

## **Verderer Elections - FAQ's**

### **What is this election for?**

Epping Forest is held in trust and managed by the City of London Corporation. The Mayor, Aldermen and Common Councilmen acting as the Court of Common Council are appointed as the Conservators of Epping Forest by the Epping Forest Act 1878 ("the Act"). The Conservators appoint twelve Members elected within the City of London itself, plus four elected locally who have the title Verderer and these sixteen make up the Epping Forest and Commons Committee who manage and regulate the Forest. The election of Verderers is held every seven years and is being held here today.

The Conservators are obliged to uphold all aspects of the Epping Forest Act 1878 - the legislation that founded the Forest and protects it to this day.

### **What do Verderers do?**

Originally Verderers were officials responsible for the enforcement of Forest law - particularly to protect the greenery and game of Royal Forests. Since the Act of 1878 our Verderers are elected by and therefore traditionally represent the Commoners of Epping Forest (two representing the North, and two the South, see map and below) but in practice take on a far wider remit, representing at Committee the views and experiences of local residents, visitors and Forest users across the whole of the area. The role is entirely voluntary and receives neither salary nor expenses. A role description giving more details on involvement, preferred skills, knowledge and the demands of the position is available on our website.

### **Why are the elections run this way?**

Specific, detailed directions for the election of Verderer's are given in the Epping Forest Act 1878 (Schedule 4). (Copy provided to Poll Clerks). It gives instructions that Verderer elections must run every seven years, and that they are elected by Commoners of Epping Forest and further specifics regarding the election itself.

### **Should I have known about it?**

We have used a number of methods to raise awareness of this election, its importance to the Forest and the unfamiliar way in which it must be carried out. This includes Notices in the local Guardian group newspapers and City AM (as required by the Act), posts on Facebook and Twitter, updates to our own website, articles in Forest Focus and presentations and updates at the Epping Forest Consultative Committee and direct mail shots. These have particularly been targeted at those who are able to vote... the Commoners of Epping Forest.

### **Can I vote?**

Case law arising from the introduction of the Act defines Commoners as owners or occupiers of half an acre of old enclosure, capable of receiving cattle. That land must be within one of the twelve Ancient Parishes of the Forest (ecclesiastical Parish Boundaries as at 1878) AND within the "perambulation of King Charles 1" - an ancient Forest boundary laid out in 1642 (maps provided to Poll Clerks).

The Conservators are required to keep a Register of Commoners “on which they shall insert the name, description and address of every person or body entitled to a right of common in or over Epping Forest, on their claiming to be so inserted..”. Work has been underway to contact known and potential new Commoners since Summer 2019 to update these records ready for the election.

The Register of Commoners was settled on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (as prescribed in the Act) and no further changes or additions can be made for this election. It has been available to view in hard copy at Guildhall and the Warren in draft and settled forms in the run up to election.

### **Can I be a Verderer?**

Verderers must be resident in one of the Ancient Parishes and must not be Members of the City of London Court of Common Council. There is no requirement of landholding, Verderers do not themselves have to be Commoners.

Candidates standing for election today presented themselves at the Nomination meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February. The Act states that there must only be between one and three days from Nomination to Election.

### **Why is this not a secret ballot?**

The method for election is set out in the Act and was unaffected by the Representation of the People Act which went on to define our now more familiar election processes. Under the terms of the Epping Forest Act 1878 (Schedule 4), paragraph 24 “The returning officer shall cause to be entered in the polling books the name, description and address of every voter and for whom he/she votes”, so, no polling booths or ballot box.

However, we recognise the justified expectations of modern voters and have made every arrangement possible to protect the confidentiality of your vote whilst remaining within the rules set out in the Act.

### **How can I find out more about candidates?**

Voters (on the Settled Register of Commoners) were invited to attend the Nomination Meetings on 24<sup>th</sup> February, where candidates were able to address the audience with their ‘manifesto’.

Many candidates have taken the opportunity to contact individuals and businesses on the Register of Commoners to set out their credentials in the run up to today.

### **Is there more information on-line?**

Please go to <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/about-us/Pages/Verderers.aspx>

This page contains the parish and perambulation map, the Verderer role description and explanation of the election process.

### **(If I qualify) can I get involved next time?**

The next elections will be held by 20<sup>th</sup> March 2027. Details will be broadcast via appropriate social media and hard copy press nearer that time.

Should a Verderer vacate their post mid-term then a new candidate is recruited and appointed directly by the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and again, details of how to apply would be broadcast through all available means should it occur.

**How can I contact Verderers for representation?**

Contact details for our Verderers are on our website as above.