

FAQ for people interested in being a Conservator : 2025

What are the Conservators?

The responsibility for managing Therfield Heath and Green lies with a group of people called “the Conservators”. When the legal structure for the Heath and Green was created in 1888 there were eight Conservators ;

- three Conservators were elected only by those people who were called Commoners (but today we would say ‘stint holders’) being the people who held grazing rights on the Heath (“stint holder Conservators”);
- three Conservators were elected by those people who were referred to as the ‘Inhabitant Ratepayers of the special Drainage District for Royston’ today we now call the “SDDR Conservators”;
- There was a Conservator role for the rector of Therfield if he/she wanted to serve - and the Rev Carol Newman has agreed to take on this role.
- There was a Conservator role for whoever was chosen by the Lords of the Manor of Therfield. Currently this is Mr John King.

Today the same, largely unchanged, structure still exists.

How do you become a Conservator?

Each February one stint holder Conservator and one SDDR Conservator reach the end of their 3-year term. The 1888 Award says this :

“The term of Office of the elected Conservators except as aforesaid shall be three years and the Conservator elected by the said Commoners and by the said Inhabitant Ratepayers respectively who has been longest in Office without re election shall go out each year”

At that point the people either resign or stand again at the election. And so, each February there is the opportunity for new people to stand for election into one of these roles. The 1888 Award says this :

“Elections of Conservators in the place of those going out of Office shall be made by the said Commoners and by the said Inhabitant Ratepayers at meetings to be held in the month of February in every year and the names of those elected shall be intimated in writing to the Clerk of the Conservators”

What do you do if you are a Conservator?

For the successful candidates – elected in February – it will be a 3-year term. Should people be elected in delayed elections their term will be a less than 3-year period and will end at the appropriate February election period.

Although in the 1888 Award only required bi-yearly meetings today the Conservators meet monthly and are updated – between meetings – by email about matters which may require their attention. Conservators are expected to attend (so far as possible) monthly evening meetings currently held on the 4th Thursday of the month.

Do I need any special knowledge?

Not at all. Conservators come with their own personal background and life experience and are a diverse bunch of people. Everyone will have something relevant to contribute at meetings. Whilst some of our Conservators are local farmers and landowners (familiar with the soil and land conditions in the area) others work for charities, run their own businesses etc; they have different interests and different viewpoints! What draws them together is that they want to contribute something. We ask only that you engage with your fellow Conservators; bring and share your views with them ; and find solutions, to today's problems and questions, working together to protect the Heath for generations to come.

The current election is for two SDDR Conservators and one Stint Holder Conservator.

Only those with 'stint' will participate in the Stintholder election which will take place first on election night Thursday 13th February; the stintholder election normally happens between 7:00-7:10.

Only those who live in the Special Drainage District can vote in the SDDR election but this is a significant number of Royston households. This election takes place next, commencing at 7:10pm. Because a SDDR Conservator stepped down mid role we have the remaining time of 1-year from that term to fill (as well as the normal 3-year Conservator role).

We welcome applications from anyone who is interested and willing to volunteer their time and experience.

Please contact the clerk for a form and any further information which you may require. Email : clerk@therfieldheath.org.uk