



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Appointment of a Board Member of Natural England (Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair)

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date: 12 noon on 23 October 2017

Reference: APT12-17



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Ministerial message to candidates

Dear Candidate

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

Natural England is a non-departmental public body with a statutory responsibility for ensuring that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Natural England is committed to working in partnership with the Defra group and other government bodies to achieve our shared ambition to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better condition than we found it. Natural England will be a leading player in delivering the Government's forthcoming 25 year plan for the environment.

In addition to its operational delivery roles, Natural England acts as an expert adviser to government. In the next few years, there will be a focus on how best to secure the opportunities that EU Exit offers to develop a better approach to protecting and enhancing the natural environment and our farming and fishing industries – and in ensuring that new policies are implemented effectively.

As a Natural England Board Member your leadership will be essential in driving this ambition with the senior leadership of the organisation. You will be able to share your experience and enthusiasm for the natural environment, be active nationally, as well as locally, with stakeholders and staff alike.

If you have the skills and experience to help lead and support Natural England, whatever your background, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Michael Gove
Secretary of State for the Environment



Defra mission statement

Defra wants Britain to be a great place to live. Our work plays a critical role in the wellbeing of everyone in the country through the creation of healthy environments, a world leading food and farming industry, a thriving rural economy and enhanced protection against floods and animal and plant diseases.

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

Defra will be operating an interview access scheme for disabled people (as defined by the Equalities Act 2010) who meet the minimum criteria for this appointment as published in these notes. If you wish to apply for consideration under this scheme, please notify the Department when you return your application. In addition, if you require any special arrangements at interview stage, please give details in a covering letter to enable us to make the appropriate arrangements if necessary. Furthermore, adjustments will be made in the event of a successful application.



Natural England mission statement

Natural England is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and plays a key role in delivering the environmental priorities of central government. It is a statutory body with its own powers and duties, exercising regulatory responsibilities at arm's length from Ministers. Natural England is accountable to Defra's Secretary of State for the delivery of its objectives, who in turn is responsible to Parliament for its performance.

Established under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Natural England's general purpose is to "ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development".

The NERC Act provides Natural England with a broad and challenging purpose which includes:

- promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity
- conserving and enhancing the landscape
- securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment,
- promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation
- contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment.

Responsibilities

Through the NERC Act and through a number of other Acts of Parliament, Natural England has a broad set of responsibilities as:

- the government's statutory adviser for the natural environment in England, informing the

development of policy to enable Defra's strategic objective of creating a 'great place to live', creating conditions in which nature and our economy can thrive together.

- Advisor and regulator, working at a local level with decision-makers and customers, using evidence, technical expertise and local knowledge to ensure that we conserve and enhance England's most important conservation sites and, more broadly, deliver resilient local landscapes.
- The delivery body for a range of key government programmes – including agri-environment schemes, the marine 'Blue Belt' and the creation of the England Coast Path.

Currently Natural England employs over 2,000 people based in local offices across the country.

Strategic Direction

Natural England is currently implementing its [Conservation 21 Strategy](#) which has three key themes:

- Creating resilient landscapes and seas
- Putting people at the heart of the natural environment
- Growing natural capital

Priorities

Natural England publishes annual action plans taken from its strategic [corporate plan](#). These are reviewed and endorsed by its Board.

For more details about NE's responsibilities and priorities see the latest [annual report](#) and [corporate plan](#).

What is the Natural England Board?

The Board of Natural England includes a Chair and no fewer than 8 and no more than 15 other members. The Board of Natural England has corporate responsibility for ensuring that Natural England plays its full role in contributing to delivery of the Government's policies for the natural environment in England. The current membership of the Natural England Board is at [Annex B](#).

Board members complement each other in terms of their skills and experience, 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;
- Approval of all matters not delegated to the Chief Executive under the Natural England Schemes of Delegation

The Natural England [framework document](#) outlines the specific requirements for the Board and Leadership as part of the Natural England Governance [structures and processes](#).

Role Specification

The Secretary of State wishes to appoint a new member to the Board of Natural England to replace the outgoing Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair.

Board members play an important role in supporting and encouraging the executive team in improving Natural England's delivery for the natural environment by driving forward substantial change to deliver value for money, excellent customer service and better collaboration with key partners while maintaining a clear overview, and ensuring business continuity, across the range of its functions.

Leadership is characterised by the combination of an evidence-based approach, a practical knowledge of delivery and delivery tools, and an understanding of policy making. Your experience will be vital in helping the Board make the right decisions for current and future policy.

Natural England is going through a period of substantial reform including significant funding pressures and restructuring. It is fully committed to the consolidation of Government support services (Estates, Finance, and HR).

Board members are expected to encourage and support innovation as Natural England fully develops its income generation capacities and explores new relationships with businesses in the future.

The Secretary of State is seeking high-calibre applicants from diverse backgrounds who can demonstrate they can contribute to the strategic leadership of Natural England, discharge a full range of non-executive responsibilities and provide professional insight into key corporate issues - in particular audit, governance and risk assurance. As Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) you will effectively chair four ARAC meetings a year and ensure delivery of the Committees work. You will oversee the governance and accountability, and have a clear insight on the risks and assurance of Natural England's business.

The [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee](#) (ARAC) is a standing committee of the Board. Its role is to advise the Board and Accounting Officer on matters of financial accountability, risk, control, assurance and governance.

The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan principles of public service (attached at [Annex A](#)).

Another recruitment exercise is also underway for two other Natural England Board member vacancies. A separate briefing pack is available for these positions.

Essential Criteria

You should demonstrate all of the following:

- Significant expertise in audit, governance, risk assurance and financial reporting and must be a qualified accountant.
- An ability to analyse issues at a strategic level in ways which are impartial, creative and focused on finding solutions.
- An ability to question, challenge constructively and influence decision making within a Board setting in a large and complex organisation.
- A proven ability to influence and engage a strong and diverse network of people and organisations and the ability to inspire confidence in stakeholders at all levels.
- An enthusiasm for and genuine interest in the work delivered by Natural England and how it can contribute to Government priorities, including Defra's long-term vision for a more integrated approach to working across the Defra group.

Time commitment and term of office

Appointments are normally for up to three years. The length of these terms will be determined by any statutory constraints or will be a matter for decision by Ministers. In total an appointee cannot serve more than a total of ten years.

Reappointments may be made subject to satisfactory performance assessment and will be at the discretion of Ministers. The successful candidate will be expected to attend around 9

meetings of the Board per year, as well as relevant committee meetings including chairing the Audit and Risk Committee and visits. The total time commitment will be up to 4 days per month, which will include preparation and participation in Board meetings, and any other responsibilities as agreed with the Chair.

Remuneration and expenses

The remuneration is £328 per day (up to £14,760 per annum for a time commitment of 45 days). The appointment is non-pensionable. Reasonable travel expenses are paid.

The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is noon on 23 October. We expect to have shortlisted by 14 November, with panel interviews in December.

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 Shirley Trundle (Defra Director) as chair, Andrew Sells (Natural England Chair) and Sir Laurie Magnus (Historic England Chair) as the independent panel member. At the Shortlist meeting the Panel will assess each application

against the essential criteria and decide who to invite for final interview.

Interviews are expected to take place at Defra's offices in Westminster and will last for approximately 45 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 will meet with the Secretary of State before a final decision is made.

How to apply and submit your application

To apply, please email the following to publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk by the deadline of 12 noon on 23 October:

- a CV of no more than two sides of A4
- a supporting statement of not more than two sides of A4, setting out how you meet the [essential criteria](#) – make sure you refer to the contents of this document
- Diversity monitoring form
- Conflicts of interest and political activity monitoring form
- Contact details (including email address) for two referees.

If you have any questions about the appointments process please contact Andrew Morris, Public Appointments Team on 020 8026 6562; publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk

For an informal discussion about the role please contact Mick Oliver, Natural England on 07768 291 446; Mick.J.Oliver@naturalengland.org.uk

Email applications to:
publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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We are [also recruiting for two other vacancies](#) on the Natural England Board. If you would also like to be considered for these opportunities please clearly indicate this when you submit your application. For full details see the separate Applicant Briefing pack on the Centre for Public Appointments website.

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:

[The Commissioner for Public Appointments](#)

[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:

[Contact OCPA](#)

Alternatively please contact the Commissioner's office on 020 7271 0831 for a printed copy.

Data protection

Defra is committed to protect your privacy and to process your personal information in a manner which meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

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 – Current membership of the Board

Andrew Sells (Chair) [biography](#)

James Cross (Chief Executive, ex officio board member) [biography](#)

William Cockbain [biography](#)

Dr Joe Horwood [biography](#)

Nigel Reader CBE [biography](#)

Teresa Dent CBE [biography](#)

Dr Simon Lyster [biography](#)

Dr Andy Clements [biography](#)

Dr Julia Aglionby [biography](#)

Professor Michael Winter OBE [biography](#)



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