



Natural England Science Advisory Committee (NESAC)

Terms of Reference

Purpose

NESAC provides independent advice, challenge and review to Natural England's Science and Evidence functions and works to strengthen its relationship with the wider scientific community.

Key responsibilities

NESAC will:

- Provide advice and steer to the Natural England Board on the integrity and relevance of Natural England's science, evidence and evaluation strategy; our overall science and evidence programme; of our prospective research and monitoring programmes; and our plans for particular pieces of work in novel or contested areas of science.
- Provide challenge on the rationale and methods for proposed studies; and to the emerging findings of specific pieces of research.
- Provide post hoc analysis, and comment, on the success of methodologies and approaches we have applied.
- Provide assurance that internal peer review and external QA processes adopted are robust.
- Identify suitably qualified reviewers that might be approached to undertake external quality assurance or peer review.
- Provide a strategic external perspective to support Natural England's futures and horizon scanning work.
- Act as an external champion for Natural England's science and evidence; helping to forge links and partnerships with the wider scientific community; e.g. sponsoring a

series of NESAC Science Seminars or contributing to Natural England Science Conferences.

NESAC may occasionally be asked to provide advice on issues relating to the natural environment across government, reflecting Natural England's role as the government's statutory adviser on the natural environment in England.

Membership

Membership will comprise of the following:

- Three nominated specialists from the Natural England Board, one of whom will act as NESAC Chair.
- At least eight independent external members, judged by the representatives of the Board to offer appropriate expertise.
- Invited/co-opted members recruited on a time-limited basis to offer expertise on a specific subject.
- Natural England Chief Scientist

Chief Scientist's Directorate Directors and Deputy Chief Scientists will also attend NESAC. The Chair and nominated Board Members will normally be expected to serve for a formal term of three years and may serve more than one consecutive term. Independent members will be selected to reflect the range of expertise required to deliver Natural England's purpose. These members will be expected to serve for at least three years, but there will be no formal term limit.

The Chair, Chief Scientist and secretariat will review the membership annually to ensure continuity and fresh perspectives are provided and that the breadth, depth and balance of expertise is sufficient to perform the role of the Committee. NESAC will aim to maintain expertise across a wide breadth of specialist areas:

- marine, coastal, freshwater, terrestrial, urban ecology, ecosystem structure, process and function
- soil science, agriculture and land-use
- economics, ecosystem services and natural capital
- landscape, hydrology, geology and geomorphology
- public dialogue, engagement and participation, behavioural sciences
- social research methods and analysis, evaluation, futures studies
- recreation and access
- green infrastructure
- public health and wellbeing
- new and emerging technologies and methodologies

Meetings

- Meetings will be held at least 4 times per year with dates for the following year being agreed by the previous July.
- Meetings will be organised in a way that ensures NESAC provides a good balance of advice, challenge and review across the course of the year.
- Meetings will typically consider 3-4 substantive papers agreed in advance by the Chair, Chief Scientist and Secretariat.
- On occasion, NESAC may undertake field visits and will aim to host at least one externally-facing Science Seminar each year.
- The Chair will report to the full NE Board regarding outcomes of the discussions.
- Secretariat will be provided through Chief Scientist's Directorate with support from Board Services.

Ways of working

- Papers may be commissioned by:
 - i. Requests from NE Board to scrutinise the evidence underpinning key work areas or decisions.
 - ii. Topics proposed by NESAC Chair and Members, Natural England's Chief Scientist or Natural England officers.
 - iii. An outline future programme will be maintained by the secretariat and reviewed by NESAC at least annually.
 - iv. Secretariat will submit detailed agendas to be agreed between Chief Scientist and NESAC Chair one month in advance.
 - v. Secretariat will submit papers to NESAC Chair for QA 12 days before the meeting and will circulate finalised copy to NESAC members at least 7 days before the meeting.
 - vi. Any time extensions to be approved in advance by Chief Scientist.
- Actions/notes:
 - i. Any direct actions will be circulated within 48 hours of meeting to members of group/authors.
 - ii. Draft notes and confirmed actions will be circulated within 72 hours of meeting.
 - iii. A full report will be produced for the next NE Board meeting and circulated with papers for the following NESAC meeting.
 - iv. NESAC papers will be loaded on TRIM and made available within Natural England via the Technical Information Exchange

A communication note will be produced for wider internal/external circulation.