



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Appointment of Chair of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date 6th February 2025

Reference: APPT01-25



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Ministerial message to candidates

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for applying to chair the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), which has a key role in helping the Government's aim to end poverty on a liveable planet.

JNCC has been a vital and trusted statutory advisor on nature conservation and recovery for over thirty years, helping to deliver our collective efforts for nature. The Committee provides robust scientific evidence and advice to the UK Government and the devolved governments on UK-wide and international nature conservation.

JNCC's strategy Together for Nature: Our Strategy to 2030 builds on their strong heritage of expertise, knowledge and networks with a new vision: Thriving nature for a sustainable future. JNCC's high ambition to halt and reverse biodiversity loss aligns with their mission: Turning science into action for nature, people and the planet. Their integrated approach to nature conservation and recovery is through investing in people and partnerships. JNCC intends to maximise the impact and profile of their evidence and advice on complex ecological, social and economic systems to conserve and recover the natural systems we all depend on.

JNCC played a key scientific advisory role at the Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), where agreement was secured for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This agreement, described as the 'Paris moment for nature,' guides JNCC's work, not only to 2030 but for generations to come. It gives hope for the future.

I am looking for a Chair with strong knowledge and experience in UK and international nature conservation and recovery; someone with proven leadership in making a difference to the natural environment. You must be ready to lead and inspire JNCC in support of the UK Government's commitment to protecting and restoring natural systems, domestically and internationally. The UK Government has committed to deliver all of the Global Biodiversity Framework targets and JNCC's evidence and advice is essential to this.

The Chair of JNCC is critical to the inclusive, collaborative and innovative delivery of JNCC's mission: turning science into action for nature, people and the planet. I am looking for a high-profile ambassador to accelerate delivery of JNCC's vision.

If nature inspires you, this may be the leadership role for you. I would love to hear about the values, experience, skills and qualities you can bring to JNCC's vision and mission for nature. I particularly encourage applications from talented people from all backgrounds to ensure membership of the Committee reflects our diverse society and takes an inclusive and equitable approach to nature recovery. Boards of public bodies are most effective when they reflect the diversity of the society they serve, and this is part of the Government's agenda.

MARY CREAGH CBE MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
(Minister for Environment)

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 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 JNCC

Our story began over three decades ago and our scientific and technical endeavour has produced some of the most important evidence and advice on the state and change of nature, both domestically and internationally.

JNCC is a Non-Departmental Public Body. Originally established under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to handle science-based GB and UK international issues. We were later reconstituted by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, as the forum through which the country nature conservation bodies (CNCBs) in England (Natural England), Northern Ireland (Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside), Scotland (NatureScot) and Wales (Natural Resources Wales), discharge their statutory responsibilities across the UK and internationally.

Uniquely positioned amongst the environmental public sector, and given the devolved status of environmental policy, our statutory duties are at multiple scales of the four countries of the UK, our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and internationally. We provide impartial, interdisciplinary scientific evidence and advice, fostering collaboration and building connected communities for nature conservation and recovery.

JNCC needs to maintain its license to operate and to take risks commensurate with the scale of the ecological and climate emergencies – that means raising our heads above the parapet and the comfort of our data and evidence and advocating publicly with that evidence. It means telling a compelling story, which reaches hearts and minds of decision-makers, of how healthy ecosystems underpin all life on Earth. And how our national and international security, prosperity and wellbeing is dependent on resilient natural infrastructure.

Our journey has taken us from species to protected sites, across land and sea, domestically and globally. We now need to accelerate and amplify our knowledge to drive our ambition in *Together for Nature* – our strategy to 2030.

The new Chair of JNCC will play a pivotal role in promoting our statutory mandate and public duty, driving organisational culture change to deliver our strategic priorities, and escalating our impact to mainstream nature throughout economic, social and foreign policies. You will be a force for nature, turbo-charging JNCC to deliver its full potential to play our full part in bending the curve of biodiversity loss to ensure thriving nature for a sustainable future.



Vision

Thriving nature for a sustainable future.

Mission

Turning science into action for nature, people and the planet.

Strategic Priorities

- Use our scientific expertise to facilitate a collective response to the global biodiversity crisis.
- Use our trusted expertise and judgement to evaluate effectiveness of existing policies and advise on the design of new policies and action to progress nature recovery.
- Lead the discussion to align action for nature and climate change to deliver outcomes that tackle climate breakdown and accelerate nature recovery.
- Continue to innovate and advance our learning on nature recovery so that science, technology, and new digital knowledge are applied to drive positive environmental outcomes.
- Work collaboratively to support the transition to sustainable blue/green economies, linking nature recovery to economic prosperity and societal wellbeing.
- Seek opportunities to integrate the value of nature into decision-making by mainstreaming nature recovery into social and economic policy areas.

- Invest in our people and culture to ensure an inclusive, collaborative, and innovative learning organisation, where staff wellbeing is prioritised, and our partners are engaged and respected.

Values

- **Inclusion:** embrace, respect and accept difference, recognising its importance to JNCC's culture and success in delivering its mission. JNCC will address systemic and structural barriers to enable all its people to thrive.
- **Collaboration:** We convene governments, academia, industry, and civil society to address problems and to develop solutions, supporting and strengthening the resilience of natural systems, which are the foundation for resource security, economic prosperity, and societal wellbeing.
- **Innovation:** We adapt cutting-edge techniques and unique solutions and employ them to help nature recover. We strive for excellence; our agile ways of working allow us to play a courageous role in nature conservation and recovery.

Role specification

JNCC's [Framework Document](#) provides the legal, administrative and financial framework within which the Joint Committee operates and the specific functions of the Committee and the Chair.

The Committee, under the leadership of the new Chair, will be responsible to the Defra Secretary of State for the leadership, direction and effectiveness of JNCC in line with [Together for Nature: Our Strategy to 2030](#). You will be the primary contact with Ministers across the UK for the Committee.

You will provide visible leadership, setting strategic and operational direction, ensuring excellent governance and, together with the Joint Committee, hold the executive to account through support, challenge and coaching.

Strong leadership in the context of cultural change and transformation will be essential in maintaining a clear focus to deliver the JNCC's seven strategic priorities, alongside raising the organisation's profile to a wider audience of influential decision-makers.

In addition, you will have the following responsibilities:

Committee

- ensuring that the Committee has the right balance of skills to deliver its functions and JNCC's business.
- reviewing the work of the Committee and its members' performance annually and driving forward any necessary change.
- ensuring that the Committee, in reaching decisions, takes account of guidance

provided by Ministers, Defra or Devolved Governments.

- ensuring collaborative working amongst JNCC, the country nature conservation bodies, Defra, Devolved Governments, and other government departments, to make the best use of resources and optimise impact.
- ensuring that each person in the organisation and on the Committee feels valued and respected, and that the diversity of the organisation represents the communities it works with.
- ensuring the Committee has a strong and confident voice for nature.

Governance and Performance

- Ensuring that governance, internal control and risk management systems are effective and capable of delivering relevant, accurate and timely management and financial information to the Committee.
- Scrutinising the performance of the organisation in meeting agreed goals and objectives, and monitor the reporting of performance, including financial targets.
- Developing and encouraging appropriate behaviours, in line with JNCC's core values of inclusion, collaboration and innovation, to maintain or improve the organisational culture

Communication and Engagement

- Confident in advising Ministers and government departments and framing external communications, including with the media.

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- Championing strong stakeholder engagement, with the ability to engage constructively with a wide range of stakeholders to raise awareness of JNCC's work and strengthen impact of evidence and advice on decision-making.
 - Connecting the Committee and Executive to people and organisations who can provide different perspectives, opinions and expertise which will assist in furthering delivering of *Together for Nature*.

Executive

- appointing a Chief Executive should the post become vacant.
- setting the Chief Executive's performance objectives.
- setting the direction for the executive team and the tone and pace needed to deliver agreed strategies and plans, and responding to changes in the science and policy landscape; and
- promoting the efficient and effective deployment of staff and other assets to deliver priorities.

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](#).

Essential criteria

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

1. Strong knowledge and experience in UK and international nature conservation and recovery, with proven leadership in making a difference to the natural environment.
2. Strong leadership capabilities, with the ability to support diverse teams through organisational change to deliver strategic objectives. Ability to guide and challenge the Committee, ensuring alignment with the organisation's vision and mission.
3. Proven ability to ensure effective governance and risk management frameworks are in place. Experience of scrutinising organisational performance, including financial and operational outcomes to meet targets and drive continuous improvement.
4. Strong communication skills, with the ability to engage constructively with diverse stakeholders, including government departments, external partners and the media.
5. Capability to analyse, interpret and communicate a wide range of complex scientific evidence and data (particularly related to nature conservation and recovery) with the ability to draw and present independent conclusions.

Time commitment and term of office

The successful candidate will be expected to make a time commitment of 2 days per week, which will include four committee meetings per calendar year (in March, June, September, and November/December).

Appointment will be initially for three years, beginning approximately May. A further reappointment of three years may be made

subject to satisfactory performance assessment and will be at the discretion of Ministers.

Remuneration is set at £40,059 per annum. Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses are paid. The role is not pensionable.



The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is midday on 06 February 2025. We expect to have shortlisted by February, with Panel interviews in 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](#).

The Advisory Assessment Panel will consist of Richard Pullen (Deputy Director, Natural Environment, Trees and Landscapes, Defra) as chair, Donald Henderson (Deputy Director, Nature, Scottish Government) as representative from Devolved Governments, and Dr Eugenie Regan (Chair of the board of trustees of Buglife) 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.

This is a Ministerial appointment and all candidates deemed appointable by the Panel

may meet with the Minister 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: **APPT01-25**

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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

<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

We will ask you to check and confirm your personal details to ensure your application is accurate.

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 Dr Gemma Harper OBE, Chief Executive (ceo@jncc.gov.uk).

Completed applications should be submitted online at <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles> by the closing date of 12:00 on Thursday 6th 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 JNCC, 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

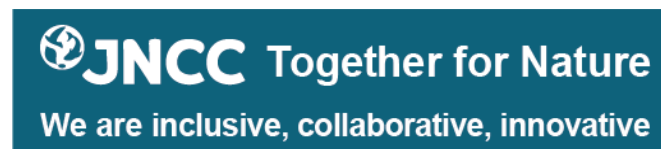
- Maintain independence from the executive to allow scrutiny of management and in meetings agree goals and objectives and monitor performance and the reporting of performance so that the public who use your organisation receive a high-quality service.
- Satisfy yourself on the integrity of budget setting 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 – Current membership of the Committee

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|---|---|
| Professor Tom Meagher | Independent Member (University of St Andrews) and Interim Chair |
| Ms Cath Denholm | Independent Member (Integrated Corporate Services for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). |
| Professor Julian Orford | Deputy Chair of Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside |
| Professor Colin Galbraith | Chair of NatureScot |
| Professor Peter Higgins | Board Member of NatureScot |
| Professor Mel Austen | Board Member of Natural England and Interim Deputy Chair of JNCC |
| Professor Rhys Jones | Board Member of Natural Resource Wales |
| Professor Steve Ormerod | Board Member of Natural Resources Wales |





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