

# News story: Professor Piers Forster joins Committee on Climate Change

Professor Piers Forster has been appointed to the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) by the Minister for Energy and Clean Growth, Claire Perry MP, and the devolved administrations.

Professor Forster is Director of the [Priestley International Centre for Climate](#) and Professor of Physical Climate Change at the University of Leeds. He takes up the post of climate scientist on the Committee for a 5 year term.

Piers has played a significant role authoring Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, and currently has a coordinating lead author role for the [IPCC sixth assessment report](#). As well as his research career, he established the forest protection and research charity, the [United Bank of Carbon](#) and has a number of roles advising industry, including membership of the [Rolls Royce Environment Advisory Board](#).

Professor Forster replaces founding Committee member, Sir Brian Hoskins, who recently stood down after 10 years of service.

Commenting on his appointment, Professor Forster said:

Sir Brian taught me as a PhD student and is someone I have huge respect for. I am humbled to be following in his footsteps. I am thrilled to be taking up this post on the 10th anniversary of the UK's Climate Change Act. The Act and the Committee have done a great job in helping the UK establish itself as a world leader in reducing emissions. However, the challenging 'teenage years' are just around the corner and the Committee has some important work to do on long-term targets and evidence based solutions that, if we get it right, will help the transition to a zero-carbon UK.

Although climate change is a global problem, many of its solutions need to be implemented at a local level, and I am keen to learn best practice from the cities, rural communities and businesses of the UK. I can't wait to roll up my sleeves and get started!

Chairman of the Committee on Climate Change, Lord Deben, said:

I am absolutely delighted to welcome Professor Piers Forster to the Committee. His long-standing experience in climate research and analysis – including at the very highest levels of the IPCC – will be extremely valuable, particularly as we prepare to deliver a major report to Government reassessing the UK's long-term climate change targets.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Sir Brian Hoskins for his dedicated and exemplary service. For over a decade, Sir Brian has ensured the CCC's recommendations to government are firmly rooted in the latest scientific research and evidence. Brian's knowledge and insight have been pivotal to the Committee's success since it began work 10 years ago.

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## [Speech: Digital Court Reform](#) [Conference: David Gauke speech](#)

The Secretary of State for Justice spoke at the first international forum on online court services.

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It's a real pleasure to be here today at this first international forum on online court services.

It's really energising to have the key players from around the world together in one place to spark off one another. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank both HM Courts & Tribunals Service and the Society for Computers and Law for organising the forum and DLA Piper for hosting us in this fantastic setting. I know this is going to be a really successful event and I hope – as the world continues to change so rapidly – that it is just the beginning of a collaborative approach on this in the future.

As technology revolutionises our lives, it is imperative not just that our justice systems keep pace – but that they actively seek to make the most of opportunities to build on the enduring principles of justice, using new ways of doing things which can be better than what has gone before at putting people first, and building the system around them.

Here in Britain with our world-renowned court system and world-class judiciary, we realise that responding to the rapid changes taking place globally will be crucial to maintaining that reputation for excellence. That's why we are undertaking a 6-year programme of reform to our courts and tribunals – one that utilises the new technology available to us and modern ways of working.

One of the great strengths of the English system of common law is that it can change and adapt with the times. Our system is steeped in history and tradition; but we know that the law needs to keep pace with the society it serves.

However, changing the law through gradual accretion can make it more and more complex; and we have laid those layers on a fundamental system that hasn't changed very much at all. Our court practices and procedures are complex, with civil rules that run to thousands of pages. And we rely too much on lengthy paper-based processes and face-to-face hearings even for simple matters. The system can often look like a secret garden designed by experts. Of course, all that complexity is not very efficient. But there is a much more powerful reason to do things differently.

Complexity – and that sense of the system as a secret garden – puts people off from pursuing justice through our courts. The court system should be a leveller; a mechanism by which everyone – regardless of their wealth or status – can enforce their rights against another party. We need to recognise the transformation that can be brought about by thinking first about how we can simplify, streamline, and put the citizen in the driving seat. Technology – never an end in itself – is a means to that end.

This will allow us to open up our justice system, make it more accessible, and put power back into the hands of the people using it...

... including simpler, faster routes to resolving disputes that are clear and easy to use – recognising that people often want their problem solved rapidly and satisfactorily more than they want their 'day in court';

... removing the unnecessary costs of complexity, duplication, error and waste – so that people are not priced out of justice; and – for example – that lawyers are paid and used for their legal advice and skill, not simply to navigate the system;

... and with easily accessible data and information – so that everyone can make informed decisions, and we can harness the power of big data in support of justice.

Transforming the justice system in this way doesn't just mean better outcomes for individuals. It can also create a society that is inherently fairer – building trust to assure people that the system protects them and works in their interests; making it worth sorting and settling even small wrongs; and in turn, discouraging those who might otherwise prey on the people who are at present least likely to know how to exercise and enforce their rights.

In building its digital services, some of which Richard touched on earlier during his presentation, the UK has drawn on the experience of our global partners, many of whom are in the room today. This can be seen in our development of online small claims, in which we have been able to create a new online court for the resolution of civil, family, and tribunal cases. We have used the experience of our counterparts to create a user-centred system that offers quick but fair outcomes to disputes and new routes to justice.

This means fewer hearings, more mediation, simpler processes and a lot less paperwork – making it much less daunting for individuals and much more difficult to manipulate for those with enhanced financial resources. And we are already seeing encouraging evidence of high take up of online court services and more engaged users.

One example of this is users now being able to challenge rogue traders or businesses over shoddy workmanship or defective products via our online civil money claims system simply by clicking a button. Though in its early stages of rollout, the feedback we have received on this system shows that users overwhelmingly find it quick and easy to navigate.

Over the coming 18 months we will continue learning from many of you here today – so that we can not only expand the service but add to it.

Before concluding I will briefly touch on our legal services sector and the huge contribution that legal professionals make to our nation. The UK legal services sector is worth an estimated £24 billion every year and its wider impact in facilitating trade and giving confidence to businesses is probably inestimable.

However, if our legal services sector is to meet the expectations of consumers, it can't stand still. It needs to continue to change and embrace the technological revolution to respond to the way people expect to be able to access legal services.

That's why we are working to foster innovation in the sector and create an environment that enables the UK's fledgling LawTech industry to thrive. The use of automation tools, early stage artificial intelligence systems and smart contracts is enabling firms to reduce their costs, scale economies and use their workforces more efficiently. This means they can spend more time doing what they do best – giving their clients top-quality legal advice.

The government is already helping UK firms to take better advantage of technology – in funding specific projects such as the Next Generation Services Fund, which recently awarded approximately £2 million for research on how the legal sector can adopt new technologies and artificial intelligence to boost productivity.

We have also established a government supported, sector-led LawTech Delivery Panel, which brings together professionals with the expertise and experience to drive LawTech innovation forward and support it to reach its true potential.

Our ambition is to create an environment where innovation in the legal sector is the norm – so that LawTech can thrive much the way that FinTech has radically transformed the financial sector to meet consumers heightened expectations.

Ultimately, all of us here today have made the same realisation – that our jurisdictions must move with the times if they are going to, not just survive, but thrive in the digital age, while at the same time opening up

justice so that it works better for everyone.

We all know that the technological revolution is a global one and our future success will hinge on how we respond to it.

By continuing to work together and sharing our experiences, we can pool our collective expertise to our mutual benefit and, in doing so, we can ensure all our justice systems flourish.

I know my team of officials here at the conference are keen to learn from you and I hope each and every one of you is able to take something away from it. What's more, I hope that this event is the first step towards a much more deliberate and determined collaborative enterprise globally on the way justice is done in the future. Thank you.

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## [Press release: Pensions dashboards to enable more informed retirement planning](#)

Pioneering proposals to give millions of people their pension facts and figures at their fingertips have been unveiled by the government today (3 December).

New free, user-friendly 'pensions dashboards' would allow people to access their information from most pension schemes in one place online for the first time.

Pensions dashboards – an idea welcomed by consumer groups and pension providers – would:

- give people accurate, easy to understand, secure information
- show people clearly how much they have in their pension pots and what they can expect to have to live on in retirement
- put people in control of when and how they check their data and who has access to it
- help people to find 'lost' pension pots

It is envisaged the first pensions dashboard will be established in 2019, with multiple dashboards to be introduced in the following years subject to the necessary consumer protection being in place.

Guy Opperman, Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion, said:

Pensions dashboards are another major milestone in our radical pension reforms, harnessing innovative technology to benefit

savers. Plain pensions information at the touch of a screen will ensure better-informed, more engaged savers and help many more people to plan effectively for retirement.

Bringing pensions information into the digital age has the potential to revolutionise the way we all think about and plan for later life. People, young and old, should have all the help they need to get ready for retirement and maximise their pension incomes and, working with industry, we will ensure they do.

Now the government is seeking views about what the new services will look like and how they will work. Consumer protection and safeguarding data will be top priorities.

Accessible pensions dashboards would help people to make informed choices and better plan for retirement. The government believes that consumers will benefit from a range of dashboards to choose from, and will work with the pensions industry to include State Pension information at some stage. Development and design of dashboards will be industry-led and facilitated by government which has committed to legislate where necessary (for example, to compel pension schemes to provide data to consumers via dashboards).

A feasibility report into pensions dashboards, which forms the starting point for consultation on a range of matters including delivery models and governance, has been published by the Department for Work and Pensions today.

Nigel Peaple, Director of Policy and Research, Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association, said:

The publication of the feasibility report is a significant step forward for the dashboard project. Pensions dashboards will be an essential tool to help savers plan for their retirement. There are a number of important questions which will need to be worked through, such as on governance, compulsion, regulation, the timetable and funding. We look forward to working with the industry, savers and the government to make a success of the dashboard.

Yvonne Braun, Director of Long-term Savings Policy at the Association of British Insurers, said:

Today, pensions dashboards start moving from rhetoric to reality. Being able to access all your pension information in a single place will transform retirement planning for millions. Dashboards will also help reunite people with an estimated £20 billion in lost pensions money. The government is right to be preparing for legislation – all pension providers and schemes need to be involved, as well as the State Pension. We've been working hard for more than 2 years with our members and partners to lay the

groundwork but there's a huge amount still to do. We're excited to get on with the next phase, and to being joined by all parts of the pension system.

Sir Hector Sants, chair of the Single Financial Guidance Body, said:

Pension dashboards will be a major step forward in helping people make the most of their money and pensions. This requires individuals to be informed, empowered and financially capable. Reflecting its mission, the Single Financial Guidance Body will welcome the opportunity to work with industry to deliver dashboards.

Jenni Allen, Managing Director, Which? Money, said:

"The government is right to recognise that pensions dashboards must work for consumers – so we welcome today's steps towards achieving what could be a game-changing improvement to the way people manage their pensions. Every dashboard must display all the important information consumers need in a clear and accessible way, allowing them to easily understand their pension savings and the costs involved. It's crucial that all schemes are included, alongside the state pension, so that savers are able to make informed decisions about their retirement savings and plan their lives accordingly."

For more information or to contribute to the consultation go to [Pensions Dashboards: Working together for the consumer](#)

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