



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Triennial Review of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment

February 2015



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Triennial Review Team

Defra

Nobel House

Smith Square

SW1P 3JR

trt@defra.gsi.gov.uk

PB 14306

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1. About ACRE

1. The Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE) is a statutory advisory committee appointed under section 124 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It advises the UK government and the devolved administrations on risks to human health and the environment from the release and marketing of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
2. ACRE currently has 13 members including the Chair. Each member is appointed by ministers for terms of three or four years, and may if reappointed serve a maximum of 10 years. The current Chair has been in post since 2013, having previously served as a committee member for seven years.
3. Members are independent and are selected for their scientific and technical expertise; they do not represent stakeholder organisations. The committee currently consists of entomologists, ecologists, and molecular biologists, those with expertise in the strategic issues around food security, expertise in veterinary science and medical science, statistical expertise and agronomics.
4. ACRE assessors, who are representatives of Government departments and bodies with an interest in ACRE's business, may attend and participate in ACRE meetings and are consulted on issues relevant to them. These include the Devolved Administrations, the Health and Safety Executive, the Food Standards Agency and Natural England.
5. The committee meets about five times a year, depending on business. Some of ACRE's routine business is conducted between meetings by e-mail and through a Huddle workspace.
6. ACRE has an annual cost of about £45,000, made up of fees and travel expenses and costs of recruiting new members. The secretariat is provided by Defra staff who work part-time on ACRE support, estimated at £30,000 a year.

2. The review process

7. In April 2011, the Cabinet Office announced that all Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) would be reviewed at least once every three years.¹ The purpose of a Triennial Review is to provide a robust challenge to the continuing need for the NDPB and to check whether its functions and form are appropriate.
8. Function is assessed against the Government's three tests:
 - Is this a technical function which needs external expertise to deliver?
 - Is this a function which needs to be delivered with absolute political impartiality?
 - Is this a function which needs to be delivered independently of Ministers to establish facts or figures with integrity?
9. The review of form looks at:
 - alternative delivery models;
 - capacity for delivering more effectively and efficiently, including identifying potential for efficiency savings and its ability to contribute to economic growth; and
 - control and governance arrangements in place to ensure that the public body is complying with recognised principles of good corporate governance.
10. This Triennial Review of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE) was launched on 25 March 2014. The terms of reference for the review are in Annex 1. The Review has been conducted in accordance with the Cabinet Office Guidance on Reviews of NDPBs, recognising the need for the Review to be proportionate to the relatively small size of the organisation.²
11. The Triennial Review Team gathered evidence from:
 - ACRE members;
 - ACRE assessors;
 - relevant policy teams in Defra;
 - the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee;
 - specific key stakeholders; and
 - a public call for views between 20 March until 30 April 2014 (only one response was received from the public call for views, which was positive in its support for ACRE).

² Cabinet Office Guidance: http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/triennial-reviews-guidance-2011_tcm6-38900.pdf

3. Assessment of function

12. ACRE provides statutory advice on the risks to human health and to the environment from the release and marketing of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Its remit, as set out by legislation, is to provide advice on:

- the risks posed to human health and the environment by the release or marketing of GMOs;
- the limitations and conditions of consents issued to release or market GMOs. This covers post-release monitoring and provision to make amendments to consents;
- fees and charges relating to the cost of issuing consents, and in respect of maintaining inspection and enforcement regimes;
- the making of regulations under Part VI of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Deliberate Release Directive; and
- GM-related scientific issues.

13. Genetic modification is a high profile and sensitive issue. The Government has a commitment to a GMO policy based on scientific evidence, and needs a source of reputable independent and impartial scientific advice to underpin its domestic policy and its negotiating position in Europe. Indeed, the Public Attitudes to Science 2014 survey highlighted the key role of independent expert advice that is delivered in a transparent way in underpinning public confidence in the regulation of GMOs.³

14. ACRE members, who are appointed purely for their expertise and do not represent stakeholder interests, provide Ministers with the necessary assurances that GM policy is evidence-based and can stand up to scrutiny.

15. This Review therefore considers ACRE to fulfil a technical function, which needs to be delivered impartially and independently, and hence meets all three of the Government's tests set out in Section 2.

16. ACRE's advice on GMOs contributes to delivery of Defra's priorities, in particular "improving the environment" and "leading the world in food and farming" and we expect the need for ACRE to continue in the foreseeable future as there will be an ongoing need for safety assessments of GM trials and products coming to market. In fulfilling this role, ACRE's expertise will need to be kept under review to ensure it can meet the challenges of new developments in biotechnology.

³ Public Attitudes to Science, March 2014: www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/pas-2014-main-report.pdf

4. Assessment of form

17. ACRE is an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body set up under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The review considered the following alternative delivery models for ACRE functions:

Bring the functions in house

18. This option was ruled out given the requirement, described above, for the functions of the Committee to be delivered independently and impartially. In addition, this model would be expected to be more expensive than the current arrangements as Defra does not currently employ staff with the range of GM expertise that ACRE members have.

Contract with the experts

19. This could deliver the same results, but is unlikely to be more cost-effective as it would require similar secretariat functions and costs as for the current Committee i.e. recruitment of members, travel costs etc.

Merge with similar bodies

20. There are other Scientific Advisory Committees that sometimes advise on GMO issues in relation to novel foods and animal feed respectively. These are:

- **The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)**, which provides expert scientific advice to the Health and Safety Executive on the authorisation of novel foods, in accordance with EU Regulation 258/97. On occasion it also considers issues related to the safety of GM foods, for example by assessing new scientific evidence relevant to the safety assessment of GM foods. Responsibility for assessing applications for authorisation of new GM foods lies with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).
- **The Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF)** which provides advice on a broad range of animal feed issues to the Food Standards Agency, Defra and its devolved counterparts. This may occasionally involve issues associated with GM feed but, as with food, the primary responsibility for evaluating GM feed safety now resides with EFSA. It is EFSA's advice that provides the basis for authorisation decisions at EU level.

21. This Review considers that while a single committee covering all aspects of GM is possible, any merger seems likely to be less effective than the current arrangements because there is relatively little overlap in function and necessary expertise; there is little alignment between ACRE's work on contained use and environmental risks and the food and feed work, while GM considerations are not a major part of the work done by ACNFP and ACAF. In addition, the expertise needed to perform the

functions of all three committees would be very broad, making a combined committee difficult to manage.

22. This Review therefore concludes that the current Committee is the appropriate form to deliver the required functions.

5. Assessment of effectiveness

23. The consultation responses focussed on effectiveness rather than function or form. Consultees were in agreement that the committee as it presently stands is effective and delivers a high quality service. They agreed that the:

- advice provided is comprehensive and balanced;
- Committee members have specialist knowledge which is shared by a very small pool of people across the UK;
- diversity of expertise allows for accurate assessments of applications and of future advances in research techniques and commercial product development;
- secretariat is very effective and meetings are well received; and
- Committee is open to queries and ready to provide additional information as requested.

24. A previous review of ACRE undertaken in 2009 found that the committee was well-run, well-respected and effective. The review encouraged ACRE to promote further openness and transparency in the way it operates and to make greater use of electronic communication.

25. Both recommendations were followed up. Since February 2014 all main committee meetings are open to the public to attend as observers (any sensitive or confidential business is held in private) and ACRE holds occasional evidence-gathering meetings where experts are invited to give presentations and stakeholders are invited to participate. Meeting minutes and agendas are freely available online. ACRE now also has a Huddle shared workspace for the secretariat, members and assessors to access, where documents and meeting papers are shared for comment.

6. Assessment of governance

26. As part of the triennial review ACRE's governance arrangements were assessed against the Cabinet Office Principles of Good Corporate Governance for Advisory NDPBs.

27. Annex 2 summarises this assessment and shows that all of the requirements are met. In summary:

- **Accountability:** Defra provides all the secretariat support for ACRE. Committee members are appointed on merit following an open competition. ACRE publishes an annual report. The Chair and the Minister meet once a year and review ACRE's role and current activities.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** There is a Framework Document governing the working relationship between Defra and ACRE. There is regular dialogue between Defra sponsor team and ACRE, and the Chair assesses ACRE members' performance annually. Members and the Chair are appointed for their expertise and do not represent stakeholder interests.
- **Communication:** ACRE's meeting minutes and agendas are published online and the committee holds some of its meetings in public.
- **Conduct and behaviour:** Members' terms and conditions of appointment set out the conduct and behaviour expected. A register of members interests is published annually.

7. Conclusion

28. The Review has found that:

- **Function:** It is necessary for ACRE's functions to continue. The Committee is important in underpinning the Government's policy of ensuring that GM technology is used in a safe and responsible way;
- **Form:** Following consideration of alternative models, it remains appropriate for ACRE to remain as an advisory NDPB;
- **Effectiveness:** ACRE is effective and delivers a high quality service;
- **Governance:** ACRE meets the Cabinet Office Principles of Good Corporate Governance.

Annex 1: Terms of reference

The purpose of Triennial Reviews is to ensure that non-Departmental Public Bodies are still needed and comply with principles of good corporate governance.

The Review will follow two stages:

Stage 1: The Review will assess the functions and form of ACRE to confirm that they remain appropriate. It will take a proportionate approach to examine:

- ACRE's main objectives and how the organisation structures its functions, people and resources to deliver them;
- the nature of the functions and whether they are appropriate;
- alternative models to assess whether delivery of ACRE's functions through an NDPB continues to be the most appropriate delivery model;

In reaching conclusions on Stage 1, the Review will take into account previous reviews of the body (conducted in 2007 and 2009), which concluded that the functions of ACRE remained important.

Stage 2: If it is agreed that the ACRE should remain as an NDPB, the Review will assess the control and governance arrangements in place to ensure that the public body is complying with recognised principles of good corporate governance.

The Review is conducted on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs, and will be carried out in accordance with Government guidelines for Triennial Reviews⁴. The Review will be led by a Defra official with no direct involvement in the work of ACRE. It will be conducted in an open and inclusive way, and will take into account views from ACRE members, other Government Departments, stakeholder organisations, and ACRE's users. *Anyone with an interest will be able to contribute.*

⁴ Cabinet Office Guidance on Reviews of Non Departmental Public Bodies p.4-5 - http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/triennial-reviews-guidance-2011_tcm6-38900.pdf

Annex 2: Assessment of governance of ACRE

	Assessment of NDPB	
Accountability	Principle: The minister is ultimately accountable to Parliament and the public for the overall performance, and continued existence, of the advisory NDPB.	
Supporting provisions	The minister and sponsoring department should exercise appropriate scrutiny and oversight of the advisory NDPB. This includes oversight of any public monies spent by, or on behalf of, the body.	Defra provides the secretariat for ACRE. This includes managing its budget and costs, advising the committee on the operation of its business and ensuring that it operates within its remit.
	Appointments to the advisory NDPB should be made in line with any statutory requirements and, where appropriate, with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.	All appointments to ACRE, including the Chair, are made within the requirements of the OCPA Code of Practice.
	The minister will normally appoint the chair and all board members of the advisory NDPB and be able to remove individuals whose performance or conduct is unsatisfactory.	<p>Appointments are made on merit, following open competition. Interviews of prospective members are carried out by panels set up in accordance with the OCPA Code of Practice. The recommendation is submitted to the minister (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment and Science) who will put his final choice to ministers in the Devolved Administrations for agreement before the appointment is made. The minister is consulted regularly during the appointment process and has the option of meeting appointable candidates.</p> <p>The chair and members are subject to annual performance appraisal and their appointments can be terminated early if performance or conduct has been unsatisfactory.</p>

	The minister should meet the chair on a regular basis.	The Chair and the minister meet once a year and review ACRE's role and current activities
	There should be a requirement to inform Parliament and the public of the work of the advisory NDPB in an annual report (or equivalent publication) proportionate to its role.	ACRE publishes an annual report which describes the committee's major activities over the previous year. This is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/acre-annual-report-2013
	The advisory NDPB must be compliant with Data Protection legislation.	Any material published by ACRE is published on Gov.UK by the secretariat, who are Defra staff and aware of their obligations with respect to Data Protection legislation.
	The advisory NDPB should be subject to the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967.	All agendas, minutes, advice and annual reports are published on Gov.UK. Older electronic records are on the National Archives website, and earlier written records are on registered departmental files.
Roles and Responsibilities	<p>Principle: The departmental board ensures that there are appropriate governance arrangements in place with the advisory NDPB.</p> <p>Principle: There is a sponsor team within the department that provides appropriate oversight and scrutiny of, and support and assistance to, the advisory NDPB.</p>	
Supporting provisions	<p>Depending on the risks to the department's wider objectives and/or the size of the advisory body, the following arrangements may need to be put in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The departmental board's agenda should include scrutiny of the performance of the advisory NDPB proportionate to its size and role. There should be a document 	<p>ACRE is too small to be considered on its own as an item for the departmental board to scrutinise unless there was some particular issue with its conduct or management. Its annual cost is c. £45k. It does not have its own budget line as it is part of the running costs of the Chemicals and Emerging Technologies team</p> <p>The Framework Document governing the working relationship between Defra and ACRE is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239094/acre-framework-agreement.pdf This document contains ACRE's terms of reference</p> <p>The secretariat is part of Defra's team dealing with GMOs. The secretariat's role is defined in the Framework Document.</p>

	<p>in place which sets out clearly the terms of reference of the advisory NDPB. It should be accessible and understood by the sponsoring department and by the chair and members of the advisory NDPB. It should be regularly reviewed and updated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be a dedicated sponsor team within the parent department. The role of the sponsor team should be clearly defined. • There should be regular and ongoing dialogue between the sponsoring department and the advisory NDPB. • There should be an annual evaluation of the performance of the advisory NDPB and any supporting committees – and of the Chair and individual members. 	<p>Dialogue occurs on a frequent basis. Defra provides the secretariat to ACRE and attends ACRE meetings. There is regular contact outside the meetings by phone and email between the chair, members and secretariat. At each meeting ACRE is updated on UK policy or EU developments relevant to its remit so it understands the context in which it is operating.</p> <p>The chair assesses the members annually. The chair is assessed by the CET Deputy Director with input from the minister. The performance of the committee as a whole is covered through the report of its activities and achievements in its annual report.</p>
Role of the Chair	Principle: The chair is responsible for leadership of the advisory NDPB and for ensuring its overall effectiveness.	
Supporting provisions	The advisory NDPB should be led by a non-executive chair.	This requirement is met. The current chair has been in post since September 2013. She served on the committee for 7 years before being appointed as Chair.
	There should be a formal,	The appointment of the current Chair was compliant with the OCPA Code of

	<p>rigorous and transparent process for the appointment of the chair. This should be compliant with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The chair should have a clearly defined role in the appointment of non-executive board members.</p>	<p>Practice. The Chair sat on the panel set up to find new ACRE members in 2014 and was consulted about the role descriptions.</p>
	<p>The duties, role and responsibilities, terms of office and remuneration (if only expenses) of the chair should be set out clearly and formally defined in writing.</p> <p>Terms and conditions must be in line with Cabinet Office guidance and with any statutory requirements. The responsibilities of the chair will normally include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representing the advisory NDPB in any discussions with ministers; • advising the sponsoring department and ministers about member appointments and the performance of members; 	<p>The responsibilities, terms and remuneration of the Chair are set out in the terms and conditions of appointment, issued with the appointment letter. The terms and conditions used follow the template supplied by Defra's Public Appointments Team and are in line with Cabinet Office guidance and any statutory requirements.</p> <p>Ministerial discussions are standard practice for the ACRE Chair</p> <p>The Chair reviews with officials the composition of the committee and the expertise it will need for future challenges prior to a recruitment campaign. The Chair's views are fed in to ministers before a new recruitment process begins. The Chair undertakes the performance appraisal of the members.</p> <p>Members gain an understanding of their role and responsibilities through an induction session run by the ACRE secretary on the Chair's behalf. New members are also supplied with the Framework Document and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Bodies. The Chair undertakes assessments of members.</p> <p>ACRE's terms of reference are published on Gov.UK. These define its remit. The secretariat advises the Chair on any guidance ACRE needs to follow, any propriety or procedural issues and any legislative issues, so that the Chair can give appropriate direction to the committee.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that the members have a proper knowledge and understanding of their role and responsibilities. The chair should ensure that new members undergo a proper induction process and is normally responsible for undertaking an annual assessment of non-executive board members' performance; • ensuring that the advisory NDPB, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of guidance provided by the sponsoring department or ministers; • ensuring that the advisory NDPB carries out its business efficiently and effectively; and • representing the views of the advisory NDPB to the general public, when required. 	<p>The Chair will agree deadlines for ACRE working groups and reports produced by the whole committee to ensure outputs are timely. The secretariat ensures the chair and members are fully informed of any deadlines to meet statutory requirements.</p> <p>Generally the Chair will act as the spokesperson for ACRE if approached by the media, but will consult Defra beforehand.</p>
Role of other members	Principle: the members should provide independent, expert advice.	
Supporting provisions	There should be a formal, rigorous and transparent process	Appointments are made in line with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

	for the appointment of members to the advisory NDPB. This should be compliant with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.	
	Members should be properly independent of the Department and of any vested interest (unless serving in an ex-officio or representative capacity).	Members and the Chair are appointed for their expertise and do not represent stakeholder interests. They must observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice they provide, following the Seven Principles of Public Life as set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. These principles are part of their terms and conditions of appointment. Additionally they must comply with the Code for Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees. A register of interests is published in annual reports and at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239152/acre-members-interests_2013.pdf .
	Members should be drawn from a wide range of diverse backgrounds, but should have knowledge and expertise in the field within which the body has been set up to advise ministers. The advisory NDPBs as a whole should have an appropriate balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge.	Before seeking to recruit new members, the Chair and Secretariat review the composition of the committee and assess the range of expertise currently available against ACRE's anticipated future workload. Recruitment campaigns are run in line with OCPA guidance and aim to attract a strong and diverse field of candidates. ACRE members are independent and selected purely for their scientific and technical expertise in the field of GMOs. The committee consists of academics and two farming experts. .
	The duties, role and responsibilities, terms of office and remuneration of members should be set out clearly and formally defined in writing. Terms and conditions must be in line with Cabinet Office guidance and	Roles and responsibilities are set out Framework Document. https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/advisory-committee-on-releases-to-the-environment/about/our-governance#acre-framework-agreement Terms and conditions follow the template supplied by Defra's Public Appointments team which meets any Cabinet Office or statutory requirements.

	with any statutory requirements.	
	All members must allocate sufficient time to the advisory NDPBs to discharge their responsibilities effectively.	Members before appointment are made aware of a time commitment of about 20 days a year. Meetings are booked well in advance to ensure good attendance levels. Much of the committee's business is done by email or in a Huddle workspace between meetings. The number of meetings members have attended each year is recorded on performance appraisals.
	There should be a proper induction process for new members. This should be led by the chair. There should be regular reviews by the chair of individual members' training and development needs.	Members of the Committee are appointed for their professional expertise. On appointment they receive induction training covering their role, the role of the Committee and the authorisation process.
	All members should ensure that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times. This should include ensuring that the advisory NDPB operates in an open, accountable and responsive way.	Members and the Chair must observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice they provide, following the Seven Principles of Public Life as set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Additionally they must comply with the Code for Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees.
Communication	Principle: The advisory NDPB should be open, transparent, accountable and responsive.	
Supporting provisions	The advisory NDPB should operate in line with the statutory requirements and spirit of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.	Any Freedom of Information enquires would be handled by the secretariat in accordance with the legislation and in consultation with the committee if required.
	The advisory NDPB should make an explicit commitment to openness in all its activities. Where appropriate, it should establish clear and effective channels of communication with	ACRE is committed to operating in an open and transparent manner. Minutes and agendas for ACRE meetings are available at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/advisory-committee-on-releases-to-the-environment/about/our-governance#meetings . ACRE also publishes an annual report and advice on specific issues, and a register of its members' interests.

	<p>key stakeholders. It should engage and consult with the public on issues of real public interest or concern. This might include holding open meetings or annual public meetings. The results of reviews or inquiries should be published.</p>	<p>ACRE holds occasional evidence-gathering meetings where it will concentrate on one topic on which it requires further information before publishing a report,. At these events outside experts will give presentations and the public can attend and ask questions. Most of the people who attend are representatives of stakeholder groups. Examples include GM insects and the EU regulatory system for GMOs.</p> <p>ACRE in the past has held its normal committee meetings in public on occasions (about one a year or less). From February 2014 all of the normal meetings have been held in public and people can register to attend as observers. Sensitive or confidential business will still be conducted in private.</p>
	<p>The advisory NDPB should proactively publish agendas and minutes of its meetings.</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings and agendas are published on the ACRE website https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/advisory-committee-on-releases-to-the-environment/about/our-governance</p>
	<p>There should be robust and effective systems in place to ensure that the advisory NDPB is not, and is not perceived to be, engaging in political lobbying. There should also be restrictions on members attending Party Conferences in a professional capacity.</p>	<p>This requirement is covered in the terms and conditions of appointment so misconduct in this area could lead to dismissal. Central Government advice on political activity, such as attendance at Party Conferences, is circulated to members.</p>
Conduct and Behaviour	Members should work to the highest personal and professional standards. They should promote the values of the advisory NDPB and of good governance through their conduct and behaviour.	
Supporting provisions	<p>A Code of Conduct must be in place setting out the standards of personal and professional behaviour expected of all members. This should follow the Cabinet Office Code. All</p>	<p>There is not a separate code of conduct document but the terms and conditions of appointment cover conduct in sufficient detail to meet this requirement. Members are also obliged to abide by the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees and the Framework Document setting out the relationship with Defra. .</p>

	members should be aware of the Code. The Code should form part of the terms and conditions of appointment.	
	There are clear rules and procedures in place for managing conflicts of interest. There is a publicly available Register of Interests for members. This is regularly updated.	<p>A register of Interests is updated annually and published on the ACRE website and in its Annual Report. https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/advisory-committee-on-releases-to-the-environment/about/our-governance#terms-of-membership</p> <p>Members also declare any interest before individual agenda items are discussed at the meetings and there is clear guidance on a member's involvement in the discussion of an item when an interest has been declared This is covered in the Framework Document</p>
	There must be clear rules in place governing the claiming of expenses. These should be published. Effective systems should be in place to ensure compliance with these rules.	Travel and subsistence is payable within Defra guidelines. There is advice on the member's claim forms or they can ask the secretariat if they have any queries. All claims are checked and authorised (or challenged if necessary) by the secretariat before submission to Defra's payments section.
	There are clear rules and guidelines in place on political activity for members and that there are effective systems in place to ensure compliance with any restrictions.	Candidates for committee membership are required to declare any significant political activity (which includes holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election) which they have undertaken in the last five years. Details of committee members with declared political activity are published by Defra when the appointments are publicised.
	There are rules in place for members on the acceptance of appointments or employment after resignation or retirement. These are enforced effectively.	This is covered in the terms and conditions of appointment. Committee members need to clear with the Department, in advance, any appointment or employment taken up within two years of leaving ACRE where official duties resulted in personal involvement with the company or other organisation making the offer, or access to commercially sensitive information of this company or other organisation.