

CANDIDATE BRIEF – INFORMATION PACK

MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS



WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

July 2020



Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

NEWSPAPER ADVERT Appointed Conservator Vacancy (Voluntary)

Ministerial Appointment to the Board of Conservators by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under Section 12 of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871

Candidates are now being sought for the role of a Conservator to be appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This is a special opportunity to be instrumental in shaping the future for our Commons.

Further details may be obtained from the Conservators' website: www.wpcc.org.uk

To apply for a Candidate Brief – Information Pack for this challenging but rewarding role, contact:

Ranger's Office, Windmill Road, Wimbledon Common, Wimbledon SW19 5NR, Tel: 020 8788 7655 or e-mail rangersoffice@wpcc.org.uk

The Closing Date for returned applications is 14 August 2020.

Interviews for the post will take place during week commencing 21 September 2020.

**Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators are committed
to equality of opportunities.**



Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators Public Notice

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12 of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871

**This is a special opportunity to be instrumental in shaping the
future for Wimbledon and Putney Commons.**

The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) ensure that Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common (known collectively as “the Commons”) are managed and conserved in accordance with the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871, as supplemented by the Commissioners Clauses Act 1847 and Byelaws, and their legal obligations as Trustees of a registered charity. We are a non-political organisation, dedicated to the conservation and protection of the Commons.

The Commons comprise around 1,140 acres of countryside, of which approximately 900 acres of the Commons are recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The open space can be enjoyed for exercise and recreation and attracts large numbers of visitors.

Managed by a team of 22 staff, the Commons are also home to many sporting facilities including some 48 acres of playing fields used for rugby and football, 16 miles of horse rides and a golf course.

Candidates are now being sought for the role of a Conservator to be appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are looking for someone with drive, enthusiasm and an appropriate balance of skills to complement experience within the existing Board. Applicants must be able to demonstrate skills and experience in nature conservation and ecological issues, particularly as they relate to a large and complex public open space and ideally have experience of being part of a multi-disciplinary Board of Trustees.

To obtain a Candidate Brief – Information Pack for this challenging but rewarding role, visit The Ranger’s Office, Windmill Road, Wimbledon Common, Wimbledon SW19 5NR, Tel: 020 8788 7655
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Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Context

The Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) ensure that Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common (known collectively as “the Commons”) are managed and conserved in accordance with the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871 (“the Act”), as supplemented by the Commissioners Clauses Act 1847 and Byelaws, and their legal obligations as trustees of a registered charity. WPCC is a non-political organisation, dedicated to the conservation and protection of the Commons.

The lands that constitute the Commons span three local authorities: Merton (53 percent of area), Wandsworth (43 percent) and Kingston (four percent). The Commons are principally financed by an annual levy, paid by those living within three-quarters of a mile from the Commons or in the old parish of Putney, which since 1990 has been collected by the three relevant local authorities (alongside council tax) on behalf of WPCC. (The levy is set annually by WPCC; the rate set for 2020/21 for a Band D property is £30.41 per year.)

Under Section 8 of the Act, governance of Wimbledon and Putney Commons is provided by eight Conservators, five of whom are directly elected every three years from the levy-paying area and the remaining three appointed by three government departments. The next triennial election is due to take place in February 2021.

The three non-elected Conservators are appointed, respectively, by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Secretary of State for Defence, and the Home Secretary. The appointed Conservators represent specific interests and skills; they do not have to live in the levying area, although it is preferable that they reside in the general area so that they can easily attend meetings of the Board of Conservators (“the Board”) meetings and participate in discussion of local issues. The appointed Conservators provide an important function in terms of continuity of governance for the Commons.

Every Conservator, whether elected or appointed, should be interested in the Commons as an important site for nature conservation as well as a recreational facility. It is also desirable that a Conservator should bring some particular expertise to the Board. Meetings of the Board are normally held on a bi-monthly basis, on the second Monday of that month.

Charity trustees make decisions about their charity collectively, working as a team. Charity trustees have the ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a charity and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it was established. The most effective boards have people with a wide breadth of skills and experience.

To ensure an appropriate balance of skills and experience within the Board, it would be particularly advantageous given its current composition for applicants to be able to demonstrate skills and experience of nature conservation and ecology, particularly as they apply to the management of a large and complex public open space. Given the nature of this role applicants would be expected to have experience of community engagement and managing volunteers. The successful applicant will be expected to chair Wildlife and Conservation Forum, take a lead in the BioBlitz weekend and other monitoring and conservation management issues and contribute to and collate the annual Monitoring Report.

The initial appointment is for a three-year term, which may be extended by up to a further two terms.

The Commons operates an Equal Opportunities policy.

The Commons

The first recognised formation of Wimbledon and Putney Commons arose when Earl Spencer came to terms with residents in drawing up the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act which received Royal Assent in August 1871. The Act conveyed interest in the Commons to a body of Conservators who were charged with keeping the Commons open to the public with natural aspects preserved. The Commons are to this day overseen by this Board of Conservators who are responsible for the governance of the Commons.

The Commons are an area of calm and tranquillity in the midst of the urban sprawls of Wimbledon, Putney and Kingston-upon-Thames in South West London. The Commons comprise about 460 hectares (1,140 acres) of countryside split between Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common. Putney Lower Common is separated from the rest of the Common by about 1.5 miles. Approximately 360 hectares (900 acres) of the Commons are a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The Commons consist of woodland, (acid) grassland, heathland, scrub, ponds, bogs and mown recreation areas. They are home to a wide variety of bird, animal and plant life. Being an unfenced Common, the whole area is open to the public 24 hours a day throughout the year.

Within the Commons there is an 18-hole Golf Course (played over by two Clubs), 16 miles of horse rides and the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields covering 20 hectares (48 acres), providing football and rugby pitches. There is also a large pavilion containing 16 changing rooms with showers and toilets. There are two cricket pitches within the Commons, one at Putney Heath and one on Putney Lower Common, which also has a bowling green and tennis courts.

As a trustee of a charity, Candidates should also be conversant with two key Charity Commission guidance documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/its-your-decision-charity-trustees-and-decision-making/its-your-decision-charity-trustees-and-decision-making>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

In June 2017, the Board approved the Commons first ever Strategy, which was prepared in conjunction with local stakeholders and sets out WPCC's Vision, Mission and Values, together with key priorities for the next ten years. The Strategy can be found at [here](#). A progress report on the Key Initiatives for 2020 - 2023 can be found [here](#).

Further information on the ecology and nature conservation of the Commons can be found [here](#).

Further information about the charity can be found at www.wpcc.org.uk

Appointment Process and Timetable

Appointments to the Board have in recent years been made in a way that is consistent with government policy and best practice. In 2009, 2013 and 2018, DEFRA, the Home Office and Ministry of Defence looked to the Conservators themselves to manage the process of advertising, selecting and recommending appointees, within the spirit of the Code of Practice

for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies (2012). This has subsequently been updated following a review of the Public Appointments Process conducted by Sir Gerry Grimstone the recommendations of which came into effect on 1 January 2017. It is the Board's intention to follow this process in making recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment for the appointment of a Conservator to succeed Dr Ros Taylor who has been a member of the Board since April 2013.

Panel

A Panel comprising the Chairman of WPCC, an existing Appointed Conservator, the Chief Executive of WPCC and an independent individual not associated with the organisation will assess candidates impartially against the selection criteria in this Candidate Pack. The Panel will be chaired by the Chairman of WPCC, who will prepare a report for the Board, based on the spirit of the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies. The Panel will select a short list of appointable candidates to put forward to the Board which will then make a firm recommendation to the Secretary of State. The final decision rests with the Secretary of State who will then decide on the appointment.

As the appointment is being made to an existing Board, it is not just individual merit that is important but also the fit to the Board's dynamics and skill set. This is important to ensure that the Board as a whole is effective and has the range of skills and experience that it needs.

Process

Within the Application Pack there is a Role Description and a Person Profile. The first part of the process is for interested individuals to send in:

- 1) a letter of application (no more than two sides of A4) that should address how the applicant fits the Person Profile included in this Application Pack together with responses to the following questions:
 - a. **Why do you want to be the DEFRA Appointed Conservator?**
 - b. **What kind of expertise do you feel you could bring to the Board?**
 - c. **What has motivated you to become interested in a trustee position within an environmental charity?**
 - d. **How you will support the implementation of the Commons' Vision and Strategy.**
- 2) a two page Curriculum Vitae (CV) including personal details, education and qualifications, work experience, and other social and community involvement. The CV should also include the names and addresses of two referees who can be approached to discuss the Candidate's relevant experience and expertise and who will be asked to provide a written reference.

These two documents, **together with the signed** Application Form, and WPCC Code of Conduct which can be downloaded from [here](#) must be received at the Ranger's Office by 14 August 2020.

Shortlisting will take place during week commencing 24 August 2020.

Timetable

The shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview by the Panel to be held during week commencing 21 September 2020 and the references taken up for those whose names are put forward on the final short list to be submitted to the Board at its meeting on the 12 October 2020. Following submission to the Board, the Secretary of State for the Environment will make the final decision.



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ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR THE DEFRA APPOINTED CONSERVATOR

With other Board members:

Principal tasks

- To help formulate and regularly review WPCC's strategic aims, agree overall policy, and evaluate performance.
- To ensure that the activities, policy and practices of WPCC are in keeping with its objects and aims.
- To ensure that WPCC complies with the legal and financial requirements of a charitable organisation and its own governing documents; strives to achieve best practice; and maximises its resources.

Main duties

1. To support, and when appropriate to challenge, the Chief Executive in his or her execution of the management of the Commons in a way that reflects WPCC's vision and values, strategy and major policies at all times.
2. To contribute specific skills, interests and contacts to support WPCC and help the Board to reach sound decisions. This may involve scrutinising Board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, or providing advice and guidance on new initiatives.
3. To follow the WPCC Code of Conduct at all times.
4. To attend Board meetings and actively contribute to discussion.
5. To appoint the Chief Executive and monitor their performance.
6. To ensure the effective and efficient administration of WPCC, and its financial health.
7. To be an active member of the Board in exercising its responsibilities and functions.
8. To maintain constructive relationships with senior management staff.
9. To take part in training and development sessions provided for the benefit of Board members.
10. To undertake, if requested to do so, the duties of a "Returning Officer" on behalf of the Chairman for the triennial elections
11. To fulfil such other duties and assignments as may be required from time to time by the Board.

Additional Duties:

1. To make recommendations, in consultation with the Chief Executive, on the composition of the Board, and future candidates for the role of Chairman.
2. To ensure that the Board regularly reviews its governance structures, role, relationship to staff and implements agreed changes as necessary.
3. To define and keep under review performance criteria for Board members.
4. To ensure, through the Chief Executive, that all Board members receive appropriate advice, training and information relating to their role.
5. To work in consultation with the Chief Executive to appoint Board members, via the Appointing Bodies, with specific/relevant expertise.
6. To ensure effective communication between Board and the Chief Executive
7. To chair the Wildlife and Conservation Forum which meets bi-monthly, currently on the second Tuesday of that month; take an active role in the management of events including the annual BioBlitz Weekend of Nature and the programme of Winter Talks; and undertake collation and production of the annual Monitoring Report.
8. To take pro-active lead in developing wildlife monitoring and conservation management initiatives and developing wider engagement opportunities

It is a requirement under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871 that Conservators receive **no form of remuneration** for their voluntary services (this includes travelling or other expenses) or hold any office of profit under the Act.



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PERSON PROFILE FOR AN APPOINTED CONSERVATOR

From your letter of application and subsequent interview we will be looking to confirm that you fulfil the following criteria:

Role Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Skills and Qualities		
1. Able to demonstrate commitment to WPCC acting in the best interests of the charity making a positive difference to the Commons, for the benefit of all	X	
2. Able to be flexible, devoting the necessary time and effort, where necessary at short notice	X	
3. Able to provide leadership promoting public confidence in WPCC	X	
4. Able to communicate clearly, using interpersonal skills to form constructive working relationships (in team and organisation)	X	
5. Able to make sound, independent judgement with political impartiality having analysed complex issues and considered options	X	
6. Able to take a proportionate approach to both support and constructive challenge	X	
7. Able to think creatively in the context of the organisation and external environment	X	
8. Able and willing to express own view, but always respecting that as part of a collective the views of others must be heard	X	
9. Able to demonstrate respect for others and promote equality	X	
10. Able to act reasonably and responsibly when undertaking Conservator duties and tasks	X	
11. Able to demonstrate a clear commitment to and respect for confidentiality	X	
12. Able to support a strategic and forward looking vision in relation to the charity's objects and aims	X	
Knowledge		
1. An understanding and acceptance of legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship of a charity	X	
2. An understanding of the requirements to form and work as part of an effective team	X	
Experience (in one or more of the following areas)		
1. Specialist knowledge of the nature conservation, ecology and habitats within a public open space environment	X	
2. Community engagement and positive management of volunteers	X	
3. Administration in charitable/public sector	X	
4. Fund-raising		X
5. Marketing and promotion		X



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APPLICATION FORM APPOINTED CONSERVATOR

(Name in full)

put myself forward as an applicant for the position of Appointed Conservator, for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

DECLARATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

As a Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservator which is a registered charity (Charity No. 303167) by completing and signing this form, you declare that you:

- are willing to act as a trustee of the organisation named above;
- understand your organisation's purposes (objects) and rules set out in its governing document;
- are not prevented from acting as a trustee because you:
 - have an unspent conviction for one or more of the offences listed [here](#);
 - have an IVA, debt relief order and/or a bankruptcy order;
 - have been removed as a trustee in England, Scotland or Wales (by the Charity Commission or Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator);
 - have been removed from being in the management or control of any body in Scotland (under relevant legislation);
 - have been disqualified by the Charity Commission;
 - are a disqualified company director;
 - are a designated person for the purposes of anti- terrorism legislation;
 - are on the sex offenders register;
 - have been found in contempt of court for making (or causing to be made) a false statement;
 - have been found guilty of disobedience to an order or direction of the Charity Commission.

Personal benefit

If your organisation pays (or will pay) any trustee for being a trustee OR any trustee or person connected to them for providing goods and services, you declare that this will:

- be in the organisation's best interests;
- be lawful and authorised;
- help the organisation carry out its purposes (or be a necessary by-product of it carrying out its purposes).

You also declare that:

- the information you provide to the Charity Commission is true, complete and correct;
- you understand that it's an offence under section 60(1)(b) of the Charities Act 2011 to knowingly or recklessly provide false or misleading information;

- your organisation's funds are held (or will be held) in its name in a bank or building society account in England or Wales;
- you will comply with your responsibilities as trustees - these are set out in the Charity Commission guidance 'The essential trustee (CC3)';
- the primary address and residency details you provide in a charity registration application are correct and you will notify the Charity Commission if they change.

STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE

now I..... having read and understood the Declaration of Eligibility and Responsibility set out in the above Application Form; signed the WPCC Code of Conduct and completed the supporting material as required, I do hereby submit my nomination as a Candidate for the position of Conservator, Appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Signed:

Name (please print):

Date: