



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Defra Science Advisory Council

Up to 2 Member appointments with expertise in natural sciences (and allied disciplines)

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date 15th September 2017

Ref: APPT07-17



Science
Advisory
Council

Contents

Defra mission statement.....	2
What is the Science Advisory Council?.....	3
The role specification and essential criteria	4
Essential Criteria	5
Terms of appointment.....	6
The recruitment process.....	8
How to apply and submit your application.....	9
The Commissioner for Public Appointments	10
Data protection	10
Annex A – The seven principles of public life.....	11
Annex B – Current membership of the Board	12

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 boards of our public bodies 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. All public appointments are made on merit following a fair and open competition as regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

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.



What is the Science Advisory Council?

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) invites applications for the position of member of the Defra Science Advisory Council (SAC), an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB).

SAC plays a vital role in assisting the Defra Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) in assuring and challenging the evidence that Defra uses in its policy. The SAC currently consists of seven members plus a Chair.

Aim of the Council

The Science Advisory Council (SAC) is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) which provides independent and scientific support, advice and challenge to Defra. The SAC assist the Defra Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) in assuring and challenging the evidence that Defra uses in its policy development.

Objectives of the Council

The objectives of the SAC are to:

- advise and support Defra on developing and implementing an effective and efficient strategy for obtaining and using evidence and scientific advice;
- advise on and provide assurance on the process for evidence gathering;
- provide strategic oversight and assurance on how evidence is used in policy, providing targeted support where necessary;
- provide constructive challenge on Defra's evidence, and
- identify sources of additional expert external advice to input to Defra evidence.

SAC's relationship with Defra

The SAC's agenda and operation is structured to integrate it within the Department's workings, but retaining its capacity to provide critical independent challenge. SAC is both reactive to Defra's needs and raises issues itself that it believes would be helpful for the Department to consider. Its work plan is a balance of being forward looking and being reactive to issues as they arrive.

Structure of SAC's Business

To enable the SAC to take its role forward, at an appropriate strategic level, it organises its business in four ways: principal meetings; monthly teleconferences; subgroups on specific policy/evidence areas and a Defra Official and SAC member pairing scheme. The SAC may also establish time-limited subgroups, made up of SAC members and appropriate co-opted experts, in relation to emergencies, or to carry out in-depth studies. Subgroups will advise and challenge Defra's evidence and analysis.

The role specification and essential criteria

The Role

The SAC's remit is broad and focuses primarily on the strategic direction of the Departments' evidence. It delivers independent high-level, cross cutting, strategic advice and challenge to help assure the evidence used in Defra policy development and delivery. The SAC organises its business in four ways: principal meetings; monthly teleconferences; subgroups on specific policy/evidence areas; and a Defra official and SAC member pairing scheme.

The SAC has its own [website](#) where information about the Council's activities, reports and meeting papers are regularly published. If you require more information about the vacancies, please contact the SAC Secretariat at: science.advisory.council@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan principles of public service (attached at [Annex A](#)).

The Person

We are looking for up to two members with expertise in the natural sciences and allied disciplines, who have the right qualities to work alongside the SAC Chair and fellow SAC members. You will provide high-level strategic advice, support, and assurance to the CSA and Defra on developing and implementing an effective strategy for obtaining and using evidence and scientific advice (often at pace) including on high profile and contentious issues. You will provide strategic oversight on Defra's use of evidence, help to identify sources of external advice to input to Defra evidence, and act as a conduit between Defra and evidence providers. You will also advise on broader issues such as how Defra obtains its advice, its access to the scientific community and on maintaining and developing its scientific capabilities into the future. These duties will be performed through discussions and engagement with Defra officials and key stakeholders, and a mixture of meetings and smaller working groups.

Essential Criteria

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

1. Significant expertise in the natural sciences lying within the broad areas of interest to Defra; this might include knowledge of data science and geospatial analysis.
2. The ability to analyse issues in an impartial way and work across a range of topics drawing on - but not limited by - their expertise.
3. The ability to provide strategic scientific advice on matters relating to the use of evidence in policy making in Defra. This will include the broader issue of how Defra obtains and accesses its external advice.
4. A collaborative style and the ability to command the respect and confidence of the SAC Chair, the CSA, senior officials, and senior scientists.
5. An understanding of the interface between science, commerce and policy along with knowledge of UK and international research funding relevant to Defra. Demonstrable ability in strategically assessing the application of evidence in policy-making.

Terms of appointment

Appointments are made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Terms and conditions

The SAC's standard terms and conditions for appointments apply. These are available from the SAC Secretariat on request and will be provided to any successful candidates before any appointments are confirmed. Key points to be aware of are set out below.

Time commitment

You should ensure you have sufficient time to meet the expectations of the role.

Council business will usually take place in London or by teleconference. During the year, SAC business will require a total of approximately 11 days, consisting of:

- Four principal meetings each lasting about five hours;
- Seven monthly teleconferences each lasting an hour;
- Monthly half hour Defra/SAC pairing scheme teleconference;
- Ad hoc meetings that the Member may be invited to; and
- Additional time may also be required to provide input to the work of Council subgroups.
- Meetings are normally arranged well in advance and every effort will be made to avoid state school holiday periods. The 2018 principal meeting dates have been arranged: 6th March, 12th June, 12th September and 5th December.

In addition, it is envisaged that each SAC Member should be willing to participate in activities during emergencies that fall within Defra's remit (with considerations of an individual's availability and relevant skills being taken into account), and in some circumstances this may involve participation in meetings called at short notice.

Term of office

The appointment will commence on 1st January 2018 and will be for a period of three years.

Terms of appointment continued

Remuneration and expenses

Remuneration for SAC business (but not travelling time to and from meetings) is £39.00 per hour. Preparation time may also be claimed, on average this is generally 2.5 hours in respect of principal meetings and 0.5 hours in relation to monthly teleconferences.

Reasonable (only standard class rate) travel expenses are also paid.

The Department has due regard to diversity. Expenses may include reimbursement of reasonable additional child care or other carer costs that are occurred due to SAC commitments, and the reimbursement of reasonable additional expenses of disabled people.

Annual Appraisal

An annual appraisal will be carried out by the Chair of the Council.

Conflict of Interest

You must inform the Chair of the Council if you have any conflict of interest that might affect your ability to undertake this role. You should disclose information on any relevant business interest, public appointment or position of authority, including other connection with commercial, public or voluntary bodies. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the Panel at the shortlisting and interview stages.

The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is noon on 15th September 2017. We expect to have shortlisted by 9th October with panel interviews on 13th November.

It is essential that your statement of suitability gives full but concise information relevant to the appointment, clearly demonstrating how you meet each of the [essential criteria](#).

Defra will acknowledge receipt of your application.

The Advisory Assessment Panel will consist of:

- Professor Ian Boyd, Defra Chief Scientific Adviser as chair
- Professor Sir Charles Godfray, Hope Professor of Zoology at Jesus College, Oxford, and Director of the Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food. Chair of the Science Advisory Council as member
- Professor Dame Georgina Mace, Professor of Biodiversity and Ecosystems, and Head of the Centre for Biodiversity and Environment Research at University College London as the independent panel member.

At the Shortlist meeting the Panel will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide who to invite for final interview.

Interviews are expected to take place at Noble House, 17 Smith Square, London and will last for approximately 45 minutes. **As part of the interview, candidates will also be asked to give a presentation lasting between 5 – 7 minutes.** Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

References will be taken up for those candidates selected for interview.

Candidates will be able to claim reasonable expenses incurred travelling to and from the interview. If you have any queries about this please contact the science.advisory.council@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

How to apply and submit your application

To apply, please email the following to publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk by the deadline of **15th September 2017**:

- a CV of no more than two sides of A4 with education, professional qualifications and employment history
- a supporting statement of not more than two sides of A4, setting out how you meet the [essential criteria](#). Please make sure you refer to the contents of this document and provide specific examples
- Contact details (including email addresses) for two referees
- Conflicts of interest and political; activity monitoring form (“Monitoring form 1)
- Diversity monitoring form (“Monitoring form 2”).

If you have any questions about the appointments process please contact Public Appointments Team (publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

For an informal discussion about the role please contact Nicky Gee, SAC Secretariat on 0208 026 8973 or email science.advisory.council@defra.gsi.gov.uk

**Completed applications should be
emailed to publicappts@defra.gsi.gov.uk
– please quote reference: APPT07-17**

The Commissioner for Public Appointments

This appointment is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, to ensure that it is made on merit after fair and open competition. More information about the role of the Commissioner and the Governance Code on Public Appointments can be seen at:

<http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578498/governance_code_on_public_appointments_16_12_2016.pdf

For full details of the complaints process for public appointments, please click on the following link which will take you to the Commissioner for Public Appointments website

<http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/contact-us/>

Alternatively please contact the Commissioner's office on 020 7271 0831 for a printed copy.

Data protection

Defra is committed to protect your privacy and to process your personal information in a manner which meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

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 – Current membership of the Board

- **Professor Sir Charles Godfray** – Hope Professor in the Zoology Department and Director of the Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food at the University of Oxford (SAC Chair)
- **Professor Sheila Bird** - Visiting worker at the MRC Biostatistics Unit, Institute of Public Health, Cambridge and visiting professor at the University of Strathclyde's Department of Mathematics and Statistics.
- **Professor Tim Jickells** - Professor in the School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia
- **Professor Paul Monks** - Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry and Earth Observation Science at the University of Leicester
- **Professor Dame Henrietta Moore** - Director of Institute for Global Prosperity Chair of Culture, Philosophy and Design, University College London
- **Professor Wayne Powell** - Principal and Chief Executive of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC).
- **Professor Sarah Whatmore** - Professor of Environment and Public Policy at the University of Oxford, and Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education).
- **Professor James Wood** - Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine, Cambridge University, and Alborada Professor of Equine and Farm Animal Science



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