

Planning Inspectorate Chief Executive announces departure

Ms Richards took up post as the Planning Inspectorate Chief Executive in March 2016. During her time in office, she has overseen the transformation of the organisation, modernising the structure and digital services of the organisation to improve outcomes for customers. She led the organisation through the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continued delivery of service as well as bringing in virtual ways to deliver planning appeal, national infrastructure and local plans casework.

She said:

“In the Planning Inspectorate our people are our greatest asset. I have had the pleasure and privilege to work with many talented and hardworking people during my time at the Inspectorate and have seen an increase in our capabilities and skills, enabling us to deliver our valuable public services.

“The COVID years challenged us but brought out the resourcefulness and ingenuity to keep our casework moving. The organisation is now establishing the foundations to deliver in an increasingly digitised future.

“I am leaving at a time of great change, but also of great opportunity, for those working in the planning sector. I go with confidence that my successor will lead an organisation that is changing and improving for the better, with a workforce that is as professional and dedicated as it has always been. I wish the very best for the future to all working at the Inspectorate and across the wider government planning sector.”

Director of Planning at Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Simon Gallagher said:

“I’d like to thank Sarah Richards for her dedication to the Planning Inspectorate over the past six years in post. Her successor will be joining at an exciting and challenging time with the focus on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill progressing through parliament. The services provided by the Planning Inspectorate, however, remain a core part of the English planning system, dealing with planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, examinations of local plans and other planning-related and specialist casework in England.”

The recruitment process to appoint a successor will be run by the Department. Interim arrangements will be put in place to lead the Inspectorate while the recruitment is underway.

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