

Biographies of those seeking re-election to the Board



Richard Coates

I am standing for re-election as a Non Executive Director at the VDS. It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the Audit Committee and in the past 12 months I have taken on the role as Senior Independent Director.

I am a chartered accountant having worked in the retail financial service sector for 35 years, 20 years as an audit partner with KPMG and 15 years in a number of Non Executive Director roles with other financial sector organisations.

The VDS has a proud legacy of serving and supporting the veterinary profession over the past 159 years. The profession faces a number of key challenges in the near term and it remains more important than ever that the VDS remains financially strong and well managed so that it can continue to help, support and protect members into the future.

I live in Skipton with my wife Iris. Our two dogs recently passed away. The care and compassion provided by our local veterinary practice was exemplary.



Gudrun Ravetz

I am incredibly grateful to the veterinary degree that has given me a passport to a varied, fascinating and fulfilling career so far. I am a Liverpool graduate with a clinical past in various types of small animal general practice and a Graduate Diploma in Law. The veterinary profession has enormous opportunities for good and I realised soon after graduating that to really "see" and experience the profession beyond my clinical job I should get involved within it. This led me to join the Society of Practising Veterinary where I became President in 2012 and ultimately to becoming an Officer of the British Veterinary Association and President in 2016/17.

During my period at the BVA I was fortunate to be able to focus on the recruitment and retention challenges facing the profession and in conjunction with the University of Exeter was able to evidence factors affecting the veterinary workforce, including discrimination. I then went onto chair the BVAs Good Veterinary Workplace Working Group. Creating good veterinary workplaces with a positive culture where team members can thrive is an important driver for me and I have been delighted to support the VDS's commitment and focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

I am a past founding Director and Chair of Vet Sustain and recognise the pivotal role veterinary professionals play at the centre of One Health. It is vital that veterinary professionals are enabled and equipped to champion sustainability and the VDS can be very proud of its own work in supporting the profession in this area and within its own business which has been recognised by receiving the Green Accreditation from Investors in the Environment

In my current role as a Group Chief Medical Officer I recognise the privilege we have as veterinary professionals to positively impact animal health and welfare daily but am also acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities that we are currently facing.

I am honoured to be standing for re-election for the position of Non Executive Director of the VDS and believe my varied work experience, pragmatism and enthusiasm can continue to help the VDS to be a thriving and sustainable mutual working for its members.



Alan Kirkwood

As a qualified accountant, my 30-year career history has seen me operating at a senior level within the banking and insurance sectors, and holding roles at Group, Divisional and Business Unit level in organisations such as Lloyds Banking Group, Virgin Money and Hoare's Bank. I have extensive experience of working within regulated industries and dealing with a wide range of regulatory bodies, as well as devising and implementing a range of different business strategies.

During my career, I have developed leadership and management skills, having led large teams across multiple sites. I am very commercial in my approach and able to communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders to partner the business effectively, thereby adding value for the organisation. It would be a great honour to be re-elected to the Board of the VDS and play a full part in the future development of the business, ensuring that we continue to meet members' needs into the future.

Outside of work, I enjoy a range of activities including swimming, scuba diving and fishing. I live in Edinburgh with my wife, Lyn and our Labrador, Millie.