

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Appointment of up to two Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing date: Noon on 3 February 2025

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Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Ministerial message to candidates

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Trustee of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Kew is one of the world's leading institutions in botanical research, conservation and education. Its collections and scientific work are globally recognised, but it is the leadership that drives its mission. We need Trustees who reflect the institution's excellence and the diversity of the society it serves.

Kew plays a critical role both in the UK and globally as a key resource for plant and fungal diversity expertise. At a time of unprecedented environmental threats, Kew's science is vital to addressing challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss. These challenges call for bold, visionary leadership committed to creating a more sustainable future.

Kew's collections, such as the Millennium Seed Bank and the world-famous Herbarium, represent over 170 years of history and contribute 25,000 new specimens annually. Kew has set ambitious goals through its [Manifesto for Change](#), [Science Strategy](#) and [Sustainability Strategy](#), which aim to inspire action to protect the planet by 2030.

I am seeking individuals to join Dame Amelia Fawcett and the Trustees in leading Kew's mission. We encourage applications from diverse backgrounds, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidates, younger candidates, and those with disabilities, to ensure our board reflects the richness of our society.

We seek candidates with expertise in data science and innovation, large capital building projects, commercial income growth and/or fundraising, or Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Your skills will be critical as we expand Kew's reach and deliver science-based solutions to protect biodiversity.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Steve Reed OBE

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



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 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 are committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. To show this, we proudly display the Disability Confident Leader logo. [Read more about Disability Confident Leaders on GOV.UK](#). 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 and submit your application'](#) section on page 12.



About the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: Our manifesto for change 2021–2030

Earth is the only planet in the universe we know for certain supports life. Yet life on Earth is in crisis. Natural resources are being degraded at a rate unprecedented in human history. As a result, we are living through an age of extinction.

We also face a climate emergency. Actions such as burning fossil fuels and clearing wild lands have released greenhouse gases, disrupting natural climate patterns. In a vicious cycle, damaged ecosystems are less able to absorb emissions and mitigate the worst consequences of climate change.

The next decade will be critical if we are to reverse this environmental devastation. Humanity stands at a crossroads. The future of our planet is in grave jeopardy. Action is needed now to end biodiversity loss and repair our world.

The mission of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew) is to understand and protect plants and fungi for the wellbeing of people and the future of all life on Earth.

Our aspiration is to end the extinction crisis and to help create a world where nature is protected, valued by all and managed sustainably.

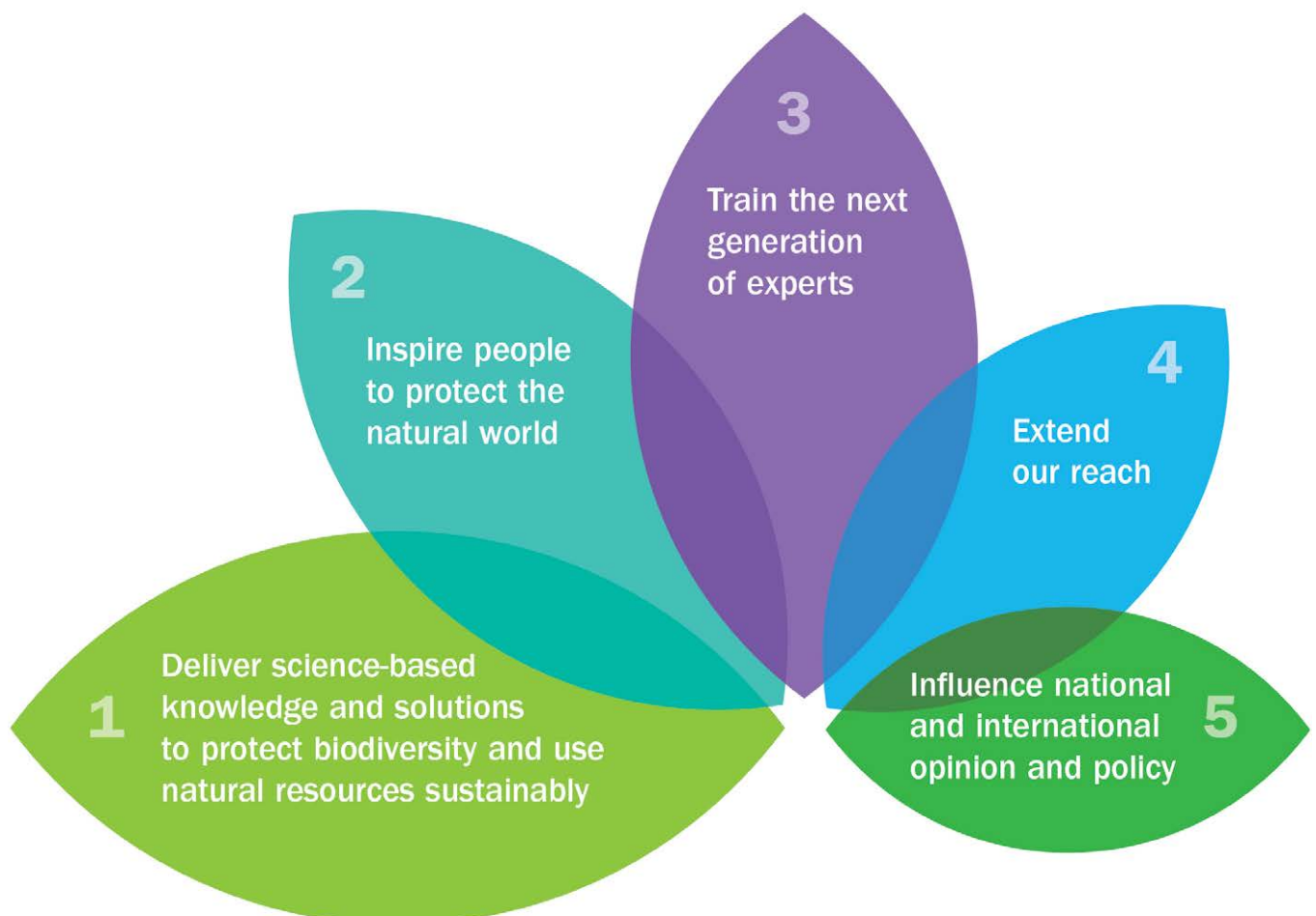
'What we do now, and in the next few years, will profoundly affect the next few thousand years.'
Sir David Attenborough, broadcaster and natural historian



RBG Kew's priorities

To deliver our mission, we have five priorities. These are based on how we believe we can best deploy our expertise and other assets to make a distinctive and substantial contribution to tackling global challenges. RBG Kew commits to:

- **Deliver science-based knowledge and solutions to protect biodiversity and use natural resources sustainably.** Our scientists will identify and strive to protect species of plants and fungi globally, as well as revealing those that could be new sources of food, medicine, fuel or materials.
- **Inspire people to protect the natural world.** We will promote and provide access to knowledge, ideas and beautiful gardens that motivate individuals to be advocates for future.
- **Train the next generation of experts.** The world needs brilliant scientists and horticulturists. We commit to training students from the UK and around the world.
- **Extend our reach.** RBG Kew is a public body and charity with global collections and influence. We must be for everyone, disseminating our knowledge and collections both physically and digitally for global benefit.
- **Influence national and international opinion and policy.** We will speak with confidence and prominence to advocate policies aligned with our mission. We will be an exemplar of environmental responsibility in all that we do, including achieving net-zero carbon emissions to become climate positive by 2030.



About the Board

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew) was founded in 1759. Under the National Heritage Act 1983, the Board of Trustees of RBG Kew was established as a corporate body. RBG Kew is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) and exempt charity, sponsored and regulated by Defra. Eleven Trustees are appointed by the Defra Secretary of State and one by HM The King.

RBG Kew has an international reputation for its scientific research into plants and fungi, and for its living and preserved collections which are unique in their global scope and coverage. Its gardens at Kew (Crown land, managed under ministerial direction from the Secretary of State) and Wakehurst, West Sussex (leased from the National Trust) are enjoyed by two million visitors a year.

With two extensive botanical gardens and a large number of nationally important heritage buildings, RBG Kew faces a significant financial challenge in ensuring it can operate its world-class visitor attractions and sites of scientific expertise while maintaining and developing these assets.

RBG Kew has a very broad and diverse range of stakeholders and partners. Kew's scientists work with over 400 partner institutions in 110 countries around the world. Kew engages actively with many UK government departments, including the Cabinet Office (CO), Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Kew engages actively with environmental NGOs, other gardens and horticultural organisations, and has a diverse commercial portfolio of partners, customers and foreign governments as well as the Higher Education sector and research institutes. Kew achieves global impact through positive engagement with this extensive community of stakeholders. For further information about the current role of RBG Kew, you may wish to [visit the Kew website](#).

The Board

RBG Kew's functions and powers as a statutory body are derived from the National Heritage Act. As an Executive NDPB, RBG Kew operates at arm's length from Defra, its sponsor department. The Trustees need to act in the best interests of the charity as well as meeting the obligations of RBG Kew as a public body. Trustees are accountable through ministers to Parliament for the public money that they spend. Defra's role is one of stewardship, enabling the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to account properly to Parliament for RBG Kew's efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring that RBG Kew is properly managed and that its grant-in-aid is used appropriately and effectively. Each year, RBG Kew produces an Operational Plan and its formal Annual Report and Accounts are laid before Parliament.

Board members are Trustees of both an exempt charity and a non-departmental public body, both regulated and sponsored by Defra. All new Board members will be given appropriate induction.

Essential criteria

The Secretary of State is seeking to attract high-calibre applicants from a range of diverse backgrounds who can discharge the full range of Trustee responsibilities.

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

- an enthusiasm for, and genuine interest in, the work delivered by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and support of its purpose, values and strategic direction
- 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 to the Board of a complex organisation
- exceptional communication skills, along with the ability to influence, engage, and inspire confidence across a strong and diverse network of stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, at all levels

Desirable criteria

This recruitment will seek to fill two vacancies on the Board. Applications are welcomed from a diverse range of backgrounds and applicants are encouraged to apply if they meet the essential criteria above and can bring new skills and expertise to the Board. For example, we are interested in receiving applications from candidates with the following skillsets:

- **data science and innovation**
- **capital building projects**
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**
- **commercial experience, including income growth and/or fundraising**

Role specification

To complement its existing skills and knowledge the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is seeking up to two new members with expertise in data, science and innovation; capital building projects; equality, diversity and inclusion; and/or commercial experience, including income growth and/or fundraising. The current Board membership is attached at [‘Annex C – Current membership of the RBG Kew Board’](#) on page 17.

Members of the Board have corporate responsibility for ensuring that RBG Kew has appropriate practices, procedures and policies to meet its statutory and administrative requirements for the use of public funds.

Important responsibilities of Board members include:

- ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times
- establishing the overall strategic direction of the organisation within the policy and resources framework agreed with the Defra Minister
- holding the Executive to account and supporting them in the delivery of planned results by monitoring performance against agreed strategic objectives and targets and by ensuring corrective action is taken when necessary
- ensuring that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority; within the limits of the Board’s delegated authority agreed with Defra and in line with all relevant agreements with Defra, including any conditions relating to the use of public funds; and, notwithstanding the above, complying with the relevant obligation’s incumbent on trustees of an exempt charity, including independence of decision-making
- representing the purpose and strategic direction of the organisation to the public and specific stakeholders
- promoting a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion on the Board as well as more widely in RBG Kew

The successful candidate must abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life 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

We are seeking to identify candidates to join the Board in 2025. The time commitment is 10–12 days each year to attend Board and Committee meetings and associated activities. Board meetings will be mainly held at Kew Gardens, with some meetings each year at Wakehurst and occasionally at other institutions/organisations when appropriate. The appointment will last for three years. At the end of your first term there is the possibility of reappointment, although this is not guaranteed.

Remuneration and expenses

The role is unremunerated, but essential expenses comprising travel, accommodation if required, and subsistence are payable based on Kew's expenses arrangements, which are set out in Kew's Expenses Policy.



The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is **noon on Monday 3 February 2025**. We expect to have shortlisted by early March, with panel interviews being held in late March.

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](#). Please also detail your area(s) of expertise in relation to the [desirable criteria](#).

The Advisory Assessment Panel will consist of Edward Barker (Director of Natural Environment, Trees, and Landscapes, Defra) as Panel Chair, Dame Amelia Fawcett (RBG Kew Chair) and Sarah Mukherjee (Environment Agency Board Member) as the Independent Panel Member. At the shortlist meeting, the Panel will assess each application against the essential criteria and, where appropriate, desirable criteria, to decide who to invite for interview.

Interviews are expected to take place at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and will last for approximately 50 minutes. Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

These are Ministerial appointments, and all candidates deemed appointable by the Panel may meet with Ministers 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: **APPT09-24**.



How to apply and submit your application

In order to apply you will need to [create an account](#) or [sign in](#) and submit your application by the deadline of **noon on Monday 3 February 2025**. 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 CV of no more than two sides of A4
- 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. Please also detail your area(s) of expertise as outlined in the Desirable criteria section
- email addresses for two referees
- completed diversity and political activity monitoring form
- completed conflicts of interest, conduct and advertising monitoring form (please note the section on [conflicts of interest and due diligence](#) on page 13)

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

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.

For an informal discussion about the role, please contact Balwinder Allen, Kew Board Secretary at B.Allen@kew.org.

Applications should be submitted online at apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles by the closing date of noon on Monday 3 February 2025.

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 the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 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 can be found on the [Commissioner for Public Appointments website](#). You can also read the [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#).

For full details of the complaints process for public appointments, visit the [complaints page of the Commissioner for Public Appointments website](#).

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 (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 – Current membership of the Board

Dame Amelia Fawcett (Chair)

Steve Almond

Judith Batchelar

Fay Cooke

Professor Christopher Gilligan (King's Trustee)

Professor Ian Graham

Krishnan Guru-Murthy

Sir Paul Nurse

Kate Priestman

David Richardson

John Scanlon

[Trustee biographies](#)



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