

## Confirmed minutes of the 5th meeting of NERC Council in UK Research and Innovation

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### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

**Fifth meeting of NERC Council in UK Research and Innovation, held in the Marine Matters Centre, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Plymouth on Thursday, 6 June 2019.**

**Members present:**

Professor Ian Boyd, Mr Nick Folland (Senior Independent Member), Professor Gideon Henderson, Professor Louise Heathwaite, Professor Stephen Holgate, Mr Imran Khan, Professor Karin Lochte, Mr Gordon McGregor, Professor Dame Julia Slingo, Lord Willis of Knaresborough, Professor Duncan Wingham (Executive Chair)

**NERC Directors (Head Office):** Mr Paul Fox (Chief Operating Officer), Dr Phil Heads (Interim Director, Research and Innovation), Mr Ian Kenyon (Chief Finance Officer, UKRI), Ms Alison Robinson (Director of Corporate Affairs, Futures and Change)

**Apologies:** None

**Other attendees:** Dr Hannah Collins (Associate Director Strategy, Futures and Evidence), for items 8 and 9 via teleconference; Professor Angela Hatton, Chair of Science Committee

**Secretariat:** Mrs Helen Page

#### Introductory items

##### 1. Executive Chair's welcome and introductions (Oral)

- 1.1 Duncan Wingham welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed Helen Page as the new NERC Council Secretary. No apologies had been received for the meeting.
- 1.2 Duncan Wingham advised Council that this would be the last meeting for both Paul Fox and Ian Boyd. Paul Fox would be replaced on an interim basis by Nigel Bird, a former NERC Finance Director, which would provide stability and continuity. Duncan Wingham expressed his gratitude to both Paul and Ian for their valuable contributions over the years which was fully endorsed by Council.
- 1.3 Duncan Wingham asked members for any updates to their declared interests. Ian Boyd advised that he had two recent appointments to declare; Non-Executive Director, National Oceanography Centre (NOC) and Chairman, UK Research Integrity Office. Neither appointment presented a conflict of interest at the meeting.
- 1.4 Duncan Wingham advised Council that the recruitment exercise for new Council members had opened on 4 June 2019. The exercise was being run by a search agency and NERC was looking to recruit two new members as well as seek to identify two further members to replace current Council members due to leave at the end of March 2020. Council were encouraged to advise the office of any potential candidates for the agency to approach.

#### **Action**

- 1.5 Duncan Wingham asked members for any amendments and matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting. None were raised and the minutes of the fourth meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

- 1.6 Duncan Wingham advised that the majority of the actions listed on the Decisions and Actions paper were complete. Item 2.6 would be closed imminently and item 11.2, the Terms of Reference for Science Committee, would be discussed at September Council. All remaining decisions and actions were accepted.

**Action**

## **2. NERC Council annual self-assessment (NERC 19/13)**

- 2.1 Nick Folland chaired this item and advised that there was a requirement under the Council Terms of Reference to conduct an annual self-assessment of its effectiveness along with a review of member contributions.
- 2.2 Nick Folland advised that Council were also being asked to review the future chairmanship of the NERC Council meetings. The proposal was to either continue with the current arrangement or for the Senior Independent Member (SIM) to assume the role of Chair.
- 2.3 Nick Folland informed Council that, as part of the self-assessment exercise, a form would be circulated for completion and the timetable was provided in the paper. Council were subsequently advised that there would also be an opportunity to discuss their responses either face to face or over the phone with Nick Folland on request. A consolidated outcome of the exercise would be shared at the September Council meeting.

**Action**

- 2.4 Nick Folland suggested that it would be useful to include the NERC Executive in the self-assessment exercise which Council supported and clarified that the intention would be to repeat the exercise on an annual basis.
- 2.5 Duncan Wingham highlighted that there would also be an independent review of Council every three years (with the first review expected to take place in 2021). Duncan Wingham advised that the rolling programme of business was mapped against the Council Terms of Reference to provide evidence for any forthcoming independent review.
- 2.6 Nick Folland invited Council to comment on the future chairmanship of meetings noting that it had been agreed at the inaugural meeting that Duncan Wingham would chair the meetings initially and that this would be reviewed at a later date.
- 2.7 Duncan Wingham explained that there was no uniform approach across UKRI with some meetings being chaired by the Executive Chair and some by the SIM.
- 2.8 Council agreed that the current arrangement was successful and were supportive that the Executive Chair continue to chair the meetings. Council suggested that, when deemed appropriate from a governance perspective, the SIM might chair some items and Nick Folland confirmed that this fell within the remit of the SIM.
- 2.9 Council asked whether the Executive Chair experienced any conflict in both chairing the meetings and representing NERC interests and Duncan Wingham advised that the approach he adopted was to gain consensus and he did not, therefore, consider there to be a conflict.
- 2.10 It was agreed to proceed with the self-assessment exercise and review the Chairmanship on an annual basis as part of the self-assessment exercise.

**Decision**

## **3. Executive Chair's update (Oral)**

- 3.1 Duncan Wingham gave an oral update on some of the key activities since the previous Council meeting.

- i. Strategic Delivery Plan  
Duncan Wingham advised Council that the Strategic Delivery Plan would now be known as the Delivery Plan and was due to be published on Monday, 10 June 2019.
- ii. University visits  
Duncan Wingham had recently visited the universities of Bristol, Exeter and Lancaster with visits planned to Oxford and Imperial. The visits had provided an opportunity to summarise the priorities outlined in the Delivery Plan.
- iii. Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF)  
Duncan Wingham reminded Council that NERC had been successful in securing private investment in excess of £170m for an Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) programme to reduce plastic waste. The business plan had now been approved and approval for the delivery plan was expected imminently. Duncan Wingham, in response to a query, advised that specific detail on the programme would be available following a Ministerial announcement which was expected prior to the parliamentary summer recess.

- iv. Green Finance  
Duncan Wingham advised Council that the subject of green finance was being actively pursued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), HM Treasury and the Bank of England with the aim of ensuring private concerns materialised climate related risks on their balance sheets. The finance community were aware of this growing momentum within government which had led to the creation of the Green Finance Institute created with matched funding from BEIS and the finance sector. There was acknowledgement within the finance community that failure to address this would potentially result in regulation. It was noted, however, that there was a lack of knowledge, outside of the insurance sector, on how to materialise these risks on the balance sheet.

Duncan Wingham advised Council that he felt NERC had a role to play in this area and advised that, during the last ISCF competition, a Green Finance bid had been received which was not successful. Duncan Wingham had subsequently discussed with the proposers the possibility of a smaller scale partnership activity and was pleased to be able to advise Council that it had been agreed earlier today to fund a joint project with Innovate UK.

Julia Slingo advised that she had been involved with the Geneva Association which was the umbrella organisation for the leading insurers in the world and was due to attend a major invited conference in London on 11-12 July on advancements in modelling and integration of physical and transition climate risks with a focus on core insurance business asset management and investment applications. Attendees would include world leading climate scientists and the Bank of England and she would be happy to report back on the outcomes. Duncan Wingham suggested that he advise BEIS of the upcoming conference and Julia Slingo agreed to assist with an invitation if required.

#### **Action**

- v. Public Engagement  
Duncan Wingham invited Alison Robinson to provide an update on public engagement.  
  
Alison Robinson advised that there were two areas of mention. NERC was contributing to the Hay Festival with NERC researchers from Peru, Colombia and the UK being paired with artists to create stories about ongoing research projects. The second highlight was NERC's Engaging Environments programme which had awarded £1.3m for a stage 2 project led by the Universities of Reading and Birmingham.
- vi. NERC Capital Call 2019  
NERC intended to launch a small capital call with grants awarded to start on 1 October 2019. The intention was to make it clear that there was a requirement for information to be provided

on use of equipment and that this would be a condition of any award with non-adherence leading to a return of funds.

- vii. Appointment of a new Director for the British Geological Survey (BGS)  
Interviews for the BGS Director post being vacated by John Ludden were taking place w/c 10 June.
- viii. Hadley Centre  
There had been an ongoing discussion regarding the future funding for the Hadley Centre. It had now been agreed that the Centre would be funded in a similar way to other Public Sector Research Establishments (PSRE) which was the subject of a ministerial agreement. Council agreed that this was a positive outcome.
- ix. Halley Antarctic Base  
Whilst the two major cracks on the Brunt ice shelf remained a concern there had been a deceleration in their expansion.

The withdrawal of the US air force in sustaining the DASH 7 fleet would lead to the primary air link into Rothera becoming increasingly expensive to operate. It has not proved possible to source a replacement aircraft that might land at Rothera.

### **Items for discussion**

#### **4. Spending Review (NERC 19/14) (Slides item 4, June 2019)**

- 4.1 Alison Robinson presented this item and talked through slides to update Council on the upcoming Spending Review. It was anticipated that there would be a delay to the Spending Review until a new Prime Minister was in post and it was expected that a one year rollover of budgets would ensue.
- 4.2 Alison Robinson explained that the spending review was a two stage process. The first stage was to work with UKRI on the collective case for investment in the science budget overall with the second stage concerning the allocation of funding including to individual Research Councils.
- 4.3 Alison Robinson explained that two scenarios were being developed by UKRI for the Spending Review submission: flat real and an increase in budget in line with the intention to increase to 2.4% GDP by 2027 which equated to an approximate doubling of budget.
- 4.4 Alison Robinson set out to Council how NERC was proposing to deliver the ambitions of the new NERC strategy with the flat real scenario and showed details of how that would flow through to funding lines. Alison Robinson then outlined the categories being used by UKRI for the spending review submission and how these related to existing NERC funding lines as well as indicating what an approximate doubling under the 2.4% scenario might look like for NERC mapped against the UKRI categories. Council were invited to share their views on the balance of investment to inform future submissions.
- 4.5 Duncan Wingham added that, under the 2.4% scenario, the Executive had sought to consider which areas to increase rather than a straight doubling of budget across the board for all categories. This was noted by Council.
- 4.6 Council were pleased to see that discovery science was viewed as a high priority and discussed how this should be represented in the spending review narrative, focusing on the need to link discovery science to solutions. The upcoming item on Discovery Science would be a first step in assisting the consideration of the balance between strategic and discovery science.
- 4.7 Council queried the 2.4% spend profile on 'people' which doubled from 2019/20 to 2020/21. Council recognised that any increase in funding was welcome but had concerns that this would be difficult to achieve without diminishing the quality and asked the executive to consider this in future

submissions, noting that, in order to achieve 2.4%, it would be necessary to significantly increase the community and that this would need to be an early aim.

- 4.8 Council were supportive that training should not be confined to fellowships and studentships but widened to include innovative technical training.
- 4.9 Council commented that the ambition to achieve 2.4% would only be possible with private sector funding and it was not clear how this would be achieved. Council noted that it remained likely that the outcome would be flat cash and expected the executive to give equal focus to this scenario to ensure it was robust.
- 4.10 Duncan Wingham added that NERC was required to address how we might meet the 2.4% target. The planning assumption was flat cash with 2.4% being transformative. If the outcome were flat cash, NERC would need to give serious consideration on how to sustain national capability.

## **5. Transformation (Oral) (Slides item 5, June 2019)**

- 5.1 Duncan Wingham presented slides and informed Council that the new structure within NERC would be in place by the end of June. The primary change was to the Research and Innovation directorate which would be split into two directorates; one dealing with the conventional portfolio and one dealing with the more complex long-term funding 'Strategic Partnerships' such as the UKRI cross-cutting funds. The aims were to increase the strength in UKRI cross-council funds, such as ISCF and SPF and to increase activity in understanding research outcomes (to be discussed further under the Discovery Science item (Item 8)).
- 5.2 Duncan Wingham explained that NERC currently had a large number of vacancies (35) and delays had recently been experienced with advertising posts. The number of vacancies were partly due to turnover relating to pay disparity within UKRI which it is planned to resolve in this year's pay remit.
- 5.3 Duncan Wingham advised Council that a new UKRI Transformation Director was now in place and was supportive of establishing a robust framework and governance structure for the replacement of the grant funding system and the first meeting of the over-arching board would take place w/c 10 June 2019. Council had an oversight responsibility for those elements which the Executive Chair was responsible for within UKRI and Duncan Wingham informed Council that he intended to bring two papers to the next meeting; one on the UKRI grants system and one on open access.
- 5.4 Duncan Wingham advised that the communications activity had recently been centralised within UKRI and the size of the function reduced. Duncan Wingham invited Alison Robinson to comment on this element and she clarified that public and external engagement would remain within NERC. From 24 June there would no longer be a dedicated NERC communications team; whilst there would be advantages such as communication on UKRI programmes, there remained some risks with regard to supporting the end-to-end grants process and communicating with the research community.
- 5.5 Council expressed some concern about the loss of a NERC specific communications team. Duncan Wingham suggested that Council re-visit this in six months to see whether these changes have had any negative impact.

### **Action**

## **6. Infrastructure Roadmap: next steps (NERC 19/15) (Slides item 6, June 2019)**

- 6.1 Alison Robinson introduced this item to inform Council of the Environment Sector contribution to the UK Research and Innovation Infrastructure Roadmap due to be published in September. Alison Robinson explained that the focus today would be on the near final chapter and Council were invited to provide any final challenge to the first edition of the Infrastructure Roadmap.

- 6.2 Alison Robinson advised that the Antarctic Logistics and Infrastructure (ALI) partition would be referenced in Chapter One as a decision was taken to separate this from the Environment Chapter.
- 6.3 Alison Robinson explained that community engagement with the NERC Community had been useful and extended particular thanks to Julia Slings, Louise Heathwaite and Gordon McGregor for their valuable input. Alison Robinson clarified that the Infrastructure Roadmap related to the Spending Review by taking the ambitions of the Roadmap to track that things we were proposing now were consistent and had shaped NERC priorities including for spending review submissions.
- 6.4 Council queried whether there was any overlap/duplication between the Environment Sector Chapter and other chapters within the Roadmap and emphasised the importance of ensuring it was cross-cutting rather than compartmentalised. Alison Robinson assured Council this would happen as a next step.
- 6.5 Council asked whether the chapter on Biology might be shared, in particular with regard to how molecular science might be applied to environmental science and how this might be useful in addressing conservatism in this area. Alison Robinson agreed to seek permission for this and to seek to add something to highlight the inter-related aspects in this area.

**Action**

- 6.6 Council suggested that it would be helpful to know what the next steps might be and how it was intended to lead the community in thinking more strategically. Alison Robinson informed Council that a further iteration of the Roadmap was expected in the next two years and that work would start once the Roadmap had been published which would help to determine the next steps.
- 6.7 Duncan Wingham added that moving from the Roadmap to a process of prioritisation and implementation was the next step, and noted the need for careful thought for the Roadmap to live up to its potential.
- 6.8 Council suggested that, in light of NERC's global footprint, it might be useful to compare the UKRI Roadmap to those produced elsewhere, for instance in the US, China and Japan so as that decisions needed to be made on future capital investment could be prioritised against UK strengths and existing national and international capabilities. Duncan Wingham agreed the Executive would investigate this suggestion further.

**Action**

- 6.9 Duncan Wingham asked Council to provide any final comments to Alison Robinson by 10 June.

**Action**

## **7. Creating a community to deliver environmental solutions (NERC 19/16)**

- 7.1 Phil Heads introduced this item and explained that we were seeking approval to develop a scheme to provide large-scale, long-term, flexible funding to create interdisciplinary communities to deliver environmental solutions. It would be important to establish effective management and governance given the scale and complexity of the scheme.
- 7.2 Phil Heads advised that an EPSRC-led programme, the National Interdisciplinary Centre for Circular Economy Research (NICER), with a similar focus was awaiting approval as part of the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF). It was planned to co-ordinate the NERC initiative with NICER to ensure clarity and complementarity before launching the NERC call in Spring 2020.
- 7.3 Council were supportive of the approach with discussion focusing on:
- i. Achieving a broad and balanced portfolio of topics for NERC investment through a process that allowed proposers to identify topics and NERC to select a balanced set of investments.
  - ii. Identifying clear outcomes and success measures, during and after the life of each investment

- and across a wider community beyond the recipients of funding.
  - iii. Building partnerships with industry to deliver solutions and to attract matched funding.
  - iv. Identifying a new generation of imaginative and entrepreneurial leaders.
  - v. Promoting and socialising this new scheme and way of working before the call for proposals.
- 7.4 Duncan Wingham added that he had already started to raise this opportunity informally as part of his recent university visits and that it would be important to ensure success was evaluated.
- 7.5 Duncan Wingham summarised that the intention was to issue an open call and that a two stage process would be implemented with the intention of inviting approximately 15 full bids. It would be important to ensure matched funding was considered but not a hard requirement and partnerships of a regional nature would be welcomed. Duncan Wingham confirmed that An Announcement of Opportunity (AO) would be brought back to Council.

#### **Action**

### **8. Discovery Science: are we getting the best? (NERC 19/17)(Slides item 8, June 2019)**

- 8.1 Alison Robinson introduced this item and presented slides to provide an initial analysis of whether NERC was funding the best science and scientists in discovery science. Hannah Collins joined via teleconference. The definition of 'best' was drawn from the ambitions set out in the new NERC strategy, and included excellence, innovation and adventurous science.
- 8.2 Hannah Collins explained that three areas had been considered in answering the question of whether NERC was funding the best; people, science and process. In looking at whether NERC funded the best people, the evidence suggested that, out of the top 500 Earth and Environmental Science researchers ranked by H-Index, circa 30% had submitted standard grant proposals to NERC within the last five years and more work was needed to understand this. In addressing the question of whether NERC was funding the best science, the evidence suggested that the citation impact was higher than the world average. With regard to NERC process it was difficult to measure whether the research was innovative or adventurous and there was a further limitation as NERC does not take track record into account in the way that other Research Councils do. Alison Robinson added that, as the H-index measures total career rather than activity over the past five years, it does have limitations.
- 8.3 Council welcomed the paper and the initial analysis of the NERC community, noting that the information presented demonstrated that more work was needed to provide the evidence for considering any potential change in the way NERC commissioned discovery science. Council suggested the following in their discussion as worthy of consideration as this area was developed further:
- i. whether data on who had applied for strategic funding rather than standard grants might give some insight into the science undertaken and how it advanced the cutting edge of knowledge, noting the graph in Annex B that showed that strategic research had now overtaken the fellowship citation impact;
  - ii. that given the limitations of using the H-index and the suggestion that citations were a more useful indicator as they can be limited to the past five years, whether other sources of data, e.g. the REF or information on the career level of PI's might be useful as there may be more useful metrics for early career researchers.
  - iii. that consideration might be given to peer recognition, such as prizes, awards, keynote talks and membership of national and international committees to inform who were NERC 'leading lights'; and
  - iv. some form of independent assessment of considerations of the 'best' might assist with creating a credible body of evidence and others such as the learned societies might provide a different perspective.
- 8.4 Duncan Wingham commented on the fact that the NERC peer review system does not take account of recent track record and suggested that consideration needed to be given as to whether

we have the right mechanisms in place. Duncan Wingham emphasised that it would be important to ensure that any changes to the peer review system were well justified in order to defend the decision within the community.

- 8.5 Council asked for clarification on the definition of outputs and outcomes, for example if a highly cited paper constituted an outcome of a scientific process, then this should be made clear to the wider community. It was also suggested that this analysis was also important in a UKRI context and suggested that a joint approach might be appropriate.
- 8.6 Duncan Wingham confirmed that the exercise would be broadened to take account of the Council discussion and a more detailed proposal brought to Council in December to provide an evidence base which would allow Council to consider if any changes to how discovery science was commissioned might be required.

**Action**

## **9. Commissioning strategic research to address NERC SDP ambitions (NERC 19/18) (Slides item 9, June 2019)**

- 9.1 Alison Robinson introduced this item which outlined a proposed process to ensure Council were confident that NERC was able to deliver on the long-term ambitions set out in the Delivery Plan. Hannah Collins joined via teleconference.
- 9.2 Hannah Collins explained the proposed approach was for the Executive to undertake a gap analysis and prioritisation that would then be reviewed by the Science Committee to ensure the NERC community fed into this process. Science Committee would then recommend a prioritised list of topics to address gaps which would be agreed by Council in the form of a 'roadmap' so that this could then be used agilely throughout the year to inform funding opportunities. Subsequently, NERC Head Office would generate Announcements of Opportunity for the highest priority topics for NERC investment. Alison Robinson emphasised that the nature of opportunities arising from the UKRI collective funds, as well as from NERC strategic science meant that an ability to be flexible and creative within agreed priorities was a key part of the proposed process.
- 9.3 Council commented that the first two steps of the process were key: SDP gap analysis and prioritisation and if these were structured in a robust and meaningful way, then the remainder of the process would be effective. Council suggested it would be useful to have an oversight of what was being done in other Councils and consider how broader input would be used at this point, including from other sources apart from Council and Science Committee.
- 9.4 Duncan Wingham advised that it was important to receive an independent, scientific view from the community via the Science Committee before obtaining a more strategic view from Council. Duncan Wingham added that it was the intention when prioritising funding to look more widely to limit duplication.
- 9.5 It was agreed that a draft approach to the gap analysis and prioritisation be brought to Council in September. Council noted that funding decisions did not need to be taken by Council until March or June 2020.

**Action**

## **10. NERC financial forecasts (NERC 19/19)**

- 10.1 Paul Fox informed Council that the finance paper was in its usual format. Annex B indicated the draft outturn for 2018/19 at £1m under budget.
- 10.2 Paul Fox highlighted that the issue with tax status remained unresolved. UKRI was reporting this as a projected overspend and NERC was not required to manage this against its core programme resource budget.

10.3 Paul Fox provided an update on the GRO project which was seeking to establish CEH and NOC as independent charities. Permission had now been obtained from the Science Minister and permission from the Chief Secretary of Treasury was now awaited. The intention was to complete the parliamentary process by summer recess.

## **11. NERC top risks at May 2019 (NERC 19/20)**

11.1 Paul Fox explained that the format of the NERC top risks had been changed to reflect the UKRI format and the UKRI risk summary had also been provided at Annex B. Paul Fox explained that some risks had moved from the NERC register to the UKRI register to avoid any duplication of risks. The risks which had moved related to EU Exit Impact, recruitment and cyber security.

11.2 Council queried whether there was a risk in these issues only appearing on the UKRI register and suggested that, for example, cyber security should appear on both registers.

11.3 Duncan Wingham explained that moving a risk to the UKRI register did not necessarily mean that it was deleted from the NERC register as there were risks which required action by NERC. Ian Kenyon added there was potential to duplicate risks if Council felt this was necessary and that duplication was preferable to omission.

11.4 Duncan Wingham advised that the NERC Assurance Board had been established to help address concerns regarding the centralisation of the risk and assurance function in UKRI and that NAB should be invited to look in detail at the issue of risk duplication and report back to Council.

### **Action**

11.5 Paul Fox highlighted the risk associated with the Antarctic modernisation programme. It was now anticipated that the royal naming ceremony would take place in early September before the ship was handed over to BAS by Christmas. The ship was expected to enter service from October 2020.

11.6 Ian Kenyon commented that some of the risks listed on the registers were unlikely to be green until completed and that action plans should be explicit as to how a risk would be reduced.

## **12. Unconfirmed Minutes of the NERC Science Committee meeting: May 2019 (NERC 19/21)**

12.1 Angela Hatton updated Council on the first meeting of the NERC Science Committee held on 15-16 May 2019.

12.2 Angela Hatton advised that Science Committee would discuss the highlight topics at their meeting in September and that a conflicts of interest policy would be produced to be circulated alongside the briefing information.

12.3 Angela Hatton explained that a mid-term review had taken place on the National Capability Science Multiple Centre (NCSMC) awards (previously known as the National Capability Long-Term Science Multiples (NCLSTM)) which resulted in all five awards meeting expectation with two of the Centres exceeding expectation in some areas. Constructive feedback was provided and Science Committee agreed that the model for the mid-term reviews was useful and it was suggested that this might be a useful model for reviewing larger strategic programmes in future. Duncan Wingham suggested that it might be useful to re-visit the constructive feedback provided in 12 months' time to ensure suggestions were implemented.

### **Action**

12.4 Duncan Wingham noted that the NCSMC funding was due for renewal in two years and it might be worth considering this when establishing our strategic priorities.

### **Action**

- 12.5 Angela Hatton informed Council that Science Committee recruitment for a new Chair and members was now open and invited Council to encourage people to apply.
- 12.6 Duncan Wingham confirmed the Terms of Reference for Science Committee would be modified for discussion at September Council.

**Action**

### **13. Minutes of the NERC Assurance Board (NAB) (NERC 19/22)**

- 13.1 Nick Folland introduced this item and informed Council that the first meeting of the NERC Assurance Board had taken place in February. Membership comprised both Executive and Non-Executive members and the meeting was chaired by Nick Folland as the Senior Independent Member. The board would provide assurance to the Executive Chair that the risks pertaining to NERC were managed appropriately and would report regularly to Council. The Board would also review the output of the Centre Assurance Boards. Nick invited Council to suggest any further areas they would like to be considered at these meetings.
- 13.2 Paul Fox reminded Council that UKRI had a central audit committee, Audit, Risk, Assurance and Performance Committee (ARAPC) and that Paul Fox and Duncan Wingham had been invited to attend the next meeting of ARAPC to provide assurance on the management of NERC.
- 13.3 Duncan Wingham informed Council that a new Non-Executive Director, Caroline Bault, had recently been appointed following an all-female shortlist.

### **14. Rolling Programme (NERC 19/23)**

- 14.1 Duncan Wingham invited Council to input to the rolling programme and explained that the business was mapped against the Terms of Reference.
- 14.2 The following items were suggested by Council:

- **Training portfolio, including UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships** – to be added to the agenda for December

**Action**

- **Global and national environmental trends** – Duncan Wingham agreed to consider how this might be implemented
- **Delivery Plans** from other councils to ensure coherence and an outward look to see if there were any opportunities. Duncan Wingham agreed to do this as part of the prioritisation exercise.
- Pre-dinner talk/discussion on the recent report from IPBES on Biodiversity and Ecosystem which included figures on the damage we have done to the environment and recommendations on what needs to be done **or** talks on previous completed and successful programme grants

### **15. Any Other Business**

- 15.1 No other business was raised.
- 15.2 Duncan Wingham thanked Council for a productive meeting
- 15.3 The meeting was closed.