



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Appointment of a Chair to the Science Advisory Council

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date 4th March 2021



Science
Advisory
Council



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Defra mission statement

The Defra group is here to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener, and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for future generations, and to leave the environment in a better state.

This matters because enhancing nature and green spaces enhances lives and livelihoods, contributing to a strong economy. Our wellbeing, our physical and mental health, our love of place and landscape, and our intrinsic need for beauty, awe and wonder, are all intimately bound up with a thriving natural environment.

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

We guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post. 'Minimum criteria' means you must provide sufficient evidence in your application, demonstrating that you meet the minimum level of competence required for each essential criterion, as well as meeting any of the qualifications, skills or experience required. The Cabinet Office and Defra is committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. To show this we proudly display the Disability Confident Leader logo. More information about Disability Confident Leaders is available by clicking the logo above. If a person with disabilities is put at a substantial disadvantage compared to a nondisabled person, we have a duty to make reasonable changes to our processes where possible. If you need a change to be made so that you can make your application, please refer to the ['How to apply and submit your application'](#) section below.

The Science Advisory Council

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) invites applications for the position of Chair 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) by advising on and challenging the evidence that Defra uses in its policy development. The SAC currently consists of eight 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'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 and to this end, diversity of thought within the members is encouraged.

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.gov.uk.

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: quarterly meetings; monthly teleconferences; subgroups on specific policy/evidence areas and a Defra Official and SAC member pairing scheme. The SAC has two standing subgroups: Social Science and Exotic Diseases. It 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.

Role specification

We are looking for a Chair who has the right qualities to take responsibility for the leadership and output of SAC. In doing so, the Chair will work in partnership with the CSA and SAC members to ensure SAC is able to provide high-level, strategic advice and constructive challenge on Defra's use of evidence on high profile policies (often at pace) and on cross cutting and longer term challenges relating to the environment, food and rural affairs. The Chair will also ensure SAC provides advice on how Defra should look to further improve its use of evidence and external advice. In addition to this the Chair will offer advice to the CSA in his oversight role of other Defra scientific expert committees.

The Chair will perform these duties by leading discussions with SAC members and Defra officials through a mixture of formal meetings and smaller working groups. In doing so, the Chair will ensure all SAC members are able to contribute to discussions and effective use of SACs time is achieved through purposeful engagement, that will add value to policy-making at Defra.

The Chair will be responsible for ensuring SAC operates in line with the Government's Principles for Scientific Advice and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees. The Chair will also participate in the appraisal of members' performance as well as act as the public face of SAC, for example interactions with the Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan principles of public service (attached at [Annex A](#)) and the [Code of Conduct for Board members](#).

Essential Criteria

Candidates must be able to demonstrate all of the following essential criteria:

- An ability to lead a diverse team of influential people and the ability to command the respect and confidence of Ministers, the CSA, senior officials, senior scientists and other stakeholders.
- The ability to chair complex multidisciplinary discussions, drawing out the views of all members, arriving at consensus, being clear on uncertainty and producing relevant and clear outcomes.
- A collaborative style and an aptitude for partnership working; this would include an ability to engage with people in a respectful and inclusive way.
- An understanding of the interface between science, commerce and policy and demonstrable ability in strategically assessing the application of evidence in policy-making. This would include the ability to recognise where and how science can enhance policy-making.
- Strong analytical skills with the capacity to examine issues in an impartial way and the ability to ensure that SAC provides high-level science advice not limited by their area of expertise.

Time commitment and term of office

Appointments are made by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food) whose responsibilities include Science and innovation, including GMOs and gene editing.

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 2021 principal meeting dates have been arranged: 16th June, 13th October and 15th December.

In addition, it is envisaged that the Chair 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 in June (exact date to be determined) and will be for a period of three years.

Remuneration and expenses

Remuneration for SAC business (but not travelling time to and from meetings) is £53.00 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 childcare or other carer costs that are occurred due to SAC commitments, and the reimbursement of reasonable additional expenses of disabled people.

The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is noon on 4th March 2021. We expect to have shortlisted by 19th March 2021, with Panel interviews on 14th and 15th April.

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](#).

The Advisory Assessment Panel will consist of:

- **Professor Gideon Henderson**, Defra Chief Scientific Adviser, as Chair
- **Tom Walker**, Defra Director of Environment Strategy, as member, and
- **Professor Judith Petts**, Vice-Chancellor of Plymouth University as the Independent Panel Member.

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

Interviews are expected to take place via Microsoft Teams and will last for approximately 45 minutes. We will be asking each candidate to make a short presentation and further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

These are Ministerial appointments and all candidates deemed appointable by the Panel will meet with the Minister before a final decision is made.

How to apply and submit your application

To apply, please send:

- a CV of no more than two sides of A4;
- a supporting statement of up to 1,000 words (approximately two sides of A4), setting out how you meet the [essential criteria](#) – make sure you refer to the contents of this document and provide specific examples;
- e-mail addresses for two referees;
- completed diversity and political activity monitoring form;
- completed conflicts of interest, conduct and advertising monitoring form (please note the section on [conflicts of interest and due diligence](#) below).
- If you have any questions about the appointments process or require additional assistance to support you in your application, please email the Public Appointments Team at
- publicappts@defra.gov.uk

For an informal discussion about the role please contact Nicky Gee, Secretary to the Advisory Assessment Panel (e-mail nicky.gee@defra.gov.uk)

Completed applications should be emailed to publicappts@defra.gov.uk – please quote reference APPT12-20

Ineligibility criteria

You cannot be considered for a public appointment if:

- you become bankrupt or make an arrangement with creditors;
- your estate has been sequestrated in Scotland or you enter into a debt arrangement programme under Part 1 of the Debt Arrangement and Attachment (Scotland) Act 2002 (asp 17) as the debtor or have, under Scots law, granted a trust deed for creditors;
- you are disqualified from acting as a company director under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986;
- you have been convicted of a criminal offence, the conviction not being spent for the purposes of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (c. 53);
- you become subject to a debt relief order or a bankruptcy restrictions order;
- you fail to declare any conflict of interest.

Conflicts of interest and due diligence

If you have any interests that might be relevant to the work of the Science Advisory Council, and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be appointed, please provide details in your application. If you have queries about this and would like to discuss further please contact the [Public Appointments Team](#).

Given the nature of public appointments, it is important that those appointed as members of public bodies maintain the confidence of Parliament and the public. 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 Advisory Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue(s) 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 publically available information. This information may be made available to the Advisory Assessment Panel and they may wish to explore issues with you should you be invited to interview. The information may also be shared with ministers and Cabinet Office.

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

<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/complaints/>

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). All the information you provide will be used to proceed with the public appointment listed in this information pack and in the case of diversity monitoring information may be anonymised and used solely for monitoring purposes. For more information about the way we collect and hold your information, please read the Privacy Notice accessible through the Cabinet Office's Public Appointments Website (<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>) or request a copy of Defra's Public Appointments Privacy Notice from publicappts@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 – Current membership of the Board

- Professor Sir Charles Godfray (Chair), Director of the Oxford Martin School (OMS) at the University of Oxford
- Professor Peter Cox, Professor of Climate System Dynamics at the University of Exeter.
- Professor Lin Field, Head of Biointeractions and Crop Protection at Rothamsted Research.
- Professor Rosie Hails, Director of Nature & Science at the National Trust.
- Professor Rowland Kao, Sir Timothy O’Shea Professor of Veterinary Epidemiology and Data Science at the University of Edinburgh.
- Professor Dame Henrietta Moore, Founder and Director of the Institute for Global Prosperity at University College, London (UCL)
- Professor Wayne Powell, Principal and Chief Executive of Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC).
- Professor Dame Sarah Whatmore, Professor of Environment and Public Policy at the University of Oxford, and Head of the Social Sciences Divisions.
- Professor James Wood, Alborada Professor of Equine and Farm Animal Medicine and Head of University of Cambridge Vet School.



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