

Press release: Update on Wimbledon & Putney Commons Conservators inquiry

The Charity Commission ('the Commission') [opened a statutory inquiry](#) into Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators ('the charity') on 18 August 2016. This was to examine regulatory concerns regarding the granting of an easement in August 2014 for access rights over part of the charity's land at a significant undervalue and the consequent potential financial loss to the charity.

The Commission was also concerned about an ongoing dispute within the trustee body relating to the easement that might impact some trustees' decision making and the group's effectiveness and ability to work together.

On 31 May 2017 the Commission [appointed an interim manager](#) to consider the trustees' decision not to take further action in respect of the loss suffered by the charity following the granting of the easement. The charity's trustees remain responsible for the day-to-day management of the charity.

The interim manager's duties include:

- reviewing the information supplied to the trustees' legal advisers;
- considering whether the decision was taken properly and was in the best interests of the charity;
- obtaining further legal or valuation advice for a new decision to be properly made if required; and
- making recommendations as to whether further action on this matter is proportionate and in the interests of the charity

The interim manager's work at the charity continues. He has spoken to current and ex-trustees and other relevant parties and reviewed a substantial level of documentation. Having presented a progress report to the Commission, he is gathering further information on valuation matters before submitting his final report.

The Commission is aware that elections for new trustees for the charity are due to take place in February 2018 and that the deadline for applications to stand is 2 January 2018 if applicants wish their details to be published and sent out with the ballot papers by the Electoral Reform Services. The actual deadline for candidates as specified in the charity's 1990 election bye laws is 'not less than two weeks before the date of the election' ie 14 February 2018.

The Commission is providing this update to help potential candidates decide whether to stand. It would encourage those with appropriate knowledge and skills to consider standing.

The Commission hopes that after the election all the elected and appointed trustees will work together to take the charity forward. This would include

considering mediation to resolve any outstanding issues within the trustee body and putting into place any actions issued by the Commission.

The Interim Manager will submit a final report to the Commission when he has gathered further information on valuation matters and completed his review. The Commission will, subject to the Interim Manager's findings, look to close the inquiry as soon as is reasonably practicable. We cannot put a definite timescale on this at present but envisage it being within the first six months of next year.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and its findings and conclusions.

Ends

PR 84/17

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity](#) tool.
3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.