

## **Minutes of UKRI-BBSRC Council meeting held on 29 September 2022 in Birmingham.**

### **Those attending:**

Steve Bagshaw  
John Bloomer  
Professor Gideon Henderson (items 4 – 10)  
Professor Martin Humphries (Chair of the meeting)  
Professor Andrew Millar  
Professor Christine Orengo  
Professor Jo Price  
Professor Nigel Scrutton  
Professor Malcolm Skingle  
Professor Steven Spoel  
Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu  
Professor Melanie Welham (UKRI-BBSRC Executive Chair)

### **Also attending:**

Dr Amanda Collis  
Dr Karen Lewis  
Dr Sarah Perkins  
Bill Poll  
Professor Guy Poppy  
Dr Rosie Cornelius  
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser (item 5 only)  
Professor Ian Charles (item 7 only)  
Professor Iain Donnison (item 7 only)  
Professor Neil Hall (item 7 only)  
Professor Graham Moore (item 7 only)  
Chris Jacobs (item 8 only)  
Dr Beverly Thomas (item 8 only)  
Sarah Cresswell  
Ksymena Grzybowska (Secretary)

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

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Guy Poppy, UKRI BBSRC Deputy Executive Chair, to his first Council meeting. Council was informed that his appointment was 0.6 full-time equivalent and it was secondment from the University of Southampton. Guy continues in his role as Programme Director of the interdisciplinary UKRI Food Systems programme, at a reduced level of commitment, alongside some university responsibilities. His appointment commenced on 1 July 2022.
2. Apologies were received from Anne Ferguson-Smith and Ewan Birney.
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 16/2022)**

4. The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting subject to addition of Nigel Scrutton's name under meeting attendance.

***Action UKRI-BBSRC 78/2022: Add Nigel Scrutton under meeting attendance (Ksymena Grzybowska, completed).***

### **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 17/2022)**

6. Council noted that the sub-headings for the Quarter 1 highlights followed the structure of the BBSRC Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) 2022-2025, which was published on 5 September 2022. The new Delivery Plan would form the basis of the BBSRC's quarterly scorecard reporting which would resume for Quarter 2. The Q2 scorecard report will be provided to Council as part of the Executive Chair's Report at the December 2022 meeting.
7. The Chair updated Council on the discussions on 7 June 2022 with Ottoline Leyser (UKRI CEO), Andrew McKenzie (UKRI Chair), Executive Chairs and Senior Independent Members (SIMs) relating to critical issues facing UKRI and working towards a more streamlined organisation, including the role of Council (advisory and challenging the Executive Chair), reducing of the size of Council and bureaucracy, engaging in cross-Council collaborations and the role of SIMs. The Terms of Reference for Councils' Councils were still under review and when finalised would be shared with Council.

***Action UKRI-BBSRC 79/2022: The Terms of Reference for Councils' Councils were still under review and when finalised would be shared with Council. (Ksymena Grzybowska, when available).***

8. Council noted that a new Responsive Mode 'Spotlights' programme would replace BBSRC's longstanding Responsive Mode priority areas, with a small number of focused topic areas that would operate across several submission rounds. The project was mapping the systems / process changes required, including communications and peer review guidance. Topic areas where spotlights could add value will be reviewed periodically in consultation with Strategic Advisory Panels and Council.
9. Council discussed ways of pursuing UKRI strategic themes and coordination of their delivery. A paper on the strategic themes would be provided to Council for information.

***Action UKRI-BBSRC 80/2022: A paper on the strategic themes would be provided to Council for information (Amanda Collis, December 2022).***

10. Council noted that BBSRC and Innovate UK had agreed new joint strategic areas of interest for the spending review in July 2022. Six areas of collaboration and co-investment will lead to new strategic innovation programmes totalling more than £55M, with at least £25M of this provided by Innovate UK. Council thanked Karen and her team for progressing this.
11. Council discussed health and food inequality acceleration due to the current situation and emphasised that coordinating activities in these areas would be very important.

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

12. The Chair welcomed Ottoline Leyser, UKRI CEO, to the meeting. Ottoline provided an update on key UKRI activities. Council discussions focused on the role of UKRI and Councils' Councils, the relationship with Innovate UK, international funding opportunities, connectivity across the system and reshaping UKRI in response to Grant and Nurse reviews.
13. Outcomes of the Grant Review were published in June 2022 and endorsed UKRI's direction of travel. UKRI was redeveloping its operating model to embed the recommendations at UKRI and local level. Outcomes of Paul Nurse's Landscape Review were not published yet, however, initial conclusions echoed UKRI's Strategy and the importance of connectivity and resilience.
14. Ottoline reflected on UKRI Strategy and Councils' Delivery Plans in place and UKRI's current focus on the mechanisms to deliver the Strategy. Council discussed leveraging opportunities to connect across UKRI, defining mutual interests beyond UKRI strategic themes for more integrated thinking and using all instruments to ensure collaboration to deliver the Strategy.
15. Summarising, Ottoline commented that research and innovation were key to the UK's recovery by creating jobs, providing solutions to major societal challenges, assurance and hope for the future.
16. The Chair thanked Ottoline for attending the Council meeting.

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

17. Gideon Henderson (DEFRA CSA) shared his updates with Council. The government updates covered the situation in Ukraine and related risks such as food, biothreats and nuclear risk, COP 27 meeting in Egypt, delays with Horizon Europe association, and government's continued commitment to current Net Zero targets. Defra-specific updates related to the on-going avian influenza outbreaks and new Secretary of State and his priorities.
18. Specifically, on delays with Horizon Europe association, Council noted that this risk was reflected in both BBSRC and UKRI Risk Registers and that there was BBSRC Task and Finish Group whose role was to ensure BBSRC was prepared, with mitigation plans in place. Council expressed its concern that continued uncertainty was damaging.

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

19. The Chair welcomed the following four BBSRC strategically funded Institute Directors to the Council meeting:
  - Graham Moore (John Innes Centre, JIC)
  - Iain Donnison (Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences, IBERS)
  - Ian Charles (Quadram Institute, QI)
  - Neil Hall (Earlham Institute, EI)
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 Chair thanked Institute Directors for attending the meeting and presenting to Council and summarised some common emerging themes such as evidence of wider strategic thinking and connecting with different parts of the landscape, difficulties with recruitment and retention, drawing on the strengths of each Institute and using its unique position, training as a unique

aspect that Institutes can provide and the importance of trusted research and security going forward.

#### **ITEM 8. UKRI FOOD DEEP DIVE (UKRI BBSRC 18/2022)**

22. The Chair welcomed Chris Jacobs (Head of Head of Secretariat, UK Science Partnership for Animal and Plant Health) and Beverly Thomas (BBSRC Associate Director, Evidence and Evaluation) to the meeting and invited Guy Poppy to introduce this item. This paper set out the key findings from UKRI's Food Deep Dive and outlined the recommendations.
23. Chris Jacobs presented his slides outlining the rationale of the Food Deep Dive, including UKRI relevance, social and economic context, public health, environment and current situation (impact of conflict in Ukraine and rising food and energy prices). Council noted UKRI spend and its trends in the last five years and data on equality, diversity and inclusion, in particular the age profile of Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators which was slightly higher in comparison to overall UKRI age profile and that this could potentially suggest succession planning needs to be considered.
24. Chris emphasised that the Deep Dive had highlighted the huge range and variety of food-related programmes and activities taking place across UKRI's remit. This demonstrated by the large number of case studies throughout the report. There were also some gaps/opportunities identified in the report.
25. Council discussed the key findings in UKRI's Food Deep Dive and welcomed the recommendations set out in the report. Council made comments about more international (global) focus, ensuring wider reach and more joined-up (systems) approaches including with industry, creating a 'coalition of the willing' and using it as a strategic platform, linking with stakeholders such as Defra, other government departments and Devolved Administrations. Other areas highlighted by Council related to talent and changing the perceptions of agriculture and plant science to attract students and ensuring early engagement with early-stage research. Council suggested using examples of existing cases studies and quick wins. Council advised that UKRI should have greater urgency in this area.
26. Council noted that the Deep Dive would subsequently be presented to UKRI's Executive Committee for approval/sign off.
27. The Chair thanked Chris and Bev for attending the meeting.

#### **ITEM 9. BIANNUAL RISK UPDATE, REVIEW, AND DISCUSSION (UKRI BBSRC 19/2022)**

28. This paper provided Council with updates and oversight of UKRI Risk Management activities operated by BBSRC.

*This paragraph was deemed business sensitive and was recorded separately.*

#### **ITEM 10. AOB AND COUNCIL FORWARD LOOK (UKRI BBSRC 20/2022)**

29. Council noted future items for discussion and meeting dates for the remainder of 2022 and 2023.

Council Secretariat  
November 2022



ANNEX 2

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>March 2023 via EC's report</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>March 2023 via EC's report</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
	<i>Actions from 15 June 2022 meeting</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>February 2023</i>	<i>Ongoing (UKRI level EDI data will be published on 1 December 2022)</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.</i>	<i>Ksymena Grzybowska</i>	<i>December 2022 under EC's report, if available</i>	<i>Noted</i>

	<b><i>Actions from 29 September 2022 meeting</i></b>			
<b>2.</b>	<b><i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 78/2022: Add Nigel Scrutton under meeting attendance (Ksymena Grzybowska, completed).</i></b>	<b><i>Ksymena Grzybowska</i></b>	<b><i>October 2022</i></b>	<b><i>Completed</i></b>
<b>4.</b>	<b><i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 79/2022: The Terms of Reference for Councils' Councils were still under review and when finalised would be shared with Council. (Ksymena Grzybowska, when available).</i></b>	<b><i>Ksymena Grzybowska</i></b>	<b><i>When available</i></b>	<b><i>Ongoing</i></b>
<b>4.</b>	<b><i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 80/2022: A paper on the strategic themes would be provided to Council for information (Amanda Collis, December 2022).</i></b>	<b><i>Amanda Collis</i></b>	<b><i>December 2022</i></b>	<b><i>Completed</i></b>