

NatureScot submission of 3 February 2023

PE1966/D: Formally recognise and incorporate local knowledge in Scottish Government policy

Thank you for your correspondence in relation to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions committee's consideration of petition: [PE1966: Formally recognise and incorporate local knowledge in Scottish Government policy.](#)

The correspondence seeks details of the membership and skills of NatureScot's board and also asks a specific question relating to NatureScot inviting a representative from the Scottish Gamekeepers Association to join the board. This response provides information in response to these matters.

NatureScot board members are appointed by Scottish Ministers through an open process managed by the Scottish Government's Public Appointments Team, who oversee the regulated public appointments process in line with relevant legislation. Essential and desirable skills and experience of applicants for public appointments is based on the board's needs such as the knowledge, skills and qualities which most closely match those required. The appointments process will also identify those that best meets the needs of the board which are underrepresented, including characteristics, such as sex, disability, age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Appointments are made using methods that are open and inclusive and which are aimed at encouraging applications from a wide range of people. All board members are appointed on an individual basis and not as representatives of organisations. NatureScot policies do not allow for the co-option of any full board member. Appointments have to be progressed through the above outlined process.

All appointments to NatureScot's board are made in line with the Ethical Standards Commissioner's Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland. Any future appointments will be made in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the revised Code of Practice, which came into effect in October 2022. The process outlined in this correspondence will serve to apply to any future potential representatives of the board.

It is worth noting that appointments made to the board have come as a result of open, widely promoted and highly competitive processes which have attracted strong interest from a range of sectors, and which have received a large amount of applications. In September 2022, the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, Lorna Slater MSP, announced the appointment of the three latest members of the board, which represents the most recent changes to its membership.

NatureScot believe that it is important for our board to provide significant experience in a wide range of areas including the environment, science, business and education. Our current board has strong credentials in fields such as environmental science, climate change and farming, as well as bringing the wealth of experience necessary for robust strategic oversight and scrutiny. The board's primary objective is to help Scotland's nature thrive and fight climate change.

NatureScot's board comes from all walks of life. With respect to the specific areas outlined in your correspondence, the board has demonstrable practical experience of land management, as well as members who come from policy development, scientific and academic backgrounds in relation to this area. This includes members who are land managers, farmers, rural business owners and members who have represented or worked alongside communities across Scotland to deliver sustainable nature-based projects. The same applies to water management, with a range of knowledge represented across the board, including with respect to fresh water ecology and the sustainable management of water systems. This broad range of professional and personal experience provides the Board with a variety of expertise and the means by which to ensure that both scientific and local knowledge is applied to our work.

Biographies of the board, which includes an overview of the respective skills and experience of each member, are set out on our [website](#).

A final point for the committee's attention is that Dr Mike Cantlay's tenure as Chair of NatureScot will come to an end in May 2023, after six years in post. Recruitment for Dr Cantlay's replacement will be led by the Scottish Government in line with the aforementioned processes and is expected to start shortly.

I hope that the information provided is of use to the committee's consideration of this petition. If any further information from NatureScot

would be beneficial in relation to your continued scrutiny of the matters set out, then please do not hesitate to ask.