

Natural England National Nature Reserves Declarations Committee



Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Natural England Board (“the Board”) has established the National Nature Reserves Declarations Committee (NNRDC) as a committee of the Board in accordance with Schedule 1 paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 with delegated authority from the Board to take the specific decisions listed below in relation to National Nature Reserve (NNR) declarations.

This is to support Natural England in fulfilling its statutory role in relation to NNR declarations and to enable Natural England to deliver the Environmental Improvement Plan target for 25 new NNRs by the end of 2027/28.

Key Responsibilities

The NNRDC does not have any delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the Board except in relation to the following proposals:

- Declaration of a whole new NNR
- De-declaration of a whole NNR on a permanent basis
- Declaration of an extension to, or permanent de-declaration of part of, an existing NNR where area of land is substantial and/or situation is likely to be contentious
- Approval of a new Approved Body to hold a new NNR.
- Approval of a new Approved Body to hold an existing NNR, where the situation is likely to be contentious.

Authority

The NNRDC acts under authority delegated from the Board. Any changes to these Terms of Reference (ToR) must be agreed by the Board.

Membership

Core membership of the NNRDC comprises seven members:

- The Chair of the Board.
- Two further Board members including the Board member chair of the NNR Advisory Group.
- Three Natural England Executives
- The Board member associated with the Area Team in which an NNR proposal falls (which will change at each meeting).

The NNRDC is chaired by the Board Chair. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of the Board may delegate the chairing of a specific meeting to an additional Board member. Membership is open to all Board members by invitation of the NE Chair. Members may step down from the NNRDC at any time by informing the Chair of their desire to do so.

Members agree to make all reasonable efforts to attend meetings. A meeting will be deemed quorate if the Chair plus two Board members and two Executives are in attendance.

Other Board members (who are not serving members of the NNRDC) may attend meetings to participate in the discussions and decision-making process. The Chair will confirm the decision of the Committee based on the discussion.

Organisation and Meetings

The NNRDC meets three times a year virtually, however where timings allow the committee to align with full Board meetings, opportunities will be sought for face-to-face meetings. The duration of the meeting will depend on the number of cases being proposed.

The Chair has the discretion to decide that a meeting is not required and to call a meeting outside of the normal cycle, depending on the demand for declarations.

Each case will be presented to the NNRDC by the Area Team.

The Committee's decision will be shared at the following Board meeting, for the Board to note, as part of the Committee updates session. This will be in the form of a paper, delivered by the Chair of the NNRDC.

Secretariat: Natural England's Secretariat Services team will organise the meetings and send out papers. Private Office will take the meeting note, supported by technical expertise in the NNR declarations team in Operations.