

JNCC Interim CEO appointed

News story

Gemma Harper has been appointed as the Interim Chief Executive of JNCC following an open competition.



Gemma Harper has been appointed as the Interim Chief Executive of JNCC following an open competition. Currently Deputy Director for Marine Policy in core Defra, Gemma will take up her new role in March 2021 once Marcus Yeo steps down.

Earlier in 2020, Gemma co-led the Food Vulnerability Directorate for several months as part of Defra's coronavirus response. Gemma is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, and external advisor to both the European Centre for the Environment and Human Health (ECEHH) and the Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement partnership (CAPE).

A social scientist by training, Gemma spent eight years in criminal justice research at the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice prior to joining Defra in 2010. From 2010 to 2017, Gemma was Defra's Chief Social Scientist. She has been awarded the Defra Leadership Award twice and co-led the Food Vulnerability Directorate to win a Defra Team Award and to be shortlisted in the current Civil Service Awards. Gemma is a University of Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy Fellow and a graduate of the Civil Service Senior Leaders Scheme.

On hearing of her appointment, Gemma said:

I am delighted to be appointed as JNCC's Interim Chief Executive. It is a brilliant time to be joining JNCC given the unparalleled opportunities in 2021 to take action globally and within the UK to tackle biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. Evidence is in my DNA and I am delighted to be able to lead this world-leading science-based organisation. I bring my love of nature and passion for inclusion to JNCC. I am really looking forward to taking up this exciting role.

Permanent Secretary Tamara Finkelstein said:

Congratulations to Gemma on her appointment as JNCC's Interim CEO. Gemma has not only done outstanding work as Defra's Deputy Director of Marine Policy. She has also done a huge amount to promote equality, diversity and inclusion as Defra's Deputy Race Champion, as well as founding and co-chairing the Civil Service Network for Nature. I'd like to thank her for all her hard work and wish her all the best at JNCC on behalf of everyone here in Defra.

Director General for Environment Rural and Marine, David Hill said:

I'm delighted that Gemma will be taking up this important role at such a pivotal time, when the JNCC's work is critical to our delivery of the ambitions in the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Government's environmental aspirations at home and internationally. I'm also hugely grateful to Marcus Yeo for his service as Chief Executive and his massive contribution to the work of Defra Group.

Published 14 December 2020