

Terms of Reference

Natural England Scientific Advisory Committee (NESAC)

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:

- i. Provide **advice and steer** to the Natural England Board on the integrity and relevance of Natural England's science and evidence.
- ii. Provide advice and **challenge on Natural England's plans for pieces of work in novel or contested areas of science**; on the rationale and methods for proposed studies; and to the emerging findings of specific pieces of research.
- iii. Provide post hoc analysis, and comment, on the success of methodologies and approaches we have applied.
- iv. Provide **assurance** that internal peer review and external QA processes adopted are robust and identify where needed, suitably qualified reviewers that might be approached to undertake external quality assurance/peer review.
- v. Provide a strategic external perspective to support Natural England's futures and horizon scanning work.
- vi. Act as an external champion for Natural England's science and evidence; helping to forge links and partnerships with the wider scientific community.

Membership

Membership will comprise:

- i. Up to four nominated specialists from the Natural England Board, one or two of whom will act as NESAC Chair / Chairs.
- ii. At least eight independent external members, judged by the representatives of the Board to offer appropriate expertise.
- iii. Invited members recruited on a time-limited basis to offer expertise on a specific paper.
- iv. Up to three early career researcher members (ECR) to attend for their professional development and contribute to discussions where they have relevant expertise.
- v. Natural England Chief Scientist

Chief Scientist's Directorate Directors and the Deputy Directors (DDs) with oversight of arrangement for NESAC will attend meetings as necessary.

Expertise covered will comprise:

NESAC will aim to maintain expertise across a wide breadth of specialist areas:

- i. ecosystem structure, process, and function:
 - o marine and coastal
 - o freshwater
 - o terrestrial
 - o urban ecology
- ii. soil science
- iii. agriculture and land-use
- iv. economics
- v. ecosystem services and natural capital
- vi. landscape
- vii. hydrology
- viii. geology and geomorphology
- ix. public dialogue, engagement and participation
- x. behavioural sciences
- xi. social research methods and analysis
- xii. evaluation
- xiii. futures studies
- xiv. recreation and access
- xv. cultural heritage and historic environment
- xvi. green infrastructure
- xvii. public health and wellbeing
- xviii. new and emerging technologies and methodologies

Recruitment of members

- i. The Chair / Chairs, Chief Scientist, responsible DDs and secretariat will review the membership periodically 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.
- ii. **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.
- iii. **Independent members** will be expected to serve for at least a three-year term. Members can be invited serve for more than one consecutive term at the discretion of the Chair / Chairs.
- iv. **ECR members** will be expected to serve for a one-year term.

Meetings

Frequency and agenda

- i. Meetings will be held 4 times per year.

- ii. Two meetings will be on-line, typically last two hours and consider one – two papers. Two meetings will be face to face, typically last four and a half hours and consider three – four papers.
- iii. Papers will be agreed in advance by the Chairs, Chief Scientist and secretariat.
- iv. On occasion NESAC may undertake field visits and host externally facing Science Seminars.
- v. The Chair / Chairs will report to the full Natural England Board regarding outcomes of the discussions.
- vi. Secretariat will be provided through Chief Scientist's Directorate with support from Board Services.

Papers

Papers may be commissioned by:

- i. Requests from Natural England Board to scrutinise the evidence underpinning key work areas or decisions.
- ii. Proposals by NESAC Chairs and Members, Natural England's Chief Scientist, Natural England's Science Evidence and Analysis Group, or Natural England officers.
- iii. Natural England staff and officers proposing topics by contacting the NESAC secretariat directly or through the form on the NESAC Share Point Online (SPOL) site.
- iv. An outline future programme will be maintained by the secretariat and reviewed by NESAC as an agenda item at each meeting.

The process for papers for each meeting will be as follows:

- i. The secretariat will submit detailed agendas to be agreed between Natural England's Chief Scientist and NESAC Chair / Chairs one month in advance.
- ii. The secretariat will submit papers to Chair / Chairs for QA 15 working days before the meeting for comment.
- iii. Final papers will be made available to the Committee as pdfs through a secure folder on the NESAC SPOL site at least five working days before a meeting.
- iv. Any time extensions to be approved in advance by Chief Scientist.
- v. All papers will be treated as Official Sensitive.

Attendance

- i. Committee members are expected to attend all meetings as far as is possible and in person for the face-to-face meetings.
- ii. Committee members who cannot attend a meeting will be invited to provide concise written feedback addressing to the questions in each paper, which should be submitted to the NESAC secretary two days before the meeting. The secretariat will collate this into a briefing for the Chair / Chairs as necessary.

Minutes and Actions

- i. Draft minutes and actions will be circulated to the Chair / Chairs and responsible DDs for comment within 10 working days of the meeting.
- ii. Paper authors will be asked to check the content and consulted on the sensitivities of the topic, so as the minutes will reflect these and omit/redact where necessary.

- iii. Full minutes will be treated as Official Sensitive and stored in secure Library on the NESAC SPOL site, assessable to the Committee, secretariat, CSD Directors and responsible DDs.
- iv. A high-level summary, with the full minutes as an appendix, should be signed off by the Chief Scientist and shared with Natural England Board.
- v. The high-level summary will be made available to all Natural England staff through the NESAC SPOL site and will be published on.gov.uk.

Annex 1: Schedule of Current Members

Member's Name	Role	Institution
Prof Clare Fitzsimmons	NEB Nominee – Co-Chair	University of Newcastle
Dr Lynn Dicks	NEB Nominee – Co-Chair	University of Cambridge
Dr Alistair Leake	NEB Member	Natural England
Prof Mel Austen	NEB Member	Natural England
Prof Michael Winter	NEB Nominee	University of Exeter
Prof Jacqueline (Jack) Hannam	External Member	Cranfield University
Prof Valerie Nelson	External Member	University of Greenwich
Prof Ben Wheeler	External Member	University of Exeter
Prof Rosie Woodroffe	External Member	Zoological Society of London
Prof Kayleigh Wyles	External Member	University of Plymouth
Prof Bill Sutherland	External Member	University of Cambridge
Prof Janet Hooke	External Member	University of Liverpool
Prof Jon Lovett	External Member	University of Leeds
Dr Nicholas J. Aebischer	External Member	Game & Wildlife Conservancy Trust
Dr Keith Kirby	External Member	University of Oxford
Dr Mariecia Fraser	External Member	University of Wales
Prof Zoe Davies	External Member	University of Kent
Prof Sallie Bailey	Chief Scientist	Natural England