

The Dons Trust

**Board
Elections
2011**

Candidates' Statements

About the election:

More debate and discussion:

- There will also be a **live broadcast on Radio WDON on Thursday 17th November**, where the candidates will take questions from members. Those can be submitted by twitter ([@AFCW_Votes](https://twitter.com/AFCW_Votes)), by email (elections@thedonstrust.org), or during the broadcast on the Womble Underground Press guestbook (www.wupgb.co.uk). A podcast of the session will be available to download.
- There's also a **forum** at <http://s.coop/dtelect> where candidates can take questions from members.

How to vote:

- If you have chosen to get messages from the Dons Trust by post, you will have received a paper ballot with this booklet. You can vote using the **Freepost service**, or vote **in person on home matchdays** at the Dons Trust stall, where a ballot box will be available from around 1.45pm-2.45pm.
- If you have chosen to get messages by email, you will be sent an email with a **unique URL**, which you click to be taken to a website where you can cast your vote.
- Should you want to change your preference, please email us on elections@thedonstrust.org **ASAP**.
- Voting closes at **5pm on Monday 5th December**, and the result will be declared at the **Dons Trust Annual General Meeting** on Thursday 8th December.

Order, Order: The order of candidates' in this document was chosen at random (using Microsoft Excel random number generator), and will be reversed on paper ballots and in the matchday programme. On electronic votes, the order will be randomized for every ballot.

Kris Stewart



- Proposed by Rob Crane & Aideen Rochford
- Board Member since 2007 (two terms served)
- Attendance Record since last election: 15/20 (75%)

Those of you who have been around for a while might well remember me from my time as Chairman of our Club. After stepping down, I took a bit of time out and then stood for the Trust board, which I've been on for nearly four years now. I'd like to stay on the board for another term, to continue with the good work we have been doing and to make sure we build on our recent improvements.

Over the last year I think the board has made real progress, although I don't think much of that work is obvious to you the members just yet. We are working hard to make ourselves more accountable and we are also working hard on making sure we hold the Football Club Board accountable in the right way.

With the huge amount of extra work which regaining our league place has meant, we have to be careful not to add unnecessary burdens to the already over-worked executives. But at the same time we have to remember that this is your Club, and that our job is to ensure that they do theirs well. Getting that balance right is something that's never going to be easy, but we are getting better at it all the time.

I said I want another term. That will make three terms, and that is enough – for me and for anyone. I think we should limit board members to a maximum of three consecutive terms and should I be re-elected I will work to introduce this change to our rules. I strongly believe that part of our job as board members is to encourage others to stand and play their part in leading our organisation. If people stay on term after term, this discourages new people from standing. And, because the Club is thriving, anyone already on the board – no matter his or her personal contribution – has a huge advantage in any election.

No-one is irreplaceable, no-one is bigger than our Club, and we should not be frightened to commit ourselves to ensuring a regular turnover of board members. Personally, I commit myself to not standing again in two years' time, should I be successful this year.

What did I promise to do last time I stood? I said my priorities would be:

- Widening participation on the board
- Making the board and its members more accountable to you

- Working to make our return home a reality

Widening participation – we now have two women on the board and the average age has come down as well. I am not in favour of any kind of quota system, but I firmly believe that our board should look like our membership and our fanbase. It doesn't yet – still too many old men such as me. But we are in a better position now than two years ago.

Accountability – having Matt Breach in the chair has really helped here.

Whereas previously the things I proposed in this area received little more than lip-service, now the majority of board members accept the need for much greater accountability and transparency. We have a long way to go, and we'll never be perfect, but at this year's AGM we should have a set of board objectives with the name of a board member next to each and a due date. And then you really can hold the board and individual board members accountable for what does and doesn't happen.

Going home – I won't try to take credit for the excellent work that's been done on this front. But I have been part of creating a much more positive environment within the board in support of a return home. I believe we have the right people with the right attitude leading this project, with support from most of the board. I also believe that it is important that the chair of the Stadium Working Group, Tom Adam, is not involved in leading this work. In all my time on the board and prior to that as chairman of our Club, I don't recall ever hearing Tom say anything positive about a return to Merton. That's the primary reason why I didn't vote for Tom two

years ago and I once again will not be voting for him this time.

As for the coming years, if elected I think the priorities are very similar, and I will put my efforts mainly into:

- Delivering genuine accountability
- Ensuring the Football Club Board is properly supported and properly challenged in running our Club
- Continuing to press in every way possible for a return home

I'd appreciate your vote. But more importantly, I'd appreciate your using your votes to make sure we have the best possible board to lead us over the next year. We need a dynamic board with the right mix of experience and fresh ideas. Nicole and David have shown their immense value to the board since being elected, and Zoe has shown through her hard work for the Club and involvement in Trust activities what an asset she would be. I hope you'll join me in voting for Zoe, Nicole and David – and maybe even for me too!

<http://electkris.wordpress.com/>

Zoe Linkson

- Proposed by Kris Stewart & David Grownns
- Not a serving board member



You may remember that I stood last year and 347 of you were kind enough to vote for me – thank you. Losing last year hasn't put me off – far from it. I am now even more sure that I want to contribute by being an elected member of the Board. I hope I can win your support this time.

I want to stand because I believe I have something to offer. I have worked in the media for 20 years and am currently a picture editor on a national newspaper. I use my particular skills to help the Club regularly as a volunteer with photography at matches and Club events and to assist the merchandising team. I also help to host the boardroom on match days, which is often fun and sometimes hard work – I leave you to guess which teams are which!

As well as using my photography skills I have played a part in the Communications Working Group, working with David Grownns to help put together a communications strategy for us. I believe that my experience and knowledge would be a useful addition to the Board at this time.

While I think that my media background will be useful, I also believe that I have a lot to offer personally. I am a committed member of the Trust and a passionate supporter of the Club and I want to bring that commitment and that passion onto the board with me.

Those running the Club have done a wonderful job and are to be congratulated for their achievements. From what I can tell, they have achieved these things mostly from following their own opinions and ideas and without any great input from the Trust Board. That has worked well so far, but one day those currently doing the job will have moved on. That's why I want to play my part right now in ensuring that the Trust board does its job properly, in supporting and managing the Football Club Board, and making sure that, no matter who takes on a particular role, the Club is run in the very best interests and under the control of us, the members.

Last year one of the issues I wanted addressed was the accountability of the Board. As a regular reader of the monthly minutes we evidently have a handful of very pro-active Board members. There remain, however, some members whose input and work remains

intangible. As Trust members it is vital that we all know how our Board is working and that our faith in them to run things on our behalf is deserved.

I also still think we need to look at why some of our regular fans feel that participation in The Trust is not for them. Why do they feel that being involved in Club governance isn't that important? Is there a reason they see a separation between supporting the team and supporting the Club? Can we do anything to change their minds? The next big change for us as a Club and more importantly as a Trust will be our return home to Wimbledon. The predicted timetable for this may be a long way off but we are already taking the first footsteps on this journey and as Trust members the important decisions will be upon us much sooner than the ribbon cutting on the new ground. I think it is vital that anyone who has an interest in the Club is given the encouragement to be involved as much as possible.

I hope you agree with me. If so, please lend me your vote this time round. If not - please give me the chance to persuade you. I will be playing a full part in all election activities, so keep an eye out on the programme and on the website, and I can always be reached on zoelinkson@blueyonder.co.uk if you have any questions for me.

Tom Adam



- Proposed by Julian Knowles & Erik Samuelson
- Board Member since 2002 (four terms served)
- Attendance Record since last election: 18/20 (90%)

Summary

I have been a member of the Dons Trust Board for 9+ years. During that time I chaired the Board for 2+ years and throughout my time as a board member I have chaired the stadium working group. That group, which comprises experts from a range of relevant professions, has driven the major changes to our stadium that were needed to qualify for the Football League, while also providing guidance and support in the search for a new stadium in Wimbledon.

I am seeking re-election for Membership to the Dons Trust Board so that I can continue to represent the interests of all Members in shaping and discharging the Board's responsibilities as well as 'seeing the job through' in terms of the further development that is needed for Kingsmeadow to be fit for purpose until we can build a new stadium. I am especially well placed to do this, given that I've been at the heart of our current stadium development and new stadium search for several years now. As you will see if you read on, I have also been active in other aspects of the Board's activities.

Background

I have been a lifelong supporter of football in Merton and I am a founder member of the Dons Trust. I am determined to see that we continue to capitalise on our strengths and take advantage of the new opportunities that membership of the Football League offers, so

that football flourishes at all levels in Merton and the surrounding area. We have already made some outstanding progress through the non-league structure but over the next two years there is a lot to do, particularly from a strategic perspective, with the consequential business management issues, as we consolidate and advance in the Football League whilst maintaining our commitment to a fans owned club and stadium

The next two years

I hope to be a Board member for the next two years during which time the Dons Trust Board needs to convert our strategy into actions so as to provide a strong foundation to sustain our Club as it grows through the Leagues and becomes an extremely valuable community asset. This means ensuring our financial control systems are strong and our business focus matches our growth, with greater emphasis on fundraising, and a major improvement in communications. I am also a strong supporter of making sure that the value of volunteers is not overlooked and they feel fully appreciated.

In terms of the stadium, we must expand and improve our existing stadium, in a financially prudent manner, because whatever happens about a new stadium in Wimbledon we will be here for several years yet. So we must maximise our capacity, consistent with planning permissions, so as to serve our needs in the short to medium term. At the same time we must advance our longer term aspirations by pro-actively

pursuing feasible opportunities in Wimbledon or surrounding area.

Contribution to the Board

My contribution to the Dons Trust Board over the last two years has been to pursue board commitment to its membership in terms of progressing the recently published Dons Trust Aims, to actively participate in the formulation of the new strategy, to ensure responsibilities between and within the Dons Trust Board and the Club are clearly focused to meet the new demands as we move into the Football League, including Stadium development through the Stadium Working Group.

As chairman of the stadium working group, our work has been specifically directed at making sure we complied with the requirements for entry to the Football League. We have also taken a series of steps to protect our planning permissions, without which we could not stay in our current home. I have chaired the group while it formulated Kingsmeadow stadium growth plans and contributed to the London Borough of Merton and the Royal Borough of Kingston master plans, so as to be able to offer to the membership realistic options for securing our longer term aspiration of a stadium back in Wimbledon while protecting our current interests.

Besides looking to the future, under the auspices of the Stadium Working Group I have also directed my attention to making a visit to Kingsmeadow a more pleasurable experience in terms of for example, field parking and toilet improvements, building maintenance and work weekends to keep the stadium tidy as well ensuring the stadium is compliant with current league and statutory obligations.

Personal details

I am a Chartered Engineer and Fellow of the Institution of Electrical Engineers by profession and able to offer extensive business experience particularly in the area

of planning and operations. I am currently a director of a company concerned with business process management and I shall continue to make sufficient time available to satisfy my passion for the creation and growth of AFC Wimbledon through the work of the Dons Trust Board.

If re-elected I will continue to discharge my assignments with care and determination and ensure that the Dons Trust Board meets its responsibilities and obligations to its Members with full transparency and accountability.

Postscript

I have been given the opportunity by the chair of Election Steering committee to respond in my election statement to an election statement made by another candidate, namely Kris Stewart. Kris reports that he has never heard me say anything positive about a return to Merton and urges members not to vote for me.

*Sadly, Kris is mistaken in two ways. First, I **don't** lead the project to return to Merton as is clear from the papers that are presented to the DT board on a monthly basis – he would also know this if he had exercised his right to attend a Stadium Working Group meeting. Some time ago I supported the proposal that Erik Samuelson should lead this initiative and he continues to do so. As for me, I provide advice and support to Erik based on my long experience of major projects and I continue to be the driving force behind the Kingsmeadow improvements over the last few years.*

Second, I am pleased to say that all the regular attendees of the Stadium WG (Erik Samuelson, Mike Dowek, John Martin, Paul Sparks and Eddie Ridgwell) confirm that I am as enthusiastic for a return to Merton as the next person - but in line with the recent fans' survey I am not prepared to close the door to alternatives if Merton should prove impossible. That is where Kris and I differ –he said at a DTB meeting that he would spend 200 years in the current stadium if we needed to do so to return to Wimbledon and I don't think this is living in the real world.

I am saddened that the election has taken this turn but I won't be drawn into attacking others. Instead I urge you to vote for the people you want, rather than vote against someone you are urged not to support. On that basis, I hope you will vote for me so that I can help to take the work (which I've dedicated the last nine years to) into the final straight.

Nicole Hammond

- Proposed by Tim Hillyer & Terry Parker
- Board Member since 2010 (one term served)
- Attendance Record since last election: 16/20 (80%)



I am standing for re-election to the Dons Trust Board after a two-year term. The past two years have been a very positive experience - it has been a genuine pleasure to serve on a board which has such a common purpose and drive. Although members of the board don't always agree on everything, the shared aims, respect for each other, and love for the club has made serving on the board a great experience.

At the risk of being unoriginal, I will repeat part of my manifesto from two years ago, with regards to my background: I was chair of WISA between 2002 to 2005, having worked in the roles of vice-chair and treasurer and general campaigner previously during WISA's busiest years. Additionally, I spent three years on the Football Supporters' Federation's national council, being particularly involved in anti-franchising, protection of clubs and club governance. I feel these have given me a good grounding in working in a democratically-elected committee environment and an awareness of the issues facing football clubs today.

I have been supporting Wimbledon since the early 90's and have been an occasional matchday volunteer since we started AFC Wimbledon, mostly on the turnstiles.

Outside of football, I am an architect, and having served on the Dons Trust Stadium Working Group since its inception, I have expanded my knowledge of architecture to elements of stadium design and have been able to advise on developments such as the reprofiling of the stands. Being on the SWG has also kept me up to speed with the situations regarding Kingston and Merton, as well as where we stand with regard to getting Kingsmeadow up to league standards.

When I stood two years ago, I stated that my two main aims were for Wimbledon to remain a fan-owned club, and to work towards moving back to Wimbledon without harming Kingstonian FC.

The main work I have undertaken while on the board has been to run the Survey Working Group, working with the New Economics Foundation to survey the fans of AFC Wimbledon. The purpose of this was to find out what the priorities of the fanbase are for the club's ambitions,

location and ownership models, etc. (The results were well-publicised, but you can find more about the results by searching for “fans' survey” on afcwimbledon.co.uk or by contacting me by post at the club.)

It was gratifying that the survey revealed that the fans' number one priority was to remain fan-owned, and that a return to Wimbledon was also a key ambition. Rapid promotion at the cost of losing ownership was rejected, and it is also gratifying to see that we gained promotion to the league nevertheless!

The results of the first stage of the survey have given the board valuable direction for making day-to-day decisions – previously we could only guess at what we thought members' priorities were. The original intent with the survey was to run a second stage, limited to Dons Trust members. However, we have somewhat been overtaken by events, in gaining promotion and making headway with Merton Council in talks about a return home. Therefore, it has been decided that the survey group will now focus on taking reactions and directions from the membership with regards to the new strategy that is being put together for the club and the trust. If re-elected, I will continue to chair the group and facilitate this work.

I have a season ticket in the Tempest end and often spend time at the DT stall before the game and around the ground after the game, so I am easily found on matchdays if you want a chat.

These are exciting times for our club. While further promotion is a possibility, the day-to-day reality of being a fan-owned and fan-run club takes constant and careful oversight. Having seen how

the trust board and the newly- football club board operate, I am confident that the club is in good hands. I would welcome the opportunity to continue working in this fantastic organization.

David Grows

- Proposed by Matt Breach & Ivor Heller
- Board Member since 2010 (one term served)
- Attendance Record since last election: 16/20 (80%)



I have been Vice Chairman of the Dons Trust Board for the past two years and I'm seeking re-election. I believe the experience and knowledge I have gained working on your behalf will enable me to make further significant contributions to the continued success of our club over the next two years.

I work for a global IT services company, helping clients to create and implement IT strategy. I bring to the Dons Trust Board (DTB) the skills I use every day – strategic thinking, experience at creating plans and turning them into action, goal-setting, scrutiny and review – coupled with the experience I have gained from serving you on the DTB over the last two years.

REPORTING BACK

In my election manifesto two years ago, I talked a lot about communications: what I wanted to change, and why. After I was elected I formed a Communications Working Group to help me carry out a detailed review of both Club and Dons Trust communications on behalf of the Board. Together we have interviewed key personnel around the Club and the Dons Trust, analysed the data we have collected and taken advice from communications experts.

A significant number of recommendations were made and these are now being implemented. The Club is recruiting a Communications Executive, whose first task will be make the transfer to a new Official Website. A Communications Management Group is being formed to manage and co-ordinate all communications within the club. The production of a regular newsletter is being investigated, and the media training needs of key personnel are being assessed. Achieving these changes is a matter of great personal pride.

On the DTB side there have been smaller improvements. The DT stall is attended by a Board Member at every home game, there is forward planning of the DT page in the programme resulting in better content, and reports on Board meetings are published in a more timely manner. But above all, there is now more awareness of the need to improve how we communicate.

During my two-year tenure I have held the position of Vice Chair (elected by my fellow DTB members), helping the Chair with the running of the Board and standing in where necessary.

I have attended meetings with Supporters Direct and at the Football League, representing the Club and the Trust. I continue to volunteer for stadium clean-up duties and I organise the annual WUP Guestbook Collective sponsored game.

LOOKING FORWARD

The search for a new stadium continues. I would personally like it to be sited in Wimbledon, but it almost goes without saying that I will of course support the consensus view of the membership. The next step is to narrow the search to a single preferred site, and we will then need to look at how viable that site is – everything from public transport links through to how much ‘enabling development’ we will need in order to finance building the stadium. There are likely to be several scenarios. I look forward to contributing to a lively debate, at the end of which you will decide how you want your Board to proceed.

There is more work to be done with communications – focussing in particular on the Dons Trust. We need to find a way to broadcast SGMs online securely. We also need to preserve our brand: defining what our brand is (the badge? the colours?), what needs to be legally protected, what our reputation is, who we associate with and how we project and protect our image.

Our rapid rise through the leagues has been astonishing – five promotions in nine years. Two years ago we were Conference new boys. Our success is testament to the sheer determination, professionalism and commitment of everybody at the club. The speed with which we have shot up through the

leagues has, however, given us a number of challenges. We desperately need more office space and more staff, and to comply with Football League ground requirements we need to finance and build a stand with more seating. Having spent two years on the DTB I am familiar with all the issues surrounding planning permissions, financing and building a stand of this sort.

As Dons Trust members we are the owners of a football club that is also a business with a multi-million pound turnover. I want a sustainable budget where donations from wealthy supporters are not relied on for day-to-day operational expenses but used as a windfall.

It is the DTB that is responsible for setting strategy and for overseeing the CEO and the Football Club Board. I am committed to ensuring that I use the experience I have gained on the DTB to make sure that the Club is run sensibly, sustainably and in our best interests.

Please continue to give me your support.