

Brief for the appointment of

# Chair



Candidate Brief



ODGERS BERNDTSON

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## About the RSPB

In 1889, Emily Williamson created the Society for the Protection of Birds with one core aim: to fight a fashion for feathers and exotic plumes that was driving birds towards extinction. Emily's efforts soon gathered pace and, after joining forces with Etta Lemon and Eliza Phillips, the movement grew in both popularity and influence, so much so that it was awarded its Royal Charter in 1904. The 1921 Importation of Plumage (Prohibition) Act was eventually passed, marking the RSPB's first successful campaign for nature.



In line with our strategy RSPB 2030, we continue to work in the UK and internationally to advocate for policies that protect, restore, and include nature. The climate crisis is the greatest long-term threat to nature and people, and the RSPB is fighting to make net-zero emissions a reality whilst ensuring the recovery of nature. We push for strong laws to protect and restore nature, such as the ambitious Westminster Environment Act which sets binding targets for air quality, water, biodiversity, and resource efficiency, as well as set environmental principles requiring ministerial adherence when developing new policies. We also work closely with our local government leaders, including on access to nature and greenspace, and tackling climate change in local regions. Whatever the decision-making arena, we advocate for a political and an economic system that recognises nature's value.

We also lead extensive conservation work, with our own hands-on protection of nature at the heart of our organisation. We have been running nature reserves since our first one opened in 1930, now working in all four countries of the UK to protect and restore endangered, threatened, and otherwise vulnerable habitats and species. We conduct our own applied scientific work as practical solutions to the conservation problems we face become even more urgently needed amidst the climate and nature crises. Whether it's deciding how to save a species on the brink of extinction or bringing a rainforest back to full health, for years the RSPB has used science-backed approaches to safeguard wild places and the wildlife that calls them home, in the UK and abroad. Our scientific work further equips us with the information needed to convince governments and other decision-makers to take action.



## Partners

We believe that collaboration is the way we ultimately deliver the best, fastest, sharpest progress at scale. We partner with organisations like BirdLife International, a global partnership we helped form to join up bird and conservation organisations worldwide to strengthen international conservation efforts. We work on delivery on the ground with other landowners, farmers and other eNGOs. We also work cross-sector with businesses like Co-op, with whom we are working to protect, restore, and sustainably manage UK peatland – some of our nature's strongest carbon stores. You can learn more about our funding partnerships, including those that fund us as well as those we fund, [here](#).



A young girl with her hair in two buns, wearing a bright pink t-shirt, is seated in a wheelchair. She is looking intently at a small object held in the palm of a woman's hand. The woman, wearing a blue RSPB uniform and glasses, is leaning over her. The background is a grassy outdoor area with a wooden fence. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

## Community Engagement

Connecting people to nature is fundamental to our work. We work hard to make sure nature is accessible to everyone, and everyone gets the chance to feel their own unique connection with it. We run and provide a range of activities to ensure people have the opportunity to engage with nature in their own way, like [conducting your own wildlife surveys](#), [creating your own nature films](#), and [building homes for vulnerable hedgehogs](#). For our part, we are always striving to stay at the forefront of accessible nature, whether that is trialling new schemes at our reserves to [help more young people get access to nature](#), or providing important tools like mobility scooters and binoculars at sites where we can. Our annual Big Garden Birdwatch, on top of giving us a valuable snapshot of how our birdlife is faring, is the world's largest citizen science project. We can always be doing more, and we continue to work to widen the audiences who can see their personal connections to nature and conservation.

# RSPB by numbers



More than a  
**million**  
members

making us one of the  
largest voluntary wildlife  
conservation organisations  
in the world



More than  
**155**

community-  
based local  
groups



Approximately  
**2,000**

established  
staff



More than  
**300**

youth groups



More than  
**11,000**

registered  
volunteers



More than  
**200,000**

youth members



**Financial  
reserves**

to support our long-  
term goals, strategy,  
and sustainability



Volunteers  
who give  
**hundreds  
of thousands  
of hours**

for birds and  
wildlife



Over  
**200**  
nature reserves  
home to  
**80%**

of the rarest  
and most threatened bird  
species in the UK, covering  
over 160,000 hectares



Expenditure of  
**£120m**  
per year

on our  
**charitable  
purposes**



**Multi-million pound**

**Conservation  
projects**

## The Role

The scale of the climate and nature crisis presents an ever-growing challenge to the mission of the RSPB and its partners, as set out in the RSPB's strategy to 2030. In response, the RSPB will continue to be louder, bolder, and more inclusive, bringing more people into action for nature and advocating tirelessly for nature to be included in political and economic planning. We will continue to support and to showcase the amazing biodiversity present throughout our reserves, which cover an area four times the size of the Isle of Wight. Gaining a broader spectrum of support is essential, through growing our membership and building new, bigger partnerships. This also includes identifying fresh, more entrepreneurial approaches to new sources of finance for conservation.





After the successful tenure of Kevin Cox as the RSPB's Chair, the time has come to pass the baton to our next Chair, who will steer the RSPB through increasingly urgent – and innovative – waters. The RSPB continues to identify new tools to protect our nature, whether that is through leading our own applied science dedicated to researching new and better forms of conservation, working to unlock creative new funding sources for the sector as a whole, or building cross-sector partnerships to ensure nature is included in the long term plans for our communities, our countries, and our planet. Our next Chair will bring steadfast and inclusive leadership to support this work, pooling broad and diverse expertise from across the RSPB's leadership, staff, volunteers, and wider networks to ensure robust governance, strategic clarity, and delivery of tangible impact against our goals. The RSPB has also recently completed a wide-ranging governance review to ensure the full utilisation and impact of this expertise, including instituting a network of more inclusive advisory committees. Our new Chair will continue to oversee delivery of the review and lead interim reviews of its effectiveness.

These are no small tasks, and in order to tackle them, the RSPB has committed, high-performing leadership across both its Council of Trustees and Executive Board, dedicating significant time to our work and to each other. As such, our next Chair will need to be able to dedicate a minimum of one day per week for this organisation during their tenure at the RSPB's helm. This time includes committee and Council meetings, as well as the preparation required for those meetings, the charity's Annual General Meeting, meetings with the Chief Executive, and other duties on behalf of the organisation, both internal and external.

We appoint our Council Chair for a three-year term, with the ability to have this term renewed once.

Some of the more specific responsibilities and accountabilities of the Chair include:

### **Governance**

- Lead the Council in its role establishing, setting, and refining the direction and strategy of the charity.
- Ensure the Council complies with all legal requirements and works to always further the objectives of the charity.
- Ensure that conflicts of interest are avoided in meetings and in the operations of the RSPB.
- Hold accountability for the annual cycle of Council meetings and overseeing the decisions taken.

### **Council Inclusion and Effectiveness**

- Liaise regularly with the Chief Executive to maintain an overview of the charity's affairs, hold the Chief Executive accountable, and provide support and guidance.
- Exercise broad oversight of the effectiveness of Executive Board workings.
- Foster the regular and meaningful contribution of all Trustees and advisors to the work and the goals of the RSPB.
- Maintain a strong link between Council and the Executive Board.
- Continue to develop the Council's culture of openness, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and in line with the RSPB's values.

### **Representation**

- Serve as a leading ambassador for the RSPB with our members, partners, and stakeholders.
- Champion RSPB's work through personal networks, social media, and other channels.



The Chair will need to execute the following duties throughout the course of their tenure:

- Chair meetings of the Council.
- Serve as Chair (ex officio) of the Nominations and People Committee of Council.
- Serve as member (ex officio) of the Finance Committee of Council.
- Provide formal presentations of the Annual Report at the Annual General Meeting, including by highlighting the most important and salient points of the RSPB's annual progress.
- Conduct annual reviews with each Member of Council.
- Lead regular evaluation of the Council's operation and effectiveness.
- Lead the appraisal process for the Chief Executive and, alongside the Nominations and People Committee, review the remuneration of the Chief Executive, considering factors such as performance and RSPB's remuneration policy.
- Sit on recruitment and disciplinary panels as required or invited.

Some of the Chair's most significant key relationships will be with the:

- Members of the RSPB Council.
- Members of the RSPB advisory committees.
- Chief Executive and Executive Board of the RSPB.
- Staff and volunteers of the RSPB.
- Chairs, Trustees, board members, and other senior staff of environmental NGOs and regulators.
- Senior leaders in partner organisations of the RSPB.
- Ministerial leaders across the Government.



# The Individual

## The successful candidate will bring:

- A longstanding interest in conservation, and a commitment to the delivery of RSPB's strategy in the context of an increasingly demanding operating environment.
- Knowledge and understanding of running effective organisations, in particular of similar scale to the RSPB.
- Experience chairing organisations with complex governance structures in a way that maintains, supports, and provides clarity of strategic direction and strong governance frameworks to progress the organisation's objectives.
- An inclusive leadership style, with the ability to listen and engage effectively, and comfortable with challenge and debate.
- A track record of fostering a collaborative and effective environment for council and/or board members, in particular for individuals volunteering their time and expertise, with diverse backgrounds, strengths, and viewpoints.
- An approach to leadership which values tact, diplomacy, and mutual trust.
- Strong emotional intelligence, communication ability, and interpersonal skills.
- An evidence-backed commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The ability to inspire the respect of staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders – internal and external – across the RSPB, the wider conservation arena, and beyond.
- The knowledge, and the passion, to effectively champion the cause and mission of the RSPB, in particular with external parties and in the public eye.
- An innovative approach to leadership which values and pursues bringing new perspectives and ideas to the organisation and its plans.
- Values of integrity, impartiality, fairness, and respect of confidences.





## How to apply

In order to apply, please submit a comprehensive CV along with a covering letter which sets out your interest in the role and encapsulates the aspects of your experience relevant to the required criteria.

The preferred method of application is online at: [www.odgers.com/90474](http://www.odgers.com/90474)

If you are unable to apply online, please email: [evie.day@odgersberndtson.com](mailto:evie.day@odgersberndtson.com)

All applications will initially receive an automated response.

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Diversity Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process. This will assist the RSPB in monitoring selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. Any information collated from the Diversity Monitoring Forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

### Personal data

In line with GDPR, we ask that you do NOT send us any information that can identify children or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and/or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive

Personal Data in your CV/application documentation will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

### Contact details

For a conversation in confidence, please contact:

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We are committed to ensuring everyone can access our website and application processes. This includes people with sight loss, hearing, mobility and cognitive impairments. Should you require access to these documents in alternative formats, please contact [evie.day@odgersberndtson.com](mailto:evie.day@odgersberndtson.com).

Also, if you have any comments and/or suggestions about improving access to our application processes please do not hesitate to contact us [response.manager@odgersberndtson.com](mailto:response.manager@odgersberndtson.com).



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