



Terms of Reference

Natural England Scientific Advisory Committee (NESAC)

Purpose

NESAC provides high-quality independent scientific advice, challenge and review to Natural England's Science, Evidence and Analysis functions and works to strengthen its relationship with the wider scientific community.

Key Responsibilities

NESAC will:

- Provide **advice and steer** to the Natural England Board on the integrity and relevance of Natural England's science, evidence, and analysis.
- 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.
- Provide post hoc analysis, and comment, on the success of methodologies and approaches we have applied.
- 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.
- Provide a strategic external perspective to support Natural England's **futures and horizon scanning work**.
- Act as an **external champion** for Natural England's science, evidence, and analysis; helping to forge links and partnerships with the wider scientific community.

Membership

Membership will comprise of the following:

- Up to four nominated specialists from the Natural England Board, one or two of whom will act as NESAC Chair / Chairs.

- At least eight independent external members, judged by the representatives of the Board to offer appropriate expertise.
- Invited members recruited on a time-limited basis to offer expertise on a specific paper.
- Up to three early career researcher members (ECR) to attend for their professional development and contribute to discussions where they have relevant expertise.
- 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:

- ecosystem structure, process, and function:
 - marine and coastal
 - freshwater
 - terrestrial
 - urban ecology
- soil science
- agriculture and land-use
- economics
- ecosystem services and natural capital
- landscape
- hydrology
- geology and geomorphology
- public dialogue, engagement and participation
- behavioural sciences
- social research methods and analysis
- evaluation
- futures studies
- recreation and access
- cultural heritage and historic environment
- green infrastructure
- public health and wellbeing
- new and emerging technologies and methodologies

Recruitment of members

- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- ECR members will be expected to serve for a one-year term.

Meetings

Frequency and agenda

- Meetings will be held four times per year.
- 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.
- Papers will be agreed in advance by the Chairs, Chief Scientist and secretariat.
- On occasion NESAC may undertake field visits and host externally facing Science Seminars.
- The Chair / Chairs will report to the full Natural England Board regarding outcomes of the discussions.
- Secretariat will be provided through Chief Scientist's Directorate with support from Board Services.

Papers

Meeting papers may be commissioned by NESAC itself or in response to:

- Requests from Natural England Board to scrutinise the evidence underpinning key work areas or decisions.
- Proposals by NESAC Chairs and Members, Natural England's Chief Scientist, Natural England's Science Evidence and Analysis Group, or Natural England officers.
- Natural England staff and officers proposing topics by contacting the NESAC secretariate directly or through the form on the NESAC Share Point Online (SPOL) site.
- 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:

- The secretariat will submit detailed agendas to be agreed between Natural England's Chief Scientist and NESAC Chair / Chairs one month in advance.
- The secretariat will submit papers to Chair / Chairs for QA three weeks before the meeting for comment. The Chair / Chaira will have one week to review papers.

- Final papers will be made available to the Committee as pdfs through a secure folder on the NESAC SPOL site at least two weeks before a meeting.
- Any time extensions to be approved in advance by Chief Scientist.
- All papers will be treated as Official Sensitive.

Attendance

- Committee members are expected to attend all meetings as far as is possible and in person for the face-to-face meetings.
- 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.
- Members of NESAC with a social science specialism may also join Social Science Expert Panel (SSEP) meetings.

Minutes and Actions

- Draft minutes and actions will be circulated to the Chair / Chairs, Chief Scientist and responsible DDs for comment within six weeks of the meeting. The group will have two weeks to review the minutes.
- Full minutes will be produced for the next meeting and circulated with papers for the following NESAC meeting.
- 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.
- 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.

Changes to these terms

These terms of reference may be amended at any time in consultation with NESAC Chair / Chairs and members. The final decision on the changes to the terms lies with Natural England.

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
Dr Claire Risbeth	External Member	University of Sheffield
Dr Carol Morris	External Member	University of Nottingham
Prof Julia Martin-Ortega	External Member	University of Leeds
Prof Jacqueline (Jack) Hannam	External Member	University of Greenwich
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

