



Annex A: Procedures for meetings where the Board considers whether to confirm the notification or denotification of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

1. The Natural England Board has a duty to consider any objections to the SSSI confirmation made by owners or occupiers of the land which is being considered for designation; and any representations made by members of the public or interested parties.
2. The meeting at which the confirmation is to be considered has two distinct stages as described below.

Board meeting: stage 1

3. The first stage must be held in public.
4. Those who have given notice that they wish to make oral representations to the Board must be given the opportunity to do so.
5. It is normal practice for representations to the Board to last for no more than 10 minutes. Parties may be given a slightly longer or shorter length of time at the Chair's discretion.
6. Those presenting to the Board may use audio-visual aids however the presentation must be visible to the whole meeting.
7. The Board may question both Natural England officers and any person who has made representations to them.
8. The Board will be joined for the discussions by an appropriately qualified lawyer, who provides legal advice as required, but who takes no part in the formal decision-making.
9. A stenographer will be present to take a verbatim note of the discussions.
10. Board Members must satisfy themselves that the procedural safeguards have been properly carried out i.e.:
 - (i) that there has been appropriate consultation with owners / occupiers and that they have been given at least three months to make their objections;
 - (ii) that the owners/occupiers have been given sufficient scientific evidence to inform them of the reasons the site is being considered for designation as a SSSI; and
 - (iii) that objectors and interested parties have been given the opportunity to present their case at the Board.

Board meeting: stage 2

11. The second stage is a closed meeting. Therefore, those who raised objections or made representations are not invited to attend. Attendees will be Board members, Executives and other Natural England officers as agreed with the Chair.
12. This meeting should be held within ten working days of the stage 1 meeting, either in person or online.

13. The Board will consider key points from the objections, representations, legal advice and officers' statements before making its decision. The decision-making process shall conform to that described in Section 7 of the Board Standing Orders.
14. In reaching its decision, any judgement made by the Board must be a scientific one based on the evidence presented. The question the Board should ask itself is: is it of the opinion that the site is of special scientific interest?
15. The decision of the Board will be recorded in the formal minutes, including details of votes cast by each Board member, i.e. whether they voted for, against or abstained. The minutes will be published on GOV.UK in accordance with standard procedures for Board minutes. There is no verbatim note captured of this stage.
16. Following closure of the meeting (and within the statutory deadline for confirming or withdrawing the SSSI notification) relevant parties will be formally notified of the decision of the Board.