

Environmental Alliance of the South of Scotland

Terms of Reference

March 2025

1. Introduction

The Environmental Alliance of the South of Scotland (EASoS) is an informal network of organisations and individuals from across the south of Scotland with a shared interest in addressing the climate and biodiversity crises.

EASoS is not a constituted organisation. It is a network and forum for knowledge sharing and a means to identify, develop, deliver, and support key strategic projects and policy for the region.

EASoS should not be seen as replacing, or replicating, existing organisations' activities; it is a network to help organisations coordinate and act collectively on their strategic environmental ambitions for South of Scotland region as a whole.

EASoS is uniquely positioned in its focus on the South of Scotland, while maintaining wider, Scottish, UK and international links to research and practice.

2. Aims and ambitions

Fundamentally EASoS wishes to make the link between the environment, communities and the rural economy; supporting a more integrated approach and a move away from "silo" thinking by facilitating a dialogue between sectors.

With a broad Open Forum membership, EASoS wishes to champion environmental sustainability, recognising the role our environment plays in underpinning the region's rural economy. It will support mechanisms which would help land use-businesses, the farming and forestry sector and others managing land to value safeguard and grow our natural environment.

EASoS offers a conduit to a broad environmental/rural audience and can be seen as a useful network, with key skills and knowledge, for those developing projects and strategies for the South of Scotland.

EASoS wishes to support existing organisations to further develop knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver projects that will have wide ranging benefits for our environment, communities and rural economy.

EASoS aims:

1. To be a strong and influential voice for the environment and environmental sector in the south of Scotland.
2. To add biodiversity value to land use activity in Southern Scotland, support land managers and policymakers to better incorporate environment and biodiversity issues in their plans, and promote improved understanding of the environment and biodiversity and its role in underpinning a sustainable rural economy across all sectors in south of Scotland.
3. To support partnership working between organisations across the south of Scotland to increase effective action, promote good practice and knowledge transfer.
4. To support and undertake research, policy development and strategic project delivery through the work of its members.

3. Structure and membership

EASoS was co-founded by the Southern Uplands Partnership and Crichton Carbon Centre and is a voluntary network. The membership has evolved organically and comprises over 70 individuals and organisations.

Membership is free. The only criteria for membership is that Network members (all categories) confirm they support the EASoS aims.

With opportunities and ambition for EASoS to play a strengthened role as a sector representative body, we require a more formal structure to guide decision-making process and strategy. In order to facilitate this, two new categories of membership have been created.

3.1 Core members

Core membership is open to constituted NGOs that are working at scale to address biodiversity loss and climate change in the South of Scotland, with a particular focus on those that are south Scotland-led and/or working at scale in South Scotland.

Core members will be responsible for guiding the overall strategic direction of EASoS and eligible to join the EASoS Advisory group, which represents EASoS externally and agrees on actions between meetings.

Core members will be asked to endorse any action or representation undertaken by EASoS.

The initial core members are:

- The Southern Uplands Partnership
- The Crichton Carbon Centre
- Tweed Forum
- Borders Forest Trust
- Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

- Galloway Fisheries Trust
- D&G Woodlands
- The Solway Firth Partnership
- RSPB Scotland

3.2 Associate Members

EASoS welcomes associate membership from a wide constituency of people and organisations working to address biodiversity loss and climate change in south Scotland.

The current associate membership can be categorised (with examples in brackets) as follows:

- Smaller or locality-based NGOs and volunteer-led community groups (e.g. Loch Ken Trust, Communities for Diverse Forestry)
- Larger/ national NGOs (e.g. National Trust for Scotland, John Muir Trust)
- Individuals, private businesses and land owners/managers
- Representatives of public bodies (e.g. NatureScot, SOSE, D&G Council, Scottish Borders Council, Scottish Forestry)
- Representatives of intermediaries and relevant membership bodies (e.g. Scottish Land and Estates).

3.3 Applications for membership.

All members are asked to agree the EASoS aims in their application for membership

The EASoS Advisory Group will regularly review all categories of membership to ensure relevance and reach, inviting new members as it deems appropriate.

All members are welcome to propose others for membership at any time, and the application will be reviewed by the EASoS Advisory Group.

The full core membership will be consulted on applications for new core members and all members will be regularly updated on new members.

3.4 Types of EASoS meetings, attendance and decision-making

EASoS seeks to balance open dialogue and information-sharing with co-ordinated action. To facilitate this, we offer two types of meetings.

3.4.1 Open Forum meetings

Regular open forum meetings of the full membership of EASoS will be facilitated, in order to enable information-sharing, consultation and dialogue across the widest possible audience.

These meetings may be attended by more than one representative of an organisation, but that organisation will be expected to speak with one voice in discussion, normally through its most senior officer present.

In order to maximise engagement from a wide range of perspectives, the number of contributors to discussion from any one organisation or individual may be limited by the Chair.

Open forum meetings will not be decision-making meetings, rather a forum for building knowledge and consensus.

Open Forum meetings will normally take place approximately every 6 months and suggestions for speakers/ topics for discussion are welcome at any time.

3.4.2 Core member meetings

Regular (approximately quarterly) core member meetings will also be facilitated, in order to make key decisions on behalf of EASoS, consider its future strategic development and direction and its external representation.

This group may delegate agreed actions to the Advisory Group.

These meetings will normally be attended by the core member organisation's Chief Officer or most senior relevant local representative.

3.5 Governance and secretariat

The Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP) provides governance, facilitation and secretariat support for EASoS, as part of its wider charitable mission to promote sustainable development in South Scotland. As such, EASoS is governed by the SUP Board and treated as a project of SUP internally.

SUP will seek opportunities to resource EASoS through its own fundraising. SUP will continue to consult and engage with members on the focus and direction of EASoS.

3.6 Advisory group

SUP convenes an informal advisory group to advise and guide it on the direction of EASoS. The Advisory Group is a sub-group of the core EASoS membership.

At present, the advisory group is comprised of:

- Dr Chris Miles, SUP Convenor
- Dr Emily Taylor, Director, Crichton Carbon Centre
- Cara Gillespie, Chief Executive, SUP
- Derek Robeson/ Luke Comins, Tweed Forum
- Jamie Ribbens, Galloway Fisheries Trust
- Ed Forrest, Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

Membership of the Advisory Group will be reviewed annually.

3.7 Delegation and Decision-making

Where possible, all strategic matters that require a decision will first be considered by the full core membership before action by the Advisory Group. However, the Advisory Group will be empowered to act on behalf of EASoS in urgent or sensitive situations.

Decision-making of the core membership will be by consensus, however where this is not possible a vote will be taken with each member having one vote. Where an attendee has joined by electronic means they will be considered present and entitled to vote. Where considered necessary, a recommendation can be agreed by written procedure.

Separate ad hoc short life working groups may be established, to develop and deliver specific projects. These will be governed by separate Terms of Reference.

4 Duty to Act in Best Interest of EASoS/ Conflicts of Interest

In carrying out their functions in relation to EASoS, core members will act in a way which best promotes the overall success of EASoS and its ambitions.

Members are expected to maintain a clear separation of roles between their own individual organisations/interest groups and EASoS, which aims to provide a collective voice.

Members may from time to time be commissioned to undertake work on behalf of EASoS. In such, or similar, situations, which may present potential for a perceived or actual conflict of interests, the member will not participate in related decision-making. This may involve absenting themselves from part or all of a meeting, in order not to inhibit free discussion and decision-making by other members.

5 Amendments to the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be regularly reviewed at a meeting of the core members. Amendments may be proposed at any time and will be agreed by the core membership.