

People's Assembly for Nature Weekend 2 Speaker Biographies

Dr Tom Tew



Dr Tom Tew is the CEO of NatureSpace, a company he founded in 2017 to design, create and implement the UK's first District Licensing scheme for great crested newts and which now partners over 50 Local Planning Authorities in England.

After a PhD at Oxford University on farmland conservation, Tom's early career was in the Government Agency sector. After leading national vertebrate specialist teams and heading the UK Scientific Authority for CITES, Tom managed local, regional and national teams for JNCC, English Nature & Natural England. Professional highlights include responsibility for SAC designation submission to the European Commission, UK lead for the European network of protected sites and leadership of England's SSSI programme. Over a 20-year career Tom spoke to the media, gave evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees and briefed Prime Ministers. He served on many committees, and coined the phrase 'better, bigger, more and joined' whilst on Sir John Lawton's expert panel. Tom finished his public service as Executive Director and Chief Scientist at Natural England.

Tom volunteers his spare time as a Trustee in the environment sector. He chaired The Vincent Wildlife Trust for 10 years, served two full terms as the Prime Minister's appointment on the Board of the Heritage Lottery Fund and is now on the Board of the National Trust.

Dr Sara McGuckin



Dr Sara McGuckin is Head of Natural Science at the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). She leads on terrestrial nature conservation; protected area designation, protection and management; biodiversity evidence and reporting, and advising on climate and agri-environment policy. Her current focus is on enhancing the evidence base on natural capital and ecosystem extent and condition, the drivers of biodiversity loss and the measures needed to deliver long-term ecological and climate resilience, allied to the emerging global biodiversity framework commitments. Sara was one of the lead authors of the recent UK Nature Positive 2030 evidence report.

Sara has worked in NIEA, and its predecessor, the Environment and Heritage Service for 21 years. Sara has a BSc in Geography from Queen's University Belfast, an MSc in Land Resource Management from Cranfield University, Master of Research in Environmental Studies from University of Ulster, and a PhD in environment science.

People's Plan for Nature

Nigel Symes



Nigel Symes is Head of Sector Advice at the RSPB. He leads a team of over 20 whose role is to help landowners and businesses to help wildlife. They work in a partnership with Barratt Developments plc to help them to create wildlife friendly developments, at the same time as locating them in the right places to minimise impacts on nature. This is a learning process for both parties. Their intent is to demonstrate to all builders and to the government and planning authorities that there is no reason why building new housing developments has to have adverse impact on nature.

Nigel has more than 30 years of experience in working in partnerships to provide better spaces for nature, across many sectors in addition to housebuilding including forestry, quarrying, solar energy, golf, and even the military.

Maxwell A. Ayamba



Maxwell A. Ayamba is the Founder/Managing Director of the Sheffield Environmental Movement. Currently a PhD Research Student in Black Studies, Department of American & Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham, M4C/AHRC. He is an environmental journalist by profession, former Associate Lecturer/Research Associate, Sheffield Hallam University. Co-Founder, 100 Black Men Walk for Health Group which inspired the national play “Black Men Walking” in 2018. First Black person to serve on the Board of the Ramblers Association UK. Named in 2021 one of the 70 most remarkable people in the history of the Peak District National Park since 1951. In 2021, Maxwell received the National Lottery Award in the Heritage category. He authored papers and chapters in books in relation to minoritised communities and the UK environment.

Kathryn Deeney



Kathryn Deeney has worked within the environment field for over 18 years.

Currently her portfolio includes strategic leadership for environmental planning, green and blue space enhancement and responding to the climate emergency within Plymouth City Council. This includes transformation of the Council's Green Estate, including nature-based solution delivery, solar farm development and activating spaces for people. Development of the UK's first National Marine Park, delivery of a new Community Forest and the development of innovative environmental funding models.

In all work there is a fundamental focus on how people and nature can work together to achieve benefits for all.

People's Plan for Nature

Philip Price



Philip Price has been an award-winning professional wildlife photographer and tour guide based on the west coast of Scotland for the last 16 years. 6 years ago, Philip helped set up a coastal community group which gave the local community a voice in how to look after our local marine environment. That was called Cromach, Craignish Restoration of Marine and Coastal Habitat. That progressed to a charity getting set up called Seawilding which Philip now works for. His role is split between active habitat rewilding and communications: education, photography and film making.

Richard Benwell



Richard Benwell is Chief Executive of Wildlife & Countryside Link, a coalition of 67 environmental charities. He is also Chair of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and a Director of UK Youth for Nature.

Gillian Dick



Gillian Dick is the Manager of Spatial Planning – Research & Development team within the Development Plan Group at Glasgow City Council. She has a BSc (Hons) in Town Planning from Heriot-Watt University and BSc (Hons) in Human Geography from the Open University. She is a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and currently the Vice Chair on their Partnership and Accreditation Panel. She has just completed six years as the RTPi nominated practitioner rep on Queen University Belfast Planning school partnership Board, which she also chaired for the final two years. She has just started a similar role with the Technical University Dublin Partnership Board, where she is the vice-chair.

Gillian has the lead role for the Council within the Horizon 2020 Connecting Nature project, where Glasgow is one of the front runner cities.

<http://www.connectingnature.eu/glasgow> Glasgow is using its Open space Strategy and Delivery Plan (opportunity mapping) as it's exemplar within this project.

Gillian started her career in Banff & Buchan / Aberdeenshire before moving to Glasgow 16 years ago. She therefore has a broad breadth of experience working both very rural and highly urbanised areas. Gillian's team takes a place-based approach with a nature based solutions focus to all that they do.

People's Plan for Nature

Professor Miles Richardson



Miles Richardson is a Chartered Psychologist, Chartered Ergonomist and Professor of Human Factors and Nature Connectedness at the University of Derby. He founded the award-winning Nature Connectedness Research Group which aims to understand and improve connection with nature to unite both human and nature's wellbeing. The group works closely with Natural England and its work has been adopted by many organisations, including the National Trust, RSPB and 2021 Mental Health Awareness week. Miles is also a lead author on the 'Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' (IPBES) global transformative change assessment.

Nadia Shaikh



Nadia Shaikh is an ornithologist and naturalist who has worked in the Conservation sector for over 14 years, recently in nature protection policy and in community engagement and volunteering development. Nadia now works as a consultant for the nature conservation sector advising organisations on access to nature and protection policy and works in land justice activism. She is also a trustee for the Wildlife and Countryside Link

Tim Ferrero



Dr Tim Ferrero is a marine biologist and conservationist working at Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT), raising awareness of the marine life, habitats and protected areas of the Solent. Tim's work at HIWWT includes responsibility for delivery of the HIWWT's "Wilder Solent" vision, marine data collection and dissemination, citizen science and marine education and engagement. Tim is currently leading HIWWT's, "Solent Seagrass Restoration Project", working on the EU Life recreation ReMEDIES project, seeking to reduce recreational impacts on seagrass, and helping to manage the Trust's national Lottery Heritage Fund project, "Secrets of the Solent".

Prior to his move to HIWWT in 2013, Tim worked for over 23 years at the Natural History Museum in London as a researcher and consultant on the ecology and taxonomy of marine free-living nematode worms. Tim's work has taken him all over the world, including five memorable trips to Antarctica and by way of contrast, he once undertook fieldwork in Kuwait in temperatures of 54 °C, but he is very happy to be back on the Hampshire coast where he grew up in the late sixties and seventies.

People's Plan for Nature

Rosie Hails



Professor Rosie Hails MBE FRSB is an ecologist and Nature and Science Director at the National Trust, holding honorary chairs at Exeter and Cranfield Universities. Her role is to develop the Trust's nature strategy, research portfolio and advise on science evidence relevant to Trust decision making. She leads teams focusing on: nature conservation, environmental research and data, trees and woodland creation, wildlife management, land use and public benefits delivered by nature.

She is a member of Defra's Science Advisory Council, chairing the Biodiversity Targets Advisory Group, and a member of Defra's bovine TB partnership. She is also on several advisory boards. Formerly she was the Science Director for Biodiversity & Ecosystem Science at the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (2013 – 2018). She was awarded an MBE for services to Environmental Research in 2000.

James Rainey



Originally from Ireland, James Rainey is Senior Ecologist at Trees for Life, an organisation working to rewild the Scottish Highlands. He spent the last few years surveying and reporting on the health and resilience of Caledonian Pinewoods and is currently focused on improving approaches to landscape-scale restoration.