



Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting of 13 November 2019

| Board Attendees | |
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| Sir John Kingman (Chair) | Professor Sir Ian Diamond (Item 1-5) |
| Professor Sir Mark Walport | Fiona Driscoll |
| Mike Blackburn | Sir Harpal Kumar |
| Emma Lindsell | Professor Max Lu |
| Sir Peter Bazalgette | Vivienne Parry |
| Professor Julia Black (dial-in item 6) | Mustafa Suleyman |
| Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz | |
| UKRI Attendees | |
| Geoff Robins (Item 5 to 8) | Professor Jennifer Rubin (Item 10) |
| Sophie Purdey (Item 5 to 8) | Madhavi Cherian (Item 10) |
| Alex Marsh (Item 6 to end) | |
| BEIS Attendees | |
| Jo Shanmugalingam | |
| Secretariat | |
| Chris Chudziak | Tom Goodsir |
| Magda North | |
| Apologies | |
| Lord Browne | Lord Willetts |
| Professor Dame Sally Davies | |

Time: 09:30 – 15:00

Location: Cardiff University Brain Research Imaging Centre (CUBRIC)

1. Welcome & introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

1.2 The Chair outlined that Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz’s tenure as a Board member had been extended for six months and Professor Sir Ian Diamond was congratulated on his appointment as National Statistician. He would continue on the Board in observer capacity as he was now a civil servant. The recruitment underway for Chief Executive Officer was noted.

2. Minutes of 11 September 2019 Board Meeting and Action Log

2.1 The minutes were **approved**, and Emma Lindsell provided an update on actions.

- **Action B2019.31** – In relation to this action on the executive to consider setting up a rolling research programme on R&D measurement, it was agreed that this action would remain open until May 2020 when findings would be reported back to the board. It would be necessary to look beyond existing datasets and to consider R&D definitions in different sectors before tackling measurement.
- **Action B2019.34** – It was flagged that updates on Spending Review plans would resume post-election, potentially with a Board call.
- **Action B2019.35** – Mark Walport was working with Lord Browne to bring together chairs/CEOs from a wide variety of industrial sectors with a view to forging a public/private partnership that could impact meaningfully on net zero.

3. CEO report

3.1 The Chief Executive reported on activities since the last Board, highlighting:

- Progress on appointments, including delays caused by the upcoming election.
- The publication of the Adrian Smith review and proposals in the event that the UK could not associate to Horizon Europe. UKRI would work closely with the Government on a response.
- The publication of the infrastructure report which would be important for engaging with new Ministers. The Board welcomed the clearly stated methodology and evidence base.
- Catapults where it was noted that the ONS reclassification would not impact rules of engagement for universities.
- 'Reforming our Business'. The dependency on technology was noted. The Board pushed the executive to ensure that reduction of paperwork should be as near 75% as possible.
- Nobel prizes won by British and UK-based researchers and the lessons to be drawn on migration and in combatting conservatism in peer review.
- The delay in the consultation on Open Access until after the election.
- Good feedback from Councils on the new UKRI branding.

3.2 The Board sought assurance on whether public engagement had formed a part of assessment of Strength in Places Fund.

Action B2019.37: Mark Walport to revert to the Board on the extent of public engagement in relation to the Strength in Places Fund.

4. CFO report

4.1 Mike Blackburn noted that he was working with BEIS to prepare advice to the Principal Accounting Officer (PAO) on budget commitments for the year ahead. As CFO it was his role to advise the PAO of the implications. Jo Shanmugalingam noted that financial pressures needed to be managed within the Department. She also confirmed that NAO planned to undertake a study on ISCF which would report in October 2020.

4.2 On EU Exit, UKRI continued to maintain a high state of readiness to deal with the range of possibilities from a no-deal exit to orderly withdrawal. Communications had been ramped up

to 31 October. The Board sought assurance on the how UKRI planned to manage the transition and the expectations of the academic community. Mike reflected that UKRI was well prepared in terms of its ability to operationalise processes when they were needed; the bigger unknowns related to policy decisions yet to be taken. He also noted a joint working group with BEIS had been established to progress State Aids issues.

4.3 The Board sought assurance on why MRC had yet to complete its accounts. Mike explained this was due to the time taken to resolve queries raised by the NAO. These had now been addressed, and accounts were finalised and ready to issue following the election.

4.4 The Board asked about the management of Freedom of Information (FOIs) requests. Emma Lindsell reported that UKRI had restructured in this area and was bringing in additional capability. The importance of a strategic approach to responding to FOIs as well as understanding the pattern of FOIs was recognised. FOIs also provided opportunities for transparency in publishing data and thereby improve communications with stakeholders.

Action B2019.38: Mike Blackburn to revert to Harpal (as Innovate UK SIM) on FOIs which related to Innovate UK.

4.5 In relation to complaints, the executive and ARAPC were live to issues where complaints revealed that practices could be improved. The Board were keen to better understand how any significant issues relating to complaints would be flagged to the Board and Councils.

Action B2019.39: Mike Blackburn to return to the Board to set out the processes for flagging complaints to Councils and the Board.

5. Transformation update

5.1 Geoff Robins and Sophie Purdey joined the meeting. The Chair thanked Geoff Robins for his work on transformation and on the HR function to date in the absence of a CPO.

5.2 Geoff Robins updated the Board on progress made on Transformation communication and engagement. He noted that the 'Working at one' document would be with the Board shortly. On the People Survey, there had been an uplift in responses to 61% from 47%.

5.3 Geoff set out some of the current challenges in HR which included migration from legacy HR approaches to new systems and active case management of historic compliance issues which had involved bringing in specialist HR support to increase capacity and capability within the HR function.

5.4 Mike Blackburn updated from the Joint National Consultative Committee meeting with Trades Unions which had agreed a number of harmonised policies, albeit some significant policies yet to bring forward.

5.5 Mike noted the funding assurance review work undertaken by KPMG which was in draft.

6. Approval of budget fallback scenarios

6.1 Alex Marsh joined the meeting to discuss fallback scenarios developed for UKRI's future budget bid. The Board noted the importance of engaging key stakeholders, as well as being careful in drawing too direct a comparison with international peers. It was also necessary to

understand the lag between UKRI R&D spend and leveraging of private sector R&D. A multi-year settlement would enable a step-change in what UKRI was able to achieve.

Decision: The Board approved the approach taken to constructing fallback scenarios for UKRI's future budget bid, for use in negotiations with BEIS and Treasury.

7. UK ARPA

7.1 Mark Walport set out the status of discussions to date on establishing a UK Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) and what it could look like.

7.2 The Board discussed how UKRI could evolve to make a success of a UK ARPA, thinking through what it meant for our own risk appetite and considering how academic stakeholders may respond.

Action B2019.40: Alex Marsh to bring paper a paper to the Board on UKRI's relationship with other Government Departments such as Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health & Social Care.

8. Approval of approach to UKRI 2025 – towards a plan (strategy and organisational strategy)

8.1 Mark Walport introduced early work with the Executive Committee to develop a unified five-year strategy for UKRI. The strategy needs to set out UKRI's overall priorities and goals which span all of its councils, how it will deliver on these, and how it will be held to account. It needed to set out leadership on cross-cutting themes such as net zero, which would be an imperative for next 30 to 40 years.

8.2 The Board welcomed the emerging strategy and noted that it needed to provide a guide to choices and how to take the organisation forwards. Members reflected that the strategy on a page approach represented a sensible framework on which to develop the strategy, and that an action plan would be needed for how to deliver and measure it. Further detail was needed, particularly on the 'how' and on financial choices to be made. It was acknowledged that defining the detail would prove challenging and would require a collegiate approach in order to bring about the necessary step-change.

8.3 Members were agreed that proper space would be needed at the January meeting to discuss with Executive Chairs a more developed version of the paper. The role of Executive Chairs in delivering the support of their Councils and communities was critical, and the Board and Executive had a role in supporting Executive Chairs to do this. Consideration also needed to be given to engaging with Ministers.

Decision: The Board approved the recommendation to produce a 5-year Strategy which defines the strategic objectives, operating and performance management models for UKRI, with a view to finalising a version for external publication and further testing in March 2020.

9. Approval of monitoring UKRI's performance and impact

9.1 Alex Marsh introduced the work underway to agree a framework to measure UKRI's performance and its impact.

9.2 In discussion, the Board reflected its desire to see additionality metrics which would capture the impact which one unified UKRI was having over and above that which the Councils could achieve in isolation. The Board also wanted to see more in the framework on inter-disciplinarity, net zero and risk.

Action B2019.41: Emma Lindsell / Isobel Stephen to return to the Board with a final proposal for monitoring UKRI performance and impact and for this work to reflect the risk profile appropriately.

10. Endorse approach to publication of EDI plan and harmonised diversity data

10.1 Jennifer Rubin joined the meeting and presented the work underway on EDI. Madhavi Cherian dialled-in for the item.

10.2 In discussion, the Board reflected on the leadership role that UKRI needed to take on EDI across the sector as well as within UKRI, and for concerted progress to be made. It was important to be networked into what related organisations were doing in this area. The systemic approach undertaken was welcomed and plans to publish full diversity data by Council in early 2020 were also welcomed. Data suggesting some protected groups were seeking smaller amounts of funding than other researchers were concerning and needed to be better understood. Whilst there were reliable data on gender and ethnicity, better disability data were needed.

10.3 Work undertaken to date was high level and the Board noted its appetite to identify the policies and interventions which could best prioritise causality and effect change. They were keen to understand what good looked like, including from the perspective of Innovate and the business community. The link to wider work within UKRI exploring the role of sanctions in addressing bullying and harassment was noted. Jennifer cautioned that identifying optimal solutions would take time, and there were risks in rushing the work.

10.4 Jennifer was thanked for her and the team's work in this area.

Decision: The Board endorsed the plan to publish by early 2020 a five-year programme for EDI alongside harmonised diversity data and analysis.

Action B2019.42: Jennifer Rubin to share the EDI action plan with the Board when it was developed.

Action B2019.43: Jennifer Rubin to revert to the Board on UKRI staff data.

11. ISCF update – Item for discussion by exception

11.1 The item was noted and work on the Audience of the Future was commended.

12. Board forward look

12.1 The Chair briefly discussed the forward schedule of Board meetings.

13. AOB

13.1 The Board requested that details for the Belfast meeting were confirmed to members early given the travel requirements.

Action B2019.44: Secretariat to confirm logistical details of the Belfast meeting with Board members.

14. Non-Executive Session

Date of Next Meeting: 15 and 16 January 2020 in London and Swindon