



**Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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<b>Board Attendees</b>	
Sir John Kingman (Chair)	Lord Willetts
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser	Fiona Driscoll
Siobhan Peters	Sir Harpal Kumar
Lord Browne (not present for item 7)	Professor Max Lu
Sir Peter Bazalgette	Vivienne Parry
Professor Julia Black	Professor Dame Sally Davies
Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz	Dr John Fingleton
<b>Attendees</b>	
Emma Lindsell	Mike Blackburn
Jo Shanmugalingam, BEIS	Alex Marsh
Bryony Butland (for Item 4)	Helen Cross (for Item 4)
Jennifer Rubin (for item 5)	Karen Salt (for item 5)
Linda Holliday (for item 5)	Simon Page (Egon Zehnder)
Karoline Vinsrygg (Egon Zehnder)	
<b>Apologies</b>	
Professor Ian Diamond	
<b>Secretariat</b>	
Hannah Berriman	Tim Russell
Zena Davis	

Time: 10:30-16:00

Date: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Location: By Zoom

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

1.1. John Kingman welcomed Dr John Fingleton, who joined the Board as an observer from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020. Following Sir Harpal's decision to step down from the Innovate UK Council, Dr Fingleton will attend Board to retain a close connection between the Innovate UK Council until a new Innovation Champion has been recruited.

**2. a) Minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020, b) Action Log and c) Forward Look**

2.1. The Board approved the minutes and noted the Action Log and Forward Look without comment.

**3. a) CEO Report**

3.1. Ottoline updated the Board on a number of live issues not covered later, including;

3.1.1. ARPA – Ottoline noted that there is strong interest in developing ARPA but the model was still unclear.

3.1.2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Ottoline noted that this was an area on which she was keen to make progress across UKRI. Ottoline noted that Dr Karen Salt (Deputy Director, R&D Culture and Environment) continued to lead on the work with involvement from other senior leaders as necessary.

3.1.3. Research Integrity Committee - Ottoline noted that work to set up the Research Integrity Committee (RIC) was underway, as recommended by the Science and Technology Committee. Ottoline noted that improving research integrity required a change in research culture to create an environment where investigating research integrity cases is seen as a positive and constructive process. Ottoline noted there is an ongoing discussion about whether the committee should have an independent role in deciding if disputes have been handled appropriately. The Board noted that the RIC should not be involved in dispute resolution as that should be the responsibility of the research body.

3.1.4. National Audit Office (NAO) review of ISCF funding – Ottoline noted that the NAO is preparing.

**b) Overall views on the research and innovation system**

3.2. John Kingman invited Ottoline to give her views on the research and innovation system and where she hopes to steer UKRI in the future. Ottoline said that while she was happy to share her personal opinions, she was keen to work with Executive Chairs and stakeholders to develop thinking further. Ottoline noted that as part of this engagement she has written blogs and is encouraging deep engagement across all councils.

3.3. Ottoline's view was that both time and money should be spent on understanding the research community, commenting that years of flat cash has meant that resource for significant engagement has been reduced. She saw this engagement as a key part of UKRI's role.

- 3.4. Ottoline highlighted the need for a supportive and productive innovation system which rewards connectivity. It is important to promote the idea of moving between sectors and highlighting options outside of the standard career path. Ottoline also emphasised the need for a supportive research environment and the need to address poorly aligned incentives.
- 3.5. Ottoline highlighted the importance of strategic prioritisation, noting that Number 10 has seemed keen on creating national strategies (eg. in Artificial Intelligence). The Board commented that UKRI is well equipped to produce a good strategy for academia, but needs also to prioritise bringing in industry and to join up with the two thirds of research UKRI does not fund. Ottoline noted the importance of raising UKRI's profile within this extended research community and building relationships across all sectors.
- 3.6. Board members agreed that connectivity across sectors was crucial, specifically with business and internationally. The Board and Ottoline agreed that a key role for UKRI is to make the whole R&D system work and to act as a steward of the system with significant convening power. It was vital that UKRI understands the needs of the research community across government departments, specific disciplines and industry. The Board noted that members and executive chairs could help facilitate building these strong relationships.
- 3.7. Ottoline highlighted the importance of offering positive incentives to drive change and the Board were supportive of this approach.
- 3.8. Ottoline noted the corporate plan outlines a lot of her key priorities and will be supported by the organisational strategy going forward. Emma Lindsell thanked the Board and Ottoline for the inspiring and challenging conversation, noting that the team would like to keep the conversation going and work with Board members to keep momentum. The Board noted that Executive Committee will continue developing the UKRI Corporate Strategy and that it would come back for further discussion.

#### **4. Research and Innovation System Sustainability**

- 4.1. The Board noted that the purpose of the update was to ensure Board members were on the same page regarding understanding the challenges and issues faced by the research and innovation system.
- 4.2. The Board thanked the team for the well-considered and interesting update, noting they felt key priorities and issues had been highlighted. Members provided suggestions on how the R&I system could be more sustainable including focusing on QR uplift and how this can support universities; and if needed, ensuring stable funding of a relatively small number of research institutes outside of universities, and ensuring we are not creating large numbers of additional institutes which become difficult to sustain.
- 4.3. The Board noted the importance of working with PhD students and Post Doctoral students to ensure they feel supported and understand their future career path, both within and outside of academia. Ottoline noted there is an existing scheme in BBSRC

which requires PhD students to undertake a secondment outside of academia to demonstrate the diverse options available to them following completion of the PhD.

- 4.4. The Board noted that the Charity Research Support Fund could be mentioned as a specific option given importance of charity funding in the R&D eco system.
- 4.5. John Kingman noted that there is an excellent team within UKRI working on this, and further work is ongoing. The Board noted R&I system sustainability would come back for further discussion following the spending review outcome.

## 5. People and Culture Strategy

- 5.1. Ottoline introduced the item, highlighting what UKRI already has in train to support the development of a People and Culture Strategy and how UKRI can look to expand that further. Ottoline highlighted that Minister Solloway had highlighted her ministerial objectives, which focus very much on developing people, leadership and a strong research culture. Alex Marsh noted that there was a huge amount of work to be done in this area to develop the strategy.
- 5.2. The Board noted that while there are specific teams within UKRI focused on making step change improvements within people and culture, the challenge is to ensure that these changes are embedded in and consistently applied across all the work done by all areas across all councils. It is integral to everything we do. The Board noted it was vital to ensure the work was adequately resourced, noting potential constraints on OpEx budgets.
- 5.3. The Board agreed that effective communications and public engagement is critical to successfully delivering the People and Culture Strategy and any associated work. It was noted that the reduction of comms teams across Government may interfere with the ability to deliver programmes going forward.

**ACTION:** Communications and Public Engagement to be added onto a future Board agenda.

- 5.4. The Board noted that while this was a hugely important area, it was often undervalued in the sector. It was noted there was an opportunity for UKRI to offer inspiring leadership in this area and look to help develop the future leaders we need. The Board noted it was important to look at varied options when developing leaders, including attracting people into research and innovation from an early age by targeting schools, or looking at age distributions of Principal Investigators (noting that there would be an increased chance of attracting international Principal Investigators if offering posts for younger researchers).
- 5.5. The Board requested the team come back for additional discussion when the People and Culture Strategy had been developed further and next steps were in place.

**ACTION:** People and Culture Strategy to be added to future Board agenda for further discussion when next steps are in place.

5.6. The Board thanked Jennifer Rubin for her time in ESRC and wished her well in her new role.

## **6. UKRI International Strategy**

6.1. Andrew Thompson (UKRI International Champion) and Tim Wheeler (Director, International) joined the meeting to introduce the item and presented a revised outline of the UKRI International Strategy. Andrew noted that the Strategy not only addresses the immediate realities of leaving the European Union and the COVID-19 pandemic but builds in longer term sustainability and the ability to take informed strategic choices. Andrew acknowledged that the outcome of the spending review will have a significant impact, noting that a tight Spending Review outcome may require difficult decisions.

6.2. The Board were keen to encourage the community to continue thinking about opportunities beyond Europe. The Board were encouraged by the possibility of developing a Discovery Fund regardless of whether the UK would have continued association with Horizon Europe.

6.3. Andrew noted that an aim of the strategy would be to grow international collaborations through the research councils and to allow researchers to work with the best researchers overseas wherever they may be. UKRI would help build strong, collaborative relationships with other national funding agencies and with priority countries.

6.4. The Board noted that embedding national security considerations into the strategy is vital and acknowledged the work on Trusted Research that is ongoing with UKRI and BEIS. Andrew Thompson noted that considerable work was ongoing regarding identifying the responsibility of UKRI as funder and universities as recipients of that funding, in this area. The Board requested further discussion regarding what, if any, cases or issues should come to the Board in the future.

**ACTION:** Trusted Research to be added on to a future Board agenda.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to liaise with Andrew Thompson and Lynn Gladden to identify when further discussion regarding national security considerations should be brought back to the Board.

6.5. The Board expressed the need to include international subscriptions into the strategy, which often require multiyear investment. Prioritising funding resources and activities that are needed by our researchers and community should be prioritised.

6.6. The Board noted they were very supportive of the strategy and thanked Andrew and his team for the hard work that had gone into developing it.

## **7. a) Spending Review (SR) Update**

7.1. Alex Marsh introduced the item providing an update on the Spending Review, noting there had been significant progress made since the last Board meeting in September, with the SR outcomes due to be announced on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The Board noted that following BEIS' submission of their departmental spending review return (which

includes UKRI), UKRI continues to work closely with them and other Government departments to further develop the detail of the bid.

- 7.2. The Board noted that in October 2020, the Chancellor announced the spending review would be for just one year, therefore UKRI is currently making the case for multi-year capital spending on R&D to enable the research and innovation system to flourish and deliver on the R&D Roadmap commitments for the whole of Government. However, Alex noted that the team is also developing plans to manage a one year settlement if needed. The Board noted that UKRI are meeting with Number 10 twice a week to discuss a range of key topics
- 7.3. The Board wished the team good luck for the spending review and noted an update will be shared following the announcement of the spending review outcome on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

#### **b) Catapults**

- 7.4. Ian Campbell joined the meeting to introduce the item. Ian provided an update on Catapults, noting that a BEIS review of Catapults was initiated in January 2020. However, due to the COVID 19 pandemic the review was paused in April 2020 but has now been restarted. This review links up with an invitation from Number 10 for Catapults to help redress regional variances and the levelling up agenda.
- 7.5. Ian flagged to the Board that since Catapults are diverse, their performance levels are very different. As part of the review, Innovate UK would magnify those doing well, support those with minor issues and look to repurpose those that are underperforming. Therefore, the expectation is there will be changes to the Catapult network coming out of the review.
- 7.6. The Board agreed that all Catapults should not be treated the same and imposing a standard framework on them would be counterproductive. The Board noted that we should not be adding to the network without a clear purpose for any new Catapults. The Board requested the review take stock of the aims of the catapults, their governance structure and who is ultimately responsible for their performance.
- 7.7. **(withheld from publication)**

#### **8. Innovate UK: Strategy for UK Business and Innovation 2021-26**

- 8.1. Ian Campbell introduced the item, providing an update on Innovate UK's work to develop a Strategy for UK Business Innovation (2021-26). Ian noted that Innovate UK are working closely with the UKRI Central team to ensure its strategy aligns closely with the wider UKRI overall strategy.
- 8.2. **(withheld from publication).**

8.3. The Board noted that significant engagement with the community has taken place, including with National Physical Laboratory (NPL), Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and British Standards Institution (BSI), as well as involvement from trade bodies. Ian noted that Innovate UK have Regional Managers in place across the UK and can clearly demonstrate funding across the whole of the UK. Innovate UK continue to feed into the levelling up agenda.

8.4. The Board noted that while embracing a busy and complex changing agenda, including the ISCF programme plus additional COVID work, Innovate UK has evolved their thinking significantly and have done an excellent job of reaching out to a wide set of external stakeholders to seek broad input. The Board noted the strategy demonstrates a big change for Innovate UK, including a major change in culture. The Board would be keen for a mapping exercise to be undertaken to ensure Innovate UK is not duplicating work that is already being done in the innovation ecosystem.

8.5. John Kingman and the Board thanked Ian Campbell for his work as the interim Executive Chair of Innovate UK.

## **9. AOB**

9.1. The Chair noted that the next Board meeting would be held on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021. No additional AOB was raised.

## **10. Non-Executive Session**

### **Papers for discussion by exception**

## **11. CFO Report**

11.1. The Board noted the CFO Report without comment

## **12. ARAPC Annual Report to Board 2019-20**

12.1. The Board noted the ARAPC Annual Report to Board without comment.