

News story: Joint Nature Conservation Committee Chair reappointed

Professor Chris Gilligan will join the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) from 1 June 2017 for three years.

All appointments to the JNCC are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. The appointment complies with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. There is a requirement for appointees' political activity, if significant) to be declared. Prof Gilligan has not declared any significant political activity during the past five years.

The JNCC was established in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) as a non-departmental public body. The JNCC advises the UK Government and Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales on UK-wide and international nature conservation. Remuneration is £40,000 per annum based on a time commitment of 104 days.

Professor Gilligan is Professor of Mathematical Biology at the University of Cambridge, where he recently completed a four year term as Head, School of Biological Sciences. He has chaired a number of complex bodies and recently chaired Defra's Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Taskforce. He is currently a Trustee of the Natural History Museum.

Professor Gilligan's current research is focused on establishing and testing a theoretical framework that identifies the mechanisms that control invasion, persistence, scaling and variability of epidemics within changing agricultural and natural landscapes.

Press release: Water companies make environmental improvements but Environment Agency urges more action

The majority of the UK's water companies achieved close to or exceeded targets set to improve water quality, according to a new report published by the Environment Agency today.

Wessex Water and United Utilities were the top performing water companies, repeating last year's success.

In a year when the Environment Agency introduced tougher standards, water companies made good progress in meeting the new targets. However, the total

number of pollution incidents increased by 160 in 2016, the first increase since 2012.

While water companies continue to improve their reporting of pollution to ensure impact can be minimised and wildlife protected downstream, the Environment Agency has urged some water companies to make significant improvements to bring down pollution levels.

The report which ranks the nine big water and sewage companies in England on a range of measures needed to protect the environment also showed:

- All companies achieved the target to complete work to build and upgrade infrastructure which will improve water quality, water resources and river biodiversity.
- Eight out of nine water companies gained full marks for protecting water supply security. This is crucial following the dry winter as some rivers, reservoirs and groundwaters are lower than normal for the time of year but there are no water supply issues.
- Safe recovery or disposal of sewage sludge took place 99.9% of the time and was mostly used to improve agricultural land, generate heat or power. And compliance with permits at sewage treatment and water treatment works is at 98.6% on average, while good is still short of the 100% target.
- The number of serious pollution incidents has continued to decline. However there was an increase in total numbers of incidents and of the most damaging pollution incidents, nine up from four in the previous year.

Dr Toby Willison, Executive Director of Operations for the Environment Agency, said:

Water companies work hard to protect the environment. We have set more stringent targets and we are glad to see overall improvements but want to see more effort to avoid pollution incidents.

As a fair and effective regulator we are committed to publishing results, highlighting best practice but also taking action to address any poor practice.

While we welcome the good progress being made we will continue to address any failings and will take enforcement action in the most serious cases.

2016 was also the first year to see several million pound fines handed out by

the courts to water companies for pollution incidents.

All water companies provide an essential public service and affect the health of rivers and how water can be used downstream by others. High environmental performance from water companies protects rivers and seas, supports wildlife and ensures people can enjoy the environment. Water companies also contributed £127 million last year to reduce risk of sewers flooding homes and protect local communities.

Annual water and sewerage company environmental performance reports are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

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[Downtime: NGDC and UKCCSRC digital data deposit application upgrade](#)

The NGDC and UKCCSRC Digital Data Deposit Applications will not be available

from 17:00 on Wednesday 12 July while we deploy upgraded versions. They are expected to become available again on Monday 17th July.

Downtime: NGDC and UKCCSRC digital data deposit and search application upgrade

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