

## **CHRIS ATKINSON | DONS TRUST BOARD MANIFESTO**

Hello. I'm Chris, and I'm putting myself forward to serve on the Dons Trust Board. I want to us to be an organisation that listens carefully, communicates clearly, and makes decisions that reflect our collective values and goals.

### **MY SKILLS & CAREER**

If you vaguely recognise me it's possibly because I worked full-time at AFC Wimbledon for five seasons from 2009 to 2014. My role was working alongside the Club Secretary/Operations Director, which gave me an intricate understanding of how a Football League side functions. It also opened my eyes to the day-to-day pressures, workloads, and challenges that club staff face. It allowed me to meet and speak to almost every supporter who came into the office (or called/emailed in), helping to get a true appreciation of the varied needs and beliefs of our loyal fanbase.

For the last 11 years I have specialised in marketing and PR, and my current role is Marketing & Communications Director for a leading sports organiser. I am responsible for some of the UK's largest mass participation events such as the adidas Manchester Marathon and the Cancer Research UK London Winter Run. It's a varied role, but it includes:

- Overseeing large marketing campaigns, such as recruiting 40,000 people to run a marathon, or growing from scratch what is now the country's largest 10k run.
- Supporting charities to help raise millions of pounds through these events.
- Working with councils (such as Westminster and Trafford) to deliver impactful and measurable community schemes.
- Communicating intricate instructions to tens of thousands of people in a clear, concise, and enjoyable way.
- Working with the media, leading crisis management, and developing creative PR campaigns.

I also sit on the senior management team for the company, as well as collaborating with colleagues in Europe on world-famous events such as the Tour de France and the Paris Marathon.

### **WIMBLEDON CREDENTIALS**

A lifelong Wimbledon fan alongside my family, I became obsessed as a 90s child using my season ticket to watch heroes such as Jones, Perry, Earle, and (an underrated favourite of mine) Michael Hughes.

I did all I could as a 16-year-old to protest the proposed move away, including attending the demonstration at Soho Square. Full disclosure, I was sent home after a couple of hours by the organising WISA members as I had my GCSE maths exam the next day (sneaked a B if you're interested). I was at Wimbledon Theatre for the Dons Trust launch and proudly boast the low(ish) membership number of 364.

I volunteered and helped however I could, including handing out leaflets on New Malden high street to promote the first AFC Wimbledon friendlies. With friends and family, I travelled home and away for years and got to live a dream by working at the club where I experienced some historic moments from the inside such as the 2011 Play-Off Final success.

I now live in Ewell, with my wife Naomi and 9-month-old Isobel, who was signed up as a Junior Don hours after she was born last November.

## **WHY I WANT TO SERVE ON THE BOARD**

I'm keen to work as a team, finding solutions to the challenges the Dons Trust faces over the next couple of years. I believe many skills I possess and use every day could be valuable, and I'd like all areas of the club to thrive.

I fully appreciate that our football club does not just exist for a couple of hours every Saturday, but is a beautiful non-stop entity with community schemes, youth games, corporate events, and much more from dawn to (well after) dusk every day.

One of my key motivations is helping towards significantly lowering the stadium debt. I appreciate how much hard work, sacrifices, and minor miracles countless volunteers have already pulled off so we can finally play home games again. I know a lot of brilliant and effective work has already happened to pay down the stadium loan. It's important that we keep pushing on, so we can plan for a future where loan repayments are assured, and we can plan to sensibly expand Plough Lane.

Most importantly though, I'm here to serve our supporters and find appropriate solutions for any issues they raise.

## **YOUR VOTE**

I don't know who else will be standing for election, but I hope you will consider using one of your votes for me. Regardless of who you choose, please make sure you use your vote. It's such an incredible privilege to own your club, and choosing the right Dons Trust Board is one of the best ways you can use your influence.

***WTID.***

Chris Atkinson