

News story: Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) chair appointments

Following a recruitment campaign for four [Regional Flood and Coastal Committee \(RFCC\)](#) posts – Anglian (Central), Anglia (Eastern), Severn and Wye and Southern – the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is pleased to announce the following four RFCC Chair appointments:

- Brian West Stewart as the Chair of the Anglian (Central) RFCC
- Paul Hayden as the Chair of the Anglian (Eastern) RFCC
- Shirel Stedman as the Chair of Severn and Wye RFCC
- Dr Martin Hurst as the Chair of Southern RFCC

Brian West Stewart's appointment runs from 2 January 2018 for three years until 1 January 2021.

The remaining appointments will run from 1 July 2018 for three years until 30 June 2021.

We have also re-appointed four RFCC Chairs for a further three years from when their current terms end on 30 June 2018:

- Eddy Poll as the Chair of Anglian (Northern) RFCC
- Vij Randeniya as the Chair of Trent RFCC
- David Jenkins as the Chair of Wessex RFCC
- Colin Mellors as the Chair of Yorkshire RFCC

Their terms will continue to run from 1 July 2018 until 30 June 2021.

All the appointments followed procedures set out in the [Ministerial Governance Code for Public Appointments](#) which came into force on 1 January 2017. There is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if significant) to be declared. None of the appointees for Anglian Central, Anglian Eastern, Severn & Wye and Southern have declared any significant political activity during the past five years.

RFCCs help to provide governance for the [Environment Agency \(EA\)](#) Flood and Coastal Erosion risk management functions and cover all flood risks that are not the responsibility of the water companies.

They have three main purposes:

- to ensure there are coherent plans for identifying, communicating and managing flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines
- to promote efficient, targeted and risk-based investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management that optimises value for money and benefits for local communities
- to provide a link between the EA, Lead Local Flood Authorities, other risk management authorities, and other relevant bodies to engender

mutual understanding of flood and coastal erosion risks in its area

All Chair posts attract a remuneration currently set at £17,503 for a commitment of five days per month.

Background details of the four appointed RFCC Chairs for Anglian Central, Anglian Eastern, Severn & Wye and Southern are as follows:

ANGLIAN (CENTRAL) RFCC

Brian Stewart OBE is now a portfolio non-executive director and consultant, following an executive career in local and regional government. From 2000 to 2010 he was the Chief Executive of the East of England Regional Assembly. He now sits on the main Board of Clarion Housing Group and is Vice Chair of its subsidiary stock holding Housing Association. He also chairs the Sizewell C Community Forum, sits on the HS2 Need to Sell Scheme Panel and is Vice Chair of Ormiston Families; a major East Anglian children's charity.

ANGLIAN (EASTERN) RFCC

Paul Hayden has been the Chair of the Anglian (Eastern) RFCC since its inception in 2011, working with stakeholders to maximise the opportunities for local decision-making and partnership working. He is a disaster risk reduction and management specialist by background, with 38 years' experience including 15 years working at an international level where he has specialised in natural hazards and climate change related projects. He led national coordination of rescue responses during the 2007 floods and subsequently sat on the Cabinet Committee formed to oversee implementation of the "Pitt Review" recommendations. He was also appointed by Defra to boards responsible for establishment of the Flood Forecasting Centre and delivery of the Flood Rescue National Enhancement Project. In addition to his RFCC and consultancy roles, Paul is a Non-Executive Director of the UK's Natural Environment Research Council, (NERC). He is a contributory author to the World Handbook on Drowning, and is a visiting lecturer at University College London and University of Mauritius. He was appointed as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year 2018 Honours list and was awarded the Queens Fire Service Medal in the New Year 2010 Honours List. He has an MA in Management and Public Administration, and an MSc in Fire Command and Disaster Management.

SEVERN AND WYE RFCC

Shirel Stedman is currently the Director of Advisory Group, Water Europe at Royal HaskoningDHV providing strategic direction and driving commercial acumen to the group. Early in Shirel's career, she trained as a paramedic in the Army establishing core values of collaboration and compassion. Shirel is a leading Civil Engineer within the UK water industry, and has a reputation that has been established over 25 years in this sector. Shirel first joined the Midlands Regional Flood and Defence Committee (RFDC) in 2008 and has continuously served until the present day. She was the Director of Central and Local Government Partnerships at AECOM, responsible for forming teams of technical, managerial and business development staff for a variety of short-

term projects for a range of clients and sectors. Shirel has significant experience within the Midlands and was a Project Director for key Midlands region flood alleviation schemes. Between 2006 and 2009, she worked as a Resources Director at Halcrow and was responsible for over 500 staff. During this time she won a commendation from South Derbyshire MP Mark Todd for her work with communities on the River Dove Strategy. Shirel has been a board member of Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management and was appointed as the institutions first Managing Director in January 2016. Shirel is a member of the Engineering Council, the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management.

SOUTHERN RFCC

Dr Martin Hurst had a long career as a senior civil servant and professional economist, including as environment, housing and planning advisor in Number 10, and Flood and Water Director in Defra – in which he played a leading role in the government’s response to the 2007 floods and the subsequent Pitt review and Flood and Water Management Act 2010. He has wide voluntary sector experience – as trustee and non-executive director – over the past 15 years – and he has a track record of working with the water industry and with local government. Martin is currently chair of finance and treasury for two large housing associations, a visiting lecturer on major infrastructure appraisal at University College London, and has a number of water and housing related trustee, corporate finance advisor and consumer champion roles.

[Press release: World-leading microbeads ban takes effect](#)

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A ban on the manufacture of products containing microbeads has come into force today – a landmark step in the introduction of one of the world’s toughest bans on these harmful pieces of plastic.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has announced that manufacturers of cosmetics and personal care products will no longer be able to add tiny pieces of plastic known as ‘microbeads’ to rinse-off products such as face scrubs, toothpastes and shower gels.

These damaging beads can cause serious harm to marine life, but the UK’s ban – praised by campaigners as one of the toughest in the world – will help to stop billions of microbeads ending up in the ocean every year. Alongside the success of the government’s 5p plastic bag charge – which has taken nine billion bags out of circulation – the ban puts the UK at the forefront of international efforts to crack down on plastic pollution.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

The world's seas and oceans are some of our most valuable natural assets and I am determined we act now to tackle the plastic that devastates our precious marine life.

Microbeads are entirely unnecessary when there are so many natural alternatives available, and I am delighted that from today cosmetics manufacturers will no longer be able to add this harmful plastic to their rinse-off products.

Now we have reached this important milestone, we will explore how we can build on our world-leading ban and tackle other forms of plastic waste.

Dilyana Mihaylova, Marine Plastics Projects Manager at Fauna & Flora International, said:

Fauna & Flora International has been working to address the issue of plastic microbead pollution since 2009, and we are delighted that the Government took such a clear stand on this issue and that a robust UK microbeads ban comes into force today.

We hope this ban signals the dawn of a new era in the fight for cleaner, healthier oceans, with the UK leading the way and supporting other countries to ensure that plastic will no longer reach the environment.

Dr Sue Kinsey, Senior Pollution Officer at the Marine Conservation Society, said:

We are delighted that such a robust microbead ban has come into force. This is the strongest and most comprehensive ban to be enacted in the world and will help to stem the flow of microplastics into our oceans.

We believe that this signals a real commitment on the part of this Government to clean up our seas and beaches and hope this is a first step on this road before we see further actions to combat plastic waste.

Today's announcement comes ahead of the government's upcoming 25 Year Environment Plan, which will set out how we will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it and create clean, healthy and productive oceans.

A ban on the sale of products containing microbeads will follow later in the year.

Press release: Statement by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Karen Bradley

It is a great honour to be asked to serve as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, particularly at such a decisive moment for Northern Ireland and the whole United Kingdom. I would like to pay the warmest tribute to my predecessor and friend, James Brokenshire, who did such an outstanding job. I wish him all the very best for his medical treatment and for a speedy recovery.

Northern Ireland is a very special part of our United Kingdom and has huge potential. A key part of my role will be to help build a Northern Ireland that is fit for the future and works for everyone. In seeking to achieve that I want to work closely with all parties, the Irish government as appropriate, and with all sections of the community. Be assured the UK Government remains fully committed to the Belfast Agreement, its principles and institutions.

Clearly, there are immediate challenges. It is now a year since Northern Ireland has had an effective, functioning power-sharing administration, and forming a Northern Ireland Executive, to deliver for the benefit of all, is my top priority. I believe a devolved government in Belfast is best placed to address these issues and take the key decisions which affect people's day to day lives – whether these relate to the economy, public services or issues of policing and justice.

We must also continue the work to deliver a Brexit that recognises Northern Ireland's unique circumstances and avoids a hard border on the island of Ireland while maintaining the economic and constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom.

Alongside these issues, I am conscious of the need to establish a stronger economy and a shared society, to address the legacy of the past and to keep people safe and secure.

In the coming days, I look forward to meeting many different people, parties and other groups as I take on this hugely important and exciting role in the Prime Minister's Government.

[News story: Government renews focus on housing with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)

Following the appointment of Rt Hon. Sajid Javid MP as the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the department will be renamed as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Building the homes our country needs is an absolute priority for this government and so I'm delighted the Prime Minister has asked me to serve in this role. The name change for the department reflects this government's renewed focus to deliver more homes and build strong communities across England.

Further ministerial appointments will be confirmed in due course by the Prime Minister.

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[News story: The Third United Kingdom-Thailand Strategic Dialogue](#)

1. The third session of the United Kingdom-Thailand Strategic Dialogue was held at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok, on 3 January 2018. The session was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and The Rt. Hon. Mark Field MP, Minister for Asia and the Pacific at the British Foreign and

Commonwealth Office.

2. The Strategic Dialogue was established in 2012 and designed to be a high-level forum for regular consultations between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Thailand on areas of bilateral collaboration as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest, in view of the ever-growing strategic partnership between the two countries. The inaugural session of the Strategic Dialogue took place on 20 May 2013 in Bangkok.
3. The two sides welcomed this continued high level engagement and again recognised the strength and strategic importance of the UK/Thailand bilateral relationship, especially in international trade, finance and investment; education; science and innovation; security and defence relations; political engagement; and consular cooperation. They welcomed the bilateral cooperation across the board, and discussed ways to deepen and strengthen this work especially as high level contacts have resumed following the EU FAC's Conclusions on 11 December 2017. Both sides noted the intention to exchange visits at the highest level.
4. The trading partnership between Thailand and the United Kingdom is strong. Thailand continues to be one of the UK's largest trading partners in ASEAN. Thailand and the UK committed to working together to ensure trade between our countries faces as few barriers as possible taking into account the Thai-UK Business Leadership Council's recommendations on market access barriers.
5. Both sides recognised the need to forge even closer relations to improve upon the existing bilateral trade relationship to maintain dynamism of economic cooperation and prepare our future trade relations in the Post-Brexit environment. Thailand hoped that the current poultry quota would not be affected after Brexit.
6. The UK is a leading investor in Thailand. Likewise, Thailand is an emerging investor in the UK. Both delegations looked forward to working together to support the implementation of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) and Thailand 4.0. The UK side welcomed the opportunities that this presents and will work closely with British companies to highlight the area for investment.
7. The UK and Thailand welcomed the initiative to focus bilateral cooperation in three sectors where both countries share potential and mutual interests, namely, Aerospace, FinTech, and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).
8. Recognising the importance of people-to-people contacts, the two sides welcomed the continuation of the UK-Thailand Consular Dialogue, which will be held on 19 February 2018. This is an important and productive set of discussions that brings real benefits to the safeguarding of British visitors

in Thailand and Thai nationals in the UK.

9. This year, the discussion will focus on Immigration and Documentary Services and their streamlining so as to provide an effective and efficient service to our respective nationals. The two sides will also discuss ever closer cooperation on tourist safety issues and on prison matters for those of our nationals which are detained, and also explore the possibility of foreign embassies conducting same-sex marriages in Thailand. Finally, both sides look forward to talks on how to improve and support to victims and how child and adult safe-guarding.
10. The delegations continued discussions on visa procedures with a view to facilitating mobility and travel for tourists, students, skilled labour and residents in both directions while recognising the need to prevent abuses. Thailand reiterated the proposal for a bilateral agreement on visa exemption for holders of diplomatic passports.
11. The two delegations noted the importance of education and the English language in supporting economic growth and the emerging ASEAN Community. Both sides commended the notable progress made under the Thai-UK MoU on Education Partnership, signed in April 2016, under which more than 6,000 Thai teachers were trained and another 13,500 teachers are targeted. Both sides agreed to further coordinate to elevate our partnership to the national scale as this would contribute to Thailand 4.0. In this connection, the Thai side invited the UK to explore the opportunity of investment in education offered in the EEC.
12. Thailand and the UK were pleased with the continued success of the Newton UK-Thailand Research and Innovation Partnership. This programme supports excellent scientific collaboration between research organisations from both countries, including joint research on health and agriculture. Both sides recognised the mutual importance and significance of this. Both sides agreed to continue to look for opportunities to enhance science collaboration further in both directions, including to stimulate business potential and start-ups. The UK noted Thailand's wish to continue cooperation under the Newton Fund.
13. The two sides welcomed the range of areas of cooperation on law enforcement and expressed hope that the MoU on Combating Transnational Crime and Police Cooperation would soon be signed to provide an overarching framework to strengthen internal law enforcement cooperation in combating organised transnational crime.
14. Recognising the warmth and depth of the defence relationship, both sides welcomed the increasing military activity levels and looked forward to even greater interaction. The meeting between Defence Ministers in the UK was a notable success and Exercise PANTHER GOLD 17, held in Thailand, delivered a

major step forward in interoperability training. It was noted that this was likely to become a regular event in future years. Along with exchange visits, the education and training of officers in each other's military academies would continue to be a significant pillar of defence engagement.

15. Both sides agreed to coordinate with authorities concerned to expedite the signing of pending MoUs including the defence related MoU on Logistic and Material Cooperation and MoU on Combating Transnational Crime and Police Cooperation; and Cooperation in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation.
16. The two delegations exchanged views on political developments in Thailand and UK. The meeting discussed the opportunities that the UK's departure from the EU represented and welcomed the progress towards general election in Thailand scheduled for the end of this year following the necessary legal enactment.
17. Both sides recognised that the upholding of the rule of law; the protection and enhancement of human rights and democratic values; and an active and strong civil society are key to stable, inclusive, open, and prosperous society. The two sides agreed on the importance of adhering to international legal obligations.
18. Recognising both sides strong positions on the international scene, Thailand and the UK expressed their resolve to take a lead on global issues in order to promote peace, security, and stability.
19. The UK and Thailand discussed international collaboration in combating the illegal wildlife trade. The UK invited Thailand to send a high level representative to the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in October 2018.
20. The meeting noted the importance of maintaining regional stability and order and agreed to further exchange views on global and regional issues including climate change, North Korea, Rakhine State, reform of the UN, Modern Day Slavery, Business and human rights, and developments in ASEAN.
21. It was agreed that the United Kingdom would host the fourth session of the Strategic Dialogue.