



Defra Science Advisory Council

February 2017 Teleconference Minutes

Matters arising

Action Number	Action detail	Owner	Deadline
Feb (17) 01	Confirm availability to chair panel discussions/Q&A sessions at the Royal Society-Defra Conference.	SAC members	
Feb (17) 02	Record, in the SAC work programme, potential input into the air quality model design	Secretariat	
Feb (17) 03	Consider inviting the NCC Chair to a SAC principal meeting.	Secretariat/SAC Chair	
Feb (17) 04	Record, in the SAC work programme, a potential discussion on insect protein production.	Secretariat	

1. Introduction

Professor Godfray welcomed attendees, especially the newly appointed senior scientist to the SAC Secretariat . Attendees and apologies are recorded at Annex A.

2. Royal Society-Defra Conference. Science for Defra: Excellence in the application of evidence

SAC members, Sub Group Chairs and Devolved Administration Observers have been invited to the conference. Defra is seeking SAC volunteers to chair panel discussions or Q&A sessions.

Action February (17) 1: SAC members confirm availability to chair panel discussions/Q&A sessions at the Royal Society-Defra Conference.



3. Chief Scientific Adviser's (CSA) update

In addition to the issues highlighted in Annex A of the meeting paper the CSA provided information on the following areas:

- Air Quality. A new air quality model and monitoring system is under discussion. The challenge is to design new policy with an adaptive approach. During development SAC may be consulted on its design.

Action February (17) 2: Secretariat to record, in the SAC work programme, potential input into the air quality model design.

- EU Exit: Work continues to take stock of existing policies in preparation for working on EU Exit across the department. The department is identifying potential negotiating positions and managing the opportunities and risks. The SAC will be updated appropriately on issues relevant to science.
- Natural Capital Committee (NCC). Following the launch of the NCCs fourth state of natural capital report in January it was agreed the SAC would consider inviting the NCC Chair to a future meeting. This would provide an opportunity for the SAC to hear about the work of the NCC and how it contributes to the Defra evidence base.

Action February (17) 3: Secretariat and the SAC Chair to consider inviting the NCC Chair to a SAC principal meeting.

- CSA meeting with Fera's Chief Executive. Of particular relevance to the SAC was a discussion on insect protein production and insect bioreactors. This is something that could be discussed at a future SAC meeting, in the meantime, the CSA would welcome any intelligence SAC members have on how the UK could get involved.

Action February (17) 4: Secretariat to record, in the SAC work programme, a potential discussion on insect protein production.

- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA), Professor Walport, has been appointed as the new UKRI Director. This means he will relinquish his current GSCA role. As an interim arrangement, until a new GSCA is in post, the Defra CSA along with other departmental CSA's will help to fill the gap.



4. Oral updates

Review of the Expert Evidence Groups

The review lead confirmed that the implementation programme had been discussed at the Group Evidence, Science and Analysis Committee (GESAC). There was broad support to the idea of aligning the Expert Group Chairs to future Executive Committee (ExCo) delivery systems; and agreement is being sought from the relevant Committees. Other consultation had taken place through a meeting of Expert Evidence Group Chairs who also broadly supported the proposed changes. It was noted that a long term vision is for the SAC to have an overarching role.

SAC Social Science Expert Group (SSEG) - potential work on “risk communication”

Professor Whatmore, Chair of the SSEG, confirmed that a preliminary evaluation will take place in March to determine the need for, and scope of, a SSEG project on 'communicating risk' which will pick up aspects of the National Flood Resilience Review. Professor Bird made the point that the first essential in risk communication is to know/understand the risk that needs to be communicated. Professor Boyd confirmed that the GCSA and several departmental CSA's have discussed risk communication and there is potential for SSEG to consider a number of different risk messaging themes.

5. Any other business

- Tim Jickells raised Defra marine evidence, with particular reference to identifying the government research need, delivering policy aligned research programmes and collaboration with the Research Councils such as The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). Professor Boyd confirmed that in part this will be addressed through the publication of Defra's 'areas of research interest' this is due to be published imminently.
- Sheila Bird will raise with the UK Statistics Authority/National Statistician the opportunity for the UK to access EU mandated surveillance data prior to EU exit.



Annex A: Attendees and apologies

SAC Members

Charles Godfray (Chair)
Sheila Bird
Tim Jickells
Paul Monks
Wayne Powell
Sarah Whatmore

Defra officials

Ian Boyd – Chief Scientific Adviser
SAC Secretariat

Devolved Administration Observers

Alistair Carson - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland
Louise Heathwaite – Chief Scientific Adviser for Rural Affairs and Environment, Scottish Government and Scottish Devolved Administration Observer
Katherine Raymond– Welsh Government (on behalf on Chris Lea)

Apologies

Henrietta Moore, SAC member
James Wood, SAC member
Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser