New Defra Chief Scientist appointed

Professor Gideon Henderson has been appointed by Defra to be the department's new Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA).

Professor Henderson, currently a Professor of Earth Sciences at the University of Oxford and until recently its head of department, will join Defra in October this year.

He will replace Sir Ian Boyd, who is leaving Defra after seven years in the post.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

> Sir Ian Boyd's contribution to Defra's work has been invaluable, and I am immensely grateful for all the advice he has provided over the past seven years, informing key government policies.
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> I warmly welcome Professor Henderson to the role and look forward to working with him and seeing his positive impact on science in the department going forward.
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> It is absolutely crucial that all our policies are based on sound scientific advice to ensure we are addressing the UK's most pressing environmental issues in a targeted and innovative way, and Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser is vital to this process.

Commenting on his appointment, Professor Henderson said:

> I am thrilled to be joining Defra at a time when the environment is such a strong priority and there is an ever-growing public level of environmental awareness.
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> The UK faces many challenges – among them responding to climate change and helping meet a net zero emissions goal, as well as ensuring our food's security and realising the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan.
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> I look forward to working closely with colleagues to help achieve these ambitions with the support of the UK's excellent scientific research.

Tamara Finkelstein, Permanent Secretary at Defra, said:

> High quality science is central to everything this department does, as our recent investment in a Systems Research Programme reinforces.

> I am delighted that Gideon Henderson is joining us as the new CSA for Defra, bringing with him strong experience in geochemistry, ocean sciences and climate. I look forward to working with him as part of the Defra executive committee and as a leader of our superb scientist community.

Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Chief Scientific Adviser, said:

> Congratulations to Professor Gideon Henderson FRS on his appointment as the new Defra Chief Scientific Adviser. He is an exceptional scientist and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this vital and varied role in a key department for science.
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> I would like to extend a warm welcome to Gideon to the network of Chief Scientific Advisers across government and I look forward to working with him.

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

Biography

- Professor Henderson has been Professor of Earth Sciences at the Department of Earth Sciences in the University of Oxford since 2006. He has also jointly held positions as Senior Research Fellow at University College, Oxford since 2012 and as Adjunct Associate Research Scientist at the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University since 1999.

- His awards include the 30th Annual Plymouth Marine Science Medal 2016, European Union of Geosciences outstanding young scientist award in 2001, and the Leverhulme Prize Fellowship in 2001. In 2013 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS).

- As of 2019, he is the chair of the Royal Society Global Environmental Research Committee, a NERC Member of Council and a Member of the Royal Society Science Policy Expert Advisory Committee. He has also recently been appointed chair of the National Oceanographic Centre (NOC) Association Board, overseeing the body formally tasked with ensuring good science and infrastructure interaction between the NOC and the broad UK oceanographic community.

- His research uses geochemistry to understand surface earth processes,

particularly those relating to climate, the ocean, and the carbon cycle. Two major themes have been the use of past climate to assess climate issues relevant to the future, and assessment of the cycles of metals in the modern ocean, including contaminants and nutrients. His present work includes researching the potential and risks of accelerating natural processes to removal CO2 from the atmosphere.

- He holds a PhD from St John’s College, Cambridge, and gives regular keynotes at international conferences in geochemistry, ocean sciences and climate.