

## Defra Science Advisory Council (SAC)

### Minutes of meeting, 23 April 2025

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair, Professor Rowland Kao, welcomed attendees and reminded members to raise any potential conflicts of interest. Attendance is recorded in annex A.

#### 2. Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) update

Defra's CSA updated the SAC on issues affecting Defra arising over the last month and invited questions from the SAC.

- The new Defra CSA has been announced. Professor Anjali Goswami will take up the post in July 2025.
- Spending review phase 2 bid has been submitted. This includes a strong set of bids in the science remit.
- The Official Development Assistance bidding process has been extended to allow time for a reassessment of priorities with the reduced budget.
- The trees outside woodland map has been published [Trees Outside Woodland Map - Forest Research](#).
- The SAC raised the prospect of a drought and linked vulnerabilities. Defra is working in area on water supply, drought avoidance, regulating water companies and climate adaptation.

#### 3. Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)

The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) sets out the government's plan for delivering against environmental goals, commitments and the [targets set out in the Environment Act](#) (2021). Defra provided an overview of the EIP, statutory Environment Act targets, key evidence workstreams and areas for improvement. Defra sought advice from the SAC on identifying gaps in their approach for evidencing the EIP, specifically on the current and future approach to monitoring and evaluation. The SAC thought it might be helpful to focus on a couple of examples at a future meeting to better understand the process and enable the SAC to provide advice on the science aspect. The SAC recommended also consulting with the Social Science Expert Group (SSEG). The Chair offered to follow up with the team directly.

**Action: Secretariat to put the SAC Chair in touch with EIP officials.**

#### 4. Any other business

SAC members were updated on upcoming meetings.



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

### **SAC Members**

Rowland Kao (Chair)	Felix Eigenbrod
Richard Bardgett	Nick Hanley
Nicola Beaumont	Chris Hutton
Camille Bonneaud	Marian Scott

### **Defra**

Justine Bejta – Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser (DCSA)  
Gideon Henderson – Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA)  
SAC Secretariat  
Officials – Environment Improvement Plan team

### **Devolved administration observers**

Johnathan Dalzell – Northern Irish Government Observer  
Simon Baldwin – Welsh Government Observer

### **Apologies**

Lisa Collins – SAC member  
Jane Hill – SAC member  
Susan Owens – SAC member  
Mathew Williams – Scottish Government Observer