



Office for  
Environmental  
Protection

Briefing pack for the appointment of

# Chair of the Office for Environmental Protection

**CLOSING DATE: MIDDAY ON 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2026**  
**REFERENCE: APPT14-25**



Defra Mission Statement	3
Ministerial Message to Candidates	4
About the Office for Environmental Protection	5
The Role	6
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 – Office for Environmental Protection Board	15

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# 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 the Chair of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP).

This Government is committed to protecting the environment and restoring nature, while delivering economic growth. The OEP performs an important role, holding the Government and other public authorities to account, monitoring progress and providing advice.

I am also committed to reforming the environmental regulatory system to make it more proportionate, outcome-focussed and easier to navigate. As the OEP carries out its statutory functions, it will need to support regulators in trialling new, innovative approaches that can lead to a more agile and effective regulatory system.

We are seeking an outstanding individual to lead the Board, working closely with the Chief Executive. The Chair must bring strong strategic leadership and a commitment to good governance. This is a unique opportunity to chair a relatively young organisation (as the second ever Chair), setting direction and balancing the expectations of stakeholders, while maintaining independence.

We encourage applications from candidates with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, including those currently underrepresented in public life and I am particularly keen to hear from those who are committed to championing equality, diversity, and inclusion at board level.

Thank you once again for your interest in this important role. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Emma Reynolds MP**  
**Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**



The OEP is an independent statutory body with the principal objective to contribute to environmental protection and the improvement of the natural environment. It was established by the Environment Act 2021 as part of a new approach to national environmental governance in England and Northern Ireland and has functions to hold government and public authorities to account for their goals for the environment and their commitments under environmental law.

The Board also takes many of the OEP's most significant decisions, including approving decisions on investigations and enforcement, and signing off all formal reports laid before Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. These responsibilities require the Board to exercise sound judgement, uphold high standards of governance and ensure the OEP maintains its independence and credibility.

As Chair, you will lead this Board. You will be responsible for guiding its deliberations, ensuring it functions effectively, fostering a culture of constructive challenge and maintaining high standards of integrity and transparency. You will work closely with the Chief Executive to ensure a clear strategic vision for the organisation and to support the delivery of the OEP's statutory functions.

The Board of the OEP includes a non-executive Chair and between five and ten other members, with the majority being non-executives. Non-executive members play a vital role in providing constructive challenge and holding the executive members to account. The Chair is central to ensuring that this balance works well and that the Board as a whole operates with cohesion, clarity and independence.



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### The OEP Board has a collective responsibility for:

- establishing and taking forward the strategic aims and objectives of the OEP consistent with its overall strategic direction and within the resources framework determined by the Secretary of State and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland (DAERA);
  - ensuring the OEP acts objectively and impartially as it carries out its functions, and challenging any activity from Defra, DAERA or any other UK or Northern Ireland government departments they consider compromises its ability to act independently in the process;
  - providing effective leadership of the OEP within a framework of prudent and effective controls that enables risk to be assessed and managed;
  - helping to ensure the financial and human resources are in place for the OEP to meet its objectives;
  - reporting to Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly through the OEP's annual accounts where the Board considers the Secretary of State and DAERA have not provided sufficient funds for the OEP to carry out its functions;
  - reviewing management performance;
  - ensuring that it receives and reviews regular financial and management information concerning the management of the OEP;
  - ensuring that it is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of the OEP or on the attainability of its objectives, and determining the steps needed to deal with such changes and where appropriate bringing such matters to the attention of the Secretary of State, Permanent Secretary and DAERA;
  - 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 DAERA, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds;
  - ensuring that, in preparing its enforcement policy and exercising its enforcement functions, it has regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 25 or 25A of the Environment Act.
  - ensuring that, in reaching decisions, the Board takes into account its strategy, its corporate and business plans, and any contribution it has agreed to make towards Defra's or DAERA's policy objectives;
  - ensuring that, as part of the above compliance, its members are familiar with:
    - the Act;
    - the OEP's Framework Document;
    - any delegation letter issued to the OEP by the Permanent Secretary;
    - any elements of any settlement letter issued to Defra or DAERA that are relevant to the operation of the OEP; and
    - any separate settlement letter that is issued to the OEP from Defra or DAERA; and
    - the need to have appropriate internal mechanisms for the monitoring of, and governance and external reporting regarding, any conditions arising from the above documents, and the need to ensure that the Chief Executive and the OEP as a whole act in accordance with their obligations under the above documents;
  - demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times, including by using the audit and risk assurance committee to help the Board to address key financial and other risks;
  - setting performance objectives and remuneration terms for the Chief Executive that give due weight to the proper management and use and utilisation of public resources, consulting with Defra where it deems appropriate;
  - putting in place mechanisms for independent appraisal and annual evaluation of the performance of the Chair by the independent non-executives, taking into account the views of relevant stakeholders, and making the outcome of that evaluation available to the Secretary of State and DAERA; and
  - determining all such other things which the Board considers ancillary or conducive to the attainment or fulfilment by the OEP of its objectives.
- The Board should ensure that effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control.

The Chair of the OEP will provide leadership and strategic vision for the board, ensure good governance and, with the board, hold the executive to account. The chair will promote a positive and constructive relationship with everyone that works with the OEP, including Parliament, government Ministers, departments, and public authorities, along with a wide range of interest groups as well as others, while consistently upholding and demonstrating the OEP's institutional independence and impartiality.

Specifically, the Chair will:

- lead the board's oversight and direction of the OEP to ensure that the OEP implements its strategy, delivers its corporate plans and in doing so achieves its objectives and maximises its contribution to environmental protection and the natural environment;
- lead the board to take significant decisions, including decisions relating to investigations and enforcement, and approving all reports laid before Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- lead the board to ensure that the OEP's affairs are conducted with probity, and in accordance with high standards of corporate governance, and that decisions are taken objectively, impartially, and taking proper account of any statutory or administrative requirements for the good use of public funds, including Managing Public Money and any delegated authority agreed with Defra;
- lead the board in its own work, and its interaction with the executive, so that it and its members perform effectively, that the balance and diversity of skills is appropriate to direct the OEP's business, that it is supported by and supports the executive to deliver and that it receives the evidence and information it needs;
- represent the OEP to Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, Ministers, partner and stakeholder organisations and the general public as an independent, evidence-led and purposeful organisation.

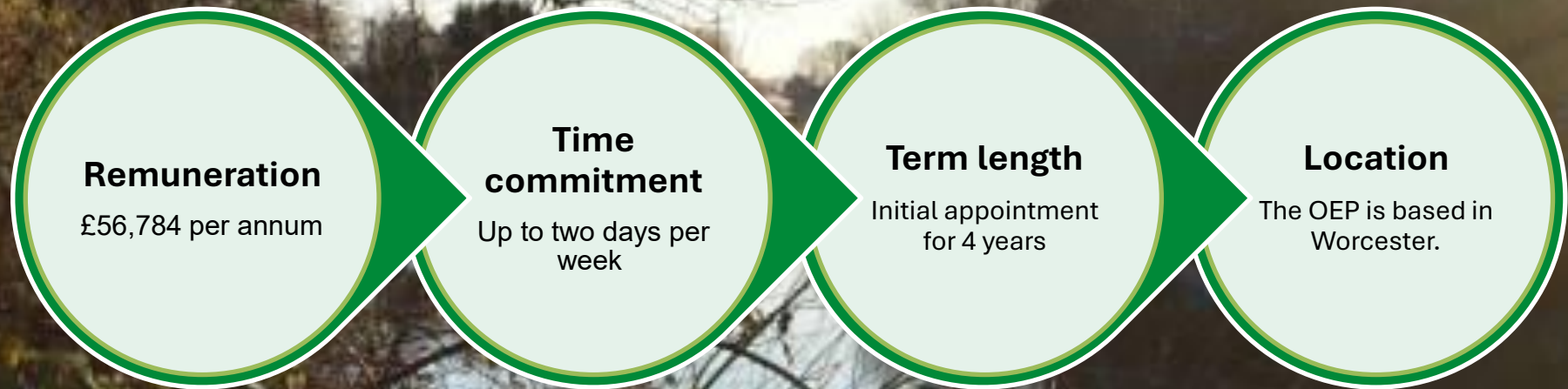


Photo © Ben Kohli

# Terms of Appointment

**Essential criteria:**

**Knowledge:** A clear understanding of the OEP's statutory remit and the broader environmental and regulatory landscape or the ability to attain that understanding swiftly.

**Experience:** A proven track record of strong leadership within a complex regulatory organisation, underpinned by an objective and evidence-based approach.

**Relationship Building:** An ability to build and maintain effective relationships with Ministers, Parliament, senior government officials and key external stakeholders. The successful candidate must manage OEP's accountability to Parliament while maintaining the OEP's independence and advancing the organisation's objectives.

**Communication:** The ability to communicate effectively, listen actively, engage constructively, lead a group to take complex decisions, and provide clear, respectful, and authoritative challenge as an ambassador of the OEP.

**Judgement:** The ability to exercise sound, evidence-informed judgement in analysing complex information to make objective decisions that support the organisation's statutory responsibilities.

**Collaboration:** A proven track record in fostering an inclusive culture of collective contribution and working collaboratively with the executive and stakeholders to provide appropriate challenge, support, and assurance.

**Desirable criteria:**

- Understanding of environmental policy and practice, particularly in areas relevant to the OEP's oversight functions.
- Experience in economic policy and/or infrastructure development to support the Government's ambition for sustainable growth and development.

Photo © Oversnap



- Candidates must demonstrate how they meet the essential criteria.
- Refer to the 'Recruitment Process' section to understand how to apply

- The Panel will assess all applications against the criteria and decide who they would like to invite for interview
- Ministers must be consulted on the shortlist before we can confirm who has been successful at this stage.
- Detailed feedback will not be provided at this stage

- Held at 2 Marsham Street, Westminster
- Will last approximately 45 minutes

- The Panel will decide who they deem to be appointable. It is then up to Ministers to decide who they would like to appoint
- Ministers may wish to meet candidates before deciding

- The preferred candidate is required to appear before the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs & Environmental Audit Select Committees
- Guidance on pre-appointment scrutiny hearings can be found [here](#)

Photo © BrianAJackson

# 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 on Thursday 18th December 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](mailto:publicappts@defra.gov.uk)

## Advisory Assessment Panel

- **Sally Randall** – Director General, Defra as Panel Chair
- **Julie Thompson** – Head of Environment, Marine and Fisheries at the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland
- **Helen Stephenson** – Senior Independent Panel Member

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.

The OEP Chair is appointed by the Secretary of State acting jointly with the Northern Ireland Department.

Photo © Monty Rakusen

## Conflicts of Interest and Due Diligence

If you have any interests that might be relevant to the work of the Office for Environmental Protection, 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](mailto: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



Dame Glenys  
Stacey



Julie Hill



Professor Dan  
Laffoley



Dr Paul Leinster  
CBE



Natalie Prosser  
(CEO)



Professor  
Eizabeth Fisher



Malcom Beatty  
OBE



Caroline May

[Link to further information about the OEP Board](#)



Department  
for Environment,  
Food & Rural Affairs



Office for  
**Environmental  
Protection**



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

