

## Minutes and actions

### Solar Radiation Management: Public Dialogue Oversight Group Meeting 01

Tuesday 2 July 2024, 13:00-15:00 BST, by zoom videoconference.

#### Members:

Jack Stilgoe (Chair): University College London: Jack Stilgoe (JS)  
 Jim Haywood: University of Exeter  
 Joanna Haigh: Imperial College London  
 Duncan McLaren University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Law  
 Doug Parr: Greenpeace  
 Nick Pidgeon: Cardiff University  
 Alexander Hall: McMaster University  
 Savio Moniz: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ):  
 Tracey Dale: Economic and Social Research Council UKRI (ESRC)  
 Jim Fleming: Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council UKRI (EPSRC)  
 Emma Bessent: Arts and Humanities Research Council UKRI (AHRC)

#### Other attendees:

Lizzie Garratt, Simon Howe, Catriona Till: Natural Environment Research Council UKRI (NERC)  
 Diane Beddoes, Steve Robinson: Sciencewise  
 Clio Heslop: British Science Association (BSA)

#### Oversight Group 01 Meeting Actions:

No.	Action	Responsible	Timing
1.1	NERC/SW to revise ToR according to initial comments from the OG.	NERC/Sciencewise	July 2024
1.2	OG Terms of Reference working document to be shared with all OG members. OG members to track comments and changes in the shared OG Terms of Reference document.	NERC All OG members	August 2024 Before the September OG meeting
1.3	Further discussion around how to increase diversity of the OG. OG members to suggest possible names to NERC/Sciencewise.	ALL OG members	Before September 2024 OG meeting
1.4	OG members to contact BSA directly conserving the SRM Social Intelligence Report.	All OG members	July – August 2024
1.4	Draft ITT working document to be shared with OG members. OG members to track comments in the shared draft ITT.	NERC All OG members	August 2024 Before OG meeting September 2024

1.5	OG members to notify DB if there are areas that they feel the Public Dialogue Evaluation will need to consider.	All OG members	Ongoing
1.6	Date for September OG meeting.	NERC	July 2024

1. *Review of agenda – Chair:*

The meeting agenda was accepted by all Oversight Group (OG) members and there were no changes made.

2. *Welcome and introduction – Chair:*

The Chair welcomed OG members. Each OG member introduced themselves, providing a brief overview of their background and thoughts on SRM. OG members had a range of views on SRM research. DESNZ comments recognised that due to the pre-election Purdah protocol contribution to discussions would be limited.

3. *Background:*

3.1 *Introduction to the NERC SRM Research Programme - NERC*

NERC outlined the new programme “Modelling environmental response to solar radiation management”. The programme will include a single call for research projects across four themes (one project per theme). The programme will be funded through NERC Strategic Research and Innovation core funding. The OG were given an overview of the research call scope (see Paper 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 for further details), highlighting that the research programme will not include any deployment or outdoor research.

Further discussion highlighted that due to SRM being a controversial subject, there is a need for public involvement, and more general inclusion of ethics and governance. NERC are therefore working with Sciencewise, through UKRI co-funding, to deliver a public dialogue. AHRC, EPSRC and ESRC will also be involved through the OG in this SRM public dialogue.

NERC explained the links between the research call and the public dialogue piece, highlighting that (1) there is an expectation that the funded projects will engage and take part in the public dialogue activity (2) projects should be open to minor amendments based on insight from the public dialogue (3) at the end of the programme the results from the public dialogue will be brought together with the results from the research programme into one portfolio of evidence.

3.2 *Introduction to Public Dialogue - Sciencewise*

The OG were provided with background to Sciencewise as a UKRI funded programme that provides evidence on public aspirations, concerns, views and values around new and emerging areas of science, technology and innovation, along with views on their potential benefits and disadvantages. The evidence collected enables socially informed research and policy making.

Public dialogue is a process during which members of the public interact with scientists, stakeholders and policy makers to deliberate on issues relevant to future policy.

### 3.3 *SRM Programme Timeline - NERC*

Slides and the timeline of activities were discussed by the group.

### 3.4 *OG initial discussion:*

OG members questioned how the OG is going to ensure the public dialogue process has integrity. They also noted the importance of ensuring the public dialogue starts at the point where the public are, not where the science is.

Multiple OG members noted that the OG need to discuss and clarify what the scope is for the influence of the public dialogue work.

There was discussion about use of “risk-risk” terminology. It was felt this should not be used for the public dialogue.

The extent to which public views on SRM may have changed since the last public dialogue, and the role this new public dialogue could play in investigating current views, was discussed by the OG (Geoengineering public dialogue and evaluation report from [2010](#) and [2011](#)). Some OG members felt that the science context and social context for evaluating technology may have changed since the last report. It was suggested that the dialogue contractor would need to use previous reports to inform the public dialogue work, and this could be encompassed as a baseline in the Evaluation ITT.

There was a discussion about the risk of legitimising SRM by discussing it. The OG concluded that the dialogue needs to be designed carefully with this in mind. During the discussion the point that studying something does not necessarily imply that you want it to happen was also raised.

It was noted that there is a need to not overemphasise the biophysical risks of SRM when communicating with the public through the dialogue.

The importance of engaging participants for whom SRM currently holds no salience was also highlighted.

## 4. *Oversight Group (OG) roles and Terms of Reference (ToR) - NERC*

4.1 NERC presented a draft Terms of reference (ToR), requesting input from the OG to finalise the ToR. It is expected that the OG to be involved in scoping and designing the public dialogue and that the OG would work with the public dialogue contractor throughout the duration of their contract.

4.2 OG discussion:

- It was noted that there may need to be more OG meetings than currently scheduled to ensure the OG can have an impact on the public dialogue and to allow for further evaluation of the public dialogue. It was confirmed that the OG would next meet in September.
- It was noted by OG members that there is a need to clarify in the ToR that the OG group are independent from NERC and Sciencewise.
- It was highlighted by OG members that Objective 2 in the ToR needs rewording to increase clarity. The OG also wanted greater clarity on what the public dialogue will be for/what impact it will have. Reflecting on the wording in the ToR, the OG asked questions about what is meant by “diverse”, it was suggested that the word “establish” may not be appropriate, “well-rounded” is misleading, and more detail was required on what was meant by “broadly reflective”.
- There was discussion around whether the public dialogue should include a space for the public to discuss their views on SRM deployment, and whether this would be appropriate given that the SRM research funding opportunity is focussed on modelling with no outdoor research.
- It was suggested that the ToR be simplified and include more reference to the [Sciencewise Principles](#), which outline in detail the reasons behind doing public dialogue and what public dialogue is for.
- OG members noted a need to clarify how the public dialogue will inform research and policy and, following discussion with the OG, specify in more detail the scope of the public dialogue outcome and audience.
- There was some discussion around the wording of the ToR. There was concern around the use of the word ‘ambassador’ and the word ‘rapporteur’ was suggested as a possible alternative.
- NERC proposed that the ToR could be simplified so that some of the detail of the public dialogue itself could be removed and be focussed under the ITT discussion. The ToR would then be focused on the roles and responsibilities of the OG.
- The OG highlighted that the OG is not as ethnically diverse as it could be. Later in the meeting, it was also suggested that the OG membership did not include anyone who was willing to argue for the potential benefits of SRM.

**Action 1.1: NERC/SW to revise ToR according to initial comments from the OG.**

**Action 1.2: ToR to be shared as a working document, OG members to track further comments and amendments on this document.**

**Action 1.3: Further discussion and action to increase the diversity and representation of views within the OG.**

## 5 *Social Intelligence Report - British Science Association*

The role of the British Science Association (BSA) is to produce reports that look across a landscape and identify what role a public dialogue could play. It was noted that this SRM social intelligence work helped fill a gap, as there are not many papers looking at this in the UK.

The OG were taken through some key points from the report: 1) the UK's Net Zero target (which was not present when previous public dialogue type activities were done) potentially creates a different context setting around SRM views. There is evidence that there is mixed confidence about the UK's ability to meet the Net Zero target. 2) The public see there is not one 'silver bullet' solution, there are doubts around whether climate mitigation technologies will work, and most people would not be comfortable with technology alone as a solution (a variety of interventions will be needed). 3) The work suggests that negative framings drive negative responses. For example, negative wording on social media leads to a negative response, while conversations around governance lead to more positive responses. 4) On a global front, noting the UK's awareness of SRM is lower than other countries. There is also a difference between public consensus in the Global North (more concerns around safety and cost effectiveness) compared to the Global South (more concerns around inequity and risk distributions). Please refer to Paper 3 - *Draft Social Intelligence Report* for more detail.

It was confirmed that BSA were happy for the OG to email her directly regarding comments/questions on the SRM social intelligence report

*Post meeting note from BSA: The BSA received useful feedback on the draft social intelligence report and are incorporating it into the final version. Most of the feedback concerned definitions of SRM (which we will ensure are consistent with the NERC call) and accurately reflecting expert debate about SRM. We were also sent a couple of additional pieces of public attitudes work, which will go into the "pre-2019 work" section.*

### **Action 1.3: OG members to contact BSA directly concerning the SRM Social Intelligence Report.**

#### **6 Draft Public Dialogue Plan – NERC**

6.1 NERC highlighted that the draft public dialogue plan was based on the Sciencewise/NERC business case and was written prior to the BSA Social Intelligence work. It was noted that NERC/SW are looking for advice and guidance from the OG to improve the Public Dialogue Plan, this document will then be used as the basis for the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for a contractor to deliver the public dialogue.

#### **6.2 Public Dialogue Plan initial OG discussion:**

- OG members highlighted that the purpose and outcomes of the public dialogue need to be outlined in more detail. It was noted that if public dialogues are to affect decision making, then the decision-making agency must be willing to give some power away. Sciencewise clarified that their projects do not normally aim for consensus or hand over decision making. OG members highlighted that there needs to be a stronger link with actual decisions being made by relevant policy bodies, including Research Councils.
- The OG noted the importance of ensuring the public dialogue piece is an open discussion and highlighted the need to ensure that the public dialogue is not used as a way of saying the public are onboard with funding SRM research. It was suggested that the conversations in the public dialogue could be used to identify what kind of guidance people would like to see and could be used to create a set of 'principles and guidance' for decision makers to follow.

- The OG raised that there is a danger of assuming that SRM will be used just for addressing climate issues, however there is the possibility of it being used for other commercial or strategic reasons. It was suggested that the public dialogue conversation is allowed to move into this space, to explore what fears and hopes people might have in this area. It was also noted that going into the public dialogue there is a need to anticipate possible misconceptions the public may hold around SRM, such as connections with conspiracy theories involving so-called 'Chemtrails'.
- It was noted that it will be important to ensure the biophysical risks of SRM are not over emphasised when communicating with the public through the dialogue (as modelling can only tell us about some of the risks involved in SRM, e.g. it doesn't tell us about cultural, social, political risks).
- It was suggested that it is important to ensure public dialogue participants are aware that the public dialogue report will be anonymised, and their names will not be linked to their views in the written public dialogue report.
- It was proposed that we try to ensure the public dialogue is not too packed with questions, and that there is scope for the participants to reframe the discussion and take it where they want.
- The OG suggested that ensuring experience of SRM in the contractors (either in the consultant team themselves or an advisor) may be something that needs to be specified in the ITT.
- Sciencewise informed OG members that there will be an evaluation of the public dialogue commissioned as part of the public dialogue process. OG members were asked to identify, before the next OG meeting, areas that they feel the public dialogue evaluation may need to consider.
- There was a question about next steps for developing the ITT and the evaluation of the submissions. NERC confirmed that a standard template from UKRI procurement would be used for the ITT and the evaluation would follow their process. *Post meeting note: NERC will confirm further detail on the OG involvement in developing the ITT and the evaluation process during meeting 02.*

**Action 1.4: A draft Invitation to Tender (ITT) working document will be shared with OG members for them to track their comments. The ITT will be discussed further at the next OG meeting.**

**Action 1.5: OG members to highlight to BSA at the next OG meeting particular aspects of the public dialogue that they feel the evaluation process should focus on.**

7 *Next OG meeting*

All OG members agreed to the next meeting being held in September 2024.

**Action 1.6: NERC to circulate a doodle poll to find an appropriate date for the next OG meeting in September 2024.**

8 *Meeting close*



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