

31st January 2024

Dear Natalie

I would like to apply for the position of President Elect of the British Society of Soil Science. I joined the society when I was studying for my PhD over 20 years ago, and currently support the society on the Outreach, and Grants and Awards committees. I would be delighted and honored to be able to support the society on the board as President Elect. I have outlined my relevant skills and experience, and ambitions for the role below.

Soil science expertise: I completed a PhD on the recycling of biosolids to short rotation willow coppice at the University of Leeds and joined ADAS as a junior soil scientist in 2003. At ADAS I have worked on and latterly led several applied, mostly publicly funded, research projects developing sustainable soil and nutrient management practices. Most of my work is on agricultural soil science, focused on soil quality, nutrient management, recycling organic materials to land, diffuse pollution of the air and water environments from agriculture, and precision farming techniques to improve soil and nutrient management.

Project management: I have extensive experience of managing complex applied research projects, and currently lead two large (>£1 million) Defra funded projects: 'Development and Evaluation of a Free to Use Nutrient Management Planning Tool, and Longitudinal Research' (2023-2027) and 'Understanding rotational 'mob' grazing: Impacts, benefits and trade-offs' (2021-2026). I led the recently completed multi-partner EU Interreg project 'Increasing the speed and uptake of innovation in the field vegetable and potato sectors: defining a new approach for delivering cost effective research (INNO-VEG)'. As project lead, I am responsible for managing and coordinating the inputs of all project partners, ensuring the projects are successfully delivered on time and budget, and maximizing the impact and value of the project results.

Collaboration and networking: I work with a broad range of organisations and stakeholders relevant to soil science. The projects I lead have both academic and industry partners including Newcastle University, Bangor University, AFBI, SRUC, LLM Farm Vets and Liz Genever Consulting. I have also worked with collaborators in Europe including Aravlis, Delphy and Inagro. In addition to BSSS, I am a member of the British Grassland Society, International Fertiliser Society, Pasture Fed Livestock Association (PFLA), and the PFLA research group. I also represent ADAS as part of the Agri-TechE network.

Communications: I am an experienced speaker and frequently present to both academic and industry audiences. In the last year I have presented at the International Fertiliser Society Conference (crop sensing) and the Association of Applied Biologists Regenerative Agriculture Conference (invited keynote), as well as to farming audiences at a Swedish Brassica conference (in person, on soil management and precision farming), Norfolk Farm Cluster group (soil & nutrient management), AHDB Monitor Farm meetings (integrating livestock into arable rotations), and online webinars for Arla (soil management) and Tyfu Cymru (nutrient management). I recognise the importance of communicating our research to as wide an audience as possible and have given interviews to the farming press for articles in Farmers Weekly, CPM Magazine and Vegetable Farmer Magazine, and I also regularly post on social media (X and LinkedIn). I am currently working with the ADAS marketing team to develop a communications and marketing plan to maximise the profile and impact of the research delivered by the ADAS Sustainable Agricultural Systems Business. I would utilise the skills and experience gained from this initiative to support BSSS to further increase its profile and impact.

Outreach: I am a strong supporter of the need to raise the awareness of the importance of soils and promote soil science to a wider audience. I am a STEM ambassador, and in the last year have delivered online talks on soil science and careers in soil science to GCSE/A-level students at De Salis Studio College, City of Liverpool College, Winstanley College and Loreto College. I am supporting the Country Trust's 'Plant your pants' campaign to raise awareness of soils with Primary school children. As part of this I have run lessons for Year 3 and 4 children at two primary schools, provided scientific advice to Country Trust Staff, and was a speaker on the 'Plant your pants' live session joined live by over 1000 children. I have recently registered as a volunteer with 'Form the future' which aims to link employers to schools and support schools to meet their Gatsby benchmarks. In January last year, I recorded an episode on being a soil scientist with Jenny Jefferies on Black Cat Radio, and in September I was a guest on the 'Career discovery podcast' with Jo Smyth.

Leadership: As Associate Managing Director I co-lead the ADAS Sustainable Agricultural Systems Business of approximately 150 staff. I have director level responsibility for the Soils & Nutrients, Horticulture, and Field Operations sectors and line manage each of these sector heads. Since taking on the role in November 2021, we have updated our vision and strategy for the business and implemented a revised pay and progression strategy. To support me in this role I have joined the Institute of Leadership and in 2022 completed the Management Development Programme on 'Inspirational leadership' accredited by The Institute of Leadership at Grade Level 5.

Current and past support for BSSS: I am currently a member of the BSSS Grants and Awards, Outreach, and SEESOIL committees. I represented BSSS at Open Farm Sunday in 2017 and 2019. I have collaborated with BSSS on behalf of ADAS for a joint collaborative presence at Groundswell in 2023 and 2024.

Ambitions for the role: It is an exciting time to be a soil scientist! We have seen the importance of soils rise up in the political and public consciousness. The recent EFRA inquiry into soil health, along with coverage in the national press and films such as 'Kiss the ground' and 'Six inches of soil' has raised public awareness of soils and in turn the importance of soil science as a discipline. The BSSS has an important role in supporting members to be the voice of soil science and provide information to support decisions on soil management. The Society should be commended for how it has delivered this in recent years, notably the success of WCSS, and recent presence at the high-profile EFRA committee and COP28. I would work with the board to continue the progress BSSS has made to date and identify appropriate opportunities and platforms to speak on soil science. I would also be keen to support and promote continuing professional development of members, particularly early careers members, and communication of soil science to a wider (outside BSSS) audience.

Employer support: I have discussed this role with the ADAS Leadership team, and they have provided their full support for my application. If successful, we would plan ahead together to reduce my project delivery time during my period on the board to enable me to fully commit to the role with BSSS.

Thank you for considering me for this role. I think have the skills and experience to deliver it. The Society has a good existing strategy and excellent current leadership. It would be a privilege to deliver this role and continue the good work that so many others have done to date.

Many thanks

Lizzie Sagoo