

Sustain Chair – role description

The overall purpose of the Sustain Chair role is to lead the Sustain Council of Trustees in guiding the organisation towards increasing its impact whilst ensuring its sustainability.

About Sustain

Sustain is a powerful alliance of organisations and communities working together for a better system of food and farming and cultivating the movement for change. We represent over 100 national food and farming organisations and work with hundreds more at local and regional levels. Together, we advocate food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture, and promote equity. Working in collaboration, we:

- Develop networks of people and organisations to devise and implement projects and campaigns, and to provide a platform for recognition and replication of pioneering work.
- Run highly effective and creative campaigns, advocacy, networks and demonstration projects, aiming to catalyse permanent changes in policy and practice, and to help equip more people and communities with skills as change-makers.
- Advise and negotiate with governments, local authorities, regulatory agencies, funding bodies and other decision-makers to ensure that legislation and policies on food, fishing and agriculture are publicly accountable and socially and environmentally responsible.

You can see an account of Sustain's many success stories and campaign wins, see our website [here](#).

Key responsibilities for the Chair

1. To provide leadership to the Council, in collaboration with the Chief Executive; and to ensure that Council members fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the proper governance of the charity.
2. To support and, where needed, to challenge the Chief Executive, and to ensure that the Council works in partnership with executive staff.
3. To secure the long-term future of the charity by ensuring that:
 - the Council sets the mission, vision, strategy, and high-level policies for the organisation;
 - the Council takes steps to monitor the performance of the organisation and to ensure that it satisfies all regulatory and legal compliance requirements;
 - major risks to which the organisation is exposed are reviewed regularly and systems are established to mitigate these risks;
 - internal controls and systems (financial and non-financial) are audited and reviewed regularly;

- the organisation's continued financial stability is ensured and financial dealings are systematically accounted for, audited and made publicly available;
- the Council evaluates and continuously develops its performance, composition and structure to optimise its effectiveness.

Specific duties

- Exercising leadership by setting priorities, in collaboration with the Chief Executive, for the Council and planning meeting schedules and setting agendas accordingly.
- Chairing Council meetings and facilitating discussion, encouraging all trustees to participate.
- Helping to ensure that Council decisions are communicated and implemented effectively.
- Improving governance practice by continually seeking to improve his/her/their performance - encouraging feedback and responding appropriately.
- Overseeing the establishment and activities of Council committees, ensuring that they are accountable to the Council.
- Monitoring and addressing differences among Council members and between trustees and other parts of the organisation.

Working with the Chief Executive

- Leading the Council in fulfilling its line management responsibilities toward the Chief Executive, including mentoring, appraisal and professional development.
- Meeting regularly with the Chief Executive to discuss key issues and provide feedback on behalf of the Council.
- In partnership with the Chief Executive, agreeing respective roles in representing the charity and acting as spokesperson, and liaising with stakeholders.
- Together with the Chief Executive, seeking ways to improve Council effectiveness by identifying development opportunities for the Council, and Council members, including themselves as Chair and a trustee.

Working with members of the alliance

- In liaison with the senior leadership team, contributing to building and maintaining positive relationships with alliance members.
- Ensuring the Council considers, as appropriate, the alliance identity of Sustain in its deliberations and decision-making.
- Upholding Sustain governance arrangements pertaining to alliance members.

Accountability

Accountable to: Members of the alliance, Funders, the Charity Commission, Companies House, other relevant regulatory bodies, and beneficiaries of the organisation's project and campaigns.

Time commitment

- Preparation for and attendance at quarterly meetings (held in central London on a weekday between 1:30 – 5:30pm, currently remote, hybrid or in person).
- One-to-one meetings with the Chief Executive (1.5 hours every 4 to 6 weeks and additional calls as helpful).
- *Ad hoc* advice and support to senior staff and Council members, usually via email or phone.
- The duties of the Chair typically take up 1 to 2 days per month on average.

Term of office

The appointment will be for three years in the first instance, as is the case for all Sustain trustees, with the option of re-election by mutual agreement for one further three-year term.

Remuneration

This is an unsalaried position. Appropriate expenses associated with travel, accommodation and subsistence on charity business will be reimbursed by the charity and transparently declared.

About the Chair

The person appointed to be the Chair of the Sustain alliance will be a representative of a Sustain alliance member or observer organisation.

The person appointed to be the Chair of the Sustain alliance will be:

- Passionate about food that is good for people and the planet (preferably with an understanding of one or more relevant farming and/or food issues).
- Attuned to the culture and dynamics of an evolving charity seeking system change.
- Committed to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism.
- Sympathetic with Sustain's values and have sound judgement and integrity.
- Experienced in chairing a committee or similar entity and, preferably, of being a charity trustee, SME board member or involvement in an NGO decision-making body.
- Confident in managing threats (including financial risks) and opportunities for an organisation.
- Experienced in successful business/organisational management and leadership
- Familiar with, and have an understanding of, influencing policy and campaigning, and/or fundraising and funder stewardship for such work.
- A strong team player who possesses tact and diplomacy.
- Able to commit 1 to 2 days on average per month.

Sustain's Chair also needs to be:

- Nominated, or nominate themselves, to become a Sustain trustee. Annual trustee elections will take place October to November 2025, and we anticipate the Chair's induction and handover period to start mid-November. Download a [Sustain Trustee nomination form](#) and [Equal opportunities monitoring form](#); and read more about Trustee work and responsibilities [here](#).

- Eligible to serve as a charity trustee. The statutory [disqualification guidance](#) is available here; and a 'fit and proper' declaration is included in the Trustee nomination form, above.
- Willing (in principle, if necessary) for Sustain to undertake a [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\) check](#).

Application process

Email your application to Sustain CEO Kath Dalmeny kath@sustainweb.org. Deadline for applications is 10am, Monday 22 September 2025. Your application should include:

- Your CV
- Your supporting statement (covering letter) detailing succinctly:
 - The reasons for your interest in the Chair of Sustain role
 - What you feel you can bring to the Chair of Sustain role
 - How your experience meets the candidate description in the 'About the Chair' section
 - Which Sustain alliance member or observer member you are associated with, and in what capacity
 - Contact details for two referees
- Completed [Sustain Trustee nomination form](#) and [Equal Opportunities monitoring form](#). This is to enable the candidate successfully recommended to by the interview panel for appointment as Chair to be able also to stand for election by alliance members as a Sustain Trustee. *(Please note that candidates for the role of Chair who are not successful in being recommended for appointment can continue to stand for election to the Council of Trustees if they wish.)*

We will respond to all applications received. The Chair of Sustain recruitment panel will undertake shortlisting and offer interviews either on Friday 26 September or during the week commencing 29 September.

During the period July to early September 2025, we would warmly welcome conversations with people from alliance members and observer organisations who are interested in putting themselves forward for consideration for this role. We will make one-hour time slots available in the period July to September for informal conversations and questions – please indicate if you have preferred dates and contact Sustain CEO Kath Dalmeny kath@sustainweb.org.

Recruitment privacy notice

The purpose of our recruitment privacy notice is to tell you what personal information the charity collects from you, how and when it may be collected and what happens to it. Please ensure you are familiar with our [Recruitment privacy notice](#). If you are appointed as Trustee and/or Chair, some of your personal information will also need to be provided to statutory bodies such as Companies House and the Charity Commission, and in routine due diligence checks by some donors or charitable trusts and foundations who fund Sustain's work.