



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Appointment of Defra Non-Executive Directors (NEDs): Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair and at least one additional NED

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date 26 February 2024

Reference: APPT15-23



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Message from Heather Hancock, Lead Non-Executive

Thank you for your interest in becoming a non-executive board member of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

I joined Defra's Board in September 2023 as the Lead Non-Executive Director alongside my roles as Master of St John's College Cambridge and Chair of the Royal Countryside Fund. The work that Defra does makes real and lasting improvements to the lives of everyone in the UK – adapting to climate change, protecting homes from flooding, protecting and restoring nature, supporting high quality and resilient agriculture and rural communities, and ensuring food security. Since joining the Board, I have been struck by the passion and dedication of Defra's people to deliver across all these critical functions, and more.

Defra has a broad and complex portfolio of change programmes to deliver across its remit. That's why this is such an exciting time to get involved as a non-executive, advising, scrutinising and challenging the work of the department into order to get further, faster and fairly, with the Government's priorities.

I am looking for new non-executive board members who are passionate, committed and experienced to bring diverse perspectives to the Board. We wish to appoint a new chair for our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, grounded in a robust base of finance or audit experience, and able to bring depth and breadth of experience to support the full range of Defra's activities, and plan to appoint one or more additional non-executive board members. In both roles, I would particularly value applications from individuals who can bring proven experience in delivering high-impact change in complex environments or in digital transformation, or offer a track record in innovation or customer engagement. Most importantly you will have a deep interest in and commitment to Defra's remit and be ready to demonstrate how your own experience can add value to achieving Defra's mission.

Heather Hancock

Lead Non-Executive Board Member



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.

About Defra

Who we are?

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) is the UK government department responsible for improving and protecting the environment. We aim to grow a green economy and sustain thriving rural communities. We also support our world-leading food, farming and fishing industries. Our broad remit means we play a major role in people's day-to-day life, from the food we eat, and the air we breathe, to the water we drink. We are a ministerial department that is supported by and works collaboratively with 34 agencies and public bodies. Together we are the Defra group.

Our structure and business model

Defra is made up of the Core department and a network of agencies and public bodies. Defra's public bodies vary in size, type, budget, remit and level of independence. Core department and delivery bodies across Defra group work together to collaboratively deliver our outcomes. Core department sets the policy and supports delivery bodies to develop capability and to deliver new and ongoing activities. Although we need to clearly align our work in this simplified way for planning, budgeting and reporting, there are complex interactions in the delivery of our outcomes. Our outcomes have many synergies and are delivered in an integrated manner.

Our vision

Defra 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 the next

generation, leaving it in a better state than we found it. Our Outcome Delivery Plan, together with the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) (more details below) set out in detail how we intend to achieve this.

Outcome Delivery Plan

1. Improve the environment through cleaner air and water, minimised waste, and thriving plants and terrestrial and marine wildlife.
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage in the agricultural, waste, peat and tree planting sectors to help deliver net zero.
3. Reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding and coastal erosion on people, businesses, communities and the environment.
4. Increase the sustainability, productivity and resilience of the agriculture, fishing, food and drink sectors, enhance biosecurity at the border and raise animal welfare standards.

Our environmental goals

1. Thriving plants and wildlife
2. Clean air
3. Clean and plentiful water
4. Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides
5. Maximise our resources, minimise our waste
6. Using resources from nature sustainably
7. Mitigating and adapting to climate change
8. Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards
9. Enhancing biosecurity
10. Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

Non-Executive Director role specification

Defra is seeking to appoint at least two new Non-Executive Directors. One appointee will have the additional responsibility for Chairing the Defra Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC).

Non-executive Directors bring external experience and expertise to the decisions and processes of Defra's Board by providing collective strategic leadership to the department. Exercising their role through influence, scrutiny, challenge and advice, they act as a trusted sounding board to the Secretary of State and Permanent Secretary, as appropriate, on any specific agreed areas and other matters more generally.

Role of Non-Executive Directors

- Reviewing business plans and challenging progress;
 - Scrutinising and challenging departmental performance reporting;
 - Providing advice on issues within their remit;
 - Supporting, scrutinising and challenging departmental projects and how they are prioritised and aligned with ministerial ambition and providing advice to the executive team on delivery;
 - Support the department to deliver its plan by providing independent scrutiny, support and assurance;
 - Providing strong and constructive challenge and supporting the executive team to ensure that they deliver the approved strategy and discharge their leadership responsibilities;
 - Advising on the operational/delivery implications of policy proposals undertaking deep dives into potential risks and mitigations, to inform the department's decision-making process;
 - Advising and supporting ministers and senior officials in influencing cross-government initiatives and policies;
 - Participating in the Board's annual effectiveness review and ensure the Board acts on recommendations and builds its own capability;
 - Participating in the recruitment of senior appointments for the department and succession planning, in line with the principles set out by the Civil Service Commission;
 - Attend a minimum of four departmental Board meetings per year, and contribute effectively to its subcommittees, as required.
 - Building and maintaining effective working relationships with a broad range of networks and stakeholders.
 - Attending occasional government-wide meetings for non-executives to share best practice.
- More information on departmental boards and government NEDs can be found [here](#).

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Defra Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) is a sub-committee of the Defra Board. It is an advisory body with no executive powers or responsibilities.

It supports and advises the Defra Board and the Principal Accounting Officer (the Permanent Secretary) on issues of risk, control and governance.

The sub-committee must meet four times a year but it is likely that five meetings would be held. Its membership comprises a Defra Non-Executive Director as Chair as well as the ARAC Chairs of the Environment Agency, Natural England, Rural Payments Agency and Animal and Plant Health Agency.

Role of ARAC Chair

The Chair of the ARAC should be independent, possess a good understanding of governance, risk and control, together with knowledge of accounting and business, and have broad experience of organisational change in large businesses / corporations, together with the ability to grasp complex issues very quickly.

The postholder will:

- Effectively Chair the Defra ARAC to deliver on its agreed Terms of Reference, including the scrutiny of the Annual Accounts.
- Make sure the ARAC oversees the compliance with the corporate governance code and to report to the Defra Board.
- Ensure effective representation of Defra within Whitehall, for example at the Government wide Lead ARAC meetings.
- Support and bring together the Defra ARAC Chairs group to build greater coherence and spread best practice.

Their role is to advise the Board and Principal Accounting Officer and provide oversight, scrutiny, challenge, and leadership as Chair of both the ARAC and the collective Defra ARAC Chairs group.

Essential criteria

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

1. The ability to contribute effectively at Board level whilst proactively supporting and challenging the executive on achieving results, with a focus on performance against targets.
2. Strategic thinking with the ability to analyse complex strategic issues and promote innovative thinking and help the Board to think through risks and mitigations.
3. Sound understanding of working with the public sector - including insight into the public bodies landscape - and the key challenges it faces. The ability to adapt quickly to fast moving situations and handle complex, sensitive issues effectively and pragmatically.

In addition to the criteria (above) successful candidates must also demonstrate expertise in the following specified areas:

Role 1: Audit and Risk Committee Chair

- **Financial accountancy or audit expertise and experience** of serving on or chairing an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for a complex organisation. Experience in or understanding of central government accounting.

Role 2: Non-Executive Director

Senior leadership experience in large or complex organisations, with desirable experience in:

- **Digital / cyber / innovation:** Senior leadership experience in driving innovative practices, advising on risk associated with data and technology (including issues such as cyber security), or leading a digitally enabled business transformation, for a complex or data-led organisation.

Or

- **Major programme delivery:** Senior leadership experience in driving a major change programme in a large and complex organisation in similar delivery environments to Defra group's areas of focus (e.g. infrastructure, land etc).

The successful candidates 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](#).

Time commitment and term of office

The successful candidates will be expected to make a time commitment of a minimum of 20 days per annum, which will include four Defra Board meetings in London and 4-5 ARAC meetings (for the ARAC Chair role only).

Appointments will be initially for three years with an anticipated start date in May 2024. A further reappointment of three years may be made subject to satisfactory performance

assessment and will be at the discretion of the Secretary of State.

Remuneration is set at £15,000 per annum with an extra £5,000 for the ARAC Chair. Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses are paid. The role is not pensionable.

The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is noon on 26 February 2024. We expect to have shortlisted by mid-March, with Panel interviews mid-April.

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 Nick Joicey (Second Permanent Secretary, Group Chief Operating Officer) as chair, Heather Hancock (Lead Non-Executive Director, Defra) and Sarah Smart (Chair, Pensions Regulator) as the independent panel member.

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 deemed appointable by the Panel will meet with the Secretary of State before a final decision is made. Candidates will be informed of interview outcomes as soon as is practically possible.

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: APPT15-23.

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 of 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 NEDsupport@defra.gov.uk

Completed applications should be submitted online at <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles> by the closing date: 26/02/2024

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 Defra, 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 – Defra Board and ARAC membership

Defra Board

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP	Secretary of State
Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP	Minister of State for Food, Farming and Fisheries
Rt Hon The Lord Benyon	Minister of State for Climate, Environment and Energy (joint with FCDO and Defra)
Rebecca Pow MP	Minister for Nature
Robbie Moore MP	Minister for Water and Rural Growth
Robbie Douglas-Miller OBE	Minister for Biosecurity, Animal Health & Welfare
Tamara Finkelstein	Permanent Secretary
Nick Joicey	Second Permanent Secretary and Group Chief Operating Officer
Lucy Smith	Director General, Strategy
Iain King	Chief Financial Officer
Heather Hancock	Lead Non-Executive Director
Colin Day	Non-Executive Director, Chair of the ARAC
Chris Tyas	Non-Executive Director
Alan Lovell	Ex-officio, Chair of the Environment Agency
Tony Juniper	Ex-officio, Chairman of Natural England

Defra ARAC

Colin Day	Non-Executive Director, Chair
Paul Dillon-Robinson	Ex officio, Rural Payments Agency ARAC Chair
Elizabeth Peers	Ex officio, Animal and Plant Health Agency ARAC Chair
Catherine Dugmore	Ex officio, Natural England ARAC Chair
John Lelliott	Ex officio, Environment Agency ARAC Chair

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