

Pre-Appointment Questionnaire – Chair of Natural Resources Wales

1. Do you have any business or financial connections, or other commitments, which might give rise to a conflict of interest in carrying out your duties, or impact on the time you are able to commit to the role?

I have no business or financial interests that would conflict with the responsibilities of Chair of Natural Resources Wales (NRW). I currently serve as Chair of East West Railway Company, a Commissioner at the Forestry Commission, and will assume the role of Chair of the University of Warwick in July 2025. I am confident I can dedicate the time and focus necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of Chair of NRW. I am accustomed to managing complex portfolios and would prioritise the needs of NRW in line with public service expectations and ministerial accountability. Should any potential conflict arise in the future, I would proactively declare and manage it in line with governance best practice.

2. Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality?

No. I have never held any elected political position, nor undertaken any activity that would call into question my impartiality. I have worked constructively with ministers and governments across political parties, and have consistently upheld the principles of public service and impartial governance.

3. How were you recruited: were you encouraged to apply, and if so, by whom?

I applied in response to contact from a headhunter acting on NRW's behalf and through the open public appointments process. I was aware of the role through public service networks and through my work as a Commissioner at the Forestry Commission. The role aligns closely with my skills and values, and I felt strongly motivated to put myself forward.

4. Please explain how your experience to date has equipped you to fulfil your new responsibilities.

I bring over 30 years' experience leading large, complex organisations across public and private sectors. My executive career at Tesco and Sainsbury's included operational leadership, transformation, and capital investment at scale. More recently, I have chaired East West Railway Company (a government-owned infrastructure body), contributed to environmental governance as a Forestry Commissioner, and led organisational development in higher education, health, and property sectors. In some cases, I have had to manage turnrounds of improving performance and board effectiveness too.

I am experienced in governance, financial oversight, public accountability, and stakeholder engagement — including with ministers, civil servants, regulators, industry groups, communities, and NGOs. At the ALBS I work with, I have worked directly on climate, land use, biodiversity, and public access issues — giving me a strong foundation to support NRW's statutory and strategic objectives. I also bring calm, values-driven leadership under pressure, and a genuine personal commitment to Wales.

5. What will be your key priorities in your new role?

In the first instance:

- Supporting a successful CEO transition and strengthening board cohesion.
- Engaging constructively with Welsh Government on NRW's financial challenges and long-term sustainability. Delivering the Business plan and Strategy.
- Listening to staff and stakeholders to understand how NRW can rebuild trust and deliver confidently.

Over the longer term:

- Positioning NRW as a national leader in delivering nature recovery, climate resilience, and land stewardship. Ensuring there is real public Value being delivered.
- Enhancing the organisation's capability, morale, and resilience to meet its growing responsibilities.
- Ensuring NRW's regulatory role is risk-based, proportionate, and clearly understood by the public and partners.

6. What criteria should be used to judge your performance over your term of office?

- The effectiveness of the Board in setting/delivering its strategy, supporting the executive, and providing accountability.
- Strengthened relationships with Welsh Government and stakeholders.
- Improved organisational confidence, clarity of purpose, and staff engagement.
- Progress in NRW's delivery against its core duties: nature recovery, environmental regulation, flood resilience, and community engagement.
- Public trust and perception of NRW's leadership and responsiveness.

7. What criteria should be used to judge the performance of NRW as a whole?

- Delivery against statutory functions and ministerial objectives.
- Tangible progress in climate adaptation, biodiversity restoration, water quality and land management.
- Financial stability and efficiency.
- Public engagement and trust, especially in rural, underrepresented, and at-risk communities.
- Responsiveness and resilience as a Category 1 responder during environmental crises.

8. What do you see as the key risks to delivering NRW's objectives?

- Continued financial pressure limiting the organisation's ability to invest in core delivery and staffing.
- Loss of public trust due to reduced services or delayed progress on environmental targets.
- Operational strain from growing responsibilities without matched resourcing.
- Complexity in stakeholder landscapes (e.g. farming, regulation, land access) that can delay or derail implementation without strong engagement.
- Climate-related emergencies that could stretch NRW's capacity.

9. What do you consider to have been the main successes and failures of NRW? What lessons can be learned from the failures?

Successes include:

- Designation and protection of Wales's most important natural sites.
- Delivery of peatland restoration and woodland expansion projects.
- Resilient flood and emergency response under difficult conditions.
- Maintenance of its role as a trusted environmental regulator.

Failures/Challenges include:

- Repeated financial pressures leading to public criticism around service reduction.
- Delayed biodiversity targets and concerns over NRW's delivery capacity.
- Communication challenges with stakeholders during controversial planning or designation processes.

Lessons:

- The importance of financial resilience and early planning for resource pressure.
- A need for more proactive and consistent public and stakeholder engagement.
- Supporting staff morale and capability through change is critical to long-term delivery.

10. What is your assessment of the public profile and reputation of the organisation?

NRW is widely recognised as a critical environmental body in Wales — but its reputation has at times been shaped more by its challenges than its achievements. Public concern over flooding, pollution, and service cuts has made trust fragile in some areas, despite strong work by frontline teams.

There is a clear opportunity — and a public expectation — for NRW to lead confidently, communicate clearly, and demonstrate visible progress. As Chair, I would support the organisation in being a trusted, expert voice on nature, land and climate, while strengthening relationships with communities, government, and delivery partners.