



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee

**Four member appointments with
expertise in hazardous substances (and
allied disciplines)**

Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date: 5th November 2021

Reference Number: HSAC2021_Member



Contents

Defra mission statement	2
What is the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee?	3
Aim of the Committee	3
Terms of Reference	3
The Role Specification and Essential Criteria	5
The Role	5
The Person	5
Essential Criteria	7
Terms of Appointment	8
Time commitment.....	8
Term of office	8
Remuneration and expenses	8
Conflict of Interest	9
How to apply and submit your application	11
Data protection.....	11
Annex A – The seven principles of public life.....	12
Annex B – Current membership of the Committee	13

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.

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 Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee?

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) invites applications for the position of Member of the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC), a non-statutory, independent scientific advisory body.

HSAC plays a vital role in assisting Defra in identifying, analysing, assuring and challenging the evidence that we use in policymaking. This is an exciting time for chemical policy following the UK's exit from the European Union as Defra is developing its own Chemicals Strategy, a key action of the 25 Year Environment Plan, which will set out the Government's vision for a Chemicals Framework. HSAC advises Defra on a broad range of topics, what constitutes 'good' evidence, contentious chemicals, prioritising the key chemical issues for the UK, defining evidence gaps and scoping exploratory work on emerging challenges. Previous work by the Committee has covered topics including microplastics, nanomaterials, endocrine disruptors, characterising pharmaceuticals of concern, chemical mixtures, and defining key research questions and gaps in ecotoxicology. The Committee will continue working on chemicals in the environment but will also consider new innovations in chemistry (including green chemistry and advanced materials), risk assessment tools (e.g. new approach methodologies), interactions between chemicals and climate change, the issues posed by chemicals in waste to the circular economy and the management of hazardous wastes. It will also benefit from the ability of members to flag connections between its work and Defra's work with work areas and programmes in other countries in academic or government institutions.

The Committee works closely with the Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team but, with the impacts of hazardous substances cutting across the Defra family, there are opportunities for the Committee to bring its expertise to a range of policy areas. HSAC currently consists of eight members plus a Chair.

Aim of the Committee

HSAC is an independent scientific advisory body providing expert advice on protecting the environment, and human health via the environment, from potentially hazardous substances, articles, and wastes.

Terms of Reference

To advise officials, UK Ministers, including Ministers in the Devolved Administrations, and other relevant bodies, on request or otherwise:

- On matters of relevance at a domestic, European and global level, relating to the protection of the environment, and human health via the environment, from potentially hazardous substances, articles and wastes, including advanced materials; including on future issues of concern, on new innovations, on impacts and on wider strategic linkages;
- On the assessment of risks associated with potentially hazardous substances, articles and wastes, including advanced materials;
- On research needs and other evidence gaps relating to potentially hazardous substances, articles and wastes, including advanced materials; including analysing, interpreting, and assessing the quality and relevance of, evidence.

To advise officials and UK Ministers, including Ministers in the Devolved Administrations, on request or otherwise, on policy development and evaluation, including the impact of different policy options; the assessment of new regulations and deregulation, and the development of voluntary initiatives, best practice advice and formal guidance, which are relevant to its remit.

HSAC's relationship with Defra

The HSAC's agenda and operation is structured to integrate it within the Department's workings, but it retains its capacity to provide critical independent challenge. HSAC is both reactive to Defra's needs and is also expected to horizon scan and raise issues itself that the Committee believes the Department should consider. Its work plan therefore combines a strategic, forward-looking view with reactive practical advice.

Protocol on the relationship between The Defra Chief Scientific Advisor and the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee:

- To report to, and engage with, the Defra Scientific Advisor and through them the Defra Science Advisory Council;
- To support the Defra Chief Scientific Adviser, as necessary, during emergencies;
- To operate in line with the Government's Principles for Scientific Advice and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees.

Protocol on relationship between the lead Defra Minister and the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee:

The lead Defra Minister will:

- Set Terms of Reference for the Committee;
- Agree strategic work plans, receive reports and advice;
- Receive periodic reviews of the Committee's functions and value for money;
- Consult the Devolved Administrations and other Departments as appropriate, about the Committee and its work.

Structure of HSAC's Business

To enable HSAC to take its role forward at an appropriate strategic level it can organise its business over the financial year in three ways: i) workshops to assess the policy needs of Defra, identify work areas and to formulate work plans, ii) principle face-to-face meetings in London, and iii) ad hoc intersessional telecons/virtual meetings or other activities to support the development of specific commissions or work streams. Under the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic, HSAC business will continue to be conducted virtually until face-to-face meetings become practical within the guidance.

The Role Specification and Essential Criteria

The Role

Members of the Committee have collective responsibility for the operation of HSAC. They are expected to attend meetings, preparing for them by reading the meeting packs beforehand and formulating a view on each item for discussion at the meetings. When there are very large or technically complex documents to review and summarise, the Chair may appoint one or more rapporteurs, drawn from the members, for this purpose. Occasionally, subgroups of HSAC members may be established to discuss specific issues and report back. Members are expected to contribute to commissions provided to them through the Defra based Secretariat or those raised from within the Committee, where members are encouraged to horizon scan and develop their own ideas for work streams where they see a role for scientific advisory. Outputs from these commissions can include: i) verbal discussion and advice (often reactive), ii) formal published responses, such as opinions, statements or document reviews, iii) external engagements with other organisations including funding bodies and government agencies.

HSAC has its own website where information about the Committee's activities, reports and meeting papers are regularly published. If you require more information about the vacancies, please contact the HSAC Secretariat at: chemicals@defra.gov.uk.

The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan principles of public service (attached at Annex A) and the HSAC Code of Practice (available on the [HSAC website](#)).

The Person

We are seeking **four new members** who have the right qualities to work collaboratively alongside the HSAC Chair and fellow HSAC members in an interdisciplinary team. We are seeking individuals with a strong expertise in at least one of the following areas:

- environmental economics
- environmental social science
- ecotoxicology
- green and sustainable chemistry
- chemical risk assessment
- environmental chemistry and fate
- chemicals in products and life cycle assessment
- plastics and microplastics, human health impacts
- hazardous waste management and the chemical-product-waste interface.

In addition, it is expected that you will have a strong understanding of the challenges posed by hazardous substances, articles and wastes to the environment and human health. You will be capable of providing high quality advice, support and assurance to Defra on a range of chemical issues.

Applicants from a wide range of backgrounds will be considered including private sector, academic and professional institutions and non-governmental organisations.

You will be able to horizon scan and identify emerging scientific and policy areas that Defra can engage with and therefore have a 'big picture' view on how your area of expertise relates with current policy issues domestically and internationally.

You will provide high-level strategic advice, support, and assurance to Defra on developing and implementing an effective strategy for obtaining and using evidence and scientific advice (occasionally 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 as well as a mixture of meetings and smaller working groups.

Essential Criteria

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

- An internationally recognised expert in the specific area of expertise associated with the role and a strong understanding of the challenges posed by hazardous substances, articles and wastes to the environment and human health;
- 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 policy teams;
- 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 policymakers and ministers. This includes completing work commissioned by Defra at pace in the form of reports, papers, feedback or advice;
- An ability to work well in an inter-disciplinary team, with effective communication, negotiating, judgement and influencing skills, including in a virtual space using collaborative, online technology as well as working face to face.

Desirable criteria

Knowledge of chemicals management regimes and risk assessment approaches.

Terms of Appointment

Time commitment

You should ensure you 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.

Committee business will usually take place in London or virtually. During the year, HSAC business will require up to 14 days, and may consist of:

- Two principle meetings each lasting approximately five hours;
- One annual workshop to plan the 12-month forward plan;
- Several virtual meetings to plan and discuss commissions lasting one hour;
- Intersessional ad hoc meetings that the Member may be invited to;
- Additional time to provide input to intersessional commissions.

Meetings are normally arranged well in advance and effort will be made to avoid state school holiday periods.

In addition, it is envisaged that each HSAC 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 in the new year of 2022. Terms of office will usually be for periods of three years and members may be re-appointed for one further term subject to satisfactory performance. Appointments may be terminated at a member's request, or by Defra, if members fail to perform as expected of them, with notice periods of not less than three months.

Remuneration and expenses

Members are entitled to claim fees based on a taxable daily rate (£168) for HSAC business. This includes meeting attendance, meeting preparation and development of outputs, but not travelling time to and from meetings. Preparation time is normally considered at 0.5 times the meeting length. Committee members are entitled to claim reimbursement for costs incurred in travelling (standard class only) to and from meetings, including any necessary overnight stays, and for any necessary meals and refreshments covering the period of travel.

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

Conflict of Interest

If you have any real or perceived conflict of interest that might affect your ability to undertake this role, please provide details in your Supporting letter. 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 Assessment Panel at the shortlisting and interview stages.

The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is noon on 5th November 2021. We expect to have shortlisted candidates by 19th November with panel interviews to be held between the 6th and 17th December.

You will provide a CV and a statement of suitability of no more than two sides of A4. It is essential that your statement 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 assessment panels will be formed from the following people or office:

- Dr Kay Williams, Joint Head of Chemicals, Pesticides and Hazardous Waste Team, Defra
- Dr. Mark Chandler, Head of Evidence and Analysis, Chemicals, Pesticides & Hazardous Waste, Defra
- Professor Chris Collins, Professor of Environmental Chemistry, University of Reading, HSAC Chair
- Professor John Colbourne, Professor and Chair of Environmental Genomics, University of Birmingham, HSAC Member
- Professor Iseult Lynch, Professor in Environmental Nanosciences, University of Birmingham, HSAC Member
- Chandu Chaudhary, Government Office for Science, Head of Emerging Technology Projects, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
- Dr Ovnair Sepai, Principal Toxicologist, Head of General Toxicology, Public Health England
- Chief Scientific Advisor's Office

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 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 – 7 minutes, the presentation topic will be provided in advance. This should be made without the use of visual aids or any other presentational aids. This will give each candidate the opportunity to express their views on an area or issue that they feel HSAC should be working on, and to set out why they want to be on the Committee, and what they would bring to that activity.

Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

One reference should be included from a research institution other than the candidates host institution.

How to apply and submit your application

To apply, please email the following to chemicals@defra.gov.uk by the deadline of **5th November 2021**, quoting the reference number **HSAC2021_Member** in the subject heading:

- 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 giving evidence of the strength and depth of your ability to meet the essential criteria for this role. Make sure you refer to the contents of this document and provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet each of the criteria. Please ensure your full name, the role to which you are applying and the corresponding reference number for the post are clearly noted at the top of your letter.
- Contact details (including email addresses) for two referees
- Conflicts of interest and political activity monitoring form (“Monitoring form 1”)
- Public Appointments Diversity Questionnaire (“Monitoring form 2”)

For an informal discussion about the role please contact Dr. Jackie Taylor, HSAC Secretariat, on chemicals@defra.gov.uk

Webinar

For anyone who would like to learn more about these roles, we are offering an opportunity for you to join a **live webinar on Monday 25 October from 14:00 to 15:00 hrs** with a combined Defra and HSAC Committee panel. To register please click on the following link - [HSAC Candidate Information Webinar](#)

Data protection

Defra is committed to protecting your privacy and to processing 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 Committee

- **Professor Christopher Collins** – Professor of Environmental Chemistry, Reading University (HSAC Chair)
- **Professor Michael Depledge CBE** – Emeritus Professor of Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter Medical School
- **Professor Stewart Owen** – Principal Environmental Scientist at AstraZeneca with core expertise in comparative animal physiology, focusing on environmental toxicology
- **Professor John Colbourne** – Professor and Chair of Environmental Genomics, University of Birmingham
- **Professor Andrew Johnson** – Environmental Research Scientist, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- **Professor Peter Matthiessen** – Independent Consultant and leading expert on aquatic pollution issues
- **Professor Iseult Lynch** – Professor in Environmental Nanosciences, University of Birmingham
- **Professor Susan Owens OBE** – Emeritus Professor of Environment and Policy, Cambridge University
- **Professor John Sumpter OBE** – Professor of Ecotoxicology, Brunel University London



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