Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Defra Science Advisory Council: Social Science Expert Group

Membership

Chair: Professor Susan Owens OBE, FBA

Appointed October 2021 for 3 years.

Professor of Environment and Policy (Emerita) and Fellow Emerita of Newnham College, University of Cambridge. Fellow of the British Academy and of the Academy of Social Sciences. Research in the field of environmental governance, policy processes in modern democracies, role of evidence and expertise in policy formation and change.
Member of Defra Science Advisory Council and of the Evidence Advisory Committee, Natural Resources Wales; Chair of Stockholm Environment Institute's Science Advisory Council. Previous service includes Review Panel on Highly Protected Marine Areas; Defra's Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee; the Science Policy Advisory Group of the Royal Society; and the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.

Members

Our members are:

Professor Peter Jackson

First appointed May 2018 for 3 years, re-appointed May 2021 for 3 years.

Professor of Human Geography at the University of Sheffield and a Fellow of the British Academy and of the Academy of Social Sciences.
His research is in the areas of social and cultural geography, with a particular interest in agri-food studies, moral economies and consumer practice.

Professor Andy Jordan

First appointed October 2019 for 3 years.

Professor of Environmental Policy at the Tyndall Centre, University of East Anglia. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and of the Academy of Social Sciences. He researches environmental policy and governance, with a particular focus on the EU and its Member States. He is currently examining the impacts of Brexit on UK environmental policy, as well as climate governance post-Paris.

Professor Harriet Bulkeley

First appointed March 2023 for 3 years.

Professor in the Department of Geography, Durham University, and at the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, Harriet is a Fellow of the British Academy and of the Academy of Social Sciences. Her research focuses on environmental governance and the politics of climate change, energy, nature and sustainable cities and is currently concerned with examining the role of nature-based solutions for climate change, biodiversity and social justice. She undertakes research with a range of partners including UN-Habitat, OECD, WEF and non-governmental organisations and is a member of the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (2023 – 2027).

Professor Jennifer Gabrys

First appointed March 2023 for 3 years.

Professor in Media, Culture and Environment in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge. She leads the Planetary Praxis research group and is Principal Investigator on the ERC-funded project, Smart Forests: Transforming Environments into Social-Political Technologies. She also has led Citizen Sense and AirKit, which are participatory and practice-based research projects funded by the

ERC that address air pollution and citizen engagement. Her research focuses on digital technologies, environments and public engagements.

Professor Simon Willcock

First appointed March 2023 for 3 years.

Professor Simon Willcock (Rothamsted Research & Bangor University) is a data-driven, interdisciplinary scientist who uses novel quantitative methods to understand sustainability. He is an expert in ecosystem services and also studies resilience (i.e., how current and future shocks may impact both natural and social systems – for example, pre-empting how resilient agricultural systems are to extreme climate events, and how this may change the needs of farmers). Simon believes the future of agriculture and our environment will be determined by more than food production – which is only one of many ecosystem services provided by the UK countryside. He works with large-scale social science methods, focussing at the same spatial and temporal scale as readily available natural science data (e.g. weekly at kilometre-scale resolution across the whole of the UK). He believes these advances will help up-scale many aspects of social science research to better match data available from natural science and enable more sustainable decisions to be made in future. Simon is excited to engage in and support interdisciplinary decision making, particularly related to citizen science, ecosystem services, natural capital, resilience, systems dynamics, and tipping points.

Professor Shonil Bhagwat

First appointed March 2023 for 3 years.

Professor of Environment and Development at the Open University. Shonil works at the cross-section between natural and social sciences and his research engages critically with discussions on a variety of key global challenges: agriculture and food security, biodiversity conservation, climate change and sustainability. An environmental geographer, Shonil is currently Head of School of Social Sciences and Global Studies at the Open University. He is also a member of the National Trust's Specialist Advice Network: Natural Environment Advisory Group and has previously contributed to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) as a Lead Author for the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration.

Professor Paul Milbourne

First appointed March 2023 for 3 years.

Professor of Human Geography at Cardiff University and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and the Learned Society of Wales. Paul's research is positioned within the fields of rural, environmental, and social geography, with a particular focus on the geographies of poverty and injustice. His current research includes projects on rural poverty, food poverty, food justice and urban food system transformation.