

Richard Hopkins

Richard Hopkins – Personal Statement

Why Sussex Matters to Me

I was born in Sussex and have lived here all my life. I care deeply about this place: its people, its history, its future. That's why I want to play my part in supporting the Society and helping it succeed.

My Experience

After many years leading software and technology businesses, stepping into the role of Managing Director at the horticultural-supply business Fargo gave me the chance to work with businesses firmly rooted in the local community, which I found especially rewarding. At Fargo, I respected the company's long heritage while transforming the business into a forward-thinking, innovative market leader, building resilience in its commercial base, growing revenues by over 60%, and fostering a culture of creativity and collaboration.

This experience led directly to my chairing the West Sussex Growers' Association, which represents a £1bn sector and 10,000 employees in the county. As Chair, I have re-energised its purpose, broadened participation, and reinvigorated membership engagement, ensuring the organisation is once again a strong and influential voice for the horticultural sector. We are proud to be a national exemplar of best practice in schools' engagement.

I also served as Vice Chair of the Coastal West Sussex Partnership, championing sustainable development for our coastal communities, and as a Board Director of Coast to Capital LEP, where I helped guide economic growth across the region and chaired the Finance & Resources Committee. Nationally, I was Board Director and Sector Chair of the Agricultural Industries Confederation, representing a £17bn industry at the highest level. In that role, I played a central part in shaping national policy dialogue and guiding the sector through complex issues, building consensus and providing clear, constructive leadership.

What I Can Offer

I bring the perspective of an experienced non-executive: mentoring executives, sparking ideas, and keeping strategy on track. I know how to stimulate debate without derailing it, ask the questions that sharpen decisions, and help leaders find clarity in complex situations.

I'm recognised for energising discussions, building trust quickly, and turning aspiration into delivery. My approach is collaborative but challenging, supportive of executives while ensuring governance stays strong and purposeful.

Looking Ahead

The Society has wonderful assets and ambitions. I feel that the priority now is to place it on a strong commercial footing so it can deliver its core mission with confidence and resilience. To achieve this, the Society must continue to balance sound finances with public engagement, scholarship, and the care of its heritage properties.

My vision is of a Society that is sustainable in every sense: financially robust, environmentally responsible, and deeply connected to the communities it serves. I see opportunities to strengthen partnerships, broaden participation, and enhance the interpretation and enjoyment of our sites and collections.

I would love to be involved in ensuring the right strategy and governance is in place so that the Society can not only safeguard Sussex's heritage but also ensure it thrives, inspires, and enriches future generations.

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