

National Estate for Nature Group - Terms of Reference

Overview

The National Estate for Nature (NEN) Group is convened to support the delivery of the terrestrial Environment Act targets and related nature recovery objectives such as 30by30, through action on members' own estates. Representation comprises major private, public and third sector landowners in England. Members commit to work individually and collaboratively towards agreed, shared goals.

Purpose

This Terms of Reference outlines the Group's purpose to:

- a. Facilitate the exchange of evidence, best practice, ideas and innovation
- b. Effect direct, meaningful change as an individual organisation
- c. Hold each other accountable on progress across agreed actions or objectives
- d. Address relevant operational issues at a senior level
- e. Delegate actions to appropriate teams and working groups (with Defra Group support as needed)
- f. Provide a clear route of engagement for other landowners to support or replicate action.

Member objectives

Members agree to:

- a. Meet a minimum standard of action on their land (outlined below)
- b. Share, and where possible, co-develop and apply consistent approaches to baselining, mapping and monitoring
- c. Trial and test innovative approaches to land management or land use change, including on a large or landscape scale
- d. Identify and share examples of good practice and barriers to delivery
- e. Offer practical delivery advice to other landowners and foster collaboration, capacity building and knowledge exchange
- f. Consider and discuss concurrent action towards wider Defra or HMG priorities and nature's role in economic growth, such as food security

Minimum Standard for all members to meet:

1. Have a published estate management plan(s) quantifying land cover and land use, with intended SMART targets and trajectories to contribute to the Environment Act targets and HMG's 30by30 commitment
2. Report annually on plans and progress to the group and/or publicly.
3. Apply the Land Use Framework Principles (as currently published) on estates
4. Participate in and contribute to key Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) associated with estates' localities
5. Consider implementing TNFD (Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures) disclosure recommendations where agreed relevant to organisational purpose

Members will agree a staged approach to delivering aspects of the minimum standard. Stage one is to have a published estate management plan(s) by April 2026. Further stages and timing will be developed and agreed through members' ongoing review.

The Cross-Government Nature Strategy (CGNS), developed collaboratively across departments, will meet the requirements of the minimum standard for government members. The CGNS aims to achieve a coordinated, whole-estate approach to nature recovery on government land.

Raising ambition

The Group recognises that meeting the minimum standard is a starting point, not the end goal. The staged approach to the requirements of the minimum standard will ensure a shared foundation, while allowing flexibility to circumstances and/or relevant priorities, and promoting continuous improvement.

Over time the Group intends to raise collective ambition, with the specifics of future expectations to be discussed and agreed collaboratively.

To support this, the Group will:

- Periodically review and revise the minimum standard to reflect evolving best practice, policy developments, and environmental needs.
- Act as a catalyst for collaborative action, with Defra and Natural England to identify and address high priority barriers and opportunities for nature impact across and beyond their estates.
- Collaborate to define what “raising ambition” looks like in practice, including potential enhancements to land management, monitoring, and reporting.

Representation and governance

- a. Quarterly meetings will be chaired by Minister Creagh (or co-chaired with a senior Defra official), with *ad hoc* meetings scheduled as needed
- b. Members will provide senior representation in meetings and ensure participation in working level meetings focused on the practical aspects of delivery
- c. One representative per organisation should attend each meeting to manage numbers and facilitate conversation
- d. Membership (Annex A) will be reviewed periodically and may be extended based on emerging priorities
- e. Additional stakeholders may be invited as observers or contributors.
- f. The Secretariat, provided by Defra's 25 Year Environment Strategy team, will support co-ordination and ensure alignment with wider Defra governance
- g. The Secretariat will ensure key insights from members and wider stakeholders inform agendas and decision making.

Confidentiality

- a. The Group will operate under the Chatham House Rule to encourage open dialogue
- b. Defra will publish meeting minutes on gov.uk once approved by members, respecting Chatham House Rule and including records of actions, commitments and progress
- c. Materials shared by Defra may be distributed with members' wider networks, subject to collective agreement.

Annex A – Membership

Government Departments (and/or Arms Length Bodies)	• Defra Group (Forestry Commission, Forestry England, Environment Agency, Natural England) • Ministry of Defence • Department for Transport (National Highways, Network Rail) • Homes England • Ministry of Justice
Private and institutional	• Church Commissioners • The Crown Estate • The Duchy of Cornwall • The Duchy of Lancaster • Elveden Estate • Clinton Devon Estate • Holkham Estate • United Utilities • Yorkshire Water
Third Sector	• National Trust • RSPB • The Wildlife Trusts • Canal and River Trust

Observer government landowners

Cabinet Office and Department for Education (including LocatEd) will engage in the Group as government observers. This status enables them to remain informed of discussions and contribute where relevant, without being subject to the requirement to meet the Group's minimum standard.