

# New chair to lead task force on sustainable farming of peatlands

Robert Caudwell has been announced as the Chair of the Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force – a group tasked with improving the condition of England's farmed lowland peat.

Robert, who currently chairs the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA), will explore how lowland agricultural peatlands can be better managed to safeguard productive agriculture as well as contributing to the government's net zero by 2050 target. The Task Force will be a key component of the government's forthcoming England Peat Strategy.

Today's announcement coincides with World Soil Day, a [UN-led campaign](#) to raise awareness about the importance of healthy soil and the role it plays in our society.

Lowland peatlands provide some of the country's most fertile soils, which play a vital role in producing food for our nation. Centuries of draining these areas to support intensive agriculture have led to degraded peat soils, which emit more than 9 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year – [the highest emissions of all peatlands in England](#).

Robert Caudwell, Chair of the Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force, said:

Climate change is posing new pressures for lowland peatlands – including more frequent and intense flooding events, and prolonged periods of summer drought. Under such trying conditions, now is the time to explore how we can farm these lands more sustainably to preserve their future and protect our climate.

In the long-term we must harness innovation: exploring ways for our peatland to help us to be more resilient to flooding and drought and mitigate climate change by protecting the carbon stored in soil. The Task Force marks the start of a conversation between farmers, risk management authorities, conservationists and other key stakeholders, working with Government on a viable plan of action.

Robert will bring together key players including farmers, water management stakeholders, conservationists, academics, and government and its agencies, to co-ordinate work already underway to encourage sustainable farming of lowland peatlands and recommend new solutions. The findings of the Task Force will inform future agricultural policy.

Robert is a leading figure in water management and brings over 40 years' experience in arable and horticultural farming. Robert is uniquely placed to explore more sustainable measures, including innovative ways to re-wet farmed

peatlands, effects on flood risk, farming profits and food production, and long-term opportunities for paludiculture (wet agriculture).

The Task Force will be supported by four regional sub-groups, which will advise on the circumstances of our most extensive lowland peatlands spanning North-East, North-West, South-West and East England. The Task Force will also be supported by a sub-group composed of experts in paludiculture.

Defra will invite members to the Task Force and the four regional sub-groups over the coming month. The Task Force will meet for the first time in early 2021 and report to Government in 2022.

## **Update**

Membership of the Task Force is as follows:

- Andrea Kelly, Broads Authority
- Charles Shropshire, G's Global
- Chris Evans, UK Centre For Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH)
- Daniel Johns, Anglian Water
- Deborah Land, Natural England
- Ian Moodie, Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA)
- Julie Foley, Environment Agency
- Olly Watts, RSPB
- Philippa Arnold, National Farmers Union (NFU)
- Richard Lindsay, University of East London (UEL)
- Stephen Briggs, Innovation for Agriculture
- Colleagues from Defra and the Environment Agency

For queries or engagement, email the Task Force mailbox at [LAPTF@defra.gov.uk](mailto:LAPTF@defra.gov.uk).

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## **Seeking a deeper and broader partnership between the United Nations and African Union**

Thank you, Your Excellency, and my thanks also to Secretary-General Guterres and Chairperson Faki for their informative briefings as part of this important debate.

As the UK's Minister for Africa, I am keen to work closely with the African Union and this is a personal priority for me. In fact, I made the first overseas trip of any UK Minister after the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak when I visited the AU Commissioners in July.

The UK is investing up to \$27 million in the AU COVID-19 Response Fund to tackle COVID and save lives.

In my remarks, I will focus on three key aspects of how the UN-AU partnership can bolster the UN's fundamental purpose – that is to say, to maintain international peace and security.

Firstly, the early identification of risks to regional peace and security.

Secondly, coordinated efforts to mediate and encourage peaceful resolutions to conflict.

And thirdly, coherent support to implement peace agreements, consolidate democratic governance and build peace.

Mr President, both the UN and the AU would benefit from more integrated analysis to identify the emergence or re-emergence of conflict. We should not shy away from identifying underlying drivers of instability and conflict and having honest conversations about where we must act.

The UK is proud to support the AU's Continental Early Warning System, and I look forward to visiting the Early Warning Centre on my next trip to Addis. But accurate and timely information needs to be coupled with plans for effective and early action, and that needs to happen at state, regional or continental level. AU support to elections in Madagascar, for example, two years ago and mediation in Sudan last year were impressive examples of what the AU can do. However, in other cases, action from the AU or UN has come too late or we have not acted at all. The key to greater shared success is consistency in our approach.

Mr President, this brings me to my second point. When conflicts do emerge, the UN and the AU bring complementary skills to the table.

We are all deeply concerned by the situation in Tigray, and the immediate priorities are to secure greater humanitarian access and ensure the protection of civilians and human rights.

The UK will continue to support AU-led efforts. I urge all parties to accept credible offers of support to establish the conditions for a sustainable political solution.

This brings me to my third point, Mr President. Once conflict is brought to an end, the real work of building and sustaining peace begins.

Continued partnership between the UN and the AU is vital to see through the peace agreement in the Central African Republic, brokered through their joint efforts. The next milestone is credible, inclusive and peaceful elections later this month.

Strong cooperation is particularly important during peacekeeping transitions, as the UN or AU presence reconfigures to meet evolving conditions.

I hope the AU will be able to provide their expertise and political support

for the work of UNITAMS, helping Sudan's transition to democracy.

AU forces currently play an invaluable role in Somalia; I pay tribute to the brave men and women of AMISOM, the AU-led peace operation. Looking ahead, Somali Security Forces are now stronger but still need support. I will encourage greater work in that regard from the AU and the UN and others to ensure that the AU-led mission evolves in response to Somalia's increasing capabilities.

Predictable and sustainability in financing is an important element of the AU's ability to deploy operations like AMISOM. The United Kingdom supports, in principle, access to UN assessed contributions for future AU-led peace support operations, on a case-by-case basis and subject to certain key conditions.

Mr President, it is abundantly clear that a deeper and broader partnership between the UN and the AU is indispensable as we strive towards our shared goal of a conflict-free Africa. The UK remains committed to supporting that partnership.

Thank you.

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## **COVID-19 vaccinations and care homes: programme launch**

[unable to retrieve full-text content]A letter from the Minister for Care to local authorities, directors of adult social services and managers of care homes for older adults.

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## **The Prime Minister has reappointed Marilyn Berk and Eric Ellul as Trustees of the Wallace Collection.**

News story

Marilyn Berk and Eric Ellul have been reappointed by the Prime Minister as Trustee of the Wallace Collection for four years from 9 January 2021 – 08 January 2025.



Marilyn Berk led an internationally renowned luxury cashmere retailing business for over 30 years before retiring in 2014. She has extensive commercial and branding experience combining contemporary design with traditional craftsmanship having also steered the company to its digital platform. She has championed the preservation and promotion of the historic heritage of her flagship shop in the Burlington Arcade.

She was appointed a trustee of the Wallace Collection in 2016 and also sits on the audit and investment committees. She was appointed a trustee of the English National Ballet in 2020 and also sits on the development committee. She has worked with The Prince's Trust advising on their retail outlet and successfully mentored many of the Trust's young companies through the retail process. Her other voluntary commitments include chairing educational appeal panels and helping young victims through the criminal court system.

Eric Ellul is a Senior Advisor of The Boston Consulting Group, Chairman of Rede-Partners (pending FCA confirmation), Non-Executive Director of Cerba Healthcare and of MGroup Services. He was previously Senior Partner and Managing Director of The Boston Consulting Group, with successive roles as Global Head of Private Equity, member of the European Management Team, Managing Director of the London office and Chair of the Global Audit & Risk Committee. He worked in the London, Tokyo and Paris offices.

Eric has been a trustee of the Wallace Collection since January 2017. He chairs the Fundraising Committee, a sub-committee of the Collection's Board of Trustees. Key areas of focus for the committee have been to advise on building the Collection's endowment; on sponsorship opportunities for the new temporary exhibition gallery and programme; and on identifying donors to improve the presentation of the Collection. He is also a member of the Audit & Risk Committee.

Eric holds a general engineering degree from Ecole Centrale de Paris and an MBA from INSEAD. He is married to Virginie and is a father of three.

These roles are not remunerated. These reappointments have been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#), the process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Marilyn Berk and Eric Ellul have not declared any

activity.

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## Welsh Secretary writes to businesses about EU Transition

News story

The letter to hundreds of Welsh businesses focusses on readiness for the end of the EU Transition period.



Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart has written to hundreds of businesses across Wales about their readiness for the end of the EU Transition period.

The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020 and the end of the Transition Period – when new rules for people, businesses, travel and trade will come into effect – arrives on 31 December.

### **In the letter Mr Hart says:**

We understand the impact Covid-19 has had on businesses' ability to prepare. We know it isn't always easy to plan ahead given the daily challenges you are facing. But more and more businesses in Wales are making the preparations they need in order to be ready and, with less than a month remaining until the Transition Period ends, our ask is that you take time now to get your business ready.

Both our governments are fully committed to supporting business in Wales to prepare, and some key UK government and Welsh Government links are enclosed with this letter.

The Welsh Secretary will be jointly hosting a webinar on Thursday (10 December), 11.30am – 12.15pm, where he will talk directly to businesses in Wales about the challenges and opportunities that the end of the Transition Period presents.

[Register for the event by using this link.](#)

## **Letter to Welsh businesses on EU Readiness**

PDF, 295KB, 5 pages

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