

Natural England Board Innovation Group (BIG)

TERMS OF REFERENCE



Background

As Strategic Direction noted '*...too many indicators of the health of the natural environment continue to signal decline. We continue to lose even familiar species from special sites and the wider countryside....Consequently; we need to adapt our current approaches...*'

A case can be made, that our current approach is not effective enough to reverse these declines and/or is being out-competed by better resourced interests.

The current and forecast reductions in Grant In Aid (GIA) also strengthen our resolve to become more innovative so that we make the very best use of the funding available for improved environmental outcomes. Our efficiency will always be important, but our effectiveness is fundamental.

BIG Role

The Board Innovation Group (BIG) is an advisory working group of the Board of Natural England with a special interest in our Innovation (& Income) activities. Its role is twofold, to share and develop insight and ideas for Innovation, and also to provide challenge and scrutiny to support and stretch the executive in making a step change in our achievements as a result of more and better innovation.

BIG Membership

- Four members of the non-Exec Board, (David Hill – Chair, Andy Clements; Simon Lyster, and Nigel Reader – also the Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC))
- Chief Executive
- Director for Conservation Strategy & Innovation, and Director, Biodiversity Delivery (or another)
- One Area Manager, Somerset, Avon & Wiltshire (or another)
- Manager of Innovation and Income
- Secretariat – supplied by Board and Executive Services (BES)

Both BIG Membership, and these Terms of Reference and hence need for the Board Group, will be reviewed annually. As a Board working group it is a time limited group and the review of its terms of reference should assess whether the group needs to continue in the coming year. Membership should provide for both continuity and fresh perspective.

BIG Chair

David Hill, appointed by Chair of the non-Exec Board,

Terms of Reference

The objective of the BIG is to ensure a central and influential position for innovation in delivering Natural England's Strategic Direction; to provide insight and to stretch and

challenge the executive and to advise the Board on opportunities and ideas for Natural England to explore within set timescales, with specific focus on :

- Strategic innovation (e.g. new business areas, new approaches to delivery, near market solutions where Natural England activity can leverage substantial funding for the natural environment)
- New thinking emerging from outside Natural England
- Direct income and resource generation
- To act as a sounding board for strategic ideas being generated by staff and the innovation team

While encouraging free and frank discussion and the full utilisation of members' knowledge and skills, the spirit of the protocols concerning the handling of conflicts of interest set out in the board standing orders will be observed at all times by members. In the event of potential conflicts in respect of the group chair, the chairing of discussion of the relevant item(s) will defer to another member. As ARAC Chair Nigel Reader will be able to offer advice in this regard as well as to provide a conscience to the group.

Meetings

The BIG will meet at least five times each year. There is a standard programme of business. The BIG will report to the Board after each meeting and will provide the Board with an Annual Report summarising the conclusions from its work during the year. The Chair of BIG may convene further meetings as may be deemed necessary.