



# HOUSE OF LORDS APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION

17 May 2022

## Two new non-party-political peers – House of Lords Appointments Commission

Two new non-party-political peers recommended by the **independent House of Lords Appointments Commission** were announced today.

The new peers are:

- Shaista Gohir, a leading women's rights campaigner and highly influential Muslim woman
- Professor Katherine Willis, an internationally recognised expert on nature and the relationship between biodiversity, climate change and human wellbeing

They will sit on the crossbenches.

### Notes to Editors

1. **Media enquiries about the work of the House of Lords Appointments Commission should go to Maggie O'Boyle on 07880 740627.**
2. The **House of Lords Appointments Commission** is an independent non-statutory advisory body set up by the Prime Minister to make recommendations for non-party-political peerages. The Commission's remit is to find people of distinction who will bring authority and expertise to the House of Lords. The Commission recommends individuals on merit and their ability to contribute effectively to the work of the House.
3. **Shaista Gohir** has worked in the charity sector for nearly twenty years and is a leading women's rights campaigner and highly influential Muslim woman. She leads the national award-winning charity, Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) which she first joined as a volunteer when it was an informal group in 2005. She has led its growth since serving as the Chair and is currently MWNUK's Chief Executive. Her achievements have included setting up the national Muslim Women's Network Helpline and Counselling Service. Shaista, who is of Pakistani heritage, is a leading voice on issues relating to Muslim women and has a varied and rich background in campaigning and advocacy ensuring lived experiences inform policy making. For example, she successfully challenged the Foreign Office policy on charging 16-17 year old forced marriage victims repatriation fees. She conducted ground-breaking research on sexual exploitation of Asian girls and contributed to the government's Sharia Law Review with her research on marriage and divorce while her report on Muslim women's experience of the criminal justice system shone a light on the justice

gap faced by victims of abuse. She is currently researching harms experienced by Muslim women and their babies during maternity care. Shaista is currently a Non-Executive Director at the University Hospital North Midlands NHS Trust and the Women's Voices Lead at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, an honorary role with responsibility for ensuring women's views and experiences of maternity and gynaecology services are heard. In 2021 she also founded a new charity, the Nisa Global Foundation, to help women and girls in developing countries. She has been awarded an MBE for services to Muslim People and to Community Relations and OBE for Gender Equality and Women's Rights.

4. **Professor Katherine Willis** is currently Professor of Biodiversity in the department of Biology and Principal of St Edmund Hall at the University of Oxford. She is an internationally recognised plant scientist who was previously Director of Science at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Her expertise covers plant evolution, biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, natural capital assessments, agri environment schemes, nature-based solutions, forestry, climate change and the relationship between biodiversity and human wellbeing. Katherine has a wide range of experience on UK based environmental policies and served as a member of the government's Natural Capital Committee. She played a key role in providing detailed analysis and scrutiny of the scientific evidence base underpinning the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, Biodiversity Net Gain policies, and the Environment Act. Her expertise in biodiversity has led her chairing meetings involving heads of state, NGOs and CEOs of large businesses. She received a CBE in 2018 for services to Biodiversity and Conservation.
5. Further information on the Appointments Commission can be obtained from: <http://lordsappointments.independent.gov.uk>
6. The House of Lords Appointments Commission has now recommended a total of 74 non-party-political peerages (since 2000) to the Prime Minister, drawn from approximately 5,600 nominations.
7. The Commission last recommended non-party-political peers in January 2021.
8. The Commission also **vets nominations for life peers, including those nominated by the UK political parties, for propriety.**
9. The membership of the House of Lords Appointments Commission currently comprises three independent members: Lord (Paul) Bew (Chairman), Rt Hon and Rt Rev Lord (Richard) Chartres, The Lord Lieutenant of Belfast, Mrs Fionuala Jay-O'Boyle and three members nominated by each of the three main political parties: Rt Hon Lord (David) Clark of Windermere (Labour), Baroness (Angela) Browning (Conservative) and Baroness (Kate) Parminter (Liberal Democrat). There is a vacancy for an independent member following the resignation of Charles Moore in 2019. The Chairman and independent members are selected through open competition under the Governance Code for Public Appointments.