

National Estate for Nature Group

Meeting Minutes: 20 January 2026

Attendance

- Defra: Secretary of State Emma Reynolds MP, Minister for Nature Mary Creagh CBE MP, Jed Hamblin-Boone
- Natural England: Tony Juniper, Oliver Harmar, Andy Smith, Amanda Craig
- Environment Agency: Darren Martin (on Teams)
- Forestry Commission: Richard Stanford
- Canal and River Trust: Heather Clarke
- The Church Commissioners: Paul Jaffe
- Clinton Devon Estates: John Varley
- The Crown Estate: Fay Jones-Poole (on Teams)
- Department for Education: Juanita Shepherd (on Teams)
- Duchy of Cornwall: David Cope
- Duchy of Lancaster: Mark Coombs
- Elveden Estate: Andrew Blenkiron
- Holkham Estate: Jake Fiennes
- Homes England: Alison Crofton
- LocatED: Mark Fiedeldey
- MoD: James Clare
- MoJ: Carl Von Reibnitz
- National Trust: Rosie Hails (on Teams)
- National Highways: Stephen Elderkin
- Network Rail: Neil Strong
- RSPB: Michael Copleston
- United Utilities: Matthew Higginson (on Teams)
- Wildlife Trusts: Dan Pescod (on Teams)
- Defra officials: Edward Barker, Andrew Jackson, Nick Barter, Ian Fenn

Apologies:

- Forestry England
- Cabinet Office
- Department for Transport
- Yorkshire Water

Actions

Defra and Natural England to:

1. Develop and share a communications and engagement plan for the group to update and own, including a proposal for engaging and inspiring other landowners and managers to take action for nature and 30by30.
2. Establish working groups for members with shared interests, challenges and approaches to operationalise their ambitions and report progress and opportunities back to the full group.
3. Adapt the 'key delivery actions' guidance to help show which actions can directly contribute to 30by30.
4. Schedule discussions on farm tenancy challenges and opportunities; 30by30; the Land Use Framework.

Members to:

5. Send the Defra NEN Secretariat any further written feedback on the 'key delivery actions' guidance by 24 February for its adoption and iteration as 'live' guidance for the group.
6. Send the Defra NEN Secretariat further options or invitations to site visits and related events across the year.

Minutes

1. NEN Leadership and Inspiration

The Secretary of State, Minister Creagh and Tony Juniper set out their vision for the National Estate for Nature (NEN) to act as an exemplar and inspiration, and to help guide or convene, other land owners and managers to take action for nature.

This vision and intention was well received by the group, with a focus on positive stories and case studies; leadership by example; and clarity in approach and actions. The group agreed to develop a communications and engagement plan, to include meetings on member estates to consider action underway; preparing or testing materials or guidance ahead of publication; opportunities to represent the NEN and its activities at events and announcements; milestones for reviewing progress; drafting positive case studies; and how to engage wider landowners and managers to contribute to 30by30. Defra will provide a draft proposal.

It was agreed that working groups would help members with shared interests, challenges and approaches to operationalise their ambitions and report progress and opportunities back to the full group and through the communications plan. Defra will contact members to help facilitate the establishment and running of such groups.

2. Member Plans and Ambitions

Natural England presented progress on 'key delivery actions' guidance to support members' consistent action across different land types and uses. Written comments were invited for the guidance to be adopted as a 'live', iterative tool for members to support their own plans' delivery and ongoing group discussion.

The importance was noted of April's agreed timeline for members to have published plans with SMART targets for their estates, and of the need to be collectively brave on ambition and trialling action for nature and climate, to help facilitate individual action. Members called on each other to be propositional and seek partnerships in area- and investment-based approaches; to consider flexibility in grants and other potential funding streams; and to share and apply open geospatial data. Further discussions should be tabled to consider challenges and opportunities around tenancy arrangements, 30by30 guidance, the Land Use Framework and related policy.

3. Reporting and Communicating Progress

The group considered how it can spearhead action through existing partnerships and relevant events, including internationally. The value was noted of measuring and conveying progress simply, clearly and consistently to help raise interest and action and to generate investor appetite, when standards may not feel clear or returns not obvious.

Defra's proposal was noted for members to provide a short, consistent annual narrative summarising progress against their estate management plan, to inform internal group discussion and planning, and to highlight positive case studies and successes.