

Manifesto – Simon Hood

Standing for Re-Election to the Dons Trust Board

I stood for the Dons Trust Board last year because I believe in what this club was built on. I believed in supporter ownership. I believed in transparency. I believed in people over profit. I believed that we could do things differently and better and I still do.

But after almost a year on the board, I have to be honest. It has not been easy. And I have seen things that I cannot ignore.

The culture surrounding the Trust Board and its relationship with the club is a problem. There is a hesitancy to challenge. A fear of upsetting staff or the PLC. A belief that being on the board means falling in line and not asking too many difficult questions. I believe the opposite. The Dons Trust Board is the owner of the club. But too often, it plays second fiddle to the PLC and operates like a junior partner. That is not how supporter ownership is supposed to work.

Collective responsibility should never mean collective silence. Members deserve a Board that asks questions openly and keeps them fully involved. I want to help restore that culture of honest debate and genuine accountability.

Within my first few weeks, I received some criticism for liking a tweet that someone at the club didn't like I did not post the tweet, but merely liked it, which I don't think merited the criticism I received. My experience has been that individuals can be targeted for making well meaning comments, and honest debate can often be treated as disloyalty to the club even when that was not the intention. A club that should welcome feedback appears to have become too sensitive to hear it.

I've also seen volunteers who have given years of their time treated poorly or pushed out. That is not acceptable at any football club - especially not this one.

And let's talk about the constitution. It exists to protect this club and its members. But at times, it feels like it's being used to protect internal politics or silence dissent. We need to return to using it for what it was meant to be - a safeguard for our values, our model, and our future.

Opening Dons Trust membership up to all season ticket holders sounded good on paper. But the reality is that most new members don't even know they're members. They aren't engaged. And why would they be? They didn't opt in. We now have over 7,000 members, but fewer voices than ever. Real engagement has been diluted. It looks great in a report, but in reality it's left us with a quieter, less active membership base. I don't have a perfect solution, but we need to acknowledge the issue and start fixing it.

I live in the North West. I have a young family. I run a business. I travel regularly. So no, I won't be in the portacabin at every home game. But when it matters, I show up. When people contact me, I answer. When concerns are raised, I raise them at board level. I've never dodged a difficult conversation and I never will.

Have I changed as much as I hoped in my first year? No. I've found it harder than expected to break through the noise. But I've learned where the blocks are. And I've learned what needs to change. I don't want to sit in meetings nodding along. I want to challenge. I want to push. I want to protect the club we all care about.

This club is special. But it won't stay special if we don't fight to keep it that way. And that means facing uncomfortable truths. It means standing up for the values we were founded on. And it means giving the members back their voice.

I'm not here to be popular. I'm here to be honest. If re-elected, I'll keep doing what I've always done. I'll speak up. I'll ask the hard questions. And I'll do everything I can to make sure this club stays owned by its people and led by them too.