

Appointment of four members to the Civil Justice Council

The Lord Chancellor has appointed Dr Natalie Byrom, Kate Pasfield, John Sorabji, and James Walker as members of the Civil Justice Council for three years from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2025.

The CJC is a statutory advisory body established by the Civil Procedure Act 97.

The CJC brings together members of the judiciary, civil servants, legal professionals and others representative of the varied perspectives, sectoral interests, specialist and professional expertise found across the civil justice system.

The CJC has a statutory role in keeping the civil justice system under review. It advises the judiciary, government, and rule makers on the development of the civil justice system, especially how it can be more accessible, fair and efficient. It is empowered to make proposals for change and propose and undertake research.

Biographies:

Dr Natalie Byrom – Information Architecture and Econometrics CJC Member

Dr Natalie Byrom is Director of Research at The Legal Education Foundation and founding Director of their Justice Lab initiative. She sits on the Administrative Justice Council as a member of the steering group and is data advisor to the President of the Family Division's Transparency Implementation Group. Between 2018 and 2020 she served as an Expert Advisor on Open Data to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, where she made a series of recommendations to improve data collection, architecture and governance in the context of the ongoing programme of digital court reform.

Kate Pasfield – Other areas of expertise relevant to civil justice CJC Member

Kate Pasfield is Director of Legal Aid Policy and Member Services for the Legal Aid Practitioners Group. She previously spent 17 years in private practice and the not-for-profit sector as a legal aid solicitor specialising in housing and community care work.

John Sorabji – Barrister Role CJC Member

Dr John Sorabji is a barrister at Nine St John Street Chambers and an associate professor within the law faculty at University College London (UCL). In 2021 he was appointed Legal Adviser to the Independent Review of the Human Rights Act. He has previously advised the Lord Chief Justice, Master of the Rolls and other senior members of the judiciary on various legal and constitutional matters. He is General Editor of The White Book.

James Walker – Small and medium size enterprises (SME) CJC Member

James Walker is Chief Executive of Rightly, an organisation which helps consumers manage and own their data footprint. He is also the founder and Chief Executive of JamDoughnut, an App that assists consumers to save money. James is also a Non-Executive of Consumer Scotland. He is a Non-Executive Director advising the Dispute Resolution Ombudsman and the Collaboration Network and sits on the Consumer Panels for the Office of Road and Rail and the Civil Aviation Authority. He formally founded and grew Resolver, a free consumer tool to assist consumers in resolving complaints and disputes and built an online dispute resolution platform

Appointment of 2 legal members of the Civil Procedure Rules Committee

News story

The Lord Chancellor has approved the appointment of Ben Roe and Virginia Jones as legal members of the Civil Procedure Rules Committee.



The Lord Chancellor has approved the appointment of Ben Roe and Virginia Jones as legal members of the Civil Procedure Rules Committee (CPRC) for 3 years commencing 10 June 2022.

The CPRC is the statutory body that governs the practice and procedure to be followed in the Civil Division of the Court of Appeal, the High Court, and the County Court.

The appointment of legal members of the CPRC are made by the Lord Chancellor Appointments after consulting the Master of the Rolls and the relevant professional body.

Appointments are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and recruitment processes comply with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Biographies

Ben Roe is a solicitor who is the Lead Knowledge Lawyer for Baker McKenzie's Global Disputes and Compliance Group, responsible for knowledge management and training for litigation, arbitration and compliance lawyers. He is a member of the Association of Litigation Professional Support Lawyers and the Quality Assurance Board overseeing the Witness Intermediary Scheme.

Virginia Jones is the Head of Learning, Knowledge and Development at Stewarts Law, London. She is a solicitor with over ten years' client-facing experience in general commercial disputes and a further ten in a 'knowledge' setting, helping to ensure civil disputes lawyers remain up to date on and able to apply current law, procedure and best practice. Virginia is also a committee member of the London Circuit Commercial Court Users Group.

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[All of England's South West region now in drought](#)

- Public and businesses in drought affected areas urged to use water wisely as the dry summer impacts the environment.

The Environment Agency has today agreed that all of the South West of England is now in drought following some of the driest conditions in nearly 90 years.

Bristol, Somerset, Dorset, south Gloucestershire and parts of Wiltshire (referred to in the Environment Agency as the Wessex area) have all today moved to drought status. Earlier this month Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were also declared to be in a drought.

The triggers used to confirm today's move to drought status for the area include the hydrological position (including rainfall, river flows, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, and the dryness of soils), as well as the impacts these conditions have on the environment and abstractions. While the area has had some rainfall over the last 2 weeks, this has not been sufficient to compensate for the long dry period in recent months, but by waiting until now to declare a drought, it has given our response team time to consider the effects of the rainfall.

This change in status to drought is a change in categorisation, indicating the impact prolonged dry weather is having primarily on the environment and in addition on water resources. Essential water supplies are safe, but Defra and the Environment Agency are urging water companies to continue with their precautionary planning to protect essential supplies in the event of a dry

autumn.

In the Wessex area, the effects of drought are resulting in low river flows impacting the environment in and around rivers. So, we will work with companies and individuals who have abstraction licences allowing them to take water from rivers and groundwater boreholes, and with the public, to try to lower demand and therefore reduce the impact on the environment.

While there is an important role for people to sustainably manage their usage, Government expects water companies to act to reduce leakage and fix leaking pipes as quickly as possible and take wider action alongside government policy.

Chris Paul, the Environment Agency's area drought lead, said:

Despite some heavy rain over the past 2 weeks, it has not been enough to refill our rivers and aquifers.

River levels across our Wessex area are exceptionally low – many showing the lowest flows on record. This places incredible strain on local wildlife and this is why we are moving to drought status. We are prioritising our local operations to minimise impacts on the environment.

Action being taken across the area includes additional monitoring of the effects of the dry weather on rivers and responding to environmental emergencies, such as rescuing stranded fish, wherever possible. We will also be ensuring people and companies who have water abstraction licences only operate within the terms of their licence and taking legal action against those who fail to comply or against anyone who abstracts water without a licence.

The [Environment Agency's water situation national report for July](#) provides a picture of the rainfall, soil moisture deficit, river flows, groundwater levels and reservoir levels over the last month. The report highlights that it was the driest July across England since 1935, with monthly rainfall totals for the majority of river catchments classed as exceptionally low for the time of year.

There have been 5 consecutive months of below average rainfall across all geographic regions in England and above average temperatures. River flows, groundwater levels and reservoir stocks all decreased during July.

With Wessex now declaring a drought, 11 of the 14 Environment Agency areas in England are now in drought status.

Notes to editors

The Environment Agency uses 4 stages to describe and manage drought conditions:

- Prolonged dry weather
 - Drought
 - Severe drought
 - Recovering drought
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jHub Fellowship Scheme: “It’s a completely different area to work in.”

You might assume that to work in the jHub, experience in technology is a requirement. After all, a huge amount of what this unique and fascinating team does is centred on the procurement and distribution of state-of-the-art technology to the front line of Defence. However, although helpful, it’s not necessarily the be all and end all. Don’t believe us? Just ask John, S02 Innovation Scout in jHub X:

The exposure to technology isn’t something I had experience within my previous role.

Before working in the jHub, John was an Infantry Commander, a world away from his current role in the jHub. And although it took some time to adjust, he has relished his introduction to technology:

It’s anything from the digital aspects to modern warfare soldier systems which is super interesting, and I think really applicable going forward in my career.

Like with those around him, John makes a point of acknowledging the chance to work with those with different backgrounds and expertise as being particularly significant in the appeal of the jHub:

I have the opportunity to work with specialists and people with a variety of different backgrounds whether that’s Data scientists, UES Programmers even legal aspects. It’s not something I would have been able to do in my previous role.

All these backgrounds are the cogs in the jHub machine and contribute to their overall mission, but John explains:

The ability to make a difference, quickly, especially in the jHub X-Team is fantastic. We have such an operational drive, and we can

go identify a problem, go straight to industry to develop a solution and then get it straight into the hands of the users.

And, despite this being clearly satisfying in its own right, it's the being able to see and understand the process in a different light that that excites John:

Seeing this process from a capability procurement side is fascinating and quite rare.

If jHub's status as a unique defence office was still in question, John points out a couple of additional factors to tip the scale heavily in its favour:

It's a completely different area to work in than you would find in other areas of Defence. The style of leadership is one of a kind but so is the breadth and variety of different areas you get to work in.

And where better to finish than with this:

It's a fantastic opportunity and I would definitely recommend it to anyone who is thinking of coming into this space.

You can find more information about working for the jHub and their new Innovation Fellowship by reading the [Innovation Fellowship Launches](#) article.

[Work begins on first major broadband upgrade under £5 billion Project Gigabit](#)

- New data shows lightning-fast gigabit broadband now available for 70% of UK homes and businesses
- Prime Minister visits Dorset as first Project Gigabit contract awarded, putting more than 7,000 hard-to-reach properties in the digital fast lane by 2025
- Coverage has soared from seven per cent in 2019, meaning nearly 20m premises connected since the Prime Minister took office

The Prime Minister has announced a lightning-fast broadband boost for homes

and businesses in rural Dorset, as new data shows gigabit broadband now available for 70% of UK homes and businesses.

It comes as work kicks off on the first major contract under the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit – the biggest broadband roll out in British history.

New data to be published by independent website [ThinkBroadband](#), shows 7 in 10 UK properties can access the fastest and most reliable internet connections needed for families and businesses to take full advantage of revolutionary new advances in technology in the coming decades.

This represents a meteoric rise since Prime Minister Boris Johnson took office in 2019 when gigabit coverage stood at just 7%, demonstrating levelling up in action with a total of nearly 20 million premises connected since then and turbocharged progress by industry towards the government's target of 85% coverage by 2025.

In the last five months alone, one million premises have been connected to gigabit networks, a tremendous achievement given the first million premises took more than eight years to connect. The rate at which gigabit-capable internet connections are installed has increased threefold, with companies like Wessex Internet connecting premises at a rate of one every seven seconds.

The Prime Minister is in North Dorset today to see plans and preparations for how more than 7,000 hard-to-reach premises struggling with slow speeds will be connected under a £6 million contract awarded by the government to Wessex Internet. The first home will be connected by the end of the year, with an expected completion date for all by 2025. The project will cover the rural outskirts of towns, villages and hamlets across the region from Sherborne to Verwood and Shaftesbury to Blandford Forum.

The signing marks the start of a flurry of Project Gigabit delivery contracts to be awarded over the coming months. As part of the programme, the government has already launched procurements totalling over £690 million aiming to cover up to 498,000 premises, with work due to begin to connect hard-to-reach areas in Cornwall, Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, and several areas across north east England before the end of the year.

Project Gigabit is the government's record £5 billion scheme to bring the fastest, most reliable broadband to areas considered too difficult or expensive to connect under the broadband industry's commercial plans. Government funding will complement industry investment to ensure that these harder to reach areas benefit from the same gigabit broadband as the rest of the country, enabling businesses to grow by using digital technology to boost their productivity and giving people living in more remote areas better access to good jobs.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

“From Sherbourne to Stirling, lightning-fast broadband is levelling up towns

and villages across the country.

“In just three years we have increased the coverage of gigabit broadband from seven per cent of households to 70%, and I am proud that today more than 20 million households, businesses and organisations are able to tap into rapid and reliable internet, unleashing their potential, creating opportunities and driving growth across the country.”

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

“Today we enter an exciting new phase of our £5 billion Project Gigabit digital connectivity programme by signing our first major contract in Dorset. Thousands of hard-to-reach homes and businesses in the region will get access to faster connections and join the 20 million properties we’ve helped connect over the last three years.

“The benefits of better broadband connectivity cannot be underestimated and this work will mean those living in rural areas can enjoy 21st century speeds in the home and workplace, making their lives easier and more productive”

Gigabit broadband can provide speeds of more than 1,000 megabits per second, more than thirty times faster than copper-based superfast broadband, which is currently available to 97 per cent of UK premises. While superfast is fast enough for most people’s needs today, gigabit-capable connections will provide the speeds and reliability Britain needs for decades into the future.

Entire families will be able stream movies, TV and video games in high quality 4K and 8K definition onto multiple devices at the same time with no slowdowns in speed. It will underpin revolutionary new technologies such as Virtual and Augmented Reality and more internet-connected appliances in the home and the workplace to make our lives easier and more productive.

It will enable anyone to start-up and run a business of any size from even the most remote areas of the UK.

More than 740,000 premises have been connected through government funding so far, mainly through extending the government’s Superfast programme to provide gigabit-capable connections, the [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) and initiatives to put public services in the digital fast lane by connecting hospitals, GP surgeries, libraries and other public buildings.

Today’s announcement for Dorset is the first large-scale scheme under Project Gigabit to deliver gigabit connections to a regional area en-masse. Millions of rural homes and businesses across the UK are in line for an upgrade thanks to dozens of these multi-million pound contracts, making Project Gigabit one of the largest national infrastructure projects of recent times.

The announcement follows the confirmation last [month](#) that hundreds of thousands of pupils living in the countryside will enjoy lessons powered by better digital connections as the government invests to level up internet access for up to 3,000 rural primary schools, with an £82 million investment to help an estimated half a million primary school children.

Now the contract in Dorset has been awarded, the government will work with Wessex Internet and the local authority to begin planning the construction of the gigabit-capable network, with spades set to enter the ground in the coming weeks.

Today's news follows the announcement of plans to connect more than 2,600 hard-to-reach premises in Scotland to gigabit speeds as part of a £36 million investment with the Scottish Government. The expansion of the R100 network includes a £16 million boost from Project Gigabit.

The latest Project Gigabit quarterly update from Building Digital UK (BDUK), an Executive Agency of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, details the progress being made to roll out gigabit broadband across the UK and will be published later this week.

Hector Gibson Fleming, CEO of Wessex Internet, said:

"We're thrilled to have been awarded the first contract under the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit programme.

"As a business based in North Dorset, our priority has always been to bring fast, reliable broadband to rural communities overlooked by other providers. We believe passionately that rural areas must have access to gigabit-capable connectivity and the exciting benefits it brings for homes, businesses and communities.

"Over the last four years, we have connected thousands of homes and businesses across the South West to full fibre broadband and are excited to accelerate our roll out further with this new contract."

Cllr Jill Haynes, Dorset Council's portfolio holder for Corporate Development and Transformation, said:

"This significant government investment in Dorset is great news for communities and businesses that would otherwise have been left behind as the country moves to gigabit-capable broadband.

"Good broadband connection has never been more important as we rebuild the economy after the pandemic.

"We look forward to working with Wessex Internet and the government on this exciting development in technology, which will greatly benefit some of the most rural parts of our county."

Andrew Ferguson, Editor of thinkbroadband, said:

"With seven out of 10 premises now able to order a gigabit option and over half of those are actually future proof full fibre shows that the UK broadband market is generally delivering on its rollout targets.

"Of course at a time when many people are looking for savings on their household bills buying a gigabit service is going to seem a luxury but one of the advantages of full fibre is you can enjoy the improved reliability even

when buying the entry level services and even an entry level Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) product will be faster than an old partial fibre service where speeds are impacted by distance to the cabinet.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The Project Gigabit Summer Update includes details of the positive impact of the government’s broadband voucher scheme on businesses and communities.
- The current £210 million government [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) (GBVS) provides a grant of up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband networks in communities. It enables households and businesses to club together to increase the total subsidy of a project to cover most or all of the costs for installation to eligible areas. To date, more than 110,000 premises are now able to access a gigabit-capable broadband connection thanks to this scheme.
- The Summer Update also highlights the results of a recent BDUK survey of over 1,700 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that had received gigabit-capable broadband through the government’s broadband voucher schemes between 2017 and 2021. More than 80% of the SMEs surveyed reported an increase in productivity as a result of their upgraded connection, with the majority using improved connectivity to access digital tools such as cloud storage, video conferencing, high volume file data transfer and accounting services.
- Around 40% of businesses also reported that they were able to reduce business travel and gain new customers as a result of the connection, and nearly half are adopting more flexible working and business practices.
- Critically, 70% of businesses say the upgrade helped them to adapt and continue to do business during the pandemic.