

Appointment of
Chair of the Board





Dear potential Chair of IIED,

You find the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) at an exciting and pivotal time.

With more than 50 years of experience at the intersection of environmental and social justice, our work is rooted in the leadership of local partners in the countries and communities who are most disproportionately impacted by today's crises.

Leveraging our networks and our reputation for robust action-research, we have supported our local partners as they bring their voices to the global stage and assert their agency in the decisions that affect them most. IIED builds effective platforms for partnerships at every level of the national, regional and international structures of power, policy and practice, providing the rigorous underpinning for evidence-based policymaking and innovative programmes of action.

As the world has grown more complex and uncertain, we draw together cross-sector networks of state and international institutions, businesses and major philanthropies to highlight and begin to address some of the barriers and headwinds our partners face. We mobilise funding for our local partners to address the challenges they face.

In 2024 we adopted our new strategy '*Manifesto for a thriving world*', focusing our work on six global challenges, our six 'propositions'. We are now shaping both our internal systems and the structure of our funding to allow us to work flexibly and holistically on these issues without the rigidities of traditional programmatic constraints. At a time that calls for bold new approaches, we are working in new ways and inviting new partners, offering both the prospect of profound impact and the daily promise of fresh challenges.

In our new Chair, we are seeking a wise and courageous leader to govern IIED through this time of innovation and change.

The next Chair of IIED will be a seasoned leader, with a career that demonstrates an understanding of the sectors we operate in, experience of leading strategic change in complex organisations, and a belief in the power and importance of local agents of change. This role requires a relational team-builder to foster the contribution of our Board of Trustees in our service of the IIED mission and team.

We hope the following pages both inform and inspire you. We thank you in advance for considering serving IIED, our partners, and our mission to build a fairer, more sustainable world, using evidence, action and influence in partnership with others.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees,

Paul George, Chair

About IIED

IIED holds a special place in international development. For over 50 years, it has pioneered new thinking in the sector, earning a formidable reputation for robust research and for its role as a bridge organisation — supporting partners in the majority world on the global stage. It has played a central role in shaping seminal agendas such as sustainable development, the green economy, and loss and damage. IIED maintains long-standing, trusted relationships with a wide network of majority world organisations, funders, subject matter experts, government officials, and the increasing number of cross-sector actors partnering in climate and social justice.

In recent years, IIED has been especially notable for its work on locally led adaptation and land restoration, climate finance reform, locally and Indigenous Peoples-led stewardship of protected areas, climate-linked social protection, loss and damage advocacy, and urban climate justice. It also currently hosts the chair of the IPCC. In addition to faithful funding from pioneering government donors, progress has been made in expanding relationships with innovative philanthropic foundations.

IIED has a longstanding commitment to locally led approaches and to advancing the agency of least developed countries (LDCs) and non-state actors within the international system.

Our recent strategic refresh, emphasising systemic approaches, broad partnerships and cross-project coordination, has been well received.

IIED brings together a passionate and skilled team from diverse backgrounds and countries, to support purposeful collaborations underpinned by high-quality action research.

In the current financial year (ending 31 March 2026), IIED is forecasting income just over £35m, the majority of which is passed through directly to majority world partners.



Our strategy

Manifesto for a thriving world

IIED's previous multi-annual strategy, entitled 'Make Change Happen', was published in early 2019 and concluded in March 2024. During these years, IIED saw considerable growth of income, staff numbers, staff geographical distribution, diversity of nationality, and the emergence of a much more fundamental discussion about the Institute's future through the lens of decolonisation, tackling racism and other forms of intersectional disadvantage.

Our 2022 External Review concluded: "IIED remains not only an inspiring organisation that continues to do justice to its illustrious 50-year legacy, but one that should now take, and be given, the chance to be the best it can be to meet the demands of this era. We believe it will not disappoint". This is the challenge we have accepted in developing a future-fit IIED with our new strategy.

Our [manifesto for a thriving world](#) was launched in May 2024.

The manifesto focuses IIED on six overarching propositions for change, as follows:

- Help migrants, including displaced people, to have brighter futures
- Shift trade, finance and investment to benefit people and planet
- Evolve cities as places of inspiration and justice
- Promote forest, farm and fisheries systems that feed and nourish people and planet
- Transform climate action and governance so people and nature can thrive
- Champion community-led nature governance and stewardship.



Credit: Rusinga Studios/IIED



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Credit: Frida Aguilar Estrada via Unsplash



Governance

The work of the Board includes agreeing and overseeing IIED's strategy, risk management and financial plans in line with its vision, mission and values.

The Board of Trustees meets four times a year, online in March and September, and in person, in London, usually in June and December. The Board currently has three sub-committees: the Finance Audit and Risk Assessment Committee, the Nominations Sub-committee and the People, Culture and Remuneration Sub-committee. In practice, these core meetings are supplemented by shorter ad hoc online meetings on specific bits of business, and occasionally by less formal online 'trustee drop-ins' to give available trustees an opportunity to discuss developments with the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer when there are particularly urgent matters arising between meetings.

The Chair, as leader of our governance, takes on a particular burden of responsibility. We realise this requires due attention, care and time investment, including willingness to regularly be in the UK developing in-person relationships with IIED's executive director and of course chairing the two in-person Board meetings each year.

IIED seeks to cover all expenses related to the execution of this important role, though it does not assign a salary to this voluntary position.

Additional time may go to regular check-ins with the executive director, time getting to know the wider team, staying updated on IIED's sector context and some of the highlights of our project work, and occasionally (perhaps even rarely) meeting with network partners at key fora.

The Chair's role will be supported by a skilled Vice Chair (with experience of the UK Charity Commission's regulation). The Board of Trustees are drawn from diverse geographical regions that correspond with the international focus of IIED's work. Trustees retire by rotation, with a maximum term of six years (two consecutive three-year terms), unless an exceptional extension is approved by the Board.

The Board conducts an annual review of its structure, size and composition, seeking to ensure it has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to best support IIED's mission. This review also prioritises achieving a balanced representation in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and geographic diversity.

The Board engages with IIED's Equity, Inclusion and Justice Committee by having a trustee included in its membership.

Role description

IIED celebrates the inspiring legacy of its founder Barbara Ward and faithful stewardship from previous Chairs, including Mary Robinson, Rebecca Grynspan, Maureen O’Neil, and more recently Tara Shine.

While the Chair is a primary ambassador on occasion, the core of the Chair’s role is contributing to the strategic development of IIED and leading the Board’s effective service of IIED’s mission:

“To build a fairer, more sustainable world, using evidence, action and influence in partnership with others.”

IIED are seeking a Chair who demonstrates these four core qualities:

- **An inspiring innovator and systems-thinker** who will apply their strategic mind to the delivery of IIED’s manifesto ambitions through a devotedly partnership-centred approach
- **A people-person** who fosters trust through active listening and clear communication, bringing team-building leadership to the global Board and maintaining an excellent partnership with the IIED executive director and team
- **A wise guide of change processes** who inspires the Board’s empathetic care, entrepreneurial courage and enabling decisiveness
- **A passionate ambassador** who carries our sense of urgency and our inclusive invitation to partnership in creating change.

Person specification

The experience we are looking for in the next Chair of IIED includes:

- Career credibility working at the intersection of social and environmental systems change and bringing about better outcomes for those impacted most by injustice and inequities
- Life-long conviction to build a fairer, more sustainable world, using evidence, action and influence in partnership with others
- Excellent group facilitation skills; chairing meetings well to build a dynamic and diverse team, focusing on key themes, ensuring all voices are heard and good decisions are taken in a timely manner
- Strategic risk management with commitment to exemplary governance
- Experience leading organisations within the complexities of politically sensitive contexts amid rapid geopolitical change, including oversight of a funding base with state or politically aligned institutional funding
- Demonstration of our values of care, respect and dignity, justice and fairness, ethical partnership, transformative change, and inclusion and equity
- Experience advancing the decolonisation of organisations
- Wisdom gained from leading organisational change, particularly courageous and agile transformations and re-positioning
- Effective leadership that gets the best out of others, and a track record of managing leaders to thrive as they carry executive responsibilities
- An experienced representative and partnership-builder, including with funders
- Time and enthusiasm to dedicate to the role of Chair!

How to apply

IIED has led a consultative briefing process to equip Ewen McAlpine at Macaulay Search to help you consider this role. Please contact Ewen to learn more about our context and the role of IIED's Chair: ewen.mcalpine@macaulaysearch.com

Macaulay
search

We are asking any interested parties to please share a bio or CV and also a short note of motivation explaining why your experiences in life inspire your interest in IIED and equip you to fulfil the Chair role description. Please share these introductory documents with ewen.mcalpine@macaulaysearch.com by Monday 9 February 2026.

The Chair Nominations Committee will review statements of interest and select a few people for an online discussion in late February. Should both sides want to progress discussions, then there would be the following steps in a two-way discernment process:

- Informational, one-to-one discussions with the current Chair, Treasurer and also executive director, to be scheduled when convenient for you in March
- An in-person visit with some of the IIED team in London, which would include an interview with the Nominations Committee, informal time with the executive director, and a chance to ask questions of a small group of IIED team members. This day of meetings would take place in April.

Our sincere thanks again for your interest in learning more about IIED.

The following information, linked here, may also serve your consideration:

- [UK Charity Commission annual reports and accounts](#)
- [IIED's Wikipedia profile](#)
- [IIED's impact](#)
- [IIED Policies](#)

