



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Appointment of 3 members to the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE)

## Briefing pack for applicants

Closing Date: Midday Friday 26 April 2024

REF No.



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# Ministerial message to candidates

Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE).

ACRE provides a vital function in advising the UK Government, and the countries of Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland on the potential risks to human health and the environment from the release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) for research and marketing.

ACRE needs excellent people to help it achieve its vital work in providing statutory advice on GM trial applications and evaluating new research findings.

We are currently seeking expertise in three areas. We are looking for people with a proven track record of achievement in research and expertise in each of them. The three areas are:

- (i) Veterinary medicine, in particular, biotechnology-derived veterinary medicinal products and vaccines;
- (ii) Molecular biology, in particular biotechnology;
- (iii) Environmental biology: broad expertise in environmental microbiology, particularly in the context of molecular plant-soil-microbe interactions and biotechnology applications.

If you have the background and skills we are currently seeking, then I very much encourage you to apply.

**Mark Spencer**  
**Minister of State for Food, Farming and Fisheries**



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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 this [link](#). 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. 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.

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# About ACRE

ACRE is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) composed of leading scientists. It is sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs. ACRE provides statutory advice to the UK Government, and the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland on the potential risks to human health and the environment from the release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) for research or marketing purposes. ACRE also has a role in evaluating new research findings and any science-based GM matter, as well as providing advice on releasing non-native animals and plants into the environment as bio-control agents.

The aims, and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment are to:

- advise the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Scottish and Welsh Ministers, and other bodies as appropriate, on the exercise of powers under Part VI of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;
- advise Ministers, and other bodies as appropriate, on releases into the environment of Great Britain of animals and plants covered by sections 14 and 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;

- advise the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, (Northern Ireland) on releases of GMOs into the Northern Ireland environment for the purposes of the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1994;
- provide as requested by Ministers, scientific advice on GMOs, including advice to the Health and Safety Executive in respect of the human health aspects of releases to the environment;
- advise Ministers, and other bodies as appropriate, on research needs.

An NDPB has a role in the processes of national government, but is not a government department, or part of one. NDPBs operate, to a greater or lesser extent, independently of Government Ministers.

NDPBs have different roles. ACRE's role as an NDPB is to advise Ministers, and other bodies that carry out regulatory functions. ACRE works within the strategic framework set by Ministers, and in accordance with appropriate legislation.

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# Role specification

As a member, you will contribute to ACRE's overall effectiveness, and support the Committee as a whole in meeting its statutory duty and conducting its affairs with probity. You will take personal responsibility for helping ACRE deliver its objectives, achieve value for money, and deliver high standards of regularity and propriety.

As a member you will be responsible for:

- contributing to a cohesive and focused Committee issuing advice to Government and other Bodies researchers;
- meeting statutory duties and deadlines;
- taking proper account of evidence in reaching decisions;
- delivering high standards of propriety, contributing efficiently and effectively and conduct ACRE business in an open and transparent manner.
- The successful candidate must abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life, the [Code of conduct for board members of public bodies](#) and the [Code of Practice for Scientific Committees](#).

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## Essential criteria and expertise

We are looking to recruit high-calibre applicants from a range of diverse backgrounds who can discharge the full range of Committee responsibilities.

We are looking to recruit three members to ACRE. Candidates must demonstrate the general essential criteria outlined below, and one of the specific areas of expertise. Your expertise will be applied to the formulation of ACRE advice, particularly on the potential risks to human health and the environment posed by the use of GM products in research trials or in commercial use, and non-native species used as bio-control agents.

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

- the ability to assimilate complex information and participate fully in Committee deliberations, including offering contributions and challenges outside the area of your main expertise;
- possess strong analytical skills and the capacity to examine issues and evidence relevant to GMO safety considerations, in an impartial way, with the ability to apply this when ACRE is assessing applications to use GMOs;
- effective interpersonal and communication skills, demonstrating an ability to work collaboratively and identify key issues and

communicate conclusions to a non-specialist audience, if necessary.

- skills in risk assessment, or an ability to develop these skills, in order to help ACRE advise on the potential environmental risks (including risks to human health) associated with the use of GMO products in research trials and commercial use.

**Specific areas of expertise are being sought as follows:**

### **Post 1 – veterinary medicine:**

A proven track record of achievement in research and expertise relating to veterinary medicine, in particular, biotechnology-derived veterinary medicinal products and vaccines.

### **Post 2 – molecular biology**

A proven track record of achievement in research and expertise relating to molecular biology and biotechnology.

### **Post 3 – environmental microbiology**

A proven track record of achievement in research and broad expertise in environmental microbiology, particularly in the context of molecular plant-soil-microbe interactions and biotechnology applications.

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## Time commitment and term of office

ACRE meets about three times each year; each meeting requires one day, and there will be preparation for each meeting. Some ACRE meetings will be open to the public to observe. Some of the work of ACRE is dealt with via correspondence between formal meetings.

Meetings are usually held in Defra's London office, Marsham Street, SW1P 4DF. Some meetings may be virtual or take a hybrid approach.

Appointments to ACRE are made for 3 years. You may be eligible for a second term. Appointment beyond a second term is considered exceptional.

You may claim £173 for every full day spent on ACRE business. You are also entitled to claim reasonable travel and subsistence expenses.

## The recruitment process

The closing date for applications is noon on **Friday 26 April 2024**, we expect to confirm shortlisted candidates by **Friday 7 June 2024** with panel interviews from week commencing **Monday 24 June 2024**.

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](#) and the specialist role you are applying for.

The Advisory Assessment Panel will consist of Dr Lucy Foster, Agri-Food Science Lead, Defra (Panel Chair); Professor James Dunwell (Chair of ACRE); Professor Sallie Baillie (Deputy Chief Scientific Advisor, Scottish Government) and Dr Tim Riley (livestock farmer and Non-Executive Director on the Board of the Food Standards Agency and a member of the Defra UK Genetics for livestock and Equines (UKGLE) Committee) 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 in Defra's offices at 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF and will last for approximately 45 minutes. 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 be considered by Ministers before a final decision is made.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

If you are interested in this role, but unsure if you have the necessary experience, please read this blog by the Public Appointments Commissioner:

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<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/valuing-diversity/>

## How to apply and submit your application

To apply you will need to [create an account](#) or [sign in](#) to Apply for Public Appointment Service gov.uk by the deadline of **12:00 on 26 April 2024**. Once logged onto your account, **click on 'apply for this role'** and follow the on-screen instructions. To apply, all candidates are required to provide:

- a CV of no more than two sides of A4 with the names and e-mail addresses of two referees;
- a supporting statement of suitability of no more than 1,000 words, setting out how you meet the [essential criteria](#) and the area of expertise you are applying for – make

sure you refer to the contents of this document and provide specific examples;

- equality information;
- information relating to any outside interests or reputational issues, real or perceived, relevant to the work of ACRE.

If you have any questions about the appointments process, please email the Public Appointments Team at [PublicAppts@Defra.gov.uk](mailto:PublicAppts@Defra.gov.uk).

If you have any questions about the role, please email the ACRE Secretariat at [ACRE.Secretariat@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ACRE.Secretariat@defra.gov.uk)

**Applications should be uploaded to [gov.uk](https://gov.uk) by 12:00 (noon) of the closing date of Friday 26 April 2024.**

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## 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 ACRE, 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 publicly available information. This information will 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.

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# 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/>

## 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 UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK 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

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/>

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](mailto:publicappts@defra.gov.uk).

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# 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.

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## Annex B – Current membership of the Committee

- Professor Jim Dunwell (Chair)
- Dr Kathy Bamford
- Professor Huw D Jones
- Dr Huw E Jones
- Professor Peter Lund
- Professor Andrew Millar
- Dr Ben Raymond
- Dr Andrew Wilcox

Biographies and the register of interests for the current members can be found on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)



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