

Wimbledon and Putney Commons: Election of Conservators 2018



Diane Neil Mills

Why do you want to be a Conservator?

Wimbledon Common, together with Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common, forms one of the greatest assets of southwest London and I feel a deep sense of gratitude to those who provided the vision and leadership to establish this unique resource in 1871.

Although I am originally from Canada, a country endowed with vast wilderness, I have lived in Wimbledon since 1996 and feel extremely fortunate in having this magnificent open space in the heart of a densely built urban environment. As a runner, cyclist and outdoor enthusiast, I appreciate the recreational and cultural heritage of the Commons and I recognise the importance of maintaining and enhancing this precious asset. Furthermore, given the population growth of the surrounding areas, I believe that we must

not only protect but capitalise on every opportunity to improve and expand the open space and it would be a great honour to help achieve this objective.

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

As a Mitcham Common Conservator and Wandle Valley Regional Park Trustee, I gained experience in the stewardship of similar though very distinct open spaces. In addition, through my role as a councillor for the London Borough of Merton, I gained an understanding of the operations, finances and limitations of local government. In all of these roles, I consistently argued the need for ongoing investment in order to achieve the highest possible standard of open space.

With formal training in engineering and economics, my career in the energy and telecommunications industries provided me with experience in scrutinising the technical, commercial and regulatory aspects of both ongoing operations and new opportunities. I also chaired a major industry group comprising entities with shared yet often competing interests. I believe that this experience would be directly applicable to the consideration of the challenges and opportunities arising in the Commons.

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

The strategy that has been developed to deliver the vision is clear and comprehensive yet there will be an ongoing need to further refine and prioritise specific initiatives. Conservators are responsible for ensuring that all initiatives are properly aligned with the founding principles, adequately resourced and delivered with excellence. Quality must never be compromised.

The experience that I have gained across the private and public sectors will enable me to identify ways in which delivery of the action plan may be facilitated through working with third parties, accessing funding and resolving conflicting objectives. The recent fundraising initiatives that have been successfully undertaken have demonstrated the willingness of the public to invest in the Commons. As a community we need to build on this success and further enhance this great resource for future generations.

I support Common Sense for the Commons (dianeneilmills@supportersofthecommons.com).