

Minutes and actions

Solar Radiation Management: Public Dialogue Oversight Group Meeting 04

Wednesday 16 July 2025, 13:30-15:30 BST, by zoom videoconference.

Members:

Jack Stilgoe (Chair): University College London (JS)
 Alexander Hall: McMaster University
 Duncan McLaren: University of California, Los Angeles
 Joanna Haigh: Imperial College London
 Nick Pidgeon: Cardiff University
 Hugh Hunt: University of Cambridge (First meeting)
 Savio Moniz, Kate Scott: 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: Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
 Steve Robinson: Sciencewise
 Henrietta Hopkins, Kate Furber, Hally Ingram: Hopkins Van Mil (HVM)
 Anna MacGillivray, Hilary Livesey: URSUS Consulting Ltd

Apologies:

Jim Haywood: University of Exeter
 Chuks Okereke: University of Bristol
 Doug Parr: Greenpeace
 Trupti Patel: Sciencewise

Oversight Group Action log:

No.	Action	Responsible	Timing	Note
3.1	NERC team to initiate discussion with funded research projects to formalise public dialogue feedback and response process.	NERC	December 2025	Ongoing: Initial discussion with project teams held. Coordination plan and documents being developed throughout the remainder of 2025.
4.1	Further advance the discussion for a process for publishing OG minutes.	NERC/Sciencewise	September 2025	Ongoing: NERC and Sciencewise (SW) met with UKRI and SW comms. A route forward was agreed. Anticipated to publish toward the end of 2025. Update to be given in OG#05.

4.2	OG members to stay informed of and engaged with the Royal Society report on the <i>Exploration of the Science of SRM</i> . Interest to the OG was for inclusion of social, ethical and political consideration to be included.	OG	August 2025	
4.3a	Hopkins Van Mil to circulate dialogue design presentation to OG for further feedback and comment.	HVM	July 2025	Complete
4.3b	OG to feedback on plans (dialogue and speakers), noting specific questions in the documents.	OG	By end of August 2025	Complete
4.4	DESNZ liaise with HVM over a statement for the first dialogue workshop to address the importance of the dialogue to help frame further UK government position on geoengineering and SRM.	HVM/DESNZ	By end of August 2025	Complete

Minutes:

1. *Welcome – Chair*

JS welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly those attending their first Oversight Group (OG) meeting.

2. *Meeting overview – Chair*

JS set out the structure and purpose of this meeting. Specifically, that the meeting focussed on the landscape of SRM research and activity as well as design of the Public Dialogue.

2.1 The OG discussed the minutes and actions from the previous meeting. NERC updated the group on action 3.1 regarding the feedback process from NERC funded SRM projects to the public dialogue. Namely that NERC held an initial discussion with projects to discuss integration where project leads were reminded of the expectation of response to the dialogue report on an individual project and programme level. The projects are also feeding into the dialogue process through discussions with Hopkins Van Mil (HVM).

2.2 HVM recapped that the dialogue design workshop took place on 3 July. The meeting was well attended by academics, both funded and not funded by NERC and/or Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA), policy stakeholders, representatives from ARIA and SRM360.

- 2.3 NERC led a discussion of the publication of the minutes from OG meetings, which is often applied with Sciencewise-involved groups, although not always the case. The OG discussed this further with options available from not sharing, sharing when requested, sharing in a shortened version, or shared in full. The strong consensus being that a version of the group's minutes should be published following each meeting. The OG further discussed the creation of summary notes with less detail than full meeting notes. The proposed process and timescale would be for NERC and Sciencewise to liaise with their communications teams to ensure compliance with online publication policy, with previous minutes (meeting #01-#03) would be sense-checked and published. Subsequent minutes would be approved by the OG at the following meeting, before publication i.e. minutes from meeting #04 agreed at meeting #05 in September before being published. Consideration is to be made to ensure stylistic and formatting is consistent, particularly in relation to anonymity of individuals contributions and attribution of comments. The OG posited that meeting attendance should remain as being recorded, with comments attributed to the OG discussion, with the exception being names, and/or organisations for presenters leading particular agenda items, otherwise comments will be attributed to the group as a whole. The NERC secretariat will seek agreement from OG members not in attendance at this meeting.

Action 4.1: NERC and Sciencewise to further advance the discussion for a process for publishing OG minutes.

3 *SRM landscape – NERC*

- 3.1 NERC summarise the relationship between the NERC and ARIA SRM related funding. NERC's investment is split into two streams; one being the academic-led research programme consisting of four projects focussing on the environmental science of SRM, and a public dialogue activity (co-funded by UKRI/Sciencewise, so with a broader remit) which totals approximately £11m. While the two investments ran along a similar timescale, the programme was developed independently from ARIA's *Exploring Climate Cooling* programme. The ARIA investment is £56m, consisting of 21 projects. The scale is broader than NERC's, with the inclusion of outdoor measurement, ethics and governance as well as pure modelling. The NERC and ARIA programme teams worked to ensure no duplication of funding and encourage collaboration and links between the investments. ARIA are also ensuring that all NERC projects are involved in their public engagement activities, led by an organisation called Liminal Space, with an initial meeting taking place in the coming months. ARIA are both a key stakeholder and an audience for this public dialogue activity. HVM confirmed that they have strong links to Liminal Space and will continue to engage.
- 3.2 The OG discussed other aspects of the SRM landscape in the public space outside of the research focussed area and public dialogue. This included i) the recent YouGov poll on public willingness to support geoengineering projects; ii) various US states seeking to ban geoengineering; iii) US Environmental protection Agency (EPA) published some web content related to geoengineering; iv) recent debate in UK Parliament about all forms of Greenhouse Gas Removal (GGR) and geoengineering; v) opinion results published by SRM360; vi) Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) have published an opinion piece on the risks of SRM and the geopolitical implications; vii) Nuffield Council on bioethics are in the early stages of developing a programme on

geoengineering more broadly; viii) media reaction to ARIA funding, which is seen as the most likely to have broken through to public awareness of SRM, for participants of the public dialogue.

- 3.3 Further OG discussion centred on the Royal Society report, which follows an initial 2009 report focussed on Geoengineering the climate. The new report, which is due for release in autumn 2025 has a narrower scope of the science of SRM, without significant inclusion of governance or social and political content. While there will be chapter SRM governance, recent developments, governance principles and practical challenges. The OG see the benefit of Royal Society engaging and using lessons from the public dialogue and consider this chapter's inclusion welcome but emphasised the desire for the report to not simplify a complex landscape and debate by omitting further ethical and public engagement considerations.

Action 4.2: OG members to stay informed of and engaged with the Royal Society report on the Exploration of the Science of SRM. Interest to the OG was for inclusion of social, ethical and political consideration to be included.

4 *Public Dialogue recruitment – HVM*

- 4.1 HVM presented on dialogue recruitment. The paper shared with the OG was developed by HVM in liaison with the wider project team and incorporated initial views of the OG following the previous discussions during OG meeting 03 in May 2025. Specific feedback concerned trying to better incorporate representation from the north-east of England. The proposed adjustment was to shift the in-person location from Cambridge to Peterborough. While recognising this location is not located in the north-east, being further north than Cambridge there are more direct public transport and travel links available.

The HVM team discussed various criteria for the 14 participants at each of the four locations (Glasgow, Wrexham, Exeter, and Peterborough); age, gender, ethnicity, religion and view on climate change (noting this final criterion has the potential for overlap with political affiliation). The dialogue will seek to recruit a balance and mix of these. The OG and HVM recognised that climate impacts in each of these locations will differ. Further discussion centred on ensuring the opportunity for contributors to the dialogue to participate in a way most suitable for them, this may include written or outside of wider group discussion.

5 *Public Dialogue design process – HVM*

5.1 HVM presented on the public dialogue design process which included a process overview, feedback from the July stakeholder workshop, workshop outlines, principles and roles for specialist contributions. The OG were reminded of the dialogue process, whereby meetings will take place between September and October 2025. Participants will receive a handbook and pre-joining materials, including the opportunity to join an online technology support meeting in advance. In addition, there is a dedicated online space to support each dialogue meeting.

HVM led discussion of the design workshop outcomes, which included participants' hopes and fears for the dialogue as well as suggestions raised. These focused on background and contextualising the dialogue, specifically the framing of climate change, clarity of SRM not as a substitute or replacement for decarbonisation, as well as the specific terminology used.

It was recognised that the online forum allowed for international specialist participants, bringing a broader view of the area. Additional feedback from stakeholders at the design workshop for consideration centred on objectivity of any actors as informants on SRM, avoiding 'technology' as word which has misleading connotations for provability, readiness and deployment, when this is not the case. Also, identifying controversies, red lines and conditions; approach to addressing conspiracy theories.

The draft programme for the dialogue workshops was also presented to the OG. Following this HVM clarified the role of specialist speakers and presenters, who are required to work with a specific brief whereby they must declare interests, present ideas simply using clear and visual stimulus materials, answer participant questions (during and following workshops), explain terminology, sharing resources in advance with HVM, prepare to act as informant rather than judging or commenting on the landscape where required, and allow presentations to be recorded to allow participants to confidentially share and re-watch in their private online-space.

Further to this, it was confirmed that all OG members are welcome to observe any of the workshops. Responding to the presented information and direct questions, the OG advised on the best approach to tackling conspiracy theories, namely, to not spend a lot of time repeating the myth. The OG also advised re-addressing a previous Sciencewise dialogue by Defra on climate adaptation for potential lessons. This point is in relation to recognising climate anxiety, with the discourse of participants shifting in the previous dialogue when being taken through climate mitigation to adaptation. Additionally, the OG recommended a process for capturing participants' questions about the science programme in advance. Discussion also focussed on climate framings ('climate emergency' – requiring an action, and caution over natural vs. unnatural as terminology to approaches which may incur inherent bias perception). The OG advised HVM to be aware of and consider for speaker briefs. The OG applauded the speaker briefing framework, recognising the difference in this role as a resource for a public group, rather than as a persuader may be an unfamiliar role for speakers.

Reflecting on terminology, the OG suggested that creating specified definitions rather than using the detail of how it would frame the question is less important.

The group reflected on risk-risk framing for potentially creating a false binary between unmitigated climate change with the seemingly therefore only option of SRM. There is stark importance to frame within part of a potential package of mitigation and decarbonisation measures with the discussion of very real climate risks. Therefore, noting SRM in the context of potentially acting as mitigating some of the impacts of climate change, but not a single or only solution, recognising a required methodology to compare these risks.

The OG raised that discussion by participants may lean more towards thoughts on SRM in terms of options presented, rather than about SRM research more broadly. There may be questions which participants will want future research answers to and general thoughts on SRM research, which would be relevant to funders like NERC and DESNZ, while recognising some of the future options for research may fall outside of core climate science and fall with cross-disciplinary approaches i.e. social (ERSC), arts (AHRC) to further understand ethics and geopolitics. The group also recognised it would be beneficial to the UK government position on geoengineering and SRM is, highlighting the context of the NERC and ARIA investments to support research to understand the risks, and consequences should a state deploy SRM. SRM is not in the “toolkit” of approaches for climate mitigation.

Further feedback from the OG commented on trying to ensure gender parity in workshop speakers, noting the balance of expertise and jigsaw of availability and expertise for each speaker role.

Action 4.3a: Hopkins Van Mil to circulate dialogue design presentation to OG.

Action 4.3b: OG to feedback on plans (dialogue design and speakers), noting specific questions in the documents.

Action 4.4: DESNZ liaise with HVM over a statement for the first dialogue workshop to address the importance of the dialogue to help frame further UK government position on geoengineering and SRM.

6 *AOB - Chair*

No further items of business were raised.

7 *Date of next meeting & review of actions – Chair*

7.1 The Chair reviewed all actions arising.

7.2 The OG were reminded that the date of the next meeting will coincide with date of the second the second online dialogue meeting (in the afternoon before the dialogue taking place in the evening). This will allow the opportunity for focussed reflection on lessons learned from the first meeting.

The next two OG meeting dates are set: Meeting 05 on 16 September 2025 / Meeting 06: 3 November 2025. Agenda and meeting papers will be circulated in due course.

8 *Meeting close*