

Wimbledon and Putney Commons: Election of Conservators 2018



Brian Rutherford

Why do you want to be a Conservator?

Having been fortunate enough to live in Putney for 25 years the tranquillity of our open spaces, which so many of us enjoy, is in stark contrast to the noisy infighting which the WPCC Board has served up over recent years. This disharmony detracts from the good work of the WPCC and its staff and has to stop. We should all be concerned that the Charity Commission found it necessary to launch a Statutory Inquiry and appoint an Interim Manager and while we should not pre-judge the outcome of this Inquiry as levy payers we deserve more from our Conservators (past and present). We need Conservators who are focused on the Commons not themselves, who are committed to preserving the Commons, who are prepared to act openly and transparently and who will communicate clearly with all levy-payers.

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

The Accounts show the Board is spending too much money with lawyers and other professionals in dealing with the Charity Commission's investigation into misconduct. Whether the under-sale at the hospital site was an error or otherwise the Board's inability to resolve this is disappointing, brought on the Statutory Inquiry and necessitated the appointment of an Interim Manager. The cost of all this reduces the Charity's already depleted reserves. Money which should go towards preserving and enhancing the Commons. As a former banker and solicitor with broad experience spanning conflicts of interest, corporate, finance and litigation (including a number of years as a member of my then firm's Management Committee) I consider myself well qualified to provide support to the Charity on financial, legal and management matters. I am also a founder trustee of a charity providing educational support for disabled children and through this have direct experience of governance requirements.

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

Like the Commons themselves I see the Commons' Vision and Strategy as a 'living' matter which will be subject to update to reflect the diverse needs of the Commons as they arise always under the guiding principle set out in the 1871 Act. Namely that the Commons should remain open and unenclosed, the natural aspect preserved and accessible to all. While the Board has approved the strategy the advice of the Charity Commission at the conclusion of their Statutory Inquiry will need to be followed and this may impact the Commons' Vision and Strategy. Subject to this I see the role of the Conservators as one where they promote the Commons Vision and Strategy, test and challenge management (and where necessary the stakeholders) over its implementation, provide appropriate support and relevant expertise to ensure objectives are met.