UK Science Partnership for Animal and Plant Health: Aims, Functions and Operation

Members’ shared vision: ‘Ensure that the UK has, and effectively deploys, the science capability to protect and enhance the contributions animal and plant health make to society.’

Partnership Aims

To achieve this vision, the Partnership will:

- Develop, co-ordinate and monitor delivery of the UK-level Animal and Plant Health Science Strategy by the partners and the wider science community.
- Drive a culture of coordination and collaboration, with key public funders engaging together, and with the private and third sectors, to jointly consider key questions and cross-cutting challenges.
- Engage together to ensure the UK has the science capability to support the identification and effective response to new threats and challenges to animal and plant health.

Functions

The partners will:

- Co-ordinate and monitor delivery of the overarching UK-level Animal and Plant Health Science Strategy.
- Provide leadership and set direction within their organisations to help achieve the overarching vision and deliver the strategy.
- Drive a culture of coordination, co-design and sharing of good practice across the science landscape (government, academia, industry and the third sector).
- Consider priorities for science investment with a focus on maximising benefits for all sectors.
- Track direct and leveraged expenditure on animal and plant health science to help form agreement around coordinating resource allocations.
- Encourage innovation and best use of emerging technologies and cutting-edge scientific techniques.
- Encourage investment in scientific capability (people, skills and infrastructure) to be approached in a whole system, interdisciplinary way.
- Consider skills gaps and how these should best be addressed.
- As ambassadors for the Partnership, communicate the value added, and impact, of the Partnership within their own organisations and wider networks.
The Partnership will not have an executive role. The strength of the Partnership will be in its collective agreement making and in its ability to build consensus among a set of partners with common interests. The Partnership will focus on forming agreement on strategic direction, aligning priorities, and coordinating resource allocation, while retaining organisational independence.

Individual partners will remain responsible and accountable for deciding how their individual budgets are spent, and the Partnership will not be a budget holder. However, it will provide advice on major investments and on cross-cutting issues. The Partnership will also provide advice, based on the expertise and experience of its members, on issues such as research design and cross-cutting research challenges.

Operationalising the UK Science Partnership for Animal and Plant Health

Individual partners will:

- Align as far as possible the direction within their organisations with the overarching vision and the Animal and Plant Health Science Strategy.
- Take into account key questions and cross-cutting challenges identified by the Partnership when making resource allocation decisions.
- Engage together for the purpose of rationalising overlaps and alleviating gaps in UK infrastructure, skills and evidence generation.
- Engage together to strengthen emergency preparedness and coordinate the national deployment of interdisciplinary science capabilities in times of emergency response.
- Decide whether and when agreements formed by the Partnership need to be reported to their respective Permanent Secretaries or Ministers.

The success of the Partnership will be measured by its ability to:

- Enable the long term delivery of strategically aligned research programmes.
- Deliver improved value for money by supporting synergies among the partners, minimising duplication and filling strategically important evidence gaps (thereby increasing effectiveness).
- Protect and augment animal and plant health science skills and capabilities within the UK.
- Enhance engagement with public and private sectors across the UK and internationally.
- Deliver a culture of co-ordination and collaboration and sharing of good practice.
- Demonstrate how the Partnership has contributed to the science capability to protect and enhance the contribution animal and plant health make to society.
Frequency of Meetings

The Partnership will aim to meet four times a year. The Chair will have the ability to call ad-hoc meetings of the Partnership, as the need arises, and to set up sub-groups to drive forward work on particular issues.

The Partnership will be time-limited and reviewed after two years (against the success measures above). The Partnership will be drawn to a close if the partners feel that it is no longer needed.

Provision of Expert Science Advice

The Partnership will have access to expert science advice; science here covering all the sciences, including economics. The Partnership will work on the principle of accessing the best available scientific advice from the most appropriate source. Examples could include, but not be restricted to, Defra’s Science Advisory Council, the Scottish Science Advisory Council, and the Science Advisory Council for Wales. Where expertise is unavailable within the existing Advisory Councils or other advisory mechanisms, there will be scope to from subgroups and bring in additional expertise, including from overseas, as identified by the partners.

Establishing New Workstreams

New workstreams will be evaluated by the Partnership on the extent to which they meet the following criteria:

- National and international importance.
- Cross-cutting strategic issue of relevance to more than one partner organisation.
- Alignment with the vision and the Animal and Plant Health Science Strategy.
- Potential to deliver improved value for money and increased effectiveness.

New worksteam will require a partner sponsor and will be considered in batches to allow comparison between them and fair evaluation.