

Defra chief scientist departs after seven years in post

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers has today thanked Professor Sir Ian Boyd on his last day as Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Sir Ian, who has been in the post for seven years, has been responsible for ensuring the department's policies – on everything from air quality to plant health – have been underpinned by sound, scientific advice.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

Sir Ian Boyd's work for the department over the last seven years has been crucial to ensuring we continue to protect the environment with the very best science available.

I am immensely thankful for his service and wish him all the best in future endeavours.

Some of Sir Ian's key accomplishments while in post include leading the scientific input into key government strategies like the [25 Year Environment Plan](#), [Resources and Waste Strategy](#) and the [Clean Air Strategy](#).

Sir Ian also dealt directly with the threat of [ash dieback](#), driving the use of underpinning research into operational practice, and chaired the Decontamination Science Assurance Group in response to the Salisbury nerve agent attack in 2018.

Commenting on his time in post, Sir Ian Boyd said:

I'm very grateful for the opportunity and privilege to have served as Defra CSA. The role is immensely varied, but ultimately it involves putting science at the heart of all decision making at the department, whether responding to an unexpected event, or long term policy decisions to improve the environment.

I've had the pleasure to serve under several Secretaries at State with different priorities, but I'm proud to say we have ensured science remains top of the agenda.

In terms of science, he has championed innovation in the department, leading to the use of satellite Earth Observation and the creation of the [Defra Earth Observation Centre of Excellence](#). Most recently, he was responsible for establishing the [Systems Research Programme](#), an initiative putting Defra in the lead in using systems approaches to inform policy decisions

Tamara Finkelstein, Permanent Secretary at Defra said:

I'd like to thank Sir Ian for his dedication and contributions to Defra during his time as CSA, and his commitment to bringing the best scientific advice to bear on the department's decision making.

We are indebted to him as the longest serving CSA, and look forward to seeing his ongoing influence in the scientific community.

Sir Ian has BSc and DSc degrees for the University of Aberdeen, a PhD from Cambridge University and has received prizes for his research including the Scientific Medal of the Zoological Society of London, the Bruce Medal for Polar Science from the Royal Society of Edinburgh and The Polar Medal awarded by Her Majesty The Queen. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

He is expected to continue in his role as Professor in Biology at the University of St Andrews. He is also Chair of the UK Research Integrity Office and will also be pursuing research extending from his experiences as CSA at Defra.

Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Chief Scientific Adviser said:

Ian has been a champion of the use of science to improve government, not just in Defra, but more broadly.

His broad knowledge and fearless challenging has been an example of how a CSA can really make a difference.

The CSA sits on Defra's Board and is responsible for overseeing the quality of evidence that the department relies on for policy decisions. They also provide Ministers with scientific advice and sets the priorities for scientific research and evidence-gathering.

Professor Gideon Henderson is [due to take over the post in October](#).