



Department  
for Environment,  
Food & Rural Affairs

# **Appointment of members of the UK Zoos Expert Committee**

## **Briefing pack for applicants**

Closing Date: 19 June 2026

We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment. We aim to grow a green economy and sustain thriving rural communities. We also support our world-leading food, farming and fishing industries.

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# The UK Zoos Expert Committee

The UK Zoos Expert Committee (ZEC) provides Ministers across the UK with access to independent, authoritative, impartial technical advice on zoo matters. This supports the policies, priorities and responsibilities of the UK government and devolved governments.

Its main responsibility is to provide advice and recommendations on encouraging the role of zoos in conservation, education and scientific research; to keep the operation and implementation of the zoo licensing system in the UK under review; and to advise or make recommendations to Ministers of any legislative or administrative changes that may be necessary.

All members sit in a personal expert capacity and do not represent any particular body. Members are selected for their expertise on areas such as animal welfare, conservation, education, zoo veterinary issues, local authority implementation, large zoo operation, small zoo operation and zoo inspections.

The Secretariat for the Committee is provided by Defra whilst further input is provided by officials from all UK governments.

For further information about the work of the ZEC and current members, please contact the ZEC Secretariat by email at [zecsecretariat@defra.gov.uk](mailto:zecsecretariat@defra.gov.uk).

## Defra mission statement

Defra wants Britain to be a great place to live. Our work plays a critical role in the wellbeing of everyone in the country through the creation of healthy environments, a world leading food and farming industry, a thriving rural economy and enhanced protection against floods and animal and plant diseases.

Appointing high-calibre people from diverse backgrounds with relevant skills, knowledge and experience to the Expert Committees will help us to ensure that our work is more effective, resilient and accountable.

## Equal Opportunities

UK government has a policy of equality of opportunity. We aim to promote equal opportunity policies whereby no one suffers unfair discrimination either directly or indirectly, or harassment, on grounds such as race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or age.

## Diversity

We positively welcome applicants from all backgrounds.

## Disability

Defra will be operating an interview access scheme for disabled people (as defined by the Equalities Act 2010) who meet the minimum criteria for this appointment as published in these notes. If you wish to apply for consideration under this scheme, please notify the Department when you return your application. In addition, if you require any special arrangements at interview stage, please give details in a covering letter to enable us to make the appropriate arrangements if necessary. Furthermore, adjustments will be made in the event of a successful application.

The Devolved governments fully support Defra's Mission Statement.

## The role and person specification

### The Role

We are looking for three new members who have the right qualities to work as part of a group of experts who have wide ranging, zoo related interests. You will build good working relations with other members of the Committee and with Defra and the Devolved governments to ensure that the Committee works effectively. You will make an active and constructive contribution to the work of the Committee, so that it can produce collectively agreed and soundly based advice. You will be able to lead on particular work streams where needed and deliver outputs and advice in a timely manner.

We are seeking three new members with different areas of expertise:

- **Post A:** A veterinary expert with experience of zoos in the UK and of the types of animals typically held in UK zoos and aquariums.
- **Post B:** An expert with experience of large zoos in the UK and who is currently working in a leading role within a large zoo.
- **Post C:** An expert with experience of small zoos in the UK and who is currently working in a leading role within a small zoo.

The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan principles of public service included in Annex A and the guidance on conflicts of interest included in Annex B.

## Time commitment and term of office

The appointments commence in October 2026. Appointments will be made, in consultation with Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish colleagues, by the Defra Director, Animal and Plant Health and Welfare, who is the designated Senior Responsible Owner for these appointments.

Appointments will be for four years. Re-appointments may be made subject to satisfactory performance assessment and will be at the discretion of Defra and the Devolved governments. The appointee may resign at any time by writing to Defra. Defra may terminate the appointment under certain conditions. In the event that the committee is dissolved during your tenure, your appointment would cease with effect from that dissolution.

This is a part-time role and members will be expected to contribute approximately 15 days a year to ZEC work. This includes attending meetings, providing advice via email, and drafting or preparation work. There are regular whole Committee meetings three times per year; however, ad-hoc subgroup meetings are often arranged to work on specific tasks. Meetings generally take place in London but can take place in other UK locations. Meetings are currently being held virtually.

Defra is currently leading on a programme of reforms to the zoo licensing regime on behalf of GB governments following a major update of the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice. Members will not be expected to contribute to all ongoing projects but are expected to contribute regularly and remain actively involved throughout their term. Officials from Defra and the Devolved Administrations hold performance management meetings with the Chair of ZEC three times per year to ensure the efficacy of the Committee.

## Remuneration and expenses

The Committee's annual budget for meeting costs and members' fees and expenses is provided by Defra and the scale of activity must be carried out within the funding available. Members are entitled to an attendance fee of £300 per day for meetings, and the Chair to £500 per day.

Members can claim the fees for time spent on ZEC business not associated with a particular meeting for example for research or drafting work, with the agreement of the Secretariat and within available resources. Members can be reimbursed for all reasonable expenditure incurred in connection with attendance at ZEC meetings, visits, and representative events.

## The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is noon on 19 June 2026. We expect to have candidates shortlisted by week commencing 22 June 2026 and panel interviews to commence on 29 June 2026.

It is essential that your supporting statement gives full but concise information relevant to the appointment, clearly demonstrating how you meet each of the essential criteria. Please ensure to specify for which role you are applying.

At the shortlist meeting the panel will assess each application against the essential and desirable criteria and will then decide who to invite for final interview.

Interviews are expected to take place online via MS Teams and will last for approximately 45 minutes. Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

## How to apply and submit your application

To apply, please provide:

- a CV of no more than two sides of A4
- a supporting statement of not more than two sides of A4, setting out how you meet the essential and desirable criteria

Email completed applications to [zecsecretariat@defra.gov.uk](mailto:zecsecretariat@defra.gov.uk)

## Data protection

Defra is committed to protect your privacy and to process your personal information in a manner which meets the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679. If you have any questions about how Defra is using your personal data or about your associated rights about such use of your data, you can contact core Defra's Data Protection Manager by email at: [data.protection@defra.gov.uk](mailto:data.protection@defra.gov.uk)

Please find the contact details for the Data Protection Officer responsible for monitoring that core Defra is meeting the requirements of the data protection law below:  
[defragroupdataprotectionofficer@defra.gov.uk](mailto:defragroupdataprotectionofficer@defra.gov.uk)

## Annex A – The seven principles of public life

### Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

## **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

## **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

## **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

## **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

## **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

# **Annex B – Conflicts of interest**

## **What is a Conflict of Interest?**

Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest that might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasion be as damaging as the existence of a real one.

It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived. No one should use or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private



interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and can receive a lot of media attention.

### **Why should I declare a perceived conflict?**

The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual and the Committee that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a Committee member can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation. It is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be.

### **What happens if I do not declare a conflict, which is then discovered by Defra and the Devolved governments after my appointment?**

Each case would be considered on its merits, but Defra and the Devolved governments may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public life and may terminate your appointment.

### **What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?**

This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work on the Committee becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body or the work of the body itself changes and it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.

In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Chair of the Committee in consultation with Defra and the Devolved governments, to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner. Each case is considered individually.

It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue on the Committee for example if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body's routine business. In such cases the member may be asked to stand down from the body.

### **Areas where a conflict could arise**

There are five main issues that could lead to a real or apparent conflict of interests. These are:

- relevant financial or other interests outside the organisation
- relationships with other parties/ organisations which could lead to perceived or real split loyalties
- access to information on pending government policy could give unfair personal advantage to people with business interests likely to be affected
- perception of rewards for past contributions or favours
- membership of some societies

In considering whether a danger of real or potential conflict exists members should assess whether they; a close family member; a person living in the same household as the Committee member; or a firm, business or organisation with which the Committee member is connected are likely to be affected by the decisions or advice made or given by the Committee. In addition, Committee members should consider whether they need to disclose relevant interests of other persons or organizations that members of the public might reasonably think could influence the member's judgement.