

Press release: New appointments to the Natural Capital Committee

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove has appointed two new members to the Natural Capital Committee.

Professors Melanie Austen and Chris Collins bring their expertise in marine conservation and soil health and are appointed for the remainder of the Committee's current term, through to December 2020.

Professor Austen said:

The Natural Capital Committee has been influential in advising government on the importance of natural capital on sustainable economic growth, health and wellbeing.

I feel honoured to have been invited to join the Committee and am particularly looking forward to adding a distinctly marine perspective, and considering how implementation of the 25 year Environment Plan could improve our natural marine environment and the sustainable benefits that we gain from it.

Professor Austen is a marine ecologist and interdisciplinary marine researcher who is a Head of Science for the Sea and Society group at Plymouth Marine Laboratory. She has recently been appointed as an independent member of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC); completed a three year term as the Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK's Marine Management Organisation (MMO); and for the last twenty years has been developing and leading UK and EU funded collaborative marine research projects, including currently GCRF Blue Communities in South East Asia.

Through her interdisciplinary research she has examined and quantified the societal consequences and policy relevance of changes to the marine environment and its ecosystems. She has been an Honorary Professor at the University of Exeter medical school since 2014, a member of other Expert Advisory Groups, and has chaired an EU Marine Board expert group on ecosystem valuation.

Professor Chris Collins is Chair of Environmental Chemistry at the University of Reading, where his research focuses on determining the factors controlling exposure of biota to environmental pollution to develop the evidence base for regulators.

He is the Natural Environment Research Council Soils Coordinator, overseeing a £10 million research investment to improve our understanding of how soils resist, recover and adapt to land use and climate change. Professor Collins chairs the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee providing expert advice to the UK Government on

how to protect the environment, and human health via the environment from chemicals.

Professor Collins said:

Soils have been a bit of a Cinderella topic when compared to air and water, so to restate the commitment to manage soils sustainably by 2030 in the 25 Year Environment Plan was a major step forward. Serving on the Committee will help to ensure we develop the approaches to deliver this aspiration.

Professor Dieter Helm, Chair of the Natural Capital Committee, commented:

Melanie and Chris bring world-leading expertise. They will strengthen the Committee's ability to support implementation of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan at a vital time for the protection and enhancement of our natural environment.

Other members of the Committee include Professors Ian Bateman, Diane Coyle, Paul Leinster, Colin Mayer and Kathy Willis. Dame Georgina Mace recently left the Committee to take up a position on the Adaptation Sub Committee of the Committee on Climate Change.

Press release: Fishing licence money protecting fish from predatory birds

Local anglers at Wedgwood pools had been concerned that a number of Cormorants and Goosanders were eating the fish and leaving very little behind. The birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, so it was up to the Environment Agency to step in and protect the fish.

Last week saw the completion of 2 fish refuge 'floating islands' at Wedgwood pools, Barleston, Stoke on Trent. The islands allow fish cover from the birds, through the use of cages beneath the islands, allowing fish to swim in but not the birds.

Environment Agency Fisheries Technical Officer, Mick Buxton said:

This has been a really worthwhile project to be involved in. The Cormorants and Goosanders are having a significant impact on the recruitment of fish, so by introducing these islands, the fish have a greater opportunity to thrive.

There is a secondary benefit from the project too. The plants on the island will also help improve the water quality of the pool, because the plants feed off nutrients in the water and this reduces the risk of algal blooms.

The floating islands project was funded through the Fisheries Improvement Program, where the money is collected from anglers through rod licence sales.

An annual fishing licence costs just £30 and now lasts for 12 months from the day you buy it. Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease, restoring fish stocks through re-stocking, eradicating invasive species, and fish habitat improvements. Fishing licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing, to encourage participation in the sport and to manage a voluntary bailiff scheme.

Children under 13 fish for free. Anyone aged 13 to 16 also fish for free, but do need to have a valid Environment Agency fishing licence. Anyone over 16 must pay for an Environment Agency fishing licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England.

More information on fisheries and fishing licences, including how to buy your rod licence is available [online](#).

Press release: Call for feedback on next section of £45m York Flood Alleviation Scheme

The Environment Agency has released further details for three sections of its £45m York Flood Alleviation Scheme and is holding a public drop-in to give information and get feedback on proposals.

As well as the work the Environment Agency is doing on the Clementhorpe, New Walk and North Street sections of the £45m York Flood Alleviation Scheme, and the River Foss catchment, the Agency is developing plans for the sections that run from York Ring Road at Rawcliffe to Lendal Bridge.

This stretch is split into three sections: the ring road to Clifton Bridge; then to Scarborough Bridge; and then to Lendal Bridge.

Clifton Bridge to Scarborough Bridge

Environment Agency project manager for the work, Richard Lever, said:

The middle section of the three, Clifton Bridge to Scarborough Bridge, will be the area we will progress flood defence works first.

We are holding a drop-in so the public can view plans and give feedback on the proposals that will better protect 150 properties, the majority of which are on Almerly Terrace, Sycamore Terrace, Longfield Terrace and Bootham Terrace.

Options include raising the existing flood wall at Almerly Terrace and the embankment at the back of the schools' playing fields, as well as extending the embankment.

Plans also include upgrading the pumping capacity at Burdyke pumping station, which is situated in the middle of the open area between the two bridges. The dike is culverted from near Clifton Backies to where it enters the Ouse.

The drop in will take place at the Environment Agency's community hub on Wellington Row from 12-7pm on Wednesday (20 June).

The proposals will remain on display for a further four weeks for members of the public to provide feedback.

Ring Road to Clifton Bridge

Mr Lever said:

The section from the ring road to Clifton Bridge will be a major part of the project, better protecting 140 homes, and include raising the embankment and increasing the embankment length towards the Park & Ride, and to behind the Homestead and the YHA.

We are also investigating building a pumping station on Blue Beck, which runs into the Ouse.

We recognise that Clifton Ings and Rawcliffe Meadows are a widely used and much loved public amenity, as well as being a Site of Special Scientific Interest and includes important grasslands, the tansy beetle, bats and newts.

We are currently involved in discussions with key partners, including Natural England, Sustrans and Friends of Rawcliffe Meadows, in how we can minimise the impact on the habitat, cause the least inconvenience while work is being undertaken and maintain amenities when work is complete.

Dependent on these discussions, we are aiming to submit the planning permission for this section before the end of the year.

Scarborough Bridge to Lendal Bridge

Mr Lever said:

For the Scarborough Bridge to Lendal Bridge section we are working with partners, including Historic England, on options for flood defence improvements in Museum Gardens, which help better protect homes in the Marygate area.

This includes raising the current embankment at the bottom of Museum Gardens or looking at a flood wall running up the Marygate side of the gardens.

We are also investigating the best way to raise and improve the flood gate at the bottom of Marygate.

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