

## **Minutes of UKRI-BBSRC Council meeting held on 15 June 2022 in London.**

### **Those attending:**

Steve Bagshaw  
Professor Ewan Birney  
John Bloomer  
Professor Anne Ferguson-Smith  
Professor Gideon Henderson (items 4 – 10)  
Professor Martin Humphries (Chair of the meeting)  
Professor Christine Orengo  
Professor Jo Price  
Professor Nigel Scrutton  
Professor Malcolm Skingle  
Professor Steven Spoel  
Professor Melanie Welham (UKRI-BBSRC Executive Chair)

### **Also attending:**

Dr Amanda Collis  
Dr Karen Lewis  
Dr Sarah Perkins  
Bill Poll  
Dr Rosie Cornelius (UKRI Observer)  
Bryan Charleston (item 7 only)  
Simon Cook (item 7 only)  
Angela Karp (item 7 only)  
Bruce Whitelaw (item 7 only)  
Dr David McAllister (item 8 only)  
Ms Laura Notton (item 9 only)  
Sarah Cresswell  
Ksymena Grzybowska (Secretary)

### **ITEM 1. OPENING REMARKS**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the two new UKRI-BBSRC Council members, Jo Price (formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Agricultural College) and Steven Spoel (Head of Institute of Molecular Plant Sciences, Professor of Cell Signalling and Proteostasis at University of Edinburgh) to their first meeting. Their appointment commenced on 1 April 2022.
2. Apologies were received from Andrew Millar and Ijeoma Uchegbu.
3. Members were reminded to check their details currently being held on the conflicts register, circulated by email before the meeting, update as necessary and send any changes to Council Secretariat. Members were asked to raise any conflicts arising during the course of the meeting.

### **ITEM 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2021 (UKRI BBSRC 10/2022)**

4. The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

### **ITEM 3. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING (ORAL)**

5. The Chair went through the actions and they were all either in hand or completed.

#### **ITEM 4. EXECUTIVE CHAIR'S REPORT (UKRI BBSRC 11/2022)**

6. The Chair invited Melanie Welham to introduce her report to Council.
7. Council noted a performance summary highlighting key achievements, future plans and a scorecard summarising progress against the Near-Term Actions (NTAs) set out in BBSRC's Delivery Plan as at the end of Quarter 4.
8. Council noted an update on Institute Directors' recruitment and that uncertainty about association with Horizon Europe is impacting the ability to attract talent to the UK more broadly. Council discussed the importance of succession planning, strategies for prioritising recruitment of exceptional leaders from Europe and the importance of cross-Council exchange of information/experience to understand the landscape, consider synergies and a possible joint UKRI approach.
9. Council discussed the risks of non-association with Horizon Europe and noted that there was a BBSRC task and finish group set up to manage this in relation to bioscience and BBSRC would provide an update on this to Council members.

***Action UKRI-BBSRC 73/2022: BBSRC would share an update from BBSRC task and finish group looking at risks of non-association with Horizon Europe (an update will be provided as part of the EC's report at the meeting in September 2022).***

10. Council asked about the National Engineering Biology Programme and its leadership and noted that in partnership with Dstl, UKRI was investing £20.6M in Engineering Biology across a portfolio of activities ranging from exploration of breakthrough ideas for Engineering Biology, further funding for six existing Synthetic Biology Research Centres and transition awards. BBSRC has been the lead Council, catalysing and convening Research Councils (EPSRC, Innovate UK, MRC,NERC) and other interested parties including Dstl, MoD, BEIS, Defra and DHSC.
11. Council was interested to hear more about Operational Expenditure (OpEx) budget reductions. The targets UKRI have been asked to meet were in line with wider government department figures, with a 25% reduction in OpEx spend and a 17% reduction in OpEx-funded staff numbers by the end of 2024/25. Council noted that the outcomes of ongoing reviews and a number of synergies across UKRI would contribute to overall efficiency. Council commented about ensuring that key and high performing staff members were retained. This could be quite difficult given the civil service pay constraints.
12. BBSRC will be analysing the feedback from the UKRI People survey and ensuring actions arising were addressed by BBSRC where relevant.
13. The Chair thanked Melanie and Council members for their comments.

#### **ITEM 5. UPDATE FROM UKRI (ORAL)**

14. The Chair invited Rosie Cornelius to provide UKRI updates.
15. Rosie updated Council on the ongoing reviews (namely Paul Nurse's review of the landscape, David Grant's review of UKRI and Adam Tickell's 'bureaucracy' review) and publishing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and spend data. Council discussed the importance of demonstrating research spend by place.
16. The Chair thanked Rosie for her updates.

## ITEM 6. UPDATES FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND THE WIDER CSA NETWORK (ORAL)

17. The Chair invited Gideon Henderson (DEFRA Chief Scientific Adviser) to share his updates with Council and his government-related updates focused on shrinkage of the civil service, the situation in Ukraine and related risks and biothreats, G20 and agriculture, Official Development Assistance (ODA) and delays with Horizon Europe association. Defra-specific updates related to the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, climate adaptation and Government Food Strategy.
18. The Chair thanked Gideon for his useful updates.

## ITEM 7. SESSION WITH INSTITUTE DIRECTORS (ORAL)

19. The Chair welcomed the following four BBSRC strategically funded Institute Directors to the Council meeting:
  - Angela Karp, Rothamsted Research
  - Bryan Charleston, The Pirbright Institute
  - Bruce Whitelaw, The Roslin Institute
  - Simon Cook, Babraham Institute
20. Institute Directors presented their SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses of their Institute's field – the UK landscape in relation to the international landscape, including the role of the Institute.

*This section is deemed business sensitive and has been recorded separately.*

21. The following generic themes emerged from the Council discussion with Institute Directors:
  - Reaffirming key role Institutes play in the landscape, focusing on their strengths
  - Building on Institutes' reputation and establishing and maintaining relationships with a diverse range of organisations, including universities.
  - Institutes' research culture and sharing ideas on how to make Institutes a better place to work
  - Opportunities to work more closely with Innovate UK and making it a priority
  - Improving translation and encouraging early start-ups
  - Sharing and accessing operational data between Institutes and more widely with industry
  - Working in partnership, rather than competing, and prioritising at the Institutes collective level
  - Difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff in the current context.
22. The remaining Institute Directors (Quadram Institute, Earlham Institute, John Innes Centre and Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences, IBERS) will attend BBSRC Council meeting in September before the Institute Assessment Exercise outcomes are discussed at Council in December 2022.
23. Council commented that the session with Institute Directors went very well and any common themes and questions could be brought together after the session with Directors in September 2022.

***Action UKRI-BBSRC 74/2022: common themes and questions from the sessions with Institute Directors could be brought together after the session in September 2022 (Ksymena Grzybowska, for December 2022 Council meeting).***

## ITEM 8. BBSRC EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN (UKRI BBSRC 13/2022)

24. The Chair welcomed David McAllister to the meeting and invited him to introduce the paper outlining BBSRC's draft three-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan for 2022-2025. This draft built on the previous action plan, agreed with Council in October 2020 and sat within the framework and context of a new UKRI EDI strategy, which is under development.

25. Council was very positive about the scope, positioning and ambition of the action plan and discussed the importance of evaluating impact and its challenges, data publication being a powerful driver for change and applying data sampling approaches (relevant to the EDI Caucus call). Council was informed that UKRI is committed to expanding its data collection and analysis capabilities on their funding applicants and recipients. Future EDI data publication will be flagged to Council and there may be some BBSRC specific data highlights that BBSRC may bring to Council's attention.

***Action UKRI-BBSRC 75/2022: Future EDI data publication will be flagged to Council and there may be some BBSRC specific data highlights that BBSRC may bring to Council's attention (David McAllister, probably November 2022).***

26. Council considered the balance between data specific and more generic actions and embedding principles within BBSRC and more widely, including Institutes. Council pointed out that many actions listed in the paper related to supporting disabled researchers and this was very positive. However, equally Council was keen to see more actions addressing underrepresentation of black researchers.

27. Some other comments related to good practice and where we can look for such examples. Council was also interested to hear more about implementing change and deploying available levers to make step changes and it was noted that this will be developed further when UKRI EDI Strategy is finalised. Council also noted that there was ongoing work in relation to UKRI workforce EDI and ensuring EDI principles are embedded within normal activities across all teams in BBSRC and more widely in UKRI.

28. Council noted the intention to finalise the action plan and publish it alongside the first edition of the UKRI EDI strategy later in 2022.

29. The Chair thanked Council members for their input and David McAllister for attending to present this item.

## **ITEM 9. STRATEGIC DELIVERY PLAN (SDP) AND SPENDING REVIEW ALLOCATIONS**

### **BBSRC Strategic Delivery Plan 2022-23 to 2024-45 - Update and Latest Draft (UKRI BBSRC 14a/2022)**

30. The Chair welcomed Laura Notton to the meeting and invited her to introduce the Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) paper.

31. Council noted an update on progress with developing the SDP, including a summary of feedback and discussion from a meeting with a subset of UKRI Board members, held on 1 June 2022, and from the UKRI CEO.

32. Council made very positive remarks about the latest working draft of the SDP and commented that this version was more outward looking and that partnerships were more visible. However, there should be more actions demonstrated within the partnerships section.

33. Council suggested featuring some examples of programmes with MRC in the understanding health section and other areas of cross-Council activity to demonstrate joined up working, adding some examples/impact case studies such as vitamin D<sub>3</sub> tomatoes.

34. Council also added that collaboration with Innovate UK should come through strongly. Porosity of staff and encouraging movement, start-ups, recognising the importance of supporting platform

technology in biosciences to support teams and reflecting on tackling fragmentation of data as a longer-term strategic priority should also feature in the SDP.

35. Council noted the next steps to finalise the SDP and was encouraged to provide any further comments before the plan was submitted for UKRI Board meeting in July 2022.
36. The Chair thanked Laura, Jas Kular and the cross-office team for their work on the SDP.

#### **Spending Review Allocations 2022-23 to 2024-45 (UKRI BBSRC 14b/2022)**

37. The Chair invited Sarah Perkins to introduce the paper, which updated Council on the outcomes of the UKRI Spending Review 2021 allocations process, following announcement of UKRI's overall allocation in March, and publication of detailed allocations in late May 2022.
38. Council noted BBSRC's 2022/23-2024/25 allocations and indicative budget breakdown. Sarah reaffirmed that the figures for the Strategic Research and Innovation/Impact budget lines were the same as the ones discussed in March 2022 (as per clarification email from Sarah Perkins sent to Council members via email correspondence prior to the meeting).

#### **ITEM 10. AOB AND COUNCIL FORWARD LOOK (UKRI BBSRC 15/2022)**

39. Council noted future items for discussion and meeting dates for the remainder of 2022.
40. Council commented that it was beneficial to have longer breaks scheduled within the agenda and meetings starting lunchtime followed by dinner in the evening worked very well.
41. Council noted that landscape item, including reflections on the Paul Nurse's landscape review, would probably be discussed in December 2022 and Food Deep Dive will feature on agenda for a future Council meeting [post meeting note: scheduled for September 2022].

***Action UKRI-BBSRC 76/2022: Landscape item, including reflections on the Paul Nurse's landscape review, would probably be discussed in December 2022 and Food Deep Dive will feature on agenda for a future Council meeting [post meeting note: scheduled for September 2022] (Ksymena Grzybowska, noted).***

Council Secretariat  
August 2022

Agenda Item	Action Description	Owner	Delivery Date	Status
	<i>Actions from 7 December 2021 meeting</i>			
4.	<i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 65/2021: Karen Lewis would share key learning once the Impact Acceleration Account process was completed.</i>	<i>Karen Lewis</i>	<i>When available</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
4.	<i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 66/2021: Council would be updated on the outcomes of the Innovation to Commercialisation pilot.</i>	<i>Karen Lewis</i>	<i>When available</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
	<i>Actions from 15 June 2022 meeting</i>			
4.	<i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 73/2022: BBSRC would share an update from BBSRC task and finish group relating to risks of non-association with Horizon Europe (an update will be provided as part of the EC's report at the meeting in September 2022).</i>	<i>Melanie Welham</i>	<i>September 2022 meeting</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
7.	<i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 74/2022: common themes and questions from the sessions with Institute Directors could be brought together after the session in September 2022 (Ksymena Grzybowska, for December 2022 Council meeting).</i>	<i>Ksymena Grzybowska</i>	<i>December 2022</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>

8.	<i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 75/2022: Future EDI data publication will be flagged to Council and there may be some BBSRC specific data highlights that BBSRC may bring to Council's attention (David McAllister, when available).</i>	<i>David McAllister</i>	<i>November 2022</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
9.	<i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 76/2022: Landscape item, including reflections on the Paul Nurse's landscape review, would probably be discussed in December 2022 and Food Deep Dive will feature on agenda for a future Council meeting [post meeting note: scheduled for September 2022] (Ksymena Grzybowska, noted).</i>	<i>Ksymena Grzybowska</i>	<i>September and December 2022</i>	<i>Noted</i>