

New Commissioners of the Forestry Commission appointed

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The new Commissioners began their terms on 1 April.

By Royal Warrant, His Majesty King Charles III has appointed four new Commissioners to the Forestry Commission.

Rebecca Heaton and Mike Kapur have been appointed for a four-year term and Pamela Abbott and John Varley have been appointed for a three-year term. All four appointments commenced on 1 April 2026.

The appointments have been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. All appointments are made on merit, and political activity plays no part in the selection process, nor is a bar to appointment.

Biographies:

Pamela Abbott

Pamela Abbott is an independent member of the IUCN UK (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Executive Committee where she chairs its Ecosystem Restoration Working Group. Until recently, she was the Director of Natural Cambridgeshire and co-chaired the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy Steering Group. She is the founding Chair of Citizen Zoo and was a member of the Mayor of London's Rewilding Taskforce. Pamela's career spans local, national and international biodiversity conservation with previous roles as Chief Executive of Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Director of Programmes at the UNEP-WCMC (UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre) and Norfolk and Suffolk Area Manager at Natural England.

Rebecca Heaton

Rebecca Heaton has held leading sustainability roles in major UK corporations, embedding sustainability into business strategy, and overseeing compliance, reporting and auditing. She has a BSc and PhD in Forestry, bringing deep specialist expertise in this area, and has been recognised with honorary degrees from Bangor and Loughborough for her contributions to climate change policy and corporate sustainability. She sat on the UK Climate Change Committee from 2017-2021, advising the government to set a net zero target for 2050. She also served on the Natural Environment Research Council from 2020 to 2024.

Mike Kapur

Mike Kapur is a qualified Chartered Accountant who has previously been Audit and Risk Chair at Leicester Royal Infirmary, The University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, De Montfort University, and National Forest Company. He has an active interest in public service and is a Trustee of National Space Centre, Leicester City Football Club Trust, and an Independent Panel Member for DEFRA. He was the figurehead for SME businesses at the Confederation of British Industry. Mike brings a wealth of expertise in governance and has a proven record of bringing private and public stakeholders together.

John Varley

John Varley is Chief Executive of Clinton Devon Estates, where he oversees 1,900 hectares of multi-purpose woodland delivering biodiversity, recreation and landscape benefits alongside commercial timber production. He previously held senior management roles at BT plc in its global and field operations divisions. He has served on the Environment Agency Board and the Natural England Board and contributed to the Lawton Review (Making Space for Nature) and the Independent Forestry Panel. He chaired the “Varley Review” on how the UK’s railway can deliver for nature and people safely. John was a member of the Steering Group for the Royal Society’s Living Landscapes Programme and has chaired the Estates Business Group.

The Forestry Commission:

- Established a century ago, the Forestry Commission (FC) is the non-ministerial government department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodlands.
- The Forestry Commission works with two agencies: Forestry England, which manages the Public Forest Estate, and Forest Research, the principal organisation for forestry and tree related research.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-commissioners-of-the-forestry-commission-appointed>