



“Nature Finance: Incentives and barriers”

11 June 2025, Venue: Sir Bob Burgess Building 1.03, University of Leicester

Registration for in-person attendance:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/universityofleicesterschoolofbusiness/1715025>

9:00 – 9:30 Arrival and Registration

9:30 – 9:35 Welcome by Prof Ania Zalewska

9:35 – 10:05 Dr Ayman Omar, ULBS, “Self-selection in the voluntary carbon market”

10:05 – 10:35 Dr Lisa Sheenan, UCD, Ireland, “Investigating the impact of climate-related risks: A regime-switching analysis of bond market dynamics and inflation expectations”

10:35 – 11:05 Prof Ania Zalewska, ULBS, “Promoting corporate biodiversity awareness: governments versus institutional investors”

11:05 – 11:25 Coffee break

11:25 – 12:35 Keynote address: Prof Vikas Agarwal, Georgia State University, USA, “ESG Metrics in Executive Compensation: a Multitasking Approach”

12:35 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 14:45 Panel 1: Regulating Nature Finance

Moderator: Prof Ania Zalewska, ULBS

Panellists: Mark Adams, Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Louise Pryor, Ecology Building Society

Bart Reumkens, Central Bank of Ireland

Melissa Swartz, Environmental Agency

14:45– 15:00 Coffee break

15:00 – 16:15 Panel 2: Nature Finance in Action

Moderator: Prof Vikas Agarwal, Georgia State University, USA

Panellists: Farook Chaka, Watergates

Richard Fitton, Finance Earth

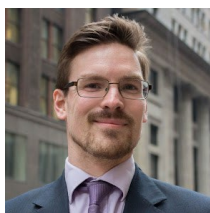
Raheem Mirza, Rebalance Earth

Alice Roberts, National Trust

16:15 – 16:30 Closing remarks, Prof Ania Zalewska

16:30 – 17:00 Networking drinks

Bios of the panellists



capital.

Mark Adams is the Principal Economist at the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the public body that advises the UK Government and devolved administrations on UK-wide and international nature conservation. Mark previously worked at Defra and before then in non-profit and academia in the United States. His current role includes combining economics and science-based and approaches to public policy problems including green finance and natural



investments, cloud based business administration and compliance, and funding and venture capital investments.

Farook Chaka is a Fellow Chartered Certified Accountant and a serial Entrepreneur in his own businesses to include franchise businesses, catering, recruitment, construction, technology and innovation. Farook has vast experience of over 25 years in advising business in strategy, funding, structuring and financial systems together with compliance matters with HMRC and Corporate Governance. Farook's particular areas of interest are new business, innovation, seed



corporate finance, spanning M&A and capital markets in the UK and Asia. Before Finance Earth, he spent four years at Vietnam's leading investment bank, where he helped major companies list on the local stock exchange and raise capital from global institutional investors.

Richard Fitton joined Finance Earth in 2019 and co-leads its Advisory business, focusing on corporate finance in the UK and internationally. He has led projects for clients including United Utilities, Norfolk Rivers Trust, and the World Water Council, and has advised UK, Scottish, and Welsh governments on scaling investment in nature. Richard played a key role in designing the Greater Manchester Environment Fund and supported the RSPB on private finance strategies. He is currently leading the development of the UK Nature Impact Fund. Richard's background is in



focuses on understanding the needs of clients and telling the story of how nature-based solutions can fit into investor portfolios. As the founder of a lifestyle brand, he brings an entrepreneurial mindset to his work, combining creativity with financial expertise to drive impactful marketing strategies at the intersection of finance, sustainability, and innovation.

Raheem Mirza is the Head of Marketing at Rebalance Earth, a boutique asset manager focused on financing nature as business-critical infrastructure. In his role, he works to ensure that nature is increasingly recognised as an asset class for investors. With experience in investment consulting at a FTSE 100 wealth manager and investment proposition at a FTSE 250 asset manager, Raheem understands different factors which inspire how capital flows. Now, at Rebalance Earth, Raheem



Louise Pryor is an actuary who for some time has been at the forefront of the profession's sustainability activities. She is a past Chair of the (then) London Climate Change Partnership, and is currently an Honorary Professor at UCL's Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction, and Chair of the Ecology Building Society. Her primary focus is on how the financial sector can support a sustainable world.



Alice Roberts leads for External Affairs across the Midlands and East of England at the National Trust. In addition to orchestrating the National Trust's political advocacy and stakeholder engagement in the region Alice manages 'Midlands Nature' a partnership of nine e-NGOs and agencies coming together to create a vision for Nature. Alice's background is in partnership working, community engagement and volunteer management.



Bart Reumkens is a financial services professional with over twenty-five years' industry experience particularly in risk management, data analytics and sustainable finance. His career includes a wide range of roles spanning a number of different financial organisations in both the public and private sector such as the National Treasury Management Agency of Ireland, Morgan Stanley and HSBC. He is currently a Senior Financial Risk Analyst at the Central Bank of Ireland. He is also a Finance Ph.D. Candidate at Chemnitz University of Technology in Germany, and holds a M.Sc. in Investment and Treasury from Dublin City University, Ireland.



Melissa Swartz is a senior advisor in the Environment Agency's Future Funding Department. With over 30 years experience working in the water and environment sector in four different countries, Melissa currently works with internal and external partners to enable investment into nature-based solutions that will deliver multiple benefits. Prior to this, Melissa was a hydrogeologist and team leader in the Environment Agency's North East Area. As a hydrogeologist, her role largely comprised working with catchment partners to protect groundwater resources and quality. She also ran her own business, Science 4 Schools, which provided education facilities with hands-on activities to inspire children, and ignite their wonder and curiosity about the world around them.

Bios of the moderators

The Keynote speaker



Vikas Agarwal is Distinguished University Professor of the University System of Georgia, and the Bank of America Distinguished Chair and Professor of Finance at Georgia State University's J. Mack Robinson College of Business. Vikas received his Ph.D. in finance from the London Business School. He is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Financial Research, University of Cologne, Germany. He also holds a Research Associate position at EDHEC Risk and Asset Management Center, France. He currently serves as a Director on the board of the Southeastern Alternative Fund Association and on the academic advisory council of Decatur Capital Management. His broad areas of research interest include investments, household finance, private equity, and behavioral finance. His articles have appeared in leading academic journals, including the Journal of Finance, Journal of Financial Economics, Review of Financial Studies, Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis, Review of Finance, and Management Science. His research has been cited and discussed in the financial press and magazines including Bloomberg, Euromoney, Financial Times, Forbes, International Herald Tribune, New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal.



Ania Zalewska is Professor of Finance, Prestigious Research Chair, Director of Research (Accounting and Finance), Director of the Centre for Finance, Governance and Sustainable Growth (FGSG) in the Leicester University School of Business, and the Lead of the Green Finance TAG at the Land Use for Net Zero (LUNZ) Hub. She is a cross-disciplinary researcher with interest in the development of financial markets, institutional investors and corporations. She has published extensively in leading academic journals including Journal of Financial Economics, Management Science, Economic Journal, and Journal of Corporate Finance, delivered keynote addresses at many academic and business conferences and workshops, and has been a member of scientific committees for numerous international research bodies including Max Planck Society's Dioscuri Centres of Excellence (Germany), and Fonds National de la Recherche (Luxembourg). She successfully mixes her academic career with advising numerous UK government bodies such as the Competition Commission, HMRC, the Committee on Standards in Public Life, FSA, DECC, BEIS, National Infrastructure Commission, oversees governmental bodies, and leading international companies and consulting firms on financial issues. She is a NED at the Southwest Heritage Trust. She has presented her research at leading policy organisations including IMF, and her opinions were featured in Financial Times, The Times, The Economist, The Hill, and many other international and national outlets.