

# Defra Science Advisory Council (SAC)

## Minutes of meeting, 10 May 2023

### Actions arising

Action number	Action	Owner
none		

### 1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees, apologies are recorded in Annex A.

### 2. CSA Update

The Deputy Chief Scientific Advisor (DCSA) provided updates on the following:

- negotiations are continuing between the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) on reassociation of Horizon and it remains the UK's position that we hope to reassociate on fair and reasonable terms.
- On Europe Day the EU ambassadors wrote a letter to The Guardian in which they stated that they would welcome a much closer relationship with the UK after the [Windsor framework](#).
- Retained EU law (REUL) continues to be a moving target in government and Defra are monitoring this closely to see how and when the best time would be to engage SAC again on this subject.

### 3. Systems Work on Land Use

Land use is a complex issue with significant implications for the government's goals on food, biodiversity, water, air, climate, rural development, and housing. Defra's Systems Research team is applying systems thinking principles and approach to land use policy to help the department embed systems thinking into policy and evidence., The team recently met with the SAC to discuss progress and seek expert steer on future priorities.

The SAC discussed possible ways of testing systems research insights with cohorts of stakeholders in specific sub-systems. They also explored ideas for making use of more complex simulation models. SAC agreed with the importance of building trust with key stakeholders and designing long-term strategies to build trusted relationships.

On future direction, the SAC felt that all areas of Defra's work have significant complexity, and that particularly water, chemicals, and pollution could benefit from systems thinking to assess intervention points and unintended consequences. They also suggested considering systems research to optimize food security with land use change, and to assess the impact of offshoring emissions and other outcomes of the food system.

## **Annex A: Attendees and apologies**

### **SAC Members**

Louise Heathwaite (Chair)  
Lin Field  
Lisa Collins  
Peter Cox  
Susan Owens  
Richard Bardgett

Rowland Kao  
Rosie Hails  
Nick Hanley  
Marian Scott  
Felix Eigenbrod

### **Defra Chief Scientific Adviser's Office**

Justine Bejta – Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser (DCSA)  
SAC Secretariat

### **Devolved administration observers**

Alistair Carson – Northern Irish Government Observer  
Matthew Williams – Scottish Government Observer  
Caryl Williams – Welsh Government Observer

### **Defra and other officials in relation to specific agenda discussion**

Head of Systems, Innovation and Futures  
Systems Research Programme Managers

### **Defra observers**

Systems team members

### **Apologies**

Gideon Henderson – Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA)