

Iain Coucher announced as new Ofwat Chair

Press release

He will take up the post as Chair of the independent economic regulator of water services in England and Wales on 1 July 2022



Iain Coucher has today (11 May) been named as the new Chair of Ofwat, the independent economic regulator of water services in England and Wales.

He will take up the post on 1 July 2022 for a term of four years and will succeed Jonson Cox, who has agreed to extend his tenure as Chair of Ofwat until 30 June 2022.

Mr Coucher has been appointed following a rigorous process conducted in accordance with the Ministerial Governance Code on Public Appointments. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee held a pre-appointment hearing last month and subsequently supported his suitability for the post. The Environment Secretary has since approved the appointment.

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 any declared) to be made public. Mr Coucher has not declared any significant political activity in the past five years.

Biographical details of Iain Coucher

- Iain has held a number of senior executive roles, including that of Chief Executive at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) and Network Rail.
- He has been a non-executive director for Cadent Gas plc and a Board Member for the Rail Safety and Standards Board.
- He is currently a senior adviser at HIG Capital, a leading global investment fund, as well as a Trustee of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

[Princess Astrid of Belgium talks fusion energy at UKAEA](#)

Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium discovered how fusion energy could play a key role in addressing climate change following a tour of the UK Atomic Energy Authority's world-leading science centre in Oxford.

Representative of His Majesty the King, The Princess was today able to experience a rare close-up of the Joint European Torus (JET), the largest and most powerful operating fusion energy machine in the world.

There were 12 Belgian scientists directly involved in the record-breaking fusion energy results announced earlier this year.

The tour was arranged as part of the Belgian Economic Mission, the first of its kind since Brexit and the pandemic, and raised the importance of fusion energy in delivering an environmentally responsible future energy supply.

Ian Chapman, CEO, UKAEA, said: "It was an honour to discuss the benefits of fusion energy with Her Royal Highness and the delegation from the Belgian Economic Mission. Belgium is an important partner in the global mission to achieve commercial fusion power and in ensuring the world has access to a safe, sustainable and low carbon energy supply."

Twenty-six representatives from the Belgian delegation covering officials, government, industry, academia and press, toured Culham Science Centre, including: Tinne Van Der Straeten, Minister of Energy, Willy BORSUS, Vice-President of the Walloon Government, Ambassador Dirk WOUTERS, Advisor to Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, and Bruno Van Der Pluijm, Ambassador of Belgium to the United Kingdom.

Belgium is part of the EUROfusion consortium that runs experiments using JET at UKAEA's world-leading Culham Science Centre.

Sara Moradi, Interim Head of the Fusion Science Department, EUROfusion, said: "It is good to see growing interest in fusion in my adopted country. Currently Belgium contributes to the EUROfusion programme both generally and specifically within the fields of ion cyclotron resonance heating in the JET and Wendelstein 7-X devices at ERM/KMS, and material research at SCK CEN."

The ground-breaking research being done at UKAEA with partners across the globe represents a huge opportunity for the economy.

The UK energy industry invests £13bn annually, delivers nearly £30bn in gross

value added on top of the nearly £100bn in economic activity through its supply chain and interaction with other sectors. It supports more than 700,000 jobs across the country.

Belgium ranks highly as a UK foreign trade partner. In 2021, it was the UK's seventh largest client of goods worldwide and sixth largest supplier of goods. The Belgian Economic Mission aims to increase Belgian export to the UK with HRH offering her support.

Chief Social Worker for Adults publishes annual report

- The report acknowledges the tireless work of the sector and gives thanks to key supporting stakeholders
- Priorities include supporting social care reform, training for the workforce, recovery from the pandemic and the impact on staff and people receiving care and support and their families

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Chief Social Worker (CSW) for Adults, Lyn Romeo, have published the annual CSW report. It highlights key achievements of the past year and sets out objectives for the sector as it looks ahead to 2022/23.

Key achievements in the last year include making the wellbeing of staff more central, with practitioners having better access to supervision and peer support as well as continuing professional development opportunities. Staff have also been better supported to prioritise care and meet individual needs through risk assessment tools and a decision-making framework put together by principal social workers, supported by directors of adult social services. In addition to this the ['Revisiting Safeguarding'](#) guidance has also recently been published, encouraging practitioners and those responsible for adult safeguarding to reflect on and revisit their current practice.

This year's annual report broadly summaries the CSW-led focus for the year ahead, including:

- Advising and influencing proposals for social care reform and Covid recovery, including guidance for the sector and support for staff wellbeing and further developing their digital capability
- Promoting and advising on investment in research including advising on further research for emerging issues such as the impact of and recovery from Covid, social work leadership and strengths based social work practice in working with homeless people
- Ensuring the voice of people with lived experiences is at the heart of practice and care, particularly those with mental health issues and increasing the headcount of approved mental health professionals

- To advise the Principal Social Workers Network on best practice and achieving good outcomes as well as reviewing the package of support to develop a cohort of capable and confident supervisors and leaders
- Supporting and strengthening personalisation and choice within care to achieve the outcomes that matter to them and driving for the inclusion of people with lived experiences in designing new policy and guidance
- Promoting improved practice on equality, diversity and inclusion including access to continued professional development for all social care staff

Chief Social Worker for Adults Lyn Romeo said:

I am so grateful to everyone working in the social care sector, especially for their work over the past year during the pandemic

Looking to the year ahead, we'll look to support the social care reform, the vital recovery from the pandemic and strengthen post-qualifying standards to support the workforce. As we learn to live with Covid, social work must redesign and reimagine practice alongside people, their carers and the communities they live in to be ambitious in providing the best outcomes for all.

Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:

The last two years have been a huge challenge with our brilliant social care workforce going above and beyond.

We've seen the workforce rise to the challenges of the pandemic with compassion and dedication to protect and promote people's opportunities to have the best possible lives.

Thank you to all social workers in the sector for your hard and dedicated work, we have never needed your expertise and insights more than we do now.

The report includes special thanks to stakeholders including the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), Music for Dementia, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, National Institute for Health Research, Research in Practice, Skills for Care, Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) and The Principal Social Workers' Network.

Particularly good work highlighted includes:

- the British Association of Social Workers' publication of a consistent pathway of development for social workers and their employers to ensure reliable and quality care for people with learning disabilities and for social work with autistic adults their carers
- development of guidance on how people with dementia can be supported with music therapies by Music for Dementia

- Research in Practice's continued support of the implementation of the Post Qualifying Standards for supervisors
 - Skills for Care's roundtable on anti-racist social work in partnership with Social Work England
 - The leadership impact of Principal Social Workers in supporting social workers and practice
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Biggest overhaul of state threats legislation for a generation

The Home Secretary has introduced the National Security Bill, which brings together vital new measures to protect the British public, modernise counter espionage laws and address the evolving threat to our national security.

This Bill will keep our country safe by making the UK an even harder target for those states who seek to conduct hostile acts against the UK.

It will provide new and updated tools for our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to tackle modern threats, which range from cyber-attacks and spying to interference in our economy and democracy.

This Bill will, for the first time, make it an offence to be an undeclared foreign spy in the UK and introduce a new foreign interference offence to disrupt illegitimate influence activity done for, or on behalf of, a foreign state.

A new sabotage offence will be introduced to provide greater scope to respond to new tactics and technology, such as the use of drones and cyber attacks. It will address the serious threat from state-backed attacks on sites, data, and infrastructure critical to the UK's safety or interests.

This Bill will also criminalise acts which are committed in preparation for state threats offences, meaning that the perpetrators can be disrupted before serious damage is done and it will allow the courts to hand down significantly longer sentences for foreign state backed crimes.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel said:

The British public should be in no doubt of my determination to keep them and our country safe from those who would seek to do us harm.

The threat of hostile activity from states targeting our democracy, economy and the values we hold dear is real and ever-evolving – which is why the modernising measures included in the National Security Bill are so essential.

These tougher laws and more powerful tools for our world class police and intelligence agencies, will be critical to help those on the front line deal with the threats we are constantly facing.

MI5 Director General, Ken McCallum said:

The UK is in a contest with states who are trying to undermine our national security and democratic institutions.

Laws designed to deal with wartime espionage have not kept pace with the threats MI5 is now tackling. State actors are stealing not only national security secrets, but our cutting-edge science, research and technology. They are attempting to interfere covertly with our democracy, economy and society. We see coercion and, at the extreme, direct threats to life.

The laws of the past continue to serve us against 'traditional' espionage. It must be right that Parliament looks at modernising the powers the State has to protect us all from the full range of today's threats.

This National Security Bill will replace existing espionage laws which were primarily designed to counter the threat from spies during the First World War. It will create a modern set of offences to apprehend and enable prosecution of people not captured by existing legislation, and increase existing maximum sentences. This will protect the UK from those who conduct espionage, disclose sensitive information and trade secrets to foreign states and otherwise assist foreign intelligence services.

While the core of the Bill focuses on countering hostile activity from foreign states, it will also include reforms to restrict the access of convicted terrorists to civil legal aid. Reforms to civil claims will prevent public funds from being given to those who could use it to support terror.

This Bill will introduce a Foreign Influence Registration Scheme, requiring individuals to register certain arrangements with foreign governments, to help combat damaging or hostile influence being exerted by foreign states in the UK. These laws will apply to threats from any state which would do the UK or its citizens harm, recognising that the threat we face today is growing, diversifying and evolving.

The National Security Bill, formerly known as the Counter State Threats Bill, will be introduced to Parliament today, with its further stages as parliamentary time allows.

Proposed measures included in the Bill will:

- reform existing espionage laws
- introduce new offences to tackle:
 - state-backed sabotage

- foreign interference
 - the theft of trade secrets
 - assisting a foreign intelligence service (e.g. by being a covert foreign spy)
 - create a foreign influence registration scheme, (FIRS). This will bring us in line with our allies in Australia and the United States by creating a scheme requiring individuals to register certain arrangements with foreign governments
 - enhance police powers to support the investigation of state threats activity to enable the police to obtain evidence of espionage activities
 - reform existing prohibited places provisions to protect the UK's most sensitive sites
 - provide powers to allow state threats to be tackled at an early stage and for other offences that are committed where there is a state link to be sentenced accordingly
 - introduce a new suite of State Threat Prevention and Investigation Measures (STPIMs) to use as a tool of last resort to manage those who pose a threat but who cannot be prosecuted
 - also include measures to restrict the ability of convicted terrorists to receive civil legal aid and prevent the exploitation of our civil damage systems by convicted terrorists
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