



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Trees and Woodlands Scientific Advisory Group – recruitment pack

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing date: midday on 18 October 2023

September 2023

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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Defra mission statement

Defra wants Britain to be a great place to live. Our work plays a critical role in the wellbeing of everyone in the country through the creation of healthy environments, a world leading food and farming industry, a thriving rural economy and enhanced protection against floods and animal and plant diseases.

Appointing high-calibre people from diverse backgrounds with relevant skills, knowledge and experience to the boards of our public bodies will help us to ensure that our work is more effective, resilient and accountable.

Equal opportunities

UK government has a policy of equality of opportunity. We aim to promote equal opportunity policies whereby no one suffers unfair discrimination either directly or indirectly, or harassment, on grounds such as race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or age.

Diversity

We positively welcome applicants from all backgrounds. All appointments are made on merit following a fair and open competition. Diverse applicants and applicants early in their career are encouraged to apply.

Disability

Defra will be operating an interview access scheme for disabled people (as defined by the Equalities Act 2010) who meet the minimum criteria for this appointment as published in these notes. If you wish to apply for consideration under this scheme, please notify the Department when you return your application. In addition, if you require any special arrangements at interview stage, please give details in a covering letter to enable us to make the appropriate arrangements if necessary. Furthermore, adjustments will be made in the event of a successful application.



What is the Trees and Woodlands Scientific Advisory Group?

The [Trees and Woodlands Scientific Advisory Group - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/trees-and-woodlands-scientific-advisory-group) (TaW-SAG) was established in April 2021 and provides independent and scientific support, advice and challenge to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on matters related to trees and forestry. TaW-SAG is an advisory, non-departmental public body (NDPB).

The Group currently has 13 members and are looking for 2 new members¹:

- one with research expertise in commercial and productive forestry (including aspects of the forestry and wood products supply chains)
- one with research expertise in forest carbon cycling (preferably of managed forests)

Aim

The aims and objectives of the Trees and Woodlands Scientific Advisory Group (TaW-SAG) is to provide high quality, robustly evidenced, and independent expert advice, challenge, and scientific support to Defra specialists and policy makers in matters related to trees and forestry to support the objectives of the England Trees Action Plan (ETAP)², the statutory tree and woodland target, the 25 Year Environment Plan³ and supporting the delivery of the Environmental Improvement Plan⁴.

Remit and role

TaW-SAG is one of several expert advisory groups within Defra and provides balanced independent, technical, scientific advice to the Nature for Climate Tree Programme, ensuring that Defra receives input from a wide range of scientific experts and disciplines. TaW-SAG is itself highly multi- and inter-disciplinary and seeks to draw together advice

¹ TaW-SAG provides independent expert advice and any candidates employed by a government organisation will be required to provide advice in a personal expert capacity rather than representing their organisation.

² [The England Trees Action Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94421/2020-11-17-etap-2021-25.pdf)

³ [25-year-environment-plan.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94421/2020-11-17-etap-2021-25.pdf)

⁴ [Environmental Improvement Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94421/2020-11-17-etap-2021-25.pdf)

equitably from across the sciences and social sciences. The Group's remit and role includes, but is not limited to:

- supporting policy makers to achieve key outcomes of wider environmental and socio-economic objectives including carbon sequestration, nature recovery and biodiversity, tree resilience, water and air quality, flood control and storm buffering, job creation and economic growth, health and wellbeing
- technical advice to support achievement of these co-benefits, including advice on mapping, tree planting and tree management
- identifying, informing and providing leadership for the articulation of scientific evidence requirements, including the programme's role in the delivery of ETAP, and providing advice on evidence gaps that may be funded by the research and development funding available to the programme

TaW-SAG is a forum for providing expert advice and not a forum for lobbying.

Terms of reference

See Appendix 1 for Terms of reference. Please note these are currently being reviewed so may be subject to minor changes.

Background of TaW-SAG

The government has committed to facilitate woodland creation on an unprecedented scale, increasing planting to a rate of 30,000 hectares of trees per annum in the UK from 2025 onwards, supporting government's Net Zero commitments, whilst also maximising other environmental (and socio-economic) objectives. Trees and Forestry policy are devolved, but Defra works closely with Devolved Administrations to ensure we are on track to collectively deliver the UK wide commitment by the end of this Parliament.

The Government has legislated a statutory tree and woodland cover target for England. The target is to increase tree canopy and woodland cover of England to 16.5% by 2050.

The ETAP set out priorities for achieving the objectives of expanding, protecting and improving our trees and woodlands. It also set out the increased role that trees and woodlands can play in supporting the economy, how best to further connect people to nature, and the most effective way in which trees and woodlands can be created and managed to help combat climate change.

To drive forward this ambitious agenda, the Nature for Climate Tree Programme has been established to oversee the delivery of the ETAP over this Parliament.

Defra's Trees, Woodlands and Forestry team provide the secretariat for TaW-SAG, with support from the Science and Analysis Group.

The role specification and essential criteria

New members will be appointed from November 2023 until March 2025.

Required expertise

TaW-SAG is seeking 2 new members with specific research expertise, as well as skills and experience, to provide advice on the broader issues across the field of trees, woodlands and forestry. Candidates must be able to demonstrate significant expertise in one of the following areas:

- commercial and productive forestry (including aspects of the forestry and wood products supply chains)
- forest carbon cycling (preferably of managed forests)

Essential criteria

Candidates must be able to demonstrate all the following essential criteria:

- significant expertise, evidenced by a track record in the peer-reviewed literature, in one of the areas:
 - commercial and productive forestry (including aspects of the forestry and wood products supply chains)
 - forest carbon cycling (preferably of managed forests)
- the ability to analyse issues in an impartial way and work across a range of topics drawing on, but not limited by, their expertise
- the ability to provide strategic scientific advice on matters relating to the use of evidence in policy making in Defra – this will include the broader issue of how Defra obtains and accesses its external advice
- a collaborative style and the ability to command the respect and confidence of the TaW-SAG Chair, Defra senior officials and Defra senior scientists – this might include the ability to Chair a subgroup on a specific issue that may arise
- an understanding of the interface between science, commerce and policy along with knowledge of UK and international research funding relevant to Defra
- demonstrable ability in strategically assessing the application of evidence in policy-making

Member code of conduct

All members are expected to abide by the code of conduct comprising the Seven Principles of Public Life. See Appendix 1 and Annex 2.

Time commitment

You should ensure you have sufficient time to meet the expectations of the role. The workload will vary depending upon the requirements of Defra and events that may impact on the needs for expert advice.

TaW-SAG usually meet 6 times a year for 2 hours. In addition, preparation and de-brief time is expected to be up to 2 hours. Normally 5 meetings are conducted virtually, and one in-person meeting is held at an agreed location.

In addition, it is envisaged that each TaW-SAG member should be willing to participate in activities during exceptional circumstances that fall within Defra's remit (with considerations of an individual's availability and relevant skills being taken into account), and in some circumstances this may involve participation in meetings or advice papers called at short notice.

Formulation of advice notes normally takes place by email exchange between meetings and requires a time commitment of approximately 4 hours per note.

During the year, TaW-SAG business will require a total time commitment equivalent to approximately 8 to 10 days.

TaW-SAG duties will be performed through discussions and engagement with Defra officials and key stakeholders at the TaW-SAG meetings, sub-group meetings and on papers or advice produced collectively by TaW-SAG at Defra's request.

Meetings are normally arranged well in advance and every effort will be made to avoid state school holiday periods. In some circumstances meetings may be called at short notice should exceptional situation arise; however, every effort will be made to avoid this.

There are circumstances where Defra withholds the right to serve notice or terminate an appointment. These include the member being absent from meetings for a period of more than 6 months without the permission of the Directors Nature for Climate Tree Programme or the member's attendance being so erratic as to interfere with the good running of the Group. Termination can also be by either party giving three months' notice or by mutual consent.

Remuneration and expenses

Claiming remuneration and travel expenses for TaW-SAG related work is optional. Where claims are made, remuneration will be paid at a rate of £39 per hour for attendance at meetings and the time needed to prepare for the meeting. For virtual meetings, 2 hours is allocated for the meeting and up to 2 hours preparation or de-brief time (for example to peer-review papers for the meeting, read and assess pre-meeting papers, any preparatory work and de-brief after the meeting). For in-person meetings we will pay for the time spent travelling to the meeting location, attending the meeting and up to 2 hours preparation or de-brief time.

For in-person meetings, all reasonable travel expenses incurred by independent advisors in fulfilling their advisory role will be reimbursed via the committee claim procedure. In-person meetings may require members to travel far and stay overnight, especially if the meeting is over 3 hours long. Accommodation, subsistence, public transport costs and mileage can be reimbursed, a receipt is required for each claim.

For claiming for travel and subsistence expenses members will be provided with a claim form which is accompanied by guidance notes. Any queries regarding claims should be referred to the secretariat.

The Department has due regard to diversity. Expenses may include reimbursement of reasonable additional childcare or other carer costs that are occurred due to TaW-SAG commitments, and the reimbursement of reasonable additional expenses of disabled people. Diverse applicants and applicants early in their career are encouraged to apply.

Conflict of interest

If you have any real or perceived conflict of interest that might affect your ability to undertake this role, please provide details in your supporting letter. You should disclose information on any relevant business interest, political activity, public appointment or position of authority, including any other connection with commercial, public or voluntary bodies. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the Assessment Panel at the shortlisting and interview stages.

Data protection

Defra is committed to protecting your privacy and to processing your personal information in a manner which meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Disability

We guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post. 'Minimum criteria' means you must provide sufficient evidence in your application, demonstrating that you meet the minimum level of competence required for each essential criterion, as well as meeting any of the qualifications, skills or experience required.

Defra is committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. To show this we proudly display the Disability Confident Leader logo. Find out more about [Disability Confident Leaders](#). If a disabled person is put at a disadvantage compared to a non-disabled person, we have a duty to make reasonable changes to our processes where possible. If you need a change to be made so that you can make your application, please contact the TaW-SAG Secretariat at TAWSAG@defra.gov.uk.

The recruitment and appointment process

The closing date for applications is **midday on 18 October 2023**.

Recruitment timeline

Applications closing date: 18 October 2023

Panel sift (week commencing): 23 October 2023

Interviews or discussions: early November 2023

First attendance at TaW-SAG meeting: November 2023 or January 2024

To apply, please email the following to TAWSAG@defra.gov.uk by the deadline of **midday on 18 October 2023**:

- a CV of no more than two sides of A4 with education, professional qualifications and employment history
- a supporting statement of not more than 1000 words giving evidence of the strength and depth of your ability to meet the essential criteria for this role – make sure you specify which of the expertise you are applying under and refer to the contents of this document, and provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet the criteria
- a letter from your Head of Institution or Line Manager confirming that you will be supported with the time required to undertake the role

The TaW-SAG secretariat will acknowledge receipt of your application.

The assessment panels may be formed from the following group of people:

- Defra policy officials
- Chair of TaW-SAG, or deputy
- independent adviser

There will initially be a shortlist meeting where the panel will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide who to invite for interview or discussion.

Interviews or discussions are expected to take place online and will last for approximately 45 minutes. As part of the interview or discussion, candidates will also be asked to give a presentation lasting between 5 to 7 minutes. This should be made without the use of visual aids or any other presentational aids but referring to written notes is, of course, perfectly acceptable. The topic will be trees, woodlands and forestry policy and will give each candidate the opportunity to express their views on an area or issue that they feel TaW-SAG should be working on and to set out why they want to be a member, and what they would bring to that activity. Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

Further questions

For anyone who would like to learn more about these roles please contact the TaW-SAG Secretariat at TAWSAG@defra.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 – Terms of reference

Terms of Reference for a Trees and Woodlands Scientific Advisory Group for the Nature for Climate Tree Programme Board.

Background

The government has committed to facilitate woodland creation on an unprecedented scale, increasing planting to a rate of 30,000 hectares of trees per annum in the UK from 2025 onwards, supporting government's Net Zero commitments, whilst also maximising other environmental (and socio-economic) objectives.

The new England Tree Strategy will set out priorities for achieving the objectives by expanding, protecting and improving our trees and woodlands. It will also set out the increased role that trees and woodlands can play in supporting the economy, how best to further connect people to nature, and the most effective way in which trees and woodlands can be created and managed to help combat climate change.

To drive forward this ambitious agenda, a Nature for Climate tree programme ('the programme') has been established to oversee the delivery of the England Tree Strategy.

This Trees and Woodlands Scientific Advisory Group (TaW-SAG), one of several expert advisory groups being established within Defra, will provide balanced scientific advice to the programme, ensuring that Defra receives input from a wide range of scientific experts and disciplines, supporting both carbon sequestration and wider environmental and socio-economic objectives.

Aims and objectives

The TaW-SAG will provide high quality, balanced scientific advice, in support of the programme's objectives, in particular on:

1. Achieving key outcomes of carbon sequestration, nature recovery and biodiversity, tree resilience, water and air quality, flood control and storm buffering, job creation and economic growth, and health and wellbeing.
2. Technical advice to support achievement of these co-benefits, including mapping, planting and management.
3. Identifying, informing and providing leadership for the articulation of scientific evidence requirements, including the programme's role in the delivery of the England Tree Strategy, and incorporating the development of proposals for use of any evidence funding available to the programme.

4. Providing a view on the returns from the current consultation on the England Tree Strategy (contingent on timing of Group's creation).

TaW-SAG remit

In achieving these objectives, the TaW-SAG will:

1. Provide expert scientific input, challenge, and assurance to Defra on the use of evidence and analysis to facilitate woodland creation and improve woodland management. This input would include providing advice in relation to mapping and spatial analysis, such as advice on the development of a live data model.
2. Contribute to the department's 'Target Programme'. To provide independent advice on targets, the observers⁵ of the group will be required to abstain from any discussion or advice provided on targets.
3. Provide relevant information from participants' extended networks that will enable the Nature for Climate tree programme to have the evidence it needs to achieve its objectives. This will also help identify any wider academic expertise required. The Chair of the TaW-SAG will sit on the Nature for Climate tree programme Board to provide important links between the Board and the TaW-SAG.

TaW-SAG Chair remit

The remit of the Chair will be agreed on appointment. It will reflect the incumbent's specialist area(s) of expertise.

However, it is expected that in addition to the above, the Chair will:

1. Regularly review the TaW-SAG terms of reference to ensure they remain relevant and reflect the ongoing development of the programme, and wider departmental priorities. This will likely include, in the short-term at least, further clarification of the remit of the TaW-SAG as referenced above.
2. Lead on finalising the membership of the TaW-SAG utilising the existing 'long-list' of potential TaW-SAG members, constituting candidates proposed by the programme's Board; whilst identifying additional candidates as required. Departmental rules dictate that an audit trail of appointments is kept. The audit trail needs to demonstrate that, inter alia:
 - due diligence has been conducted during the appointments process

⁵ Any government employed TAW-SAG members will be given observer status on the group and required to abstain from discussions or advice which requires independence.

- security clearance has been secured for advisors where appropriate for those advisors handling sensitive documents or entering buildings independently
 - a diverse range of advisors within the scope of the programme has, within reason, been considered during the appointments process
3. Assist in the identification of the short and medium term goals of the TaW-SAG, particularly in relation to identifying priority programme needs that would benefit from expert scientific advice and coordinating the work of the (internal) Tree Science Group.
 4. The Chair will lead both the TaW-SAG whilst also, in conjunction with the Grade 7 science lead for the programme, being a focal science point of contact for members of the programme, together with members of the Tree Science Group, and Defra's Science Advisory Council (SAC). This will be undertaken in consultation with the Secretariat.
 5. The Chair of the TaW-SAG will also sit on the main Board of the Nature for Climate tree programme.

(Note that the specific terms and conditions of appointment are detailed within a separate document - Terms And Conditions For Appointment Of Chair To The Nature For Climate Tree Programme Scientific Advisory Group).

Governance and operating procedures

Membership

Members are drawn to represent a balance of expertise in the natural and social sciences, economics, and other relevant disciplines. It will be chaired by Professor Rob MacKenzie. Members are appointed based on their specific skills and experience and will act independently of any of their other interests. The TaW-SAG will be supported by the Programme Board.

Expenses and remuneration

Claiming remuneration and travel expenses (when applicable) for work is optional. Where claims are made, remuneration will be paid at a rate of £39 per hour for time spent in meetings and the time needed to prepare for these meetings. All reasonable travel expenses incurred by independent advisors in fulfilling their advisory role will be reimbursed via the committee claim procedure.

Members will be paid through Defra payroll; remuneration is treated as income and will be subject to NI and tax deductions.

Operating procedures

It is expected that the TaW-SAG will convene approximately six times a year, either at Defra offices or by web conferencing, with the possibility of written correspondence in-between meetings. The Group will also be provided with an online collaborative tool to allow ongoing dialogue to continue between meetings.

The Group will retain an option to break into focussed groups, potentially led by the different scientific disciplines.

Accountability

The Group will report, via the Chair, to the Nature for Climate Tree Programme Board.

Outputs

Outputs will be agreed following the convening of the first TaW-SAG meeting, in discussion with the Board and programme team. These will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are supporting overall programme objectives. The group will also be asked to undertake specific commissions for the Nature for Climate tree programme where the desired output will be articulated and delivered.

Duration

The TaW-SAG will initially be constituted to run until 2025 reflecting the existing Nature for Climate funding timeline. At that point, continuation and ToR for the TaW-SAG will be reviewed.

Members are appointed for an initial term of two years, which may be renewed for the remainder of the NCF timeline (approximately two further years).

Code of conduct

Members of the TaW-SAG must observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice they provide. All members are expected to abide by the code of conduct set out in **Annex 2**, comprising the 7 principles of public life.

Register of interests

All TaW-SAG members will declare interests that are relevant to the remit of the Group. For example, a member might declare that they, or a relation of theirs:

- is part of a related environmental research group
- is a practitioner or business owner in an industry that will be stakeholder in environmental policy and targets
- is in receipt of remuneration from any companies, charities or groups that are stakeholders in environmental policy and targets

To ensure the register is accurately maintained, members will inform the Secretariat of any changes as they occur. The Secretariat will be responsible for recording these declarations as well as maintaining a conflicts of interest register throughout engagement with advisors on the Target Programme.

Changes to these terms

These terms of reference may be amended at any time in consultation with the TaW-SAG.

The terms and conditions for the Group are detailed within Annex 1.

Annex 1: Terms and conditions

These terms set out the behaviours expected from members of the advisory group. Their purpose is to ensure that experts' independence is maintained throughout our engagement with them.

1. Advisors must not hold any paid or high-profile posts in a political party, nor misuse information gained for personal or political gain.
2. Advisors must not lobby against Government environmental target policy or conduct any lobbying in relation to environmental targets.
3. Advisors must not engage in specific political activities on matters directly affecting the Target Programme.
4. Advisors must not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations.
5. Advisors must observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice they provide.
6. Advisors must not discuss draft plans outside the group without permission from Defra.
7. Advisors must direct enquiries from the media relating to the Target Programme towards Defra officials.
8. Advisors may, in the course of their work, address conferences and seminars, or have other speaking arrangements at which the media are present. In these circumstances, members should take care to make it clear that they are speaking in a personal capacity and not as an advisor to the Target Programme.

Annex 2: The Seven Principles of Public Life

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.