NatureScot
Scotland's Nature Agency

**NatureScot**

**SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

# SCIENCE AND EVIDENCE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME – HOW THE SAC CAN SUPPORT THE PROGRAMME

## Purpose

1. This paper outlines progress on setting up NatureScot’s new Science and Evidence Leadership Programme. The paper also suggests areas of work that the SAC members could get involved with to help support the drive to increase the impact and influence of NatureScot’s science and evidence work.

## Action

1. SAC members are asked to:

## Consider the areas of work outlined in Table 1 and provide an initial steer on areas SAC members can add most value to.

## Suggest any other areas of our scientific work that they think they could help us with and should be considered under the programme.

## Preparation

1. The paper was written by Alex Mackay. It is sponsored by Eileen Stuart.

## Background

1. The Science and Evidence Leadership Programme was set up following the work of the Action Learning Set on NatureScot’s Science and Evidence.
2. The aims of the programme are to increase the impact and influence of NatureScot’s science and evidence and reinforce our role as trusted adviser to Government and other parties. We intend science to cover the natural, social and physical spheres.
3. The programme will be managed by a Programme Board which will have responsibility for overseeing, making improvement to and increasing the impact of NatureScot’s scientific work. While the programme board will set the strategic direction of the programme, there will be three workstream groups responsible for overseeing the development of the various areas of work required for the successful delivery of the programme as a whole.
4. The workstream groups are:
5. Science Leadership co-ordination & development
6. External Influencing and advocacy
7. Science skills development
8. A workstream outline (Annex 1) has been developed, taking on board suggestions from the Action Learning Set work including feedback from across the organisation as well as suggestions from the SAC following consideration of the draft SAC Forward Plan in July 2022.

## Setting up the Science and Evidence Leadership Programme Board

1. Applications for joining the Science and Evidence Leadership Programme Board were invited during September. This was a competitive process with eleven strong applications from across NatureScot for six places.
2. To complete the Programme Board, it was decided that it would be helpful to have a representative from the SAC to sit on the Board. The Chair of the SAC was asked to nominate a member to get involved with the work of the programme. Professor Jane Reid was nominated and has accepted a place on the Board.
3. The full programme board members are therefore:

* Chair/SRO - Eileen Stuart
* Permanent members - Kath Leys, Ben James and Des Thompson
* SAC Member – Professor Jane Reid
* People and Organisational Development – Linda Chalmers
* Communications – Catriona Webster
* NatureScot Staff Members - Celine Delabre - Agriculture Officer, Sian Williams - Operations Officer South, Chris Leakey - Marine Sustainability Manager, Ruth Paterson - Marine Data Adviser, Brodie Thomas - Graduate Placement – Genetic Technologies and Fairlie Kirkpatrick Baird - Geographic Systems and Data Coordination Officer
* Programme Manager – Alex Mackay

1. A draft Terms of Reference (Annex 2) has been drawn up. The first meeting of the full Programme Board will be on November 10 2022.
2. The three workstream groups will be led by Kath Leys, Ben James and Des Thompson and will have two of the six non-permanent members from the programme board as well as other co-opted staff, depending on the work being taken forward by the group.

## SAC and the Science and Evidence Leadership Programme

1. Through the Science and Evidence Leadership Programme the SAC can have an influential role as advisors, supporters and advocates for NatureScot.
2. SAC members will bring specific expertise which will help us deliver a number of the elements of the programme, across the three workstreams.
3. Table 1 below sets out some of the main areas from the draft programme where we believe a role for the SAC members could be valuable. We would welcome comments from SAC on this outline and areas of particular interest to members.

**Table 1 – Areas of work from the draft Programme where SAC members could have a role**

**Workstream 1 – Science Leadership co-ordination and development**

| **Area of Work** | **Potential Role for SAC** |
| --- | --- |
| Establishment of the Programme Board | * This has been completed – Prof Jane Reid has agreed to be member of the board. The Board will meet for the first time on November 10. |
| Develop strong links between the SAC and NatureScot | * Guest blogs for internal Intranet from SAC members – 1 every couple of months * Teach-ins – specialist discussions with particular teams. SAC members can be matched according to their area of expertise. * Launch a SAC Mentoring Scheme in early 2023 where SAC members are matched with a member of staff to help support their work.   Notes: This work would be pulled together into an engagement plan, to ensure we communicate properly with staff and make the most of the time spent by the SAC members on this work. The mentoring scheme particularly will need to be facilitated to ensure that opportunities are promoted, those wanting to participate are matched appropriately and both the SAC member and member of staff feel supported for instance at the start make sure that expectations and the level of commitment are understood and accepted. |
| Manage and support our Masters & PhD programmes | * SAC members could scrutinise and help co-design project ideas that we are putting forward for CASE studentships and Masters to ensure they are attractive to students. * Help identify and develop new partnerships with Universities that will support our work. |

**Workstream 2 – External influencing and advocacy**

| **Area of Work** | **Potential Role for SAC** |
| --- | --- |
| Review our Science and Evidence communication output | * Redevelopment of the Science newsletter to brand it as a NatureScot publication, but continue to have input from the SAC. |
| Look at new ways of communicating our science | * Draw on experience of SAC to see whether there are other ways to communicate our science and engage better with the scientific community. |
| Update our research commissioning and reporting process, including support for scientific publication | * This work will involve an internal review to determine how the current system works and where improvements could be made. Getting the views of the SAC would be very useful in terms of ensuring we embed good practice into the commissioning and reporting process. |
| Developing our science communication competencies | * Draw on the SAC’s experience or their contacts to help support our science communications - perhaps an opportunity to contribute to a teach-in on this subject. |
| Develop enhanced relationships with the wider scientific community | * Hold an annual discussion with SAC members to discuss how they can support us to make better use of their connections. e.g., are there internal channels where our work could be promoted? * Help with producing short videos/vlogs for sharing with universities and colleges. |

**Workstream 3 – Overseeing a programme of skills development**

| **Area of Work** | **Potential Role for SAC** |
| --- | --- |
| Establish Mentoring Opportunities | * Links with workstream 1 – SAC mentoring scheme. |
| Opportunities for sabbaticals, exchange schemes | * SAC members may have ideas or become aware of short-term opportunities that might benefit our staff in particular science fields. |
| Establish opportunities to access science skills support | * SAC members could be involved in supporting the development of our current staff but also ensuring we future-proof our science skills and expertise. |

## Next Steps

1. A programme of work will be drawn up by the workstream groups and agreed by the Programme Board. An indication of some early work that will be delivered includes:

* November 2022 – First meeting of the full programme board.
* November 2022 – agree a programme of online meetings to explore areas of the programme, including - Communicating our science – a teach-in session from our Communications team on what makes a good science-based story
* January 2023 – Review of our CASE studentships programme
* January 2023 – Priorities for workstream groups in place
* March 2023 – Introduction of a programme of training and skills development including mentoring opportunities with SAC.
* March 2023 – Review and update of our research commissioning process

1. The SAC members are invited to suggest any other areas of our scientific work that they think they could help us with and should be considered under the programme, and in particular any early outputs that would provide impact for staff.

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**ANNEX 1**

**Science and Evidence Leadership Programme**

**Outline of Workstream Groups**

**Workstream 1 – Science Leadership co-ordination and development**

* Establish a Science and Evidence Leadership Programme Board with an agreed programme of work.
* Provide strategic support for the science and evidence needs required to deliver the Corporate Plan.
* Develop stronger links between SAC members and NatureScot colleagues
* Develop and support our Masters & PhD programmes and oversee a bi-annual Student Conference

**Workstream 2 – External Influencing and advocacy**

* Review our science and evidence communication output
* Review and update if necessary our research report commissioning process
* Develop our science communication competencies and opportunities for staff to be actively involved in communicating about our science
* Develop enhanced relationships with the wider scientific community, particularly key universities and research institutions.

**Workstream 3 – Overseeing a programme of skills development**

* Develop a CPD pathway for science career development and further education opportunities to develop expertise
* Establish in-house and external mentoring (including the SAC) & training opportunities for scientific staff
* Identify opportunities for getting involved in writing scientific research papers
* Identify gaps in our science skills and ensure we have the right skills for the future
* Establish the science skills support we need to source externally

**ANNEX 2**

**Science and Evidence Leadership Programme Board Terms of Reference (June 2022)**

**Purpose/role of the group:**

The Science and Evidence Leadership Programme was set up in response to the findings from the Action Learning Set (ALS) 16 – NatureScot’s Science and Evidence, which reported in 2021.

The aims of the programme are to increase the impact and influence of NatureScot’s science and evidence and reinforce our role as trusted adviser to Government and other parties. We intend science to cover the natural, social and physical spheres.

One of the key recommendations from the ALS was to ‘establish a Science and Evidence Leadership Programme Board with a dedicated secretariat which has formal responsibility for overseeing, making improvement to and increasing the impact of NatureScot’s scientific work’.

The programme board will commence in summer 2022 and will oversee the development of our Science and Evidence Leadership Programme.

The programme consists of three workstreams:

1. Science Leadership co-ordination & development
2. External Influencing and advocacy
3. Overseeing a programme of science skills development

Each workstream will have a working group, which will be chaired by one of the three permanent programme board members and will include two of six co-opted members of the programme board.

The programme board will develop the scope and priorities for delivering the work, ensure the success of the programme, and guide and monitor progress of the three work streams.

The main responsibilities of the Board will be:

* providing overall strategic direction for the programme
* agreeing the scope of the work within each workstream
* approving the governance arrangements for the programme including documentation e.g. programme brief, work stream plans, communication plan etc.,
* agreeing priorities and timescales for key deliverables
* agreeing any major changes from the agreed work stream plans
* quality assurance for the work stream deliverables
* monitoring risks associated with the programme
* escalating any conflicts to SLT if they cannot be resolved at programme board level

**Accountability**

* The Chair of the programme board will be responsible for feeding back progress to Senior Leadership Team.
* There will be a representative from the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) on the programme board who will be responsible for sharing information and feedback from and to the SAC on the work of the programme board.
* Individual members will be responsible for gathering information and feedback from within their teams to help inform the programme board’s work.

**Membership**

The Programme Board will be chaired by Eileen Stuart (Chief Scientist) and will have four permanent members representing science across the organisation. These places will be filled by Kath Leys, Head of Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Des Thompson, Principal Adviser on Science and Biodiversity, Ben James, Head of Marine Science and a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC). The board will also include representatives from People and Organisational Development and Communications.

A further six members will be co-opted on to the programme board for a period of up to 12 months. This model will allow a mix of stability, but flexibility to hear alternative voices and opinions. These additional six members will be drawn from NatureScot staff but may include CASE students or individuals with particular specialist interest that would be of use to the work of the Board. It is very important for the integrity of the board that there is a diversity of age, experience and scientific expertise within the membership. Expressions of interest from staff will be invited to join the programme board.

Secretariat for the group will be fulfilled by the Programme Manager.

The Programme Board will oversee the workstream groups which will be responsible for delivery. There may be occasions where the programme board wishes to set up additional working groups alongside the workstreams to take forward elements of the work that may sit across all three workstreams or be particularly novel or contentious. These groups will draw in a further range of skills, expertise and experience from across NatureScot.

**Meetings**

The programme board will meet once every quarter to review progress with the workstreams. Meetings will take place by TEAMs and an agreed set of standard papers will be issued at least three days before the meeting. The standard papers will include:

* Agenda
* Action Log
* Risk Log
* Update Paper

Additional papers will be issued for consideration depending on the Agenda.

All papers will be finalised and issued by the Programme Manager, with the agenda being agreed with the Chair in advance of the meeting.

**Openness and Transparency**

A communications plan will be put in place to ensure that the rest of the organisation is aware of the work of the programme board.

A Team will be created for the programme. The programme board will all be members of the team.

Once the new intranet and Yammer are available, a suitable more informal place to discuss the work of the Science and Evidence Programme will be identified, to allow engagement from across NatureScot

**Programme Board Longevity**

This programme board is designed to oversee the development of our science and evidence leadership programme. The intention is that this work will shape how we promote and engage others with our science as well as how we nurture science within NatureScot during the term of the current Corporate Plan – ‘A Nature-rich Future for All’. At the end of this cycle this work should be embedded into our ethos – ‘the NatureScot Way’ and the Programme will be complete and therefore the Board will no longer be required.

**Review**

The terms of reference of the Science and Evidence Programme Board will be reviewed every year. The first review will be in summer 2023, with any changes being endorsed by the programme board at their next scheduled meeting.

**June 2022**