

New appointment to the Natural England Board

Press release

Clare Fitzsimmons has been appointed to the Board of Natural England, with Lord Blencathra, Catherine Dugmore and Henry Robinson reappointed.



Defra Ministers have appointed Clare Fitzsimmons to the Natural England Board for a three-year term. Her first term will begin on 12 September 2021 and will run until 11 September 2024.

Following six-month extensions to their first terms, Lord Blencathra, Catherine Dugmore and Henry Robinson have all been reappointed for a second term. Their second terms will run from 12 September 2021 until 11 March 2024.

Sue Hartley leaves the Natural England Board on 12 September 2021, having completed three-and-a-half years.

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 partners.

Natural England plays a key role in delivering Government's environmental priorities. Its general purpose is to ensure the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations.

The appointment and reappointments have been made in accordance with the Ministerial Governance Code on Public Appointments published by the Cabinet Office. All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process.

There is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if significant) to be declared. Clare Fitzsimmons, Catherine Dugmore and Henry Robinson have declared that they have not taken part in any significant political activity in the past five years. Lord Blencathra declared that he takes the

Conservative Whip in the House of Lords. He does not make speeches on party political matters or issues related to Natural England.

Biographical details

Clare Fitzsimmons

- Dr Clare Fitzsimmons is a marine scientist, senior Lecturer and Postgraduate Degree Programme Director at the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences at Newcastle University, where she currently chairs the Industrial Advisory Board and previously served as a member of the Marine Science and Technology Executive Board and Chair of the Board of Examiners.
- She has a background in environmental research, with commercial experience gained in defence and consultancy sectors.
- She is also an active member of the North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.

Lord Blencathra

- Lord Blencathra is a member of the House of Lords. He chairs a Select Committee and has been appointed to the Council of Europe.
- He is also a Board Member of the Food Standards Agency and sits on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- He was a Minister of State at the Home Office and a Minister at the Department of the Environment in the 1990s. He represented the UK at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and launched the Darwin Initiative.
- From 1983 to 2010 he was a Member of Parliament (MP) for Penrith and The Border, England's largest rural constituency.

Catherine Dugmore

- Catherine is a qualified Chartered Accountant.
- She is currently a trustee of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and WWF-UK.
- She also has a non-executive role at Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust and has worked in the NHS since 2013.
- From 1988 to 2002, Catherine worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers, including as an audit partner.
- Previously she was vice chair and trustee of Action for Children and Chair of Victim Support.

Henry Robinson

- Henry is a trustee of two large estates, Hawk and Owl Trust and chairman of trustees at Rendcomb College.
- From 1999 to 2015, had various roles at the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), including President.
- Henry has farmed in the Cotswolds since 1978.
- Other previous positions include Director of BHR Resources, Member of the CLA, NFA, Associate of Royal Agricultural Studies and Trustee of Bowood, Flete, Brimpsfield Park.

Background

Natural England forms part of the Defra Group. As a non-departmental public body it has its own independent powers and statutory duties and exercises advisory and regulatory responsibilities at arm's length from Ministers. Natural England is accountable to Defra's Secretary of State for the delivery of its objectives.

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