

Briefing pack for the appointment of

Deputy Chair and Board Member of Natural England

CLOSING DATE: MIDDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2025

REFERENCE: APPT07-25



**NATURAL
ENGLAND**



Defra Mission Statement	3
Ministerial Message to Candidates	4
About Natural England	5
The Role	7
Terms of Appointment	8
Essential Criteria	9
The Timeline	10
The Recruitment Process	11
Conflicts of interest, complaints, data protection & ineligibility	12
Annex A – 7 Principles of Public Life	13
Annex B – 12 Principles of Governance for all Public Body NEDs	14
Annex C – Natural England Board	15

Contents

Defra Group leads on the fundamentals: the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe. It encompasses food, environment, biosecurity, trade and more. Defra is a policy, growth, science, delivery and international department.

Defra's work is fundamental to delivering the government's five missions – by building economic resilience through better flood defences, protecting against biosecurity risk, climate adaptation and nature-based solutions; creating jobs and attracting investment in our water and waste sectors; working with our sectors, such as food and drink; and ensuring that all missions are rural-proofed.

To achieve these goals, we are committed to appointing high-calibre individuals from diverse backgrounds to the boards of our public bodies. By drawing on a wide range of skills, knowledge, and experiences, we can make our work more effective, resilient, and accountable to the public.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

The UK government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that no one experiences unfair discrimination or harassment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, national origin, colour, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or age.

We actively encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds and are committed to fostering diversity in public appointments. All appointments are made on merit, following a fair and open competition process regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Disability Commitment

We are dedicated to supporting candidates with disabilities and are proud to hold Disability Confident Leader status. We guarantee an interview for any applicant with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post.

To ensure an inclusive process, we are committed to making reasonable adjustments where possible for candidates with disabilities. If you require any adjustments to support your application, please refer to the 'How to Apply and Submit Your Application' section below. Further information about the Disability Confident Leader scheme is available via the Disability Confident logo displayed above.

Dear Candidate,

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

At the heart of Natural England's mission is the recovery of Nature - a thriving natural world is fundamental to the future of everyone, from all walks of life. Working in partnership with Defra group, they deliver the Secretary of State's priorities to clean up rivers, lakes and seas; create a roadmap to a zero-waste economy; support farmers to boost food security; ensure nature's recovery and protect communities from the dangers of flooding. Natural England is fundamental to supporting delivery of the government's top priority of economic growth, including through an ambitious programme of Defra group reform.

This is an exciting time for Natural England as they develop a new 5-year Strategic Direction (Recovering Nature for Growth, Health and Security: Natural England's Strategy 2025-2030). To help bring this vision to life, I am seeking a Deputy Chair with a strong focus on operational delivery to enhance efficiency and improve customer service. In addition, I am looking for a Non-Executive Board Member with regulatory expertise to support and guide this strategic transformation.

Recovering Nature for growth, health and security is at the core of Natural England's 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 collaboration and working across Defra Group, wider government and business to achieve shared ambitions to improve Nature for the benefit of all, through place-based delivery. It provides the evidence, expertise and advice to recover Nature and shape better places for people to live.

I'm looking for candidates whose leadership will help steer Natural England through challenging pressures, demands and complexities at a time of widespread regulatory reform and in line with the government's plans for growth and nature recovery.

If you are inspired by nature, I would love to hear about the values, skills and lived experience you can bring to help lead and support Natural England. Natural England see their ambitions for Nature as inextricably linked with their ambition to be a more diverse and inclusive organisation. I particularly encourage applications from talented people from all backgrounds to ensure the organisation reflects our diverse society. 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
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
(Minister for Environment)



Natural England is the Government's adviser for the natural environment and the Nature regulator with a wide range of statutory duties and powers. We provide the evidence, expertise and advice to recover Nature and shape better places for people to live. We do this working through and with others.

This will mean:

- setting evidence-based standards, strategies and advice to empower others to recover Nature
- building partnerships across society to drive action for more people to benefit from Nature
- focusing on places where we can have the biggest impact and manage the biggest risks
- outcome-focused regulation and enforcement that supports growth and empowers people to make the right choices
- a dynamic approach to Nature protection, delivered in collaboration with other environmental regulators
- harnessing data and digital to provide a better service to our customers and work more efficiently
- using science, evidence, and analysis to empower action for Nature and support innovation

The direction set out in this [document](#) will mean changes both for Natural England and for the many organisations and people that we work with.

Strengthening our collaboration and working across Defra group, wider government, and business will be essential for our shared success. Strong local and regional relationships will ensure we continue to improve Nature for the benefit of all, through place-based delivery. We are committed to working together to identify and implement the best ways to make these changes.

Our priorities

We will transform our services and develop digital systems to make it easier for our people and customers to deliver for Nature. We will focus on the following priorities:

1. Drive Nature recovery at a greater scale and faster pace than before by supporting large scale projects and making it easier for landowners to get permissions for Nature positive change.
2. Tackle the root causes of Nature's decline working with Defra partners to ensure cleaner air, clean and plentiful water, healthier soils and rich, productive seas.
3. Partner with planners and developers on "high nature; low carbon" houses, energy and transport infrastructure and introduce strategic solutions so development can also protect and restore Nature.
4. Support food security and sustainable farming, forestry and fishing through targeted advice and the right mix of public and private finance.
5. Shape better places for people to work and live by providing clear evidence and advice to our partners, using spatial plans for Nature as a framework for investment and joined up action.
6. Connect communities with Nature and create Nature close to people's homes, ensuring everyone gains from the health benefits Nature can bring.

Board Members play an important role in steering, supporting and encouraging the executive team in further improving Natural England's delivery **of Nature recovery for growth, health and security.**

As an organisation we work to four core values, being ambitious, being inclusive, acting with integrity and working in a 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 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;
- 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.

Additionally, the Deputy Chair will have a strong focus on driving Natural England to deliver its new Strategic Direction. This includes supporting the governments growth mission by delivering the pledges in the regulatory action plan and Dan Corry's review of Defra's regulatory landscape. The Deputy Chair will also be required to drive financial and delivery efficiencies in Natural England. The Deputy Chair will represent the Chair in their absence and to carry out such other duties in conjunction with, or on their behalf, as agreed. The Deputy Chair will also sit on the Board of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

Following a Board skills review, two areas of expertise were identified that could strengthen future direction and decisions:

Planning and Regulatory Reform – To support Government in its aim to accelerate development while striking a balance between growth and environmental protection, for example, someone with experience working for a Local Authority.

Operational and change management – To deliver change, drive efficiency, and effectiveness in a large and complex organisation with a strong customer focus.

Remuneration

Deputy Chair:
£17,712 per annum

Board Member:
£11,808 per annum

**Time
commitment***

Deputy Chair:
4.5 days per month

Board Member:
3 days per month

Term length

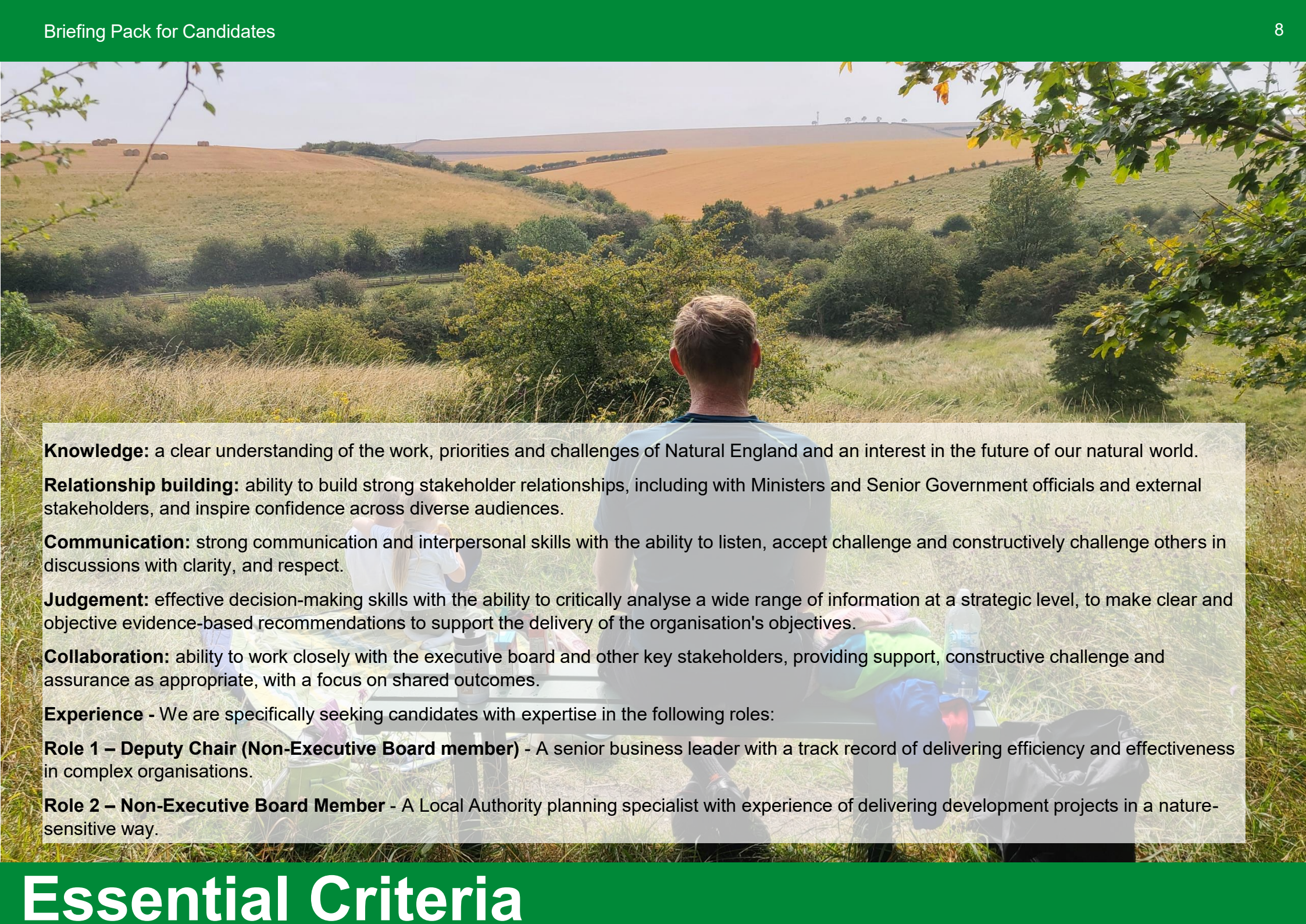
Initial appointment
for 3 years

Location

Meetings are held
nationwide,
requiring regular
travel.

*In addition to attending Board meetings, members are expected to actively contribute to sub-groups, provide area-based support, and undertake ambassadorial duties on behalf of Natural England.

Terms of Appointment

A man with short blonde hair, seen from behind, is sitting on a wooden bench in a rural landscape. He is wearing a light blue t-shirt. The background features rolling green hills, some trees, and a few buildings in the distance under a clear sky. The scene is framed by some foliage in the foreground.

Knowledge: a clear understanding of the work, priorities and challenges of Natural England and an interest in the future of our natural world.

Relationship building: ability to build strong stakeholder relationships, including with Ministers and Senior Government officials and external stakeholders, and inspire confidence across diverse audiences.

Communication: strong communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to listen, accept challenge and constructively challenge others in discussions with clarity, and respect.

Judgement: effective decision-making skills with the ability to critically analyse a wide range of information at a strategic level, to make clear and objective evidence-based recommendations to support the delivery of the organisation's objectives.

Collaboration: ability to work closely with the executive board and other key stakeholders, providing support, constructive challenge and assurance as appropriate, with a focus on shared outcomes.

Experience - We are specifically seeking candidates with expertise in the following roles:

Role 1 – Deputy Chair (Non-Executive Board member) - A senior business leader with a track record of delivering efficiency and effectiveness in complex organisations.

Role 2 – Non-Executive Board Member - A Local Authority planning specialist with experience of delivering development projects in a nature-sensitive way.

Essential Criteria



The Timeline

How to apply

To apply you will need to [create an account](#) or [sign in](#) to “Apply for Public Appointment Service” gov.uk by the deadline of **Midday 10th September 2025**. Once logged onto your account, click on ‘apply for this role’ and follow the on-screen instructions.

To apply, all candidates are required to submit:

- A CV of no more than two sides of A4 with education, professional qualifications and employment history and the names and contact details for two referees
- A statement of suitability should give evidence of the strength and depth of your ability to meet the essential criteria for this role. Please provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet each of the criteria (max two pages please).
- diversity information
- information relating to any outside interests or reputational issues

For further information please email: publicappts@defra.gov.uk

Advisory Assessment Panel

- **Panel Chair: Edward Barker** – Defra Director for Nature, Environment, Trees and Landscapes,
- **Organisation Representative: Tony Juniper** – Chair, Natural England
- **Independent Panel Member: Dame Julia Unwin** – Chair, York St John University

Ministers are assisted in their decision making by Panels. In undertaking their assessment of candidates, the role of the Panel is to decide, objectively, who meets the published selection criteria for the role, in other words, who is appointable to the role.

The names of all appointable candidates must be submitted to Ministers. It is then for Ministers to determine merit and make the final appointment.

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.

Complaints

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/>
- [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#)

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.

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 restriction order;
- you fail to declare any conflict of interest.

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.

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.



Tony Juniper
Chair



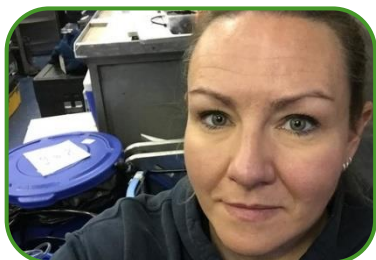
Marian Spain
CEO and Ex-Officio Board
Member



Peter Unwin
Interim Deputy Chair



Kim Shillinglaw
Non-Executive Board
Member



Dr Clare Fitzsimmons
Non-Executive Board
Member



Professor Mel Austen
Non-Executive Board
Member



Professor Lynn Dicks
Non-Executive Board
Member



Dame Caroline Spelman
Non-Executive Board
Member



Cynthia Alers
ARAC and Non-Executive
Board Member



Dr Alastair Leake
Non-Executive Board
Member



James Scott
Non-Executive Board
Member



Mark Tufnell
Non-Executive Board
Member



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

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