all essential purchases. To increase income, we aim to ensure that all agreements with commercial users of the Commons, such as sporting events, fairs and licences are priced at market value. In addition, we have also employed a fundraiser to help secure grants and donations.

We have considered increased commercialisation such as concerts, open air theatre and festivals, but believe this would not be appropriate for the Commons and visitor feedback indicates this would not be welcomed. We are often asked why we do not charge for car parking. The 1871 Act does not give us an express power to charge for car parking.

In the longer term, WPCC may also explore whether the levy area could be expanded to encompass more properties, however it is anticipated that this would be a lengthy and complex process.

What you've said so far

We have undertaken extensive engagement ahead of this consultation to help shape our proposals. Last year the Conservators engaged an independent consultancy firm to carry out an informal public consultation which tested support for the principle of increasing the levy; there was broad support with 89% of those who responded agreeing that the levy should be increased.

We are now asking for the views of every household in the levy-paying area.

NEXT STEPS AND HOW TO RESPOND

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. We would now like your view on our proposal.

How to submit your response:

Responses can be made online or by post.

There is one response per household. If you would like to make additional comments, please use the text box when you respond.

Online – visit: www.bit.ly/levy-consultation (or scan the QR code) and enter the unique code that you will find on the enclosed reply card and submit your response

Reply Card – complete the enclosed reply card, fold, place in the freepost envelope and pop it in a letterbox.

Please note that the code is randomly generated and cannot be used in any way to identify you. You can view our Privacy Statement here: www.wpcc.org.uk/privacy



If possible, please submit your response online as this will significantly reduce our postage costs.

Responses must be received by no later than Sunday 29 October 2023.

Once the consultation period has closed, Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators will consider the responses received and publish a summary on our website.

YOUR QUESTIONS AND HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

We understand that you may have questions that cannot be answered in this document. Please visit our website where you can find a FAQs section that will be kept updated at www.wpcc.org.uk. If you have a question that is not answered there, then please email consultation@wpcc.org.uk.

Opportunities to meet the WPCC team, ask questions and learn more about the levy and consultation will be held in the following locations:

1. **Wednesday 11 October 2023 at 7pm** – Sacred Heart Church Lower Hall, Edge Hill, Wimbledon London SW19 4LU
2. **Tuesday 17 October 2023 at 7pm** - Putney Community Church, Werter Road, Putney SW15 2LL
3. **Thursday 19 October 2023 at 7pm** - Roehampton Holy Trinity Church, Ponsonby Road SW15 4LA
4. **Saturday 21 October 2023 at 5pm** - Online via Zoom. Register here: <https://bit.ly/Levy-Meeting>

Full details of these meetings are also available on the WPCC website at www.wpcc.org.uk



**Wimbledon and
Putney Commons**

CONTACT US

Telephone: 0208 788 7655 Email: consultation@wpcc.org.uk

Interested in learning more about the history of the Commons, the Conservators, and the levy? Please visit: www.wpcc.org.uk/about-us

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, Manor Cottage, Windmill Road,
Wimbledon Common, London SW19 5NR
Registered Charity No. 303167

Key Stakeholders asked to respond

Stephen Hammond MP
Fleur Anderson MP
Sarah Olney MP

Leader and Chief Executive, Merton Council
Leader and Chief Executive, Wandsworth Council
Leader and Chief Executive, Kingston Council

Putney Society
Wimbledon Society



17 October 2023

Diane Neil Mills
Chairman
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Manor Cottage
Windmill Road
Wimbledon Common
London SW19 5NR

Dear Diane,

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) – Levy Consultation

Thank you for your letter to the Wimbledon Society asking us, as a key stakeholder, to respond to your consultation regarding the possibility of increasing the levy.

The WPCC are mandated to protect and preserve the Commons for the purposes of recreation and exercise, and under Charity law have the duty to act in the best interests of the charity.

The Society therefore concurs that raising the Levy, as proposed, is considered necessary to protect the Commons, and ensure that residents of Wimbledon and Putney and beyond have access to this historic and beautiful green space, and that this area is maintained and managed appropriately for our generation and future generations to come.

We also have some suggestions that the WPCC may wish to consider to help alleviate the ongoing financial issues that usually need to be resolved by increasing the levy.

Longer Term Funding

We feel it would be desirable for the WPCC to have a **long-term business plan** to deal with the wider strategic issues that need addressing over the next decade and potentially beyond.

Funding for longer term projects might come from further additional income sources to those that are currently utilised and may enable the Conservators to not just be heavily reliant on the levy, which can only realistically be increased by relatively small amounts.

Under the 1871 Act, the WPCC is restricted in seeking many alternative ways of increasing revenues such as increasing the area of levy collection or having the ability to raise more money through alternative commercial ventures.

The Society wonder if the following potential income sources have been investigated and if not, could be considered?

Biodiversity Net Gain

Should the Commons now formally consider registering as recipients of future long-term income from the **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) that is to be paid by developers in Merton and Wandsworth from November?

It means that most developments will have to demonstrate a 10% uplift in habitat biodiversity to secure planning permission, and it becomes mandatory on November 11, 2023.

It seems to involve developers identifying and committing to a 30 year management plan for individual projects. Offsetting to local projects is being seen as desirable.

If the WPCC could identify suitable projects that fit the BNG criteria, and also align with the Commons' Masterplan, could these be potentially funded from here?

Funding via a GLA Precept

The maintenance expense of the large green (MOL) spaces in London is haphazard and not logical. These great and iconic open spaces are used by a very wide range of Londoners, not just those in the particular Borough that is paying for their upkeep.

A case could be made for the funding for all these large open spaces in London to be the responsibility of the **GLA, funded through a precept.**

These funds would then be passed by the GLA to the individual Council (or the Commons) to administer and continue to run the spaces, as they all now do.

Should the Conservators consider taking a lead in suggesting that such a scheme be discussed?

We hope that you find these comments helpful and we would be very happy to discuss these with the WPCC further.

Yours sincerely



Kevin O'Neil
Chair

Please send all correspondence by email to chairman@wimbledonsociety.org.uk



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

27th October 2023

Dear Diane

I wish to thank the Board of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons for inviting me to respond as a major stakeholder to your consultation. Please treat this letter as my formal submission.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons are a hugely loved and used by my constituents. It is an almost unique area of natural space and habitats within a suburban setting. It is enjoyed by so many local residents who value having it on their doorsteps. It has rightly been protected by independence through the 1871 Act so it can be guaranteed for generations of future local residents. I know that Wimbledon residents would be devastated if the Commons were ever threatened; or the WPCC did not have the access to resources to maintain and enhance the Commons for this and future generations.

I understand that Band D Council Taxpayers pay a levy of £ 35.96 per annum. I note that you wish to increase this by 25% i.e. £ 9.05 per annum or 17p per week. I further understand that the Leaders of the Merton and Wandsworth Borough Councils have written to oppose the proposal.

Unfortunately, all too often, relative and absolute mathematical amounts can obscure reality and confuse arguments. Whilst I understand that a 25% increase sounds a huge adjustment, in reality it is a 17p per week increase which will impact no one's cost of living. Moreover, the reality for my residents is that the Mayor of London's increase in his precept, whilst smaller in percentage terms will hit their cost of living more because the absolute rise is much greater than 17p per week. Therefore, I urge the Board of WPCC not to put great weight on these submissions or any other statements about how this proposal will affect local people's cost of living.

I fully support your proposal and offer my assistance in any way to ensure its swift introduction.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

STEPHEN HAMMOND MP

13.12.23

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Diane Neil Mills
Wimbledon and Putney Commons
The Rangers Office
Manor Cottage
Windmill Road
Wimbledon Common
London
SW19 5NR

30 October 2023

Dear Diane / Consultation team,

Re: WPCC levy consultation response

I am writing in response to the recent consultation being held to assess whether the Wimbledon and Putney Commons levy should be increased to account for the additional costs associated with running these wonderful open spaces.

One of the great, defining features of South West London is its access to parks, commons and green spaces. These spaces are such a feature of everyday life for many people it is easy to forget the huge amount of work and effort that goes in to keeping them in such an excellent condition.

The new pressures that have been placed on the Conservators funds are immense. Given that usage has risen dramatically since the pandemic and that inflation has slowly degraded at the charity's spending power, I can understand the need to rebase the levy. While I realise the additional pressures on residents' finances are heavy, I believe the amounts suggested which constitute between an additional 12 pence to 34 pence a week to be modest given the benefit it would bring.

Alongside the evident benefits to the community of keeping the commons in good order, the environmental and conservation work the additional funding would allow for is of incredible significance to all Londoners. The projects intended to protect the biodiversity of the area, restore wetlands which have been under threat, and ensure the SSSI remains in good condition are all essential parts of wider conservation efforts that should be taking place across the capital.

Beverly Brook, which flows through the commons into my constituency has come under immense ecological pressure from sewage dumps and chemical spills in recent years. Protecting this stream, and the wildlife that thrives in it, is a small but critical part of the work that needs to be done to ensure London's waterways can continue to bring joy to our communities.

While only a small number of my constituents will be impacted by this change, I believe that they will share my view that we should be doing all we can to ensure the commons are protected for current residents and future generations to enjoy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Olney".

Sarah Olney
Member of Parliament for Richmond Park



Diane Neil Mills
Chairman
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Manor Cottage
Windmill Road
London
SW19 5NR

17th October 2023

Dear Diane,

Consultation on the proposal to increase the Levy

The Putney Society, the amenity Society for Putney & Roehampton, broadly supports the proposal set out in your document “Consultation on The Levy”.

The value of the Commons to the mental and physical health of the Putney and Roehampton residents cannot be overestimated as was seen especially during the pandemic lockdowns. This is particularly true for those who lack resources for more costly recreation. We are therefore concerned that upkeep of the Commons is adequately funded going forward.

We support the projects identified in the Masterplan, as set out on page 3 of the consultation document, and hope that some of these improvements extend to Putney Common.

We particularly recognise the need to retain the Commons as a wild open space and believe that the increase in the Levy is better than any further commercialisation of the Commons.

Our members are, however, aware of the cost-of-living crisis and its adverse effects on the citizens of the Borough. The Society is also aware that all Levy payers do not benefit from the Commons to the same extent as others. We would like to see far more outreach from the Conservators to residents on the estates in Roehampton and West Putney. The two walks arranged during Roehampton Community weeks were a good start, but this needs to be an ongoing process.

The Putney Society covering Putney & Roehampton
Registered Charity 263242

Would the Conservators consider working with local youth groups to allow free or subsidised use of the playing fields? Or working with primary schools (Alton School, Heathmere School and Granard School, for instance) to set up regular nature discovery events? Could some of the pupils from Ark Academy become involved in volunteering for the Wildlife and Conservation Forum?

We recognise that there could be some barriers to raising additional income from car parking (not least to deter commuter parking). However, we believe that all possible steps should be taken to research ways in which limits on parking could be introduced and enforced.

Finally, as we move towards the elections for Commons Conservators in 2024, it would be good to see a broader geographical base of elected Conservators and we will work towards that aim.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robert Arguile', written on a light-colored background.

Robert Arguile
Chair
18 Burstock Road
Putney
London, SW15 2PW



Leader's Room,
The Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London
SW18 2PU

Diane Neil Mills
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
Manor Cottage, Windmill Road, Wimbledon Common
London, SW19 5NR

3 October 2023

Dear Diane,

Thank you for your recent letter and accompanying consultation document which proposes increases to the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Special Levy, a local tax that some residents pay towards the upkeep of green spaces that you run in Wandsworth and neighbouring London boroughs.

With high inflation and the cost of living crisis affecting everyone in Wandsworth, it is more important than ever that residents' bills are kept as low as possible. That is why Wandsworth Council froze the main rate of council tax in 2023-24.

Wandsworth Council opposed the 12.6% rise that you imposed in your levy last year. There are no circumstances in which increasing your levy by a further 25%, in addition to future rises at the rate of inflation, can be justified. It certainly is not justified now during the cost of living crisis.

Many of the parks, commons and green spaces that the Council maintains are award-winning, with six open spaces being awarded a Green Flag this year. We have managed and funded them throughout many years of public sector austerity.

Despite these financial challenges, public sector organisations have had to innovate and create efficiencies into our ways of working that don't negatively impact on residents. I reiterate my previous offer of cooperative assistance to you so that you can manage the commons effectively instead of issuing ever-rising bills to Wandsworth residents.

I have written to DEFRA to make Wandsworth Council's opposition to your wholly unacceptable tax rise clear, and I have asked them to reject the proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Leader of the Council

cc : Councillor Ross Garrod, London Borough of Merton Leader
: Fleur Anderson, Member of Parliament, Putney



COUNCILLOR ROSS GARROD
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
 (Labour, Longthornton Ward)



Diane Neil Mills
 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators
 Manor Cottage,
 Windmill Road
 Wimbledon Common
 London
 SW19 5NR

London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden SM4 5DX

020 8545 3424 (Civic Centre)
 ross.garrod@merton.gov.uk

Dear Diane,

18th October 2023

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Proposed Levy Increase

Thank you for your letter and accompanying consultation document, which proposes increases to the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Special Levy, a tax that over 9,000 properties in Merton are liable to pay.

Not only is it deeply disappointing that the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) is proposing to hike this levy above inflation again, but the WPCC is now attempting to push through a 25 per cent levy rise in the middle of a cost of living crisis that people in every corner of our borough are struggling through. An increase of this scale and in this context is impossible to justify when hardworking families are struggling to make ends meet.

Merton Council recognises that the cost of living crisis is the number one issue affecting our residents right now. That is why this administration passed a £22 million cost of living budget this year and also opposed the 12.6 per cent levy rise that the WPCC imposed on Merton residents in the last financial year.

As a local Council, we sympathise with the struggles of maintaining green spaces with limited finances. Despite a decade of austerity, thanks to this Council's sound financial management and through creative innovation, Merton's green spaces are thriving, with seven parks retaining the esteemed Green Flag status. Whilst I recognise the challenges faced by the WPCC, the cost of living crisis is the priority of this administration, therefore under no circumstances will Merton Council support a hike of this nature.

I would like to offer Merton's Council's continued constructive support to effectively maintain the common, whilst delivering value for money for the residents we are both proud to serve. However, I have written to DEFRA to make our Council's opposition to your unacceptable tax rise clear, and I have asked them to reject the proposals.

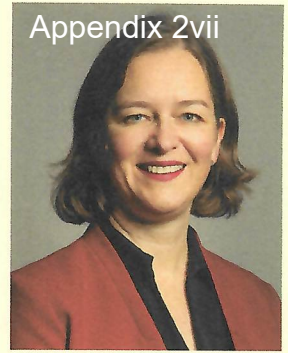
Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ross Garrod
Leader of the Council



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA



Diane Neil Mills
The Ranger's Office
Manor Cottage
Windmill Road
London
SW19 5NR

11 October 2023

Dear Diane,

Re: Consultation of WPCC Levy Increase

Thank you for your letter regarding the launch of the WPCC consultation on the proposed rises to the levy. I will make my own submission to the consultation, and I will share the information with affected residents.

I strongly support ensuring charities and public bodies have sufficient funding to protect and maintain our green spaces. However, I am concerned over the effect and timing of these proposals on lower income families in Roehampton, Putney and Southfields at the time of a Cost-of-Living Crisis.

As you will recall, I raised similar concerns over the WPCC proposals to increase the levy by 12.6% earlier this year. These new proposals to raise the levy by as much as 25% next year are naturally even more alarming. I realise that the WPCC have challenges facing sustainability of their finances, but I cannot support year on year increases for residents, particularly at rates as high as 25%.

At a time of immense pressure on household incomes, I urge the WPCC to reconsider this proposal and explore alternative ways to raise required funds. I welcomed Wandsworth Council's decision to freeze council tax this year in an effort to protect families from the effects of inflation, the energy crisis and other rises in household bills.

I understand that Cllr Simon Hogg, Leader of Wandsworth Council has offered to work with the WPCC to find efficiencies given that the council itself maintains a number of its own open spaces, also on working more to connect people in Roehampton with the Commons more. I do hope this offer can be taken up if helpful. Equally, if there are concerns or issues that you want me to raise with Ministers or at City Hall, please do not hesitate to ask. I want to help you secure a sustainable future for the WPCC alongside balancing the acute pressures on households.

Yours sincerely,

Fleur Anderson MP
Shadow Minister for Northern Ireland
Member of Parliament for Putney, Roehampton and Southfields

WORKING FOR RESIDENTS OF PUTNEY, ROEHAMPTON AND SOUTHFIELDS

Email: fleur.anderson.mp@parliament.uk - Telephone: 0207 219 3348 - Twitter: [@putneyfleur](https://twitter.com/putneyfleur)

Funding Suggestion/Comments	WPCC Comments
Expand levy catchment area	
<p>A significant number of respondents (n=181) believe the levy paying area should be expanded. A number of different options were put forward for a potential expanded area, including extending the area to 1 mile from the Commons, all residents in the three boroughs (Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth) or all of London.</p>	<p>As set out in the consultation document, the levy area is currently set out in legislation. It is anticipated that the expansion of the levy area would be a lengthy and complex process. This remains a possibility that WPCC will explore further in the longer term, but is not something that will address current funding needs.</p>
Charge car park users (non-levy payers)	
<p>A significant number of respondents (n=180) believe WPCC should consider the introduction of car parking charges. There were several suggestions, including introducing charges for all visitors, introducing charges for all visitors apart from levy-payers or other specified groups, and charging a specific workplace whose employees are thought to be utilising the car park.</p> <p>A number of residents also expressed opposition to the introduction of parking charges.</p>	<p>WPCC does not have an express statutory power to charge for car parking. In the longer term, WPCC will consider pursuing changes to the 1871 Act. The inclusion of an express power to charge for parking will be considered at that time.</p>
Other fundraising options (commercialisation, voluntary contributions, centralised funding, pay to visit etc)	
<p>A significant number of respondents (approximately n=150) suggested a variety of other options to raise funds, including further commercialisation, centralised funding, and further voluntary contributions. The comments can be summarised as below:</p>	

<p>Respondents suggested WPCC could campaign more vigorously for donations, seek donations from community members able to afford a higher contribution, encourage donations from cyclists and walkers and through signs and other information, make donation easier by displaying QR codes and installing 'tap and pay' machines, charge an entry fee, and charge licence fees.</p>	<p>WPCC has had a number of successful fundraising campaigns, most recently for the upgrade of some paths, however, as responses indicate many residents were not aware of these campaigns, WPCC will continue to raise the profile of these campaigns, along with the opportunity to make general donations.</p> <p>WPCC is in the process of developing a communications plan, which will look at fundraising messaging. There are a number of signs placed at the entrance and around the Commons encouraging voluntary car park donations. QR codes on signage take visitors to WPCC's donation page. Tap and pay machines are currently used at events, but WPCC is looking to acquire more.</p> <p>As the public have a right to access the Commons, WPCC cannot charge an entry fee. Licence fees are charged for commercial events.</p>
<p>Respondents suggested WPCC seek specific funding support from neighbouring councils and the Mayor of London, along with applying for grant funded projects, sponsorship by eco-friendly companies, or funding from ULEZ.</p> <p>In addition, some respondents suggested WPCC should look to other parks and open spaces for funding management ideas.</p>	<p>WPCC applies for grants to fund particular projects when appropriate opportunities arise.</p> <p>WPCC considers corporate sponsorship important and has a corporate membership option in the Friends' programme. Sponsorship by eco-friendly companies will be considered but competition for these funds is significant.</p> <p>WPCC does not have access to ULEZ funding.</p> <p>WPCC staff are experienced in the management of open spaces and maintain regular contact with others working in open space management across London in particular.</p>
<p>Some respondents queried opportunities for local business to contribute, noting they often benefit from the Commons.</p>	<p>Local businesses have contributed to the launch of the Friends' programme and provided prizes for competitions. WPCC is continuing to network with local businesses to pursue further opportunities, although expects income would be limited.</p>
<p>While a number of respondents were opposed to commercial events being held on the Commons, some felt that WPCC should explore</p>	<p>WPCC considers the merits of each proposal that comes forward in accordance with the Access Framework (ie, alignment with charitable</p>

<p>further commercial opportunities by way of events. Some respondents noted certain types of events with limited environmental impact may be appreciated and provide a source of income.</p> <p>Suggestions included a music festival or seasonal county fair.</p>	<p>objectives, potential interference with other visitors and potential damage to the Commons).</p> <p>There are also limitations to events that can be held as a result of legislation (ie, there is a public right of access (on foot) to all of the Commons).</p> <p>The Commons' Open Day is similar to a small-scale county fair and generates a modest profit.</p>
<p>Several residents feel that WPCC should seek to charge dog walkers, or other commercial users of the Commons such as personal trainers.</p> <p>Other residents suggested coffee booths or the existing café may provide an additional source of revenue.</p> <p>Other suggestions from individual respondents included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing and charging for electric vehicle charge points • Ground source heat under the car park • Windmill project to generate energy to sell to grid • Draw down on investments • Introduce cycle hire • Sell logs from felled trees • Rent pavilion for functions • Charge for officially led walking tours 	<p>Those using the Commons on a commercial basis do pay a fee to WPCC. In terms of commercial dog walkers, WPCC's priority has been on reducing the number of dogs that could be walked together. WPCC has agreed to explore ways in which individuals using the Commons for commercial purposes (such as dog walkers and personal trainers) could make a contribution to WPCC in cash or in kind.</p> <p>The café pays a commercial rent to WPCC. There is also a mobile coffee booth, which pays rent, although the income is modest. Under the 1871 Act, there are restrictions on the construction of buildings on the Commons.</p> <p>A number of other individual suggestions were made, some of which were suitable for exploring further but none are anticipated to produce sufficient income to change the position in respect of levy proposal.</p>
Reduce expenditure	
<p>Several respondents raised queries or provided suggestions for potential ways to reduce costs and expenditure. Some examples are addressed below:</p>	

<p>A number of respondents expressed concern with the percentage of income spent on 'engagement, governance and administration costs'. Respondents suggested this percentage be reduced by, for example, reducing systems administration, reducing administrative and governance costs and avoiding duplication.</p> <p>In addition, changing the employee pension scheme was raised as an option to reduce costs.</p>	<p>For the purposes of the consultation, 'engagement, governance and administration costs' include communication, fundraising, events, governance, legal fees, insurance, processing of licence fees, permits and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>The share of 'administrative' costs as a percentage of total costs was 23% and has averaged 25% over the past five years. WPCC considers administrative costs to be in line with, or less than, other comparable organisations.</p> <p>WPCC is constrained by the terms of the pension scheme to which WPCC belongs in terms of our ability to amend the pension entitlement for new employees. This has been investigated but was deemed not financially feasible to change.</p>
<p>Some respondents queried the need to proceed with the Masterplan, or carry out projects and improvements such as enhancing heathland and improving ponds, in times of financial pressure.</p>	<p>WPCC has a legal duty to preserve and protect the Commons. This includes, for example, protecting the landscapes and their nationally important habitats.</p> <p>There are also duties on WPCC as a result of the Commons being designated an SSSI and SAC, including to enhance habitats if needed.</p> <p>It is worth noting that a number of specific projects have been funded primarily through donations (for example, the ponds outside the office).</p>
<p>A number of respondents suggested increased use of volunteers to undertake works and save costs.</p>	<p>WPCC is grateful for the invaluable contribution volunteers make. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Commons received approximately 8,030 voluntary hours from the local community. Much of the habitat maintenance projects would struggle without this contribution, however as much of this work is unskilled, follow up and oversight from WPCC staff is required. In addition, much of the work required is specialised and requires training (eg. use of particular equipment or machinery), so is not suitable for volunteers.</p>

<p>Queries were raised regarding the cost of using horses on the Commons, and ULEZ charges incurred by the Commons' vehicle.</p>	<p>Horses are able to move through thick cover that vehicles cannot access. WPCC believes horses are efficient, better for the environment and promote a sense of safety.</p> <p>ULEZ fees are only incurred where a vehicle goes off the Common which is kept to a minimum.</p>
<p>Review council tax banding contributions, scaling, means testing and the impact of an increase in the number of households on the total levy</p>	
<p>Several respondents suggested the levy should be distributed differently between levy-payers. For example, by increasing the levy by a greater amount for higher tax bands, not applying the increase to lower tax bands, or calculating the levy based on proximity to the Commons.</p> <p>Some respondents asked if an increase in population in the levy-paying area would mean that WPCC would receive more money because more people would pay the levy.</p>	<p>The levy is set by WPCC but collected on behalf of WPCC by the three local councils in line with existing council tax bands. This is set out in legislation and WPCC does not have the ability to vary the allocation of the levy between the bands.</p> <p>WPCC is only able to set a fixed total amount for the levy, therefore, if the number of households in the levy-paying area increases, the total levy will be spread over more households. This means each household would pay slightly less but the total amount collected would not increase (apart from inflation).</p>
<p>Sports clubs to contribute more (playing fields, horse riding, golf, etc)</p>	
<p>A number of respondents suggested sports clubs should pay, or contribute more, to the upkeep of the Commons.</p> <p>In particular, respondents queried the contributions of the golf clubs, the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club (AELTC), the riding school, running events and cyclists.</p>	<p>Sports clubs pay commercial fees for hire. The fees reflect the profitability/nature of the organisation/comparable market rates.</p> <p>The golf clubs make significant annual donations to WPCC for the general upkeep of the golf course. They also carry out maintenance works directly. London Scottish Golf Club pays rent to WPCC for the clubhouse.</p> <p>The AELTC has also made donations to a number of WPCC's fundraising projects through its foundation.</p>

	<p>The Village Stables make regular donations that go towards the upkeep of the rides and other costs of maintaining the Commons.</p> <p>Parkrun is not a commercial organisation and hence the organisers do not pay a licence fee; however, its organisers make a voluntary contribution every year and also support WPCC's events. The organisers of commercial runs who charge participants do pay WPCC licence fees that cover the costs of the event.</p> <p>WPCC cannot charge people to cycle on the Commons.</p>
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