

# Wimbledon and Putney Commons: Election of Conservators 2018



## **Andrew Bignold**

### **Why do you want to be a Conservator?**

This is my fourth consecutive attempt to care for the Commons by becoming a Conservator - elections in 2015 and, in the interim, two statutory appointments. Why? I have enjoyed the Commons all my life - living adjacent, walking my children and dogs, playing sport and even camping on them as a young Scout. I love them. If elected I would maximise support for these world-class places by tapping into the latent passion and support that clearly exists (£50k recently raised in just 6 months for footpaths) by founding a 'Friends of the Commons Group', modelled on the successful Richmond Park example. The 1871 Act preserves the status of these lands and cites, 'for public and local use, for the purposes of exercise and recreation'. This Group would foster appreciation of the flora and fauna, explain the challenges ahead and tap into its members' expertise in finding and executing solutions.

### **What experience and skills do you feel you could bring to the role?**

After 31 years public service in the Metropolitan Police and 14 in the City Livery I am well versed in Governance and Committee work, particularly supporting charitable aims. I have been active in two sporting charities, each with assets of approximately £2.3 million. I am a Churchwarden and Trustee of the Kingston Vale Trust. By nature I am a cautious reformer but well prepared to challenge accepted tenets. My written and spoken communication skills are well honed from my time as a City Livery Clerk - coincidentally with the Gunmakers who assisted with the Shooting Championships on the Commons before they moved to Bisleigh - and Toastmaster, the latter on the international stage with many prominent people including Royalty. I know how to use these skills to maximise team effort. I am passionate that the Board changes its tempo to a more collaborative and inclusive methodology to safeguard these glorious open spaces.

### **How will you support implementation of the Commons' Vision and Strategy?**

I supported the Governance Review carried out 4 years ago and I equally support the Vision and Strategy. Any organisation needs direction and focus and these documents provide both. But, they must not just gather dust on a shelf. An organisation needs drive and its plans executed. For many years I have regularly attended the Open Meetings and discussed issues with staff. My son has volunteered and assisted the staff on the Commons. I am dismayed at how our Levy Money is being used. The Board has recently lost its way, being dragged off course tilting at historic legal windmills. We need a new Board that refocuses on the Vision and Values thus preserving our own windmill and its stunning surroundings. If I can start a new challenge of horse-riding at 60 I can take on another challenge of being a Conservator.