


Briefing pack for the appointment of

# Members of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE)

**CLOSING DATE: 6 February 2026**





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Defra Group leads on the fundamentals: the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe. It encompasses food, environment, biosecurity, trade and more. Defra is a policy, growth, science, delivery and international department.

Defra's work is fundamental to delivering the government's five missions – by building economic resilience through better flood defences, protecting against biosecurity risk, climate adaptation and nature-based solutions; creating jobs and attracting investment in our water and waste sectors; working with our sectors, such as food and drink; and ensuring that all missions are rural-proofed.

To achieve these goals, we are committed to appointing high-calibre individuals from diverse backgrounds to the boards of our public bodies. By drawing on a wide range of skills, knowledge, and experiences, we can make our work more effective, resilient, and accountable to the public.

### Equal Opportunities and Diversity

The UK government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that no one experiences unfair discrimination or harassment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, national origin, colour, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or age.

We actively encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds and are committed to fostering diversity in public appointments. All appointments are made on merit, following a fair and open competition process regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

### Disability Commitment

We are dedicated to supporting candidates with disabilities and are proud to hold Disability Confident Leader status. We guarantee an interview for any applicant with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the post.

To ensure an inclusive process, we are committed to making reasonable adjustments where possible for candidates with disabilities. If you require any adjustments to support your application, please refer to the 'How to Apply and Submit Your Application' section below. Further information about the Disability Confident Leader scheme is available via the Disability Confident logo displayed above.

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE). ACRE needs excellent people to help it achieve its vital work in providing statutory advice on the potential risks to the environment and human health of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) particularly in the context of research trials (crop and medicinal), evaluating new research findings, and providing scientific advice to support policy-making.

ACRE provides a vital function in advising the Departments of the UK Government, and the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland responsible for agriculture and the environment, as well as liaison with other Public Bodies, such as the Animal and Plant Health Agency, and the Health and Safety Executive.

We are currently looking for experts with proven track records of achievement in research and scholarship in each of the following three areas:

- Medical microbiology including biotechnology-derived medicines including vaccines;
- Agricultural ecology including plant/animal population biology in the context of environmental risks;
- Entomology including insect-plant-microbe biological interactions in the context of environmental risk.

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

Dame Angela Eagle DBE  
Minister of State (Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs)



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.

As a member, you will contribute to ACRE's overall effectiveness and support the Committee 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. 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 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.

**Post 1 – Medical microbiology**

The successful applicant will have expertise in biotechnology-derived medicines including vaccines. Expertise will be applied to the formulation of advice, particularly on the potential environmental risks posed by the use of medicines comprising or containing GMOs in clinical trials and commercial use.

**Post 2 – Agricultural ecology**

The successful applicant will have expertise in agricultural ecology including the potential impacts of environmental risks on plant and animal populations in an agricultural setting, particularly in the context of biotechnology applications.

**Post 3 – Entomology**

The successful applicant will have a broad expertise in entomology particularly in the context of the impact of potential environmental risks on insect-plant-microbe interactions in agriculture and other environmental settings.

**Remuneration**

£173 per full day  
& expenses

**Time  
commitment**

3 days a year, plus  
correspondence

**Term length**

Initial appointment  
for 3 years

**Location**

Occasional travel to  
meetings, typically  
in London

**Terms of Appointment**



# The Timeline

## How to apply

To apply you will need to [create an account](#) or [sign in](#) to “Apply for Public Appointment Service” gov.uk by the deadline of **midday on 6 February 2026**. Once logged onto your account, click on ‘apply for this role’ and follow the on-screen instructions.

To apply, all candidates are required to submit:

- A CV of no more than two sides of A4 with education, professional qualifications and employment history and the names and contact details for 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.

For further information please email:

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

## Advisory Assessment Panel

- **Lucy Foster** – Agri-food Science Lead, Panel Chair
- **Prof Jim Dunwell** – ACRE Chair
- **Dr Kim Davie** – Scottish Government
- **Prof Gurch Randhawa** – Bedford University, Independent Panel Member

Ministers are assisted in their decision making by Panels.

In undertaking their assessment of candidates the role of the Panel is to decide, objectively, who meets the published selection criteria for the role, in other words, who is appointable to the role.

The names of all appointable candidates must be submitted to Ministers. It is then for Ministers to determine merit and make the final appointment.

## 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.

## Complaints

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/>
- [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#)

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

## 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 restriction order;
- you fail to declare any conflict of interest.

### **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.

### 1. Expertise

- Consider and act in the best interests of your organisation and its objectives; delivering the outcomes expected by your sponsor department, ministers and ultimately the public.
- Consider the broader mission and duties of your sponsoring Secretary of State, his or her Department and the Government.
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties and the organisation's Framework Document and act within its powers.
- Exercise reasonable care, skill, and diligence in the exercise of their authority and judgement.

### 2. Scrutiny and challenge

- Maintain independence from the executive to allow scrutiny of management and in meetings agree goals and objectives and monitor performance and the reporting of performance so that the public who use your organisation receive a high-quality service.
- Satisfy yourself on the integrity of budget setting to deliver objectives and financial information and reporting against budgets, and that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible. Meet the requirements of Managing Public Money, including supporting the Accounting Officer in fulfilling their duties to provide propriety and value for money in the use of public funds.
- Champion high standards of risk management by ensuring your organisation has effective risk reporting, controls and governance, risk expertise and risk tolerances to effectively manage risk.
- Represent your organisation to the department and to Ministers, as well as ensuring Ministers' views are considered by the executive team of the organisation, as appropriate.

### 3. Support

- Support the board in succession planning and be prepared to put yourself up for re-appointment, as well as promoting the need for a diverse board.
- Participate in and promote regular reviews of your organisation, as well as the board's own effectiveness, with particular focus on the organisation's purposes and its efficiency in meeting these purposes. Engage in the appraisal process, including self-reflection on your own abilities.
- Listen carefully to, ask appropriate questions of and support management to encourage discussion in a manner that promotes a culture where all perspectives are listened to, while fulfilling the individual Director's duties and responsibilities and respecting and valuing the expertise of the executive team.
- Promote the success of the entity having regard to the interests of all members and stakeholders, and all risks

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

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



Department  
for Environment,  
Food & Rural Affairs

