



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Infrastructure  
and Projects  
Authority

To: **Edward Barker**, Senior Responsible Owner for the Nature for Climate Fund (NCF) Programme

From: **Tamara Finkelstein**, Permanent Secretary of Defra and

Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority

**11<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

Dear Edward,

## **APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE NATURE FOR CLIMATE FUND (NCF) PROGRAMME**

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Nature for Climate Fund (NCF) Programme with effect from 1 April 2020. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

As SRO, you are directly accountable to Director General of ERM (Environment, Rural and Marine), under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary as accounting officer for DEFRA, and George Eustice, Secretary of State.

Your programme forms part of the Nature for Climate Fund Programme, under the oversight of the Chair of the Defra Executive Committee and is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the Nature for Climate Fund Programme and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives, policy intent and outcomes expected. This encompasses securing and protecting its vision, ensuring that it is governed responsibly, reported on honestly, escalated appropriately and influencing the context, culture, and operating environment of the programme. You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the programme and recommending its pause or termination if appropriate. Where issues arise which, you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these to Defra Executive Committee.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the project in accordance with the objectives and policy intent as set by Ministers.

In addition to your internal accountabilities, SROs for GMPP projects and programmes are personally accountable to Parliamentary Select Committees. This means that, from the date of this letter, you will be held personally accountable to and could be called by Select Committees to account for and explain the decisions and actions you have taken to deliver the programme.

It is important to be clear that your accountability relates only to implementation, within the agreed terms in this letter; it will remain for the Minister to account for the relevant policy decisions and development.

More information on this is set out in [Giving Evidence to Select Committees - Guidance for Civil Servants](#), sometimes known as the Osmotherly Rules. Information on the roles and responsibilities of the SRO are detailed in the Infrastructure and Project Authority's guidance on [the role of the senior responsible owner](#). You should also make yourself familiar with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), the requirements of the Government Project Delivery Framework, and the guidance and requirements for project delivery as set by Defra Portfolio Office.

#### Time commitment and tenure

This role will require 50% of your time to enable effective delivery of the role and execute your responsibilities in full.

You are required to undertake this role until achievement of programme close, planned for 31 March 2025. Progress towards this will be reflected in your personal objectives. Any changes to the agreed time commitment or tenure of the role, as set out above, will require both departmental and Infrastructure and Projects Authority consent.

#### Objectives and performance criteria

The scope of the Programme Objectives is to put tree planting and peatland restoration in England on the trajectory required for the UK to meet Net-Zero and 25 Year Environment Plan Commitments by 2050. The Objectives for the Programme are as follows: -

- Increasing annual planting rates to achieve manifesto commitments for new woodland creation by March 2025.
- Sequestering CO<sub>2</sub>e in line with Environment Plan commitments by 2050 (and continuing to sequester carbon after that).
- Improving the resilience of England's woodlands.
- Restoring peatland by 2024/25 and reducing emissions from peat by 2050 in line with the manifesto and Environment Plan commitments (and continuing to abate after that).
- Contribute to the Nature Recovery Network by creating high-quality habitats that recover wildlife and provide wider environmental, social and economic benefits, including climate change mitigation.
- Improve people access to nature for the benefit of people's physical and mental health and develop visitor economies by ensuring activity close to where people live.
- Improve the future financial sustainability of woodland creation and peatland restoration by supporting the development of green finance and markets to increase private investment in these Nature Based Solutions. Support further development of private investment to pay for and support the wider ecosystem services that trees, and restored peat habitats can provide.
- Position the UK as a global leader on Nature Based Solutions to climate change, maximizing ecosystem services from tree and peat activity.

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the programme are: -

1. As SRO for the Nature for Climate Fund (a GMPP programme) ensure the fund's £766m budget and resource is deployed effectively and efficiently to achieve the programme's objectives by 2025.
2. Provide overall leadership, decision making and strategic direction. Ensure the strategic direction remains aligned with any changes in political or business priorities.
3. Agree and own the programme vision and success criteria with the Programme Director(s) who you will appoint, advise, coach and provide strategic direction.

4. Establish an appropriate Governance structure, appoint a qualified Board to deliver the Programme and Chair the Board.
5. Maintain positive engagement with all stakeholders and the Ministerial team to support activities linked to programme delivery.
6. Own the business case, assure on-going viability, and ensure benefits tracking processes are established. Refer any significant concerns about feasibility, value for money, regularity or propriety to the AO (Accounting Office).

You are expected to run your programme in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), the other [Functional Standards](#) as applicable to this programme and the requirements of the Government Project Delivery Framework.

## **Extent and limit of accountability**

### Finance and Controls

HM Treasury spending controls will apply on the basis set out within the department's delegated authority letter. Where the programme exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury, the Treasury Approval Point process will apply, and the details of each approval process must be agreed with your HM Treasury spending team. You should consult departmental finance colleagues on how to go about this.

You should note that where expenditure is considered novel, contentious, repercussive, or likely to result in costs to other parts of the public sector, HM Treasury approval will be required, regardless of whether the programme expenditure exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury. If in doubt about whether approval is required you should, in the first instance, consult departmental finance colleagues before raising with the relevant HM Treasury spending team.

The overall estimated budget, resourcing requirements and tolerances for your project/programme will be agreed as part of the approval process. You will be expected to deliver within these tolerances and report quarterly on these as part of GMPP reporting.

You should operate at all times within the rules set out in [Managing Public Money](#). In addition, you must be mindful of, and act in accordance with, the specific HM Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to the Nature for Climate Fund Programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

### Delegated authority

- As the SRO for the Nature for Climate Fund (NCF) Programme you are authorised to commit resources within the current approved expenditure figure for the Whole Life Cost of the Programme which is £766 million. Elements of the budget which have been delegated to Defra's Arm's Length Bodies to deliver the programme are included.
- This includes RDEL and CDEL over the lifetime of the Programme. Future approved expenditure will be set as part of the department's financial control and governance processes.

## **Appointments**

You should appoint a full-time programme director to support you in the management of this programme and make other appointments as required for the control and delivery of your programme within your delegated authority.

## **Governance and assurance**

You should pay attention to ensuring effective governance for your programme, including the establishment of a programme board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the programme secures business case approval from the Defra Investment Committee including CO and HMT. You should also ensure that the programme remains aligned to the strategic outcomes, costs, timescales, and benefits in line with the approved business case as well as monitoring the context within which the programme is being delivered to ensure it remains valid.

Where a change impacts the scope, costs, benefits, or planned delivery milestones agreed as part of an agreed business case, you are responsible for following the agreed change request approval process and setting a new, approved, business case baseline.

You should ensure that an accounting officer assessment is completed alongside the approval of the Outline Business Case and that this is published on GOV.UK as part of the government's transparency requirements on major projects. You are responsible for bringing to the attention of the accounting officer any material changes in the programme which could require a new accounting officer assessment to be completed and published. [Guidance on completing accounting officer assessments](#) for major projects is available from HM Treasury.

Although you are directly accountable for this programme, you are also expected to support delivery of the department's overall strategic objectives. This means that you are expected to work collaboratively with other SROs and project directors in adjacent projects and programmes and with the Defra portfolio management office and portfolio director to manage dependencies, resources, schedules, and funding to support delivery of the overall change the department needs to achieve its strategic objectives.

You should ensure that appropriate and proportionate assurance is in place and agree on the level and frequency of assurance reviews through the maintenance of an integrated assurance and approvals plan. You should develop this plan and its maintenance in collaboration with the Departmental Assurance Coordinator and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

## **Programme status, reporting and transparency requirements**

The programme status at the date of your appointment is reflected in the most recent quarterly return on the programme to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and is the agreed position as you assume formal ownership of the programme.

You are responsible for ensuring the honest and timely reporting on the position of the programme to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority while it remains on the GMPP and for providing reports and information to the Defra portfolio management office as required. Information on the programme will be published annually by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

As the SRO of a programme that is within scope of the cross-government Net Zero Portfolio you are additionally required to report into the Net Zero and Climate Change governance structure, specifically reporting into the Net Zero National Security Implementation Group Sub-Group and the Climate Action Implementation Committee.

As part of the government's commitment to transparency on major infrastructure projects, you are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK:

- A summary of the accounting officer assessment completed in line with the approval of the Programme Business Case and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required.

- A summary of the HM Treasury approved Programme Business Case; and
- A close out report after the programme has completed

## Development and support

As SRO of a GMPP programme, you are required to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy, and you have agreed to enrol on cohort 30D. The Head of Profession in DEFRA can provide further information on the application process.

To widen experience and understanding of the role, SROs are also expected to become accredited assurance reviewers and to lead or participate in such reviews for other government departments, the wider public sector, and other areas of DEFRA as appropriate. Becoming an assurance reviewer and completing a review will form part of your time at the Major Projects Leadership Academy. To maintain your accreditation, you will be required to participate in a review at least once every 12 months.

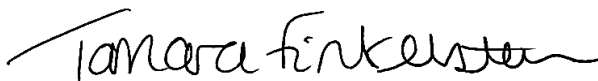
The department will assist you in securing the necessary resources to support the programme, and will set clear guidance, requirements and standards, which align to the [Government Functional Standard on Project Delivery](#), to enable good governance and effective delivery. You will be part of the department's cohort of major project leaders who will be expected to support each other, share good practice and lessons learned and to collectively develop solutions. You should liaise with the department's Head of Profession for project delivery to discuss the maintenance and development of your delivery and leadership skills.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority will be available to you for support, advice, and assurance throughout the programme's time on the GMPP.

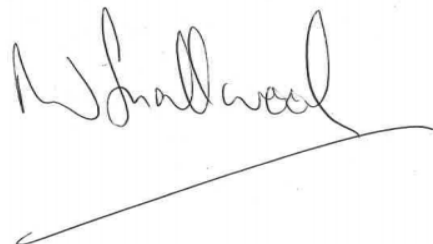
Following approval of the business case and entry onto the Defra Portfolio, the Defra Executive Committee will provide ongoing oversight and support and will take steps to help resolve and escalate risks, issues or constraints that are acting as a blocker to successful delivery.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in your role as SRO.

Yours sincerely,



**TAMARA FINKELSTEIN**



**NICK SMALLWOOD**

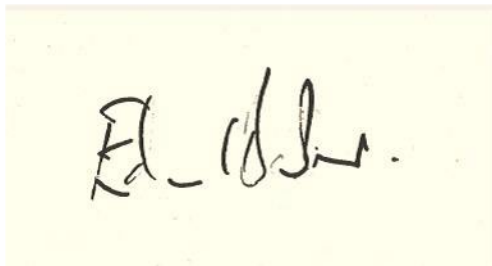
Permanent Secretary, DEFRA

Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure and  
Projects Authority

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## **CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT**

I confirm that I accept the appointment of Senior Responsible Owner for the programme, including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature appears to be 'Ed Barker'.

**EDWARD BARKER**

Director, Natural Environment, Trees & Landscapes

11/04/2022