



Biotechnology and
Biological Sciences
Research Council



Appointment of Chair of the Board of Trustees



Technician **Commitment**



Welcome from Professor Cristóbal Uauy



Thank you for your interest in becoming Chair of the Board of Trustees of the John Innes Centre.

The John Innes Centre is an independent, international centre of excellence in plant science, genetics and microbial sciences. We are a registered UK charity and a BBSRC strategically supported institute, combining scientific discovery with a commitment to delivering public benefits.

We believe that solutions to many of humanity's greatest challenges lie within the extraordinary biology of plants and microbes. Our mission is to discover, understand and harness this biology for the benefit of people and planet. We foster a creative, curiosity-driven approach to fundamental questions in bioscience, with exceptional discovery and applied science that reaches communities across the UK and around the world.

This is a significant opportunity to join JIC. We are advancing our Healthy Plants, Healthy People, Healthy Planet strategic vision while embarking on a transformative £500 million programme of investment in new laboratories, glasshouses, controlled environment facilities, platform technologies and data infrastructure. Together with our scientific ambitions, these new capabilities will strengthen JIC's contributions to UK science and our ability to address global challenges.

Our new science strategy sets out three interconnected priorities for the next decade:

- **Sustainable agriculture for a healthier planet:** advancing knowledge and innovation to support food security and environmental sustainability;
- **Resilient plants in a changing environment:** understanding how plants and microbes respond to changing conditions and applying this knowledge to build resilience; and
- **Next-generation medicines and diets:** unlocking the potential of plants and microbes to improve health and nutrition.

As Chair, you will play a pivotal role in helping JIC realise these ambitions. Working closely with the Director, the Board of Trustees and the senior leadership team, you will provide strategic guidance, constructive challenge and effective governance through a period of significant growth, change, and increased global impact. You will also help strengthen the relationships and partnerships that underpin our scientific excellence, financial sustainability and societal impact.

This information pack introduces JIC, our research, our collaborative environment on the Norwich Research Park, and the contributions you could make as Chair. You can also explore more about our work and ambitions at www.jic.ac.uk.

We look forward to your application.

Professor Cristóbal Uauy,
Director, John Innes Centre

About our institute

The John Innes Centre is an independent, international centre of excellence in plant science, genetics and microbial sciences. We are also a registered UK charity and a UKRI-BBSRC strategically supported institute.

Our mission is to discover, understand and harness the biology of plants and microbes for the benefit of people and planet.

Over the last 115 years, we have achieved a range of breakthroughs, resulting in major societal impacts. Our exceptional discovery and applied science successes reach every UK household, and across the world.

For example, we identified and isolated the wheat dwarfing gene which sits behind the 'Green Revolution', and provided the underpinning science for the production of many modern antibiotics.

We continue to innovate, and support the development of new products, including the famous 'purple tomatoes' which are on sale in the USA and Canada. We are proud to host 40 independent research groups with around 350 staff. At any one time we are also training up to 100 PhD students.

Our scientific departments work across a range of disciplines including biology, chemistry, genetics and information technology, across four BBSRC-funded Institute Strategic Programmes.

With a fascinating history and heritage, our future is set to be even more compelling as our research accelerates to meet the world's biggest challenges and unlock nature's mysteries.



Healthy Plants, Healthy People, Healthy Planet

It is an exciting time to join JIC as we advance our ambitious Healthy Plants, Healthy People, Healthy Planet (HP³) strategic vision and build new, cutting-edge facilities.

In collaboration with The Sainsbury Laboratory, [HP³ sets out our ambitious long-term goals](#) for the global impact of our science, backed by more than £500 million investment in state-of-the-art laboratories, glasshouses, controlled environment chambers, and platform technologies offering unparalleled research infrastructure.

The laboratories, which are scheduled to open in 2031, will have the latest equipment in analytical biochemistry, genomics, bioimaging and structural biology, supported by a dedicated new Data Centre; future-proof computational infrastructure to support artificial intelligence and machine learning.

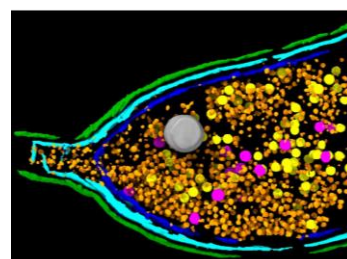


Norwich Research Park



The [Norwich Research Park](#) is one of five BBSRC-funded UK Research and Innovation Campuses, bringing together four independent internationally renowned research institutes: the John Innes Centre, Quadram Institute, Earlham Institute and The Sainsbury Laboratory. It is also home to the University of East Anglia, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and a community of more than 30 businesses. It is one of the largest single-site concentrations of research in food, genomics and health in Europe.

- [The Sainsbury Laboratory](#) focuses on plant-microbe interactions and crop diseases
- [The Earlham Institute](#) studies living systems with a strong emphasis on evolutionary functional genomics and informatics
- [The Quadram Institute](#) has leading programmes on food science, nutrition, and gut microbiology
- [The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) is one of the largest teaching hospitals in the UK
- [The University of East Anglia](#) is our partner University where all our PhD students are registered. [The Research Excellence Framework 2021](#) classified 91% of its research as 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent', ranking it first for Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Science, and [Development Studies](#).



About the role

The Chair of the Board of Trustees provides strategic leadership and direction to the Board of Trustees, ensuring it fulfils its responsibilities for the overall governance, direction, and continuing success of the John Innes Centre. Working closely with the Director, Board of Trustees and senior leadership team, the Chair will help ensure that JIC continues to deliver world-leading science, public benefit and organisational excellence, whilst also ensuring its financial sustainability.

The Chair will bring senior strategic leadership experience and a strong interest in JIC's scientific mission, with particular expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Industry
- Research and Innovation
- Business and organisational leadership
- Transformation and large-scale capital projects

The successful applicant will be / have:

- An accomplished strategic and creative thinker with a genuine interest in JIC's vision, mission and values.
- A highly regarded leader, with proven experience and success in leading senior executive teams and non-executive boards.

- Skilled in stakeholder management, with experience of engaging and influencing at the highest levels of government, funders, industry, academia and philanthropy.
- An outstanding communicator and ambassador, capable of promoting JIC externally and representing its interests nationally and internationally.
- A deep understanding of positive organisational culture, with the ability to support inclusive, effective and values-led leadership.
- Experienced in organisations undertaking major transformational change, including major capital investment and infrastructure programmes.
- Commercially aware, with experience gained in complex organisations.

Applicants should be sensitive to the demands of trusteeship, including the need to observe [The Seven Principles of Public Life](#).

The Chair is expected to devote a minimum of 18 to 24 days per year on JIC business.

As a registered charity, JIC does not remunerate Trustees. Reasonable expenses incurred in performing the role will be reimbursed.



About the role (continued)

The Chair's responsibilities will include:

- Supporting the Director to deliver the Institute's mission and strategic objectives, providing advice, challenge and strategic counsel.
- Acting as an ambassador for the Institute, enhancing its visibility, reputation and influence across government, research, policy, industry and other stakeholders nationally and internationally.
- Building and strengthening relationships with government, funders, academia, industry and philanthropic partners to advance the Institute's strategic ambitions and impact.
- Supporting the Director and Executive Team in development of the Institute's commercial strategy, helping to strengthen partnerships, diversify income streams and maximise the impact and translation of the Institute's research and innovation.
- Supporting the Director in positioning the Institute as the leading voice in plant and microbial sciences, extending the Institute's influence and enhancing its contribution to national and international priorities.
- Providing leadership to the Board, ensuring effective governance, collective accountability and sound decision-making in support of the Institute's mission.
- Promoting collaboration across the Norwich Research Park, engaging with fellow Chairs and Chief Executives of partner organisations to advance shared ambitions and maximise collective impact.
- Ensuring the highest standards of governance, integrity and regulatory compliance, including accountability to the Charity Commission where required.



Person profile

We will be using the following person specification for selection purposes, to ensure that the individual appointed has the key attributes required.

Experience & Capabilities

Essential

- Proven senior leadership experience and success in a significant organisation, including experience of managing staff and resources (£5m +) in a Director level, or equivalent senior role.
- Experience of strategic leadership in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment, including organisations undergoing major transformation.
- Experience in a scientific research, academic, commercial or government organisation.
- Significant experience of leading committees as a non-executive director or Trustee Director, and experience of following the 'Charity Governance Code' and/or other good governance frameworks.

- Proven experience of engaging and influencing at senior levels in academia, business, government, or the wider science sector.
- An established professional network and the ability to 'open doors'.

Desirable

- An understanding and experience of commercial research.
- Senior experience in knowledge transfer and translation (commercial or public benefit).
- Experience and understanding of the UK research funding environment, including working with funding agencies.
- An understanding of and experience in commercial and/or philanthropic fundraising.
- Experience of major capital development projects and the oversight and governance required to ensure successful delivery.



Person profile (continued)

Interpersonal and communication skills

- Excellent written and verbal communication, with the ability to express complex information in a concise and straightforward manner.
- Proven ability to build and maintain constructive professional relationships and to engage effectively with a wide range of stakeholders and audiences.
- Clear strategic thinking, with the ability to analyse complex information, demonstrate clear analytical intellect and guide rational decision making.
- Work collaboratively, building consensus in decision making.
- Ability to assess risk and promote risk awareness without being risk averse.

- A good understanding of and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Motivation

- A genuine enthusiasm and passion for the mission, values and long-term ambitions of the John Innes Centre.
- An appreciation of the transformative potential of plant and microbial science to address global challenges in food security, health and environmental sustainability.
- Willingness to commit the necessary time to undertake the role effectively and to travel to meetings as required (meetings are typically held in Norwich or London).



Image credit: Robin Niedojadlo

How to apply

The John Innes Centre has engaged McLean Partnership to support and advise on this appointment.

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role, please contact Dr Graham Little at McLean Partnership via email at grahamlittle@mcleanpartnership.com

Interested applicants are invited to submit a CV and a cover letter stating what motivates them to apply for the **Chair of the Board of Trustees** position at JIC.

Applications should be submitted by email to JIC@mcleanpartnership.com

Closing date for applications is Monday 16th November 2026.

Key Dates:

- Provisional Interviews with McLean: w/c 30th November and 7th December.
- Final Panel Interviews (London): w/c 18th January 2027.



MCLEAN
Partnership
