



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Appointment of five Board Members to Natural England

Briefing pack for applicants

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Defra mission statement

The Defra group is here to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener, and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for future generations, and to leave the environment in a better state.

This matters because enhancing nature and green spaces enhances lives and livelihoods, contributing to a strong economy. Our wellbeing, our physical and mental health, our love of place and landscape, and our intrinsic need for beauty, awe, and wonder, are all intimately bound up with a thriving natural environment.

Appointing high-calibre people from diverse backgrounds with relevant skills, knowledge, and experience to the department and the boards of our public bodies will help us to ensure that our work is more effective, resilient, and accountable.

Equal Opportunities

UK government has a policy of equality of opportunity. We aim to promote equal opportunity policies whereby no one suffers unfair discrimination either directly or indirectly, or harassment, on grounds such as race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or age.

Diversity

We positively welcome applicants from all backgrounds. All public appointments are made on merit following a fair and open competition as regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Disability

We guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post. 'Minimum criteria' means you must provide sufficient evidence in your application, demonstrating that you meet the minimum level of competence required for each essential criterion, as well as meeting any of the qualifications, skills or experience required. The Cabinet Office and Defra is committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. To show this we proudly display the Disability Confident Leader logo. More information about Disability Confident Leaders is available by clicking this [link](#). If a person with disabilities is put at a disadvantage compared to a nondisabled person, we have a duty to make reasonable changes to our processes where possible. If you need a change to be made so that you can make your application, please refer to the '[How to apply](#)' section below.

Message to candidates

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Board Member of Natural England.

At the heart of Natural England's mission is the recovery of Nature with the clear understanding that a thriving natural world is fundamental to the future of everyone, from all walks of life and of our planet. We are a non-departmental public body with a statutory responsibility for ensuring that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations. Building partnerships for Nature's recovery is at the core of our mission, with four delivery programmes themed around Greener Farming and Fisheries, Sustainable Development, Connecting People with Nature, and Resilient Landscapes and Seas driving impact on the ground.

Natural England is committed to working in partnership with the Defra Group, other government bodies and key national and local partners to achieve our shared ambition to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better condition than we found it. Natural England will be a leading player in delivering the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan, Environment Act targets and Net Zero ambitions.

Restoring Nature has a multitude of benefits from local solutions to flood, pollution, public access and wellbeing as well as restoring biodiversity and carbon capture at landscape scales. The landmark legislation through the Environment Act, Fisheries Act and Agriculture Act has provided the foundation for aligning the money and tools to deliver Nature recovery through the Nature Recovery Network. Natural England will be concentrating on helping to deliver these aspirations through our on the ground Operations teams.

As a Natural England Board Member your leadership will be essential in driving this ambition with the senior leadership of the organisation, enabling the organisation to navigate very challenging pressures, demands and complexities at a time of rapid organisational growth. At Natural England we see that our national ambitions for Nature as inextricably linked with our ambition to be a more diverse and inclusive organisation and to be more representative of the communities we serve. That is why we are making efforts to recruit future Board Members from a wide diversity of backgrounds.

If you have the skills and experience and lived experiences to help lead and support Natural England, whatever your background, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Tony Juniper CBE
Chair, Natural England



About Natural England

Everything's better with nature. You included.

At Natural England, our vision is 'Thriving Nature for people and planet' and we aim to achieve this through the mission 'Building partnerships for Nature's recovery'.

We're hiring Board Members to secure a healthy natural environment for everyone, wherever they live and whatever their background.

Who we are:

We are the Government's statutory adviser, independent regulator and central delivery body for the natural environment in England. We help to protect and restore our natural world for present and future generations through sustainable development.

We were established by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 with the aim of ensuring that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

We work on a wide range of projects and partnerships, recovering nature, wildlife, access, landscapes, cultures and developing our scientific evidence to inform future decisions.

Our purpose:

After the UK Government helped to forge global common cause at the Biodiversity Conference of the Parties 'COP 15' in December 2022, it set out the new Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP).

The EIP combined with new powers and duties from the 2021 Environment Act, Agriculture Act and Fisheries Act, provides the foundation for halting and then reversing the decline in nature. This enables the transition to a high nature, low carbon economy, where a healthy and resilient environment will be fundamental to providing the services that people need and want.

The urgency of the associated targets means we need to continue to develop a nationwide Nature Recovery Network (NRN) across land and sea through targeted action with partners.

We use all the levers at our disposal – incentives, advice, regulation, and enforcement - to help restore protected sites, recover species and create new places for nature to thrive and people to enjoy.

We aim for:

- a well-managed Nature Recovery Network across land, water, and sea;
- people connected to nature;
- nature-based solutions contributing fully to tackling climate change and biodiversity loss;
- improvements in the natural capital to drive sustainable economic growth;

- evidence and expertise being used to achieve Nature recovery.

[NE building partnerships for nature](#) outlines how we work with others through our four programmes to recover nature.

About Natural England continued

A healthy natural environment is fundamental to our wellbeing, prosperity and happiness, our science and evidence programmes have shown that.

That's why we collaborate with scientists, lawyers, projects managers, experts, community groups and wider members of the public with lived experience to shape science based decision-making and environmental policy for the better. Our people enjoy rewarding careers and work to improve the lives of everyone who uses England's green spaces, wherever they live.

Board Members play an important role in steering, supporting and encouraging the executive team in further improving Natural England's delivery for the natural environment.

As an organisation we work to four core values, being ambitious, being inclusive, acting with integrity and working in collaborative way, and alongside this we value the health and wellbeing of our staff. As a board member your lived experiences will help us to become more inclusive and diverse as we deliver an Equality Diversity and Inclusion action plan which supports our

For more details about Natural England's responsibilities and priorities see the latest [annual report](#) and the Natural England [website](#) and [blog](#).



people and enables them to work in an inclusive and safe environment where their wellbeing is paramount.

The Board plays a central role in reviewing and overseeing organisational delivery, in steering ambitious change (for example to improve customer service, value for money or diversity) and in ensuring that the organisation operates to the standards required of all public bodies (for example in terms of health and safety, management of public money, management of data and information).

As set out in the [Natural England Framework Document](#) we they are specifically responsible for:

- establishing and taking forward the strategic aims and objectives of Natural England consistent with its overall

strategic direction within the policy and resources framework determined by the Secretary of State;

- setting the long-term direction for the Executive team and the tone and pace needed to deliver the agreed strategies and plans;

- agreeing an Action Plan for each year that sets out Natural England's specific delivery commitments and approving the appropriate allocation of resources;
- receiving and reviewing regular performance information concerning the ongoing delivery of Natural England against its agreed [Action Plan](#);

About Natural England continued

- ensuring that the responsible Minister is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of Natural England or on the attainability of its targets, and determining the steps needed to deal with such changes;
- ensuring that effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control and demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times;
- ensuring that any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds are complied with; that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated

authority agreed with Defra, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds; and that in reaching decisions, the Board takes into account any relevant guidance issued by Defra or by the Government more broadly; and

- Approval of all matters not delegated to the Chief Executive under the Natural England Schemes of Delegation.
- The current membership of the Natural England's management both Board and Executive is at [Annex C](#).
- The Board [structures and processes](#) are key to Natural England's governance.



Role specification

Board Members should complement each other in terms of their skills and experience. They are specifically responsible for:

- Establishing and taking forward the strategic aims and objectives of Natural England consistent with its overall strategic direction within the policy and resources framework determined by the Secretary of State;
- Setting the long-term direction for the Executive team and the tone and pace needed to deliver the agreed strategies and plans;
- Agreeing an Action Plan for each year that sets out Natural England's specific delivery commitments and approving the appropriate allocation of resources;
- Receiving and reviewing regular performance information concerning the ongoing delivery of Natural England against its agreed Action Plan;
- Ensuring that the responsible Minister is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of Natural England or on the attainability of its targets, and determining the steps needed to deal with such changes;
- Ensuring that effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control and demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times;
- Ensuring that any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds are complied with; that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with Defra, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds; and that in reaching decisions, the Board takes into account any relevant guidance issued by Defra or by the Government more broadly; and
- Approval of all matters not delegated to the Chief Executive under the Natural England Schemes of Delegation.
- Following a Board skills review, two areas of expertise were identified that could strengthen future direction and decisions: engaging diverse communities with nature and place-based delivery.

Essential criteria

The Secretary of State and Natural England are seeking to attract high-calibre applicants from a range of diverse backgrounds who can discharge the full range of board member responsibilities.

Natural England is committed to building partnerships for nature's recovery and is looking for a broad range of views, experience, and challenge.

Candidates must be able to demonstrate all the following essential criteria:

- An interest in the future of our natural world.
- An ability to understand commercial and financial considerations.
- An ability to analyse issues at a strategic level in ways which are impartial, creative and focused on finding solutions.
- An ability to provide constructive and independent leadership, challenge and support within a complex organisation.
- The ability to influence, engage, and inspire confidence across a strong and diverse network of stakeholders nationally.

Desirable criteria: A working background in one or more of the following areas:

- Strong business/commercial acumen gained within a large business and/or organisation with proven experience of leading organisations through significant growth and change.
- A chartered accountant with proven experience in risk, performance and financial management as a Chair or member of an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- Farming/ land management/ land ownership experienced in meeting the challenges and opportunities for farming to remain profitable while producing healthy food and delivering key environmental outcomes (which can include biodiversity, water, air and climate). This experience can be in either:
 - A large scale (potentially mixed) farm environment and/or a lowland environment
 - A smaller scale farm and/or an upland environment.
- Local authority and/or housing sector representatives with experience of the challenges of delivering projects in a nature sensitive way.

We aim to maintain an appropriate geographical spread of Board Members; hence we welcome candidates from throughout England and, in particular, from the north of the country.

Time commitment and term of office

Appointments are normally for up to three years. The length of these terms will be determined by any statutory constraints or will be a matter for decision by Ministers. In total an appointee cannot serve more than ten years.

Reappointments may be made subject to satisfactory performance assessment and will be at the discretion of Ministers. The

successful candidates will be expected to attend a minimum of **nine meetings of the Board per year**, as well as relevant committee meetings and visits. The total time commitment will be up to **three days per month**, which will include preparation and participation in Board meetings, and any other responsibilities as agreed with the Chair.

Remuneration and expenses

The remuneration is **£328 per day (£11,808 per annum)** for a time commitment of 36 days. The appointment is non-pensionable. Reasonable travel and overnight expenses are paid.

The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan principles of public service and the 12 Principles of Governance for all Public Body NEDs (attached at [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#)) and the [Code of Conduct for Board members](#).

The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is Noon 20th October. We expect to have shortlisted by 25th October with Panel interviews on 24th November.

It is essential that your statement of suitability gives full but concise information relevant to the appointment, clearly demonstrating how you meet each of the [essential criteria](#).

The Advisory Assessment Panel will consist of David Hill (Defra Director General Environment, Rural and Marine) as Panel Chair, Tony Juniper (Chair, Natural England) and an Independent Panel Member (TBC). At the Shortlist meeting, the Panel will assess each application against the essential criteria, in order to decide who to invite for interview.

Interviews are expected to take place as a mixture of online and in-person and will last for approximately 45 minutes. Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

Interviews are expected to take place at Defra's offices at 2 Marsham Street, London. Further details about the format will be provided in advance.

These are Ministerial appointments and all candidates shortlisted and deemed appointable by the Panel will meet with the Secretary of State before a final decision is made.

You will be able to claim reasonable travel expenses incurred travelling to and from the interview (please note you may be asked to justify travelling costs if Defra considers the claims excessive). Please let Defra know beforehand if you are likely to claim, along with the approximate costs by contacting publicappts@defra.gov.uk and by quoting reference number: APPT10-23.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

If you are interested in this role, but unsure if you have the necessary experience, please read this blog by the Commissioner for Public Appointments:

<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/valuing-diversity/>

How to apply

In order to apply you will need to visit <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles> and either [create an account](#) or [sign in](#).

Once you are logged into your account, click on 'apply for this role' and follow the on-screen instructions. To apply, all candidates are required to provide:

- a Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- a supporting statement or no more than 1,000 words, setting out how you meet the [essential criteria](#) – make sure you refer to the contents of this document and provide specific examples.
- diversity information
- information relating to any outside interests or reputational issues.

You will also have the opportunity to make a reasonable adjustment request or apply under the disability confident scheme before you submit your application.

The Advisory Assessment Panel reserves the right to only consider applications that contain all of the elements listed above, and that arrive before the published deadline for applications.

If you have any questions about the appointments process, please email the Public Appointments Team at publicappts@defra.gov.uk

For an informal discussion about the role please contact Sean Cornall, Director of Corporate Governance on sean.cornall@naturalengland.org.uk T: 07769 368 281

Completed applications should be submitted online at <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles> by the closing date Noon 10th October.

Ineligibility criteria

You cannot be considered for a public appointment if:

- you become bankrupt or make an arrangement with creditors;
- your estate has been sequestrated in Scotland or you enter into a debt arrangement programme under Part 1 of the Debt Arrangement and Attachment (Scotland) Act 2002 (asp 17) as the debtor or have, under Scots law, granted a trust deed for creditors;
- you are disqualified from acting as a company director under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986;
- you have been convicted of a criminal offence; the conviction not being spent for the purposes of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (c. 53);
- you become subject to a debt relief order or a bankruptcy restrictions order;
- you fail to declare any conflict of interest.

Conflicts of interest and due diligence

If you have any interests that might be relevant to the work of Natural England, and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be appointed, please provide details in your application. If you have queries about this and would like to discuss further, please contact the [Public Appointments Team](#).

Given the nature of public appointments, it is important that those appointed as members of public bodies maintain the confidence of Parliament and the public. If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment, or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you bring them to the attention of the Advisory

Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue(s) in your application. In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media.

As part of our due diligence checks we will consider anything in the public domain related to your conduct or professional capacity. This will include us undertaking searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs, or any other publicly available information. This information may be made available to the Advisory Assessment Panel, and they may wish to explore issues with you should you be invited to interview. The information may also be shared with ministers.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments

This appointment is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, to ensure that it is made on merit after fair and open competition. More information about the role of the Commissioner and the Governance Code on Public Appointments can be seen at:

<http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578498/gov

[ernance code on public appointments 16 12 2016.pdf](#)

For full details of the complaints process for public appointments, please click on the following link which will take you to the Commissioner for Public Appointments website

<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/complaints/>

Data protection

Defra is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information and does so in accordance with data protection law including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All the information you provide will be used to proceed with the public appointment listed in this information pack and in the case of diversity monitoring information may be anonymised and used

solely for monitoring purposes. For more information about the way we collect and hold your information, please read the Privacy Notice accessible through the Cabinet Office's Public Appointments Website (<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>) or request a copy of Defra's Public Appointments Privacy Notice from publicappts@defra.gov.uk.

Annex A – The seven principles of public life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Annex B – 12 Principles of Governance for all Public Body NEDs

1. Expertise

- Consider and act in the best interests of your organisation and its objectives; delivering the outcomes expected by your sponsor department, ministers and ultimately the public.
- Consider the broader mission and duties of your sponsoring Secretary of State, his or her Department and the Government.
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties and the organisation's Framework Document and act within its powers.
- Exercise reasonable care, skill, and diligence in the exercise of their authority and judgement.

2. Scrutiny and challenge

- Maintain independence from the executive to allow scrutiny of management and in meetings agree goals and objectives and monitor performance and the reporting of performance so that the public who use your organisation receive a high-quality service.
- Satisfy yourself on the integrity of budget setting to deliver objectives and financial information and reporting against budgets, and that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible. Meet the requirements of [Managing Public Money](#), including supporting the Accounting Officer in fulfilling their duties to provide propriety and value for money in the use of public funds.
- Champion high standards of risk management by ensuring your organisation has effective risk reporting, controls and governance, risk expertise and risk tolerances to effectively manage risk.
- Represent your organisation to the department and to Ministers, as well as ensuring Ministers' views are considered by the executive team of the organisation, as appropriate.

3. Support

- Support the board in succession planning and be prepared to put yourself up for re-appointment, as well as promoting the need for a diverse board.
- Participate in and promote regular reviews of your organisation, as well as the board's own effectiveness, with particular focus on the organisation's purposes and its efficiency in meeting these purposes. Engage in the appraisal process, including self-reflection on your own abilities.
- Listen carefully to, ask appropriate questions of and support management to encourage discussion in a manner that promotes a culture where all perspectives are listened to, while fulfilling the individual Director's duties and responsibilities and respecting and valuing the expertise of the executive team.
- Promote the success of the entity having regard to the interests of all members and stakeholders, and all risks.

Annex C – Natural England Board

Chair	Dr Tony Juniper CBE
Deputy Chair	The Rt Hon Lord Blencathra
Chief Executive	Marian Spain
Non-executive Board Member	Professor Mel Austen
Non-executive Board Member	Rosamund Blomfield-Smith
Non-executive Board Member	Dr Lynn Dicks
Non-executive Board Member	Catherine Dugmore
Non-executive Board Member	Dr Clare Fitzsimmons
Non-executive Board Member	Kerry ten Kate
Non-executive Board Member	Henry Robinson
Non-executive Board Member	Kim Shillinglaw
Non-executive Board Member	Dame Caroline Spelman
Non-executive Board Member	Peter Unwin



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