



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Release

Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) announced today the decision of Simon Lee, Chief Executive, to retire at the end of December 2020.

Simon has provided outstanding leadership for the Commons since his arrival in March 2014 and the announcement of his retirement is made with great regret. Simon was instrumental in developing an ambitious long-term vision for the Commons that recognised the critical role of the Commons in meeting not only the physical needs of the community but the social and mental requirements, as has become so clearly apparent during the pandemic. Simon also identified the need to develop a masterplan for the estate and successfully secured external funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support this major initiative. The masterplan will identify opportunities for limited and targeted investment across the Commons that will ultimately improve the resilience of these 1140 acres of magnificent open space.

Over the course of his six-year tenure, Simon also put in place procedures to ensure the efficient day-to-day management of this vast resource, ensuring that regulatory and health and safety obligations were fulfilled. The inspiration and sense of purpose that he has brought to the organisation has been critical in allowing the organisation to move forward despite the challenges inherent in working in an environment of limited resources, heightened regulatory scrutiny and most recently, a life-threatening pathogen.

There is no question that Simon's dedication to the Commons has furthered the sense of loyalty and selflessness that defines the organisation. Throughout the difficult period of the pandemic in particular, staff have consistently demonstrated a willingness to put the interests of the Commons ahead of their own in the provision of what has been deemed to be an essential service. The culture and ethos that continues to characterise this unique organisation owes much to Simon's willingness to lead from the front and discharge his duties with integrity, strength and quiet determination.

Simon's natural communication skills allowed him to engage easily with members of the local and wider communities. There is no question that under Simon's leadership, the realm of influence enjoyed by Wimbledon and Putney Commons has expanded well beyond its traditional boundaries and Simon's absence will be keenly felt by all those who had the privilege to work with him in some capacity.

In the alien environment in which we have all been living, the Commons have come to represent one of the few remaining vestiges of a normal world. Throughout this critical time, we have been extremely fortunate to have had an inspirational and visionary Chief Executive at the helm who has been whole heartedly dedicated to the organisation. His decision to retire is a huge loss for the Commons. He will be deeply missed and we wish him well in the future.

Diane Neil Mills
Chairman of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

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NOTES for Editors - Wimbledon and Putney Commons is a charity managed by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC). It was established under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871. The Commons comprise some 1,140 acres across Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common.

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