

Forestry Commission Expert Committee on Forest Science

Terms of Reference

Remit

The Board of Forestry Commissioners has established the Expert Committee on Forest Science (ECFS) to provide independent, expert advice and assurance on the quality of science and evidence provided by the Forestry Commission's (FC) research agency Forest Research (FR) and other providers.

The ECFS will also act as a resource to advise, if required, the Research Commissioning Team within the Welsh Government, the FC, the UK Government and the devolved administrations on the formulation and delivery of strategies for forestry science in the UK to support the objectives of forestry in the UK.

In carrying out the remit the Committee will be responsible for:

- providing assurance on the robustness of the science proposed to address the research questions in the commissioned research programmes;
- reviewing the quality of science provided by FR and other external providers to ensure it is fit for purpose and defensible;
- providing a perspective on the quality and applicability of applied research, particularly where it is not subject to formal external peer review;
- supporting scientists in FR through the mentoring and development of its staff, by complementing the work being done by FR itself;
- advising on opportunities for collaboration and new research programmes; and,
- providing an independent view to the FC and those tasked with commissioning research, on forthcoming challenges, which may require a research focus in the future.

Membership

The Committee will comprise a Chair and seven members. The Chair and five of the members will be from the scientific and stakeholder community, including a member of the Research Commissioning Team within the Welsh Government, and the FC's Chief Scientific Advisor.

The Chair will be appointed for a three year term. In the event of the Chair leaving before the end of their three year term, one of the members will take over the role of Chair, until a new appointment is made.

The external members will serve a term of up to five years.

Members may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms.

External members, with the core skills, expertise and experience required to help deliver the business of the committee, will be appointed in line with the procedures outlined in the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (GoScience 2011). Appointees are members in their own right and should not serve as representatives of stakeholder organisations.

Operation

The Committee will operate in line with the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees, including the government's Principles for Scientific Advice (GoScience, 2011).

The Committee will meet twice per year, setting its own agenda with input from, and responding to, issues raised by the Forestry Commission and the Devolved Administrations.

Administrative support, including a secretary, will be provided by the FC's Commissioners' Office.

Reporting

Formal reporting will be via the FR Board to the Board of Commissioners, copied to the Research Strategy Reference Group (RSRG) which provides programme level assurance to the Forestry Governance Group (FGG) on the research commissioning.

Transparency

The ECFS should establish a policy on what documents are to be published based on principles of openness and transparency. All committees are expected to publish, as a minimum, programmes of work, meeting agendas, minutes, final advice (where appropriate) and an annual report. Unless there are particular reasons to the contrary, the Committee should also consider routinely publishing supporting papers. However, the Committee will also respect restricted information of a personal or commercial nature.

Review

The functions and performance of the committee will be subject to a three yearly review, which the FC will undertake on behalf of the Board of Forestry Commissioners.