



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Biodiversity Expert Committee – recruitment pack

Pack for applicants

Closing date: 14 September 2026

August 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.

Defra is a ministerial department, supported by 34 agencies and public bodies.



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This publication is available at www.gov.uk/defra

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at biodiversity.expert.committee@defra.gov.uk.

Contents

Biodiversity Expert Committee – recruitment pack.....	1
Pack for applicants.....	1
Closing date: 14 September 2026.....	1
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	4
Equal opportunities	4
The Biodiversity Expert Committee	5
Remit and role	5
Role specification and essential criteria	6
Required expertise.....	6
Essential criteria	7
Member standards and behaviour	7
Time commitment	8
Remuneration and expenses.....	8
Recruitment and appointment process	9
Recruitment timeline	9
Conflict of interest and due diligence	10
Security.....	10
Data protection.....	10
Artificial intelligence	10
Further questions	11
Annex A – The 7 principles of public life	12
Selflessness	12
Integrity	12
Objectivity	12
Accountability	12
Openness	12

Honesty 12

Leadership..... 13

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is the UK government department responsible for safeguarding our natural environment, supporting our world-leading food and farming industry, and sustaining a thriving rural economy. Our broad remit means we play a major role in people's day-to-day life, from the food we eat, and the air we breathe, to the water we drink.

Independent expert advice plays a vital role in the business of government and in public life. Defra has a broad landscape of evidence committees which provide a critical role in advising and challenging Defra on the evidence used to inform policy.

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. All appointments are made on merit following a fair and open competition.

Disability

As a Disability Confident employer, we positively welcome applications from individuals with disabilities and we make adjustments wherever possible, to include everybody in our recruitment and selection process. We are committed to making workplace adjustments wherever possible to ensure that disabled people can participate fully, not only in the recruitment and selection process, but when they are appointed into their job. We offer a guaranteed interview scheme for all disabled applicants who provide evidence of meeting the minimum requirements necessary for the post.

If a person with disabilities is put at a disadvantage compared to a nondisabled person, we have a duty to make reasonable changes to our processes where possible. Please get in touch with the BEC secretariat (biodiversity.expert.committee@defra.gov.uk) at any stage

of the recruitment process to discuss how we can help you, whether you have a physical impairment, a mental health condition or are neurodiverse.



The Biodiversity Expert Committee

The Biodiversity Expert Committee (BEC) provides independent expert advice and constructive challenge to Defra on biodiversity evidence, analysis and approaches, supporting delivery of Defra's biodiversity commitments and wider biodiversity priorities.

The BEC operates as an interdisciplinary committee, bringing together expertise from across the natural and social sciences, economics, data analysis and related fields to provide holistic advice on biodiversity issues.

The BEC is a subgroup of Defra's Science Advisory Council (SAC), an advisory, Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). As such, it is reportable to the SAC Chair and Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser.

The committee consist of a core membership with the ability to co-opt additional experts for a limited period of time to provide specific input. Details of the [current membership](#) can be found on the [SAC GOV.UK webpages](#).

Remit and role

Members of the BEC provide independent technical and scientific advice in matters related to biodiversity. This includes, but is not limited to:

- advising and supporting Defra in developing and implementing an effective and efficient strategy for obtaining and using evidence and scientific advice relating to biodiversity
- advising on and providing assurance on the process for biodiversity evidence gathering, modelling, and monitoring and evaluation
- providing timely targeted advice and expert judgement where necessary, this includes the option for Defra to commission BEC members to produce short advice papers at pace, or to undertake pieces of analysis, quality assurance, evidence gathering exercises and reviews
- providing constructive challenge on Defra's biodiversity evidence, including reviewing evidence and analytical products produced by Defra teams, as well as research work commissioned by Defra or its arm's length bodies
- providing clear guidance on latest trends and hot topics within fields of study
- identifying sources of additional expert external advice to input to Defra evidence
- providing expert advice to senior Defra biodiversity policy boards, when needed

The group's scope covers biodiversity in terrestrial, freshwater and marine areas.

The BEC is a forum for providing expert advice and not a forum for lobbying or critiquing policy development.

The [BEC terms of reference](#) can be found on the [SAC GOV.UK webpages](#).

Role specification and essential criteria

Defra is seeking to recruit 5 new members to the BEC for appointment from October 2026, with the opportunity to join a reserve list for future vacancies.

Members provide independent technical and scientific advice in matters related to biodiversity, as set out in the remit and role of BEC above.

Members are appointed for an initial fixed term of 3 years, and may be reappointed for a second term.

Required expertise

The BEC is seeking 5 members with specific expertise, as highlighted below. Members should also have the necessary skills and experience to provide advice on the broader issues across the field of biodiversity. Knowledge of at least one of the following areas is essential:

- **Agroecology** – Expertise in agriculture, including agri-environment schemes, land-use change, and conservation management and restoration. Experience in delivering on the ground biodiversity improvements is particularly desirable.
- **International biodiversity and climate** – Expertise and experience in international biodiversity, including, but not limited to, expertise in some of following: ecosystem protection and restoration, biodiversity conservation interventions, nature-based solutions, illegal wildlife trade, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture, and sustainable commodities.
- **Freshwater and transitional water ecology** – Expertise in freshwater, estuarine and coastal ecology and restoration, and the impacts of aquatic pressures on biodiversity.
- **Economics** – Expertise in economics, economic valuation, biodiversity cost–benefit analysis, and economic incentives. Expertise should be applied in a domestic and international context (economics of international biodiversity conservation and international nature finance).
- **Social sciences** – Expertise in the social sciences, particularly in the behaviours, values, incentives and decision-making that drive environmental change, impacting the design of effective, equitable and lasting solutions. Experience of working with stakeholders to translate evidence into action to accelerate the transition to a nature-positive future would be an advantage.

While not a pre-requisite for the roles, we would welcome applications from individuals with experience in **data analysis and modelling**, to strengthen the committee's overall mix of expertise.

Essential criteria

Applicants should clearly demonstrate the following personal qualities, skills and experience:

- Significant expertise in a subject area relevant to biodiversity. Specifically, agroecology, international biodiversity and climate, freshwater and transitional water ecology, and economics.
- The ability to analyse issues in an impartial way and work across a range of topics drawing on, but not limited by, their expertise, including horizon scanning for emerging issues to raise with Defra.
- The ability to provide high quality scientific advice on the application of evidence in policy, communicating complex issues in a straightforward, truthful and candid way to Defra, including Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser.
- An ability to work cooperatively in an inter-disciplinary team, with effective communication, negotiating, judgement and influencing skills. This may be face to face or via a collaborative virtual space.
- An understanding of the interface between science and policy along with knowledge of UK and international research relevant to Defra.
- Demonstrable ability in assessing the evidence required in policymaking.

Member standards and behaviour

Members are required to comply with standards and behaviour as set out below. Members are expected to uphold the standards as set out in the [Government's Principles for Scientific Advice](#) and act in accord with the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (see [Annex A](#)).

Integrity

You must:

- set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully, and correct any errors as soon as possible
- use resources only for the authorised public purposes for which they are provided

You must not:

- deceive or knowingly mislead ministers, Parliament or others
- be influenced by improper pressures from others or the prospect of personal gain

Objectivity

You must:

- provide information and advice, including advice to the Chief Inspector and ministers, on the basis of the evidence, and accurately present the options and facts

- take decisions on the merits of the case
- take due account of expert and professional advice

You must not:

- ignore inconvenient facts or relevant considerations when providing advice or making decisions
- frustrate the implementation of policies once decisions are taken by declining to take, or abstaining from, action which flows from those decisions

Impartiality

You must:

- carry out your responsibilities in a way that is fair, just and equitable

You must not:

- act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests

Time commitment

Applicants should ensure they have sufficient time to meet the expectations of the role. The workload will vary depending upon the requirements of Defra and events that may impact on the needs for expert advice.

Members will be expected to attend and adequately prepare for BEC meetings. The BEC holds quarterly meetings: 2 in-person meetings per year with two teleconference meetings (MS Teams) in between. As well as these regular meetings, additional meetings may be requested on an ad hoc basis to discuss specific issues raised by policy teams. Additional pieces of work (for example, pieces of analysis, advice papers, evidence gathering exercises, or reviews) can be commissioned on an ad hoc basis but will be subject to BEC member agreement.

The time commitment is expected to be no more than 16 hours a month.

Meetings are normally arranged well in advance and efforts are made to avoid state school holiday periods. In some circumstances meetings may be called at short notice, should an exceptional situation arise, however every effort will be made to avoid this.

Remuneration and expenses

Claiming remuneration and travel expenses for BEC related work is optional. The current remuneration for attendance at committee meetings and carrying out additional BEC related work is £39 an hour for committee members. Remuneration for preparatory work ahead of meetings is capped at half of the meeting length (for example, to review papers for the meeting).

Some meetings that are in-person may require members to travel far and stay overnight, especially if the meeting is over 3 hours long. Travel and subsistence expenses can be claimed, in accordance with Defra's Travel and Subsistence Policy. Members will be provided with a form for making expenses claims. Any queries regarding claims should be referred to the secretariat.

Defra has due regard to diversity. Expenses may include reimbursement of reasonable additional childcare or other carer costs that occurred due to BEC commitments, and the reimbursement of reasonable additional expenses due to disabilities.

Recruitment and appointment process

To apply, please complete the online application form by the deadline of 12:00 (midday) 14 September 2026. You must upload:

- a CV of no more than 2 pages with education, professional qualifications and employment history
- a supporting statement of no more than 1000 words giving evidence of the strength and depth of your ability to meet the essential criteria for this role. You must specify which of the expertise you are applying under and refer to the contents of this document. Please provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet the criteria.

The assessment panels will be formed from the following group of people:

- Chair of BEC
- Defra official
- Independent panel member

There will initially be a shortlist meeting where the panel will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide who to invite for final interview.

Interviews are expected to take place online and will last for approximately 45 minutes. As part of the interview, candidates will also be asked to give a presentation lasting between 5 and 7 minutes. This should be made without the use of visual aids or any other presentational aids. The topic will be biodiversity policy and will give each candidate the opportunity to express their views on an area or issue that they feel the BEC should be working on and to set out why they want to be a member, and what they would bring to that activity. Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

Recruitment timeline

- Closing date for applications: **12:00 (midday) 14 September 2026**
- Panel application sift: week commencing 14 September 2023
- Interviews: weeks commencing 28 September and 5 October 2026
- Announcement: end of October 2026

- First BEC meeting following recruitment: 25 November 2026

Conflict of interest and due diligence

If you have any interests that might be relevant to the work of the BEC and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be appointed, please provide details in your supporting letter. You should disclose information on any relevant business interest, public appointment or position of authority, including any other connection with commercial, public or voluntary bodies. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the assessment panel at the shortlisting and interview stages.

If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment, or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you bring them to the attention of the BEC and provide details of the issue or issues in your application. In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media.

As part of our due diligence checks we will consider anything in the public domain related to your conduct or professional capacity. This will include us undertaking searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publicly available information.

Security

The successful candidates are required to undergo a criminal record check and complete [baseline personnel security standard checks](#).

Data protection

Defra is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information and does so in accordance with data protection law including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Please see the [data privacy notice](#) which explains how Defra will collect and use your personal data.

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence can be a useful tool to support your application, however, all examples and statements provided must be truthful, factually accurate and taken directly from your own experience. Where plagiarism has been identified (presenting the ideas and experiences of others, or generated by artificial intelligence, as your own) applications may be withdrawn and internal candidates may be subject to disciplinary action. Please see our [candidate guidance](#) for more information on appropriate and inappropriate use.

Further questions

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the role, please contact the BEC secretariat at biodiversity.expert.committee@defra.gov.uk.

Annex A – The 7 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.