

# Marian Spain appointed new Natural England chief executive

News story

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Marian Spain has been appointed as the new chief executive of Natural England, taking the post on a permanent basis after serving as interim chief executive since December 2018.

Natural England chair Tony Juniper said:

Marian has shown an unrivalled commitment to protect and enhance our natural environment along with excellent leadership skills.

It is so important not only for Natural England but also our environment to have someone with Marian's passion and experience to lead our teams at this vital time for conservation. She will ensure that the organisation can meet the challenge of restoring nature, which lies at the heart of the government's environmental policy, as the country recovers from the impact of coronavirus.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

I want to thank Marian for all her excellent work over the last year.

As we focus on setting environmental policy and farming support outside the European Union, Natural England has never been so important. I am looking forward to working further with Marian as we link together our wide range of initiatives to restore this nation's nature.

Natural England chief executive Marian Spain said:

It has been an honour to lead Natural England's exceptional, talented and passionate teams and I am so proud to be able to continue.

Every day our people work incredibly hard to make life in our country better. The future of Natural England is an exciting one as we build the partnerships we need to help nature thrive, so that we have a healthier planet and healthier people.

Marian Spain was appointed interim Chief Executive by the Natural England Board in November 2018, taking up the role in December that year.

She was chief executive of Plant Life as well as holding a number of senior roles with organisations in the environment sector, including the Environment Agency and Countryside Agency – a predecessor body of Natural England.

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## [260 kilos of cocaine seized by Border Force at Coquelles](#)

News story

Border Force officers at Coquelles have prevented an attempt to smuggle more than 260 kilos of cocaine into the UK in a lorry.



The seizure, which had a potential street value of around £20 million, happened on 28 April at the juxtaposed controls at Coquelles, France. Officers intercepted a lorry in the UK controlled zone at the port which was found to contain a consignment of car parts. A number of plywood boxes were

found within the load which contained more than a quarter of a tonne of cocaine.

Chris Philp, Minister for Immigration Compliance said:

This seizure has taken millions of pounds worth of cocaine out of the hands of organised criminals and off our streets.

Drugs are currency for organised gangs and are intrinsically linked to crime, violence and exploitation which is why we will do all we can to stop drug traffickers and bring them to justice.

Following the 28 April seizure the driver of the lorry, a Romanian national, was arrested on suspicion of importing Class A drugs and the investigation was passed to the National Crime Agency (NCA). The driver was later released under investigation.

NCA Dover branch commander Martin Grace said:

We know that international OCGs remain criminally active and despite the restrictions on movement brought about by coronavirus.

As a result of joint working between the NCA and our Border Force partners, attempts to smuggle significant quantities of drugs have been thwarted before creating harm to our communities in the UK.

Border Force officers use hi-tech search equipment to combat immigration crime and detect banned and restricted goods that smugglers attempt to bring into the country.

Anyone with information about activity they suspect may be linked to smuggling should call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or go to <https://www.gov.uk/report-smuggling>.

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## [Conor Burns MP resignation letter and the Prime Minister's response](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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## [GAD project helps 1,000+ pension scheme members](#)

Pensions specialists at the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) have completed a project which involved compulsorily transferring the pension benefits of more than a thousand ex-civil servants back into the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

We provided actuarial advice to the different stakeholders involved in this project. These included the trustees of the Babcock Naval Services Pension Scheme (BNSPS), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Cabinet Office as scheme manager to the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

GAD put 3 separate teams in place to avoid any conflicts of interest with 'ethical walls' maintained between the teams to ensure client confidentiality.

### **Transferring benefits**

BNSPS was created in 2002 when 1,500 ex-civil servants transferred employment to Babcock and a pension scheme was required that was 'broadly comparable' to the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

The security of members' benefits within the scheme was backed by MOD. The introduction of the government's Fair Deal (2013) policy of keeping staff like these in public service pension schemes, rather than in private sector 'broadly comparable' schemes, led to changes.

It was agreed that the ex-civil servants in the scheme would re-join the Civil Service Pension Scheme and their pension benefits in the Babcock scheme would compulsorily transfer back.

Pensions teams across GAD provided actuarial advice around the transfer back to the Civil Service Pension Scheme. The terms of the transfer were agreed in early 2018 after extensive discussions. Implementation began shortly after, and the project was completed in September 2019, having successfully transferred the members back to the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

### **Partnership working**

Commenting on the extensive project, GAD actuary, Natacha Lamaletie said:

“This transfer was one of a kind because all the former civil servants, not just ‘active members’ in the scheme, were compulsorily transferred back to the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

“We ensured the project went smoothly and was completed on time. It was a joint effort between a number of GAD teams.”

As part of the project, GAD also worked with the receiving pension administrators to make sure their systems were set up to deal with taking on the members’ benefits, ensuring seamless transition and payment of benefits.

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## [Ofqual publishes initial decisions on GCSE and A level grading proposals for 2020](#)

Our [consultation on the exceptional arrangements we have put in place for awarding GCSEs, AS and A levels this summer](#) closed on 29 April. We are grateful for the 12,500 plus responses we have received from teachers, teacher representative groups and unions, university or higher education institutions, parents, carers and students; we are taking these into account when finalising our plans.

To give students, schools and colleges certainty at the earliest opportunity, we have prioritised our [analysis and decisions on 2 proposals about who should receive a calculated grade](#).

### **Calculated grades for students in year 10 and below**

In line with our consultation proposal, we have decided that students entered for exams in year 10 and below will be eligible to receive calculated grades this summer. This follows the majority of responses received, which indicate that the progression of some students would be disrupted if they were not awarded a grade this summer, and to exclude them would have an unfair impact. Amongst the responses we received were concerns about the potential impact of excluding early entrants on disabled students or those with special educational needs, who might wish to spread their GCSE exams over different years.

### **Private candidates**

There was broad support for our proposal to only allow exam boards to issue results for private candidates for whom the Head of Centre is confident they can submit a centre assessment grade and include them in the centre’s rank order. The majority of respondents considered this necessary for the fairness and integrity of the approach. Most of those who disagreed were students who

are private candidates themselves and their parents or carers.

We have worked with exam boards to explore options for private candidates to receive grades this summer. Last week, the boards set out new guidance, and we [published an update to our Information document](#), about the alternative sources of evidence a school or college might consider where it does not have sufficient evidence about a student's attainment to submit a centre assessment grade and rank order information. It also confirms that some students may transfer to another centre ahead of the grading process if the centre where they had registered decides it cannot submit a centre assessment grade. In this case, some other centres may be able to work with private candidates who need a grade this summer in order to progress. So that the grading process is fair, the Head of Centre must have the same level of confidence in the grade and rank order position as for all other students when providing information to the exam board.

We said in our consultation decision document that we could not identify any reliable way to calculate grades for private candidates who could not be included within a centre's cohort of students. No workable possibilities were advanced by respondents to the consultation and we have decided that private candidates can be included only through centres.

We are continuing to analyse consultation responses on our other proposals for awarding GCSEs, AS/A levels, Extended Project Qualification and Advanced Extension Award in maths this summer; we will publish final decisions later in May.

Separately, our [consultation on arrangements for awarding vocational, technical and other general qualifications](#), including proposals for early entrants and private candidates in these qualifications, remains open until Friday 8 May.