



Natural  
Environment  
Research Council

## Confirmed minutes of the 9th meeting of NERC Council in UK Research and Innovation

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### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

**Ninth meeting of NERC Council in UK Research and Innovation  
held via Zoom on Thursday, 11 June 2020**

**Members present:**

Professor Duncan Wingham (Executive Chair), Mr Nick Folland (Senior Independent Member), Dr Matthew Harwood, Dr Rebecca Heaton, Professor Gideon Henderson (part), Professor Louise Heathwaite, Professor Stephen Holgate, Professor Karin Lochte, Ms Clare Matterson, Mr Gordon McGregor, Professor Dame Julia Slingo, Professor Graham Underwood

**NERC/UKRI Directors (Head Office):** Ms Sue Donaldson (Chief People Officer, UKRI), Mrs Victoria McMyn (Chief Operating Officer, NERC), Ms Alison Robinson (Director of Corporate Affairs), Professor Susan Waldron (Director, Research and Skills), Dr Iain Williams (Director, Strategic Partnerships)

**Apologies:** None

**Other attendees:** Ms Isobel Stephen for item 2, Dr Hannah Collins for item 7, Dr Jen Jennings for items 8 and 10, Ms Sophie Hodgson for item 9

**Secretariat:** Mrs Helen Page

#### Introductory items

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

- 1.1 Duncan Wingham welcomed members to the ninth meeting of NERC Council in UKRI and to the first virtual meeting of NERC Council.
- 1.2 Duncan Wingham welcomed Sue Donaldson, Chief People Officer, UKRI to her first meeting as the UKRI observer on NERC Council.
- 1.3 Duncan Wingham explained that the Queen's Birthday Honours 2020 announcements had been deferred to the autumn. He offered congratulations, on behalf of Council, to Professor Corinne Le Quéré who had recently been awarded the Heineken Prize for her work on climate change.
- 1.4 Duncan Wingham asked members for any updates to their declared interests or any vested interests in the items being discussed today. None were declared.
- 1.5 Duncan Wingham asked members for any amendments and matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting. No amendments were made and the minutes of the eighth meeting were confirmed as a good and complete record.

1.6 Duncan Wingham advised that most of the actions listed on the Decisions and Actions paper were completed or on the forward agenda. He updated Council on action 2.5 and explained that his planned meeting with the Helmholtz Association had been postponed. Council agreed to close action 3.1ix, relating to the Terms of Reference for Council meetings, which would be discussed further once received from UKRI. It was also agreed to close action 12.3, although any suggestions for 'deep dive' discussions at the NERC Assurance Board would still be welcomed.

## **2. Update on UKRI response to COVID-19 (Oral)**

2.1 Isobel Stephen joined the meeting to provide an overview of the UKRI response to COVID-19 so far and to ask Council for their input on the UKRI response for future planning.

### **2.2 Immediate actions to support the national response**

In terms of supporting the immediate national response, UKRI had supported medical research relevant to COVID-19 including on virus transmission, genomics, vaccines, testing and the manufacture of ventilators. Isobel Stephen explained that a call, based on key questions generated by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19, had received over 1400 proposals and had required significant cross-council input. She added that Innovate UK had launched a £20 million call for innovation projects.

### **2.3 Stability of the research and innovation sector**

UKRI had been providing support for both the research and innovation sectors in a range of ways: PhD students in their final year had been given an extra six months to complete their work; broader costed extensions were under consideration (through additional funding to universities); flexible start dates for research and a re-profiling of quality-related research funding (QR) of £100 million this academic year. Isobel Stephen added that an additional stabilisation package was planned with a task force now established involving Ministers from the Departments for Education, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the devolved administrations.

### **2.4 Recovery planning**

Key themes would include a contribution to the recovery in economic terms, the impact on research culture, the environment and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the place agenda. Isobel outlined that UKRI had supported the move to home working and she emphasised that any return to the office would be slow and measured.

2.5 Council raised an issue regarding the timescale of the stabilisation package and Isobel Stephen responded that the task force were already meeting and looking to provide some initial re-assurance to the sector fairly quickly. Council emphasised the importance of ensuring that research income generation was not disadvantaged at the expense of teaching due to financial and operational constraints.

2.6 Council asked whether any consideration was being given to costed grant extensions in addition to the no cost grant extensions which had already been agreed and whether this would be a UKRI or individual council response. Duncan Wingham advised that an announcement on this would be made following agreement by the Minister and it would apply across UKRI.

2.7 A question was raised regarding the speed of the review process for the COVID-19 emergency grant scheme in terms of how the rapid response was achieved and whether any lessons might be learnt from the process in relation to speeding up the process for grant proposals in future whilst still achieving a thorough level of review. Iain Williams explained that the proposals were received centrally within UKRI before being distributed to individual research councils who each had their own processes for reviewing and decision making. Iain Williams added that an initial response deadline of 10 days was

agreed across Councils and proposals were reviewed internally within NERC before moving to an external review process. Susan Waldron added that a panel approach was now being used with initial triage taking place internally within NERC. Duncan Wingham concluded that he was keen to support any speeding up of the decision-making process but that it would be important to ensure the quality and fairness of peer review remained.

2.8 Council raised the issue of international collaboration being affected by COVID-19 and the importance of ensuring countries do not begin to take an insular view. Isobel Stephen agreed that this was an area which UKRI should consider further.

2.9 Council also raised the issue of other organisations which might be experiencing difficulties, such as the Natural History Museum which provides a service to the research community but which sits outside the normal research infrastructure. Duncan Wingham explained that there was an intention to look at the broader sustainability of the HEI and institute sector and it was agreed that Clare Matterson would provide further information directly to Duncan Wingham on this issue.

### **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. UK Government Science Strategy

Duncan Wingham advised Council that a high-level strategy was being produced for publication by the end of June. One of the key themes of the strategy would be the intention to reduce bureaucracy in research funding.

ii. Spending review

Duncan Wingham informed Council that a date had not yet been set for the Spending Review and NERC may be required to respond quickly.

iii. UKRI Chief Executive Officer

UKRI had announced Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, University of Cambridge as its new CEO from 29 June.

iv. UKRI Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Duncan Wingham welcomed the publication of the UKRI Environmental Sustainability Strategy in May 2020. The next stage would be to produce a plan for how UKRI would achieve net zero by 2040.

v. UKRI Funding Service

Duncan Wingham informed Council that a pilot of the new UKRI funding service would start in the summer. Duncan Wingham advised that Vice Chancellors and research organisations had been informed that the existing grant system, including Je-S, would be replaced with this new service over the next couple of years and that the aim would be to simplify the process for both applicants and reviewers.

vi. Announcement of Opportunity

Duncan Wingham advised that an Announcement of Opportunity (AO), Climate and Environmental Risk Analytics for Resilient Finance (CERAF), had now closed.

vii. Open Access Consultation

Duncan Wingham informed Council that the consultation had now closed and the next stage would be to agree on the future policy.

viii. UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships

Of the recently awarded Future Leaders Fellowships, eleven were in the NERC domain

and five of these were joint with other research councils. Duncan Wingham assured Council that there was no delineation in the environmental science focus of these fellowships.

- ix. Duncan Wingham informed Council that all staff had now returned safely from Antarctica.
- x. Council raised the issue of university support for fellowships diminishing due to COVID-19 and Duncan Wingham informed Council that plans were in place to temporarily cease the requirement for matched contributions to address this.

## **Items for discussion**

### **4. NERC organisational response to COVID-19 (NERC 20/14)**

- 4.1 Victoria McMyn introduced this item to update Council on the measures taken by NERC in response to COVID-19 and highlighted that the transition to home working within both NERC HO and the research centres had been successful. She reported NERC's research ships had returned to the UK, the aircraft was grounded in the UK and staff had now been safely brought back from Antarctica.
- 4.2 Victoria McMyn advised that a recovery framework was now in place for NERC and some research centre sites were re-opening to small numbers of staff with laboratory and field work re-starting. She advised that extensive assurance work had taken place prior to the re-opening particularly at the sites on NERC estate (British Antarctic Survey (BAS), British Geological Survey (BGS), National Oceanography Centre (NOC) and UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH)). Victoria McMyn added that BAS had started planning for the next Antarctic season, NERC was working with NOC to develop a new programme for the NOC-operated ships and further assurance would be required before the FAAM aircraft started to operate.
- 4.3 Council were supportive of the NERC response and asked what support had been provided for NERC staff in terms of wellbeing. Victoria McMyn explained that a lot of support had been provided at both UKRI and NERC level including: line manager toolkits; UKRI weekly webinars; NERC weekly leadership updates for HO and research centres; NERC 'Keeping Connected' bulletins and the hosting of support networks. Duncan Wingham added that a prioritisation exercise had also taken place across NERC to make decisions on activities which might be paused to help to reduce the volume of work and resource had been re-allocated to aid with pressure points. Duncan Wingham stressed the importance of ensuring that unreasonable demands were not made of NERC staff and that expectations were clear. Sue Donaldson added that UKRI had been keen to receive feedback from staff rather than making assumptions about what support was needed and this had been done by issuing a questionnaire across UKRI.
- 4.4 Council were pleased with the range of support being offered to NERC staff and asked whether there were some new ways of working evolving which might improve efficiency in the future.
- 4.5 Victoria McMyn responded that future ways of working were under consideration including increased flexibility for home working and the increased use of technology for virtual meetings which would lead to environmental benefits. She commented that it would be important to continue the improved support for wellbeing beyond the current situation. Victoria McMyn added that business continuity planning had improved across the organisation and staff were recognising and appreciating UKRI was a good employer. Susan Waldron added that panel meetings had been held virtually and may be used as a future model pending feedback from the community.

- 4.6 Council agreed that a mixed approach between physical and virtual meetings would be the ideal outcome for the future noting that virtual meetings lacked the ability for informal interaction.
- 4.7 Matthew Harwood offered to liaise with Victoria McMyn to share perspectives on safeguarding against COVID-19 in marine operations which might be useful in the context of the NOC ships and it was agreed to follow this up outside of the meeting.

## **5. NERC financial forecasts and implications of COVID-19 (NERC 20/15)**

- 5.1 Victoria McMyn introduced this item and started by updating on the 2019/20 financial position. She asked for her thanks to be recorded to the NERC finance team for their excellent work both on year end and on operational issues in challenging circumstances. Victoria McMyn informed Council that NERC ended the financial year slightly over budget in the context of an overall underspend within UKRI.
- 5.2 Victoria McMyn explained that, due to the financial uncertainty caused by COVID-19, the budget allocation from BEIS to UKRI was still awaited and individual council budgets would follow. She added that a high level of uncertainty and significant budgetary pressure would be experienced in the next financial year with additional funding for interventions and to support COVID-19 research efforts, despite the inevitable slippage in grant delivery.
- 5.3 Victoria McMyn and Duncan Wingham had been leading for UKRI on gathering data across the UKRI institutes to understand the financial impacts of COVID-19 and would be tracking these risks on a regular basis.
- 5.4 Victoria McMyn commented that the first Strategic Relationship Assurance meeting (SRAM) had taken place earlier this week with UKCEH. At the meeting, UKCEH had explained that they were exploring all virtual options for international work including training and providing instructions remotely on maintaining instruments. The full impact of COVID-19 might not be fully realised until the next financial year.
- 5.5 Council raised the issue of the impact of COVID-19 on NERC's international activity, for example, the Global Challenges Research Fund, part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment and asked how NERC would be able to deliver on international activity, particularly in light of the current travel restrictions. Duncan Wingham agreed that this needed further consideration and suggested it be discussed further at the next Council meeting.  
**ACTION: Item to be added to the rolling programme on the impact of COVID-19 on NERC's international activity**
- 5.6 Iain Williams added that NERC had already planned to pause some of the National Capability ODA commissioning to enable adjustments to be made due to COVID-19.
- 5.7 Duncan Wingham explained that there would be a range of pressures on the UKRI budget in 2020/21 and that it would be important to seek additional funding for the institutes. He added that this would likely happen following an announcement on the support which the Government intended to provide for the university sector.
- 5.8 Council queried how the research centres were mitigating the financial risks of Covid-19 and Victoria McMyn outlined that centres were identifying ways in which savings might be made and seeking new areas for income generation whilst ensuring there was no reduction in NC capability.
- 5.9 Duncan Wingham advised that there had been a positive outcome in the pay remit for 2019 in that salaries across UKRI would now be harmonised and the differentials in pay minima addressed.

## **6. Review of the top risks at June 2020 (NERC 20/16)**

- 6.1 Victoria McMyn introduced this item and explained that the impact of COVID-19 was reflected in the risk registers along with a separate COVID-19 risk register which was being reviewed on a regular basis by the bronze team with escalation to the silver team when required.
- 6.2 Victoria McMyn highlighted the risks relating to Antarctica which would likely have an impact on future programme delivery.
- 6.3 Duncan Wingham added that there would be an impact on the delivery of the *RRS Sir David Attenborough* as work had currently ceased. One of the significant issues once work resumed would be the attendance of staff from outside the UK to test the subsystems. Matthew Harwood added that his company were experiencing similar challenges and suggested remote testing and virtual sign off might be an option in these circumstances and Duncan Wingham agreed to feed this back.

## **7. Balancing NERC's Delivery Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (NERC 20/17)** *(Slides, item 7, June 2020)*

- 7.1 Susan Waldron introduced this item and used slides to provide some detail on the initiatives which had already started such as the Digital Sprint Hackathons and the Ideas Series. Hannah Collins observed this item.
- 7.2 Susan Waldron asked Council to consider whether the NERC Delivery Plan ambitions were able to sustain research to address the impact of COVID-19 and for Council approval to repurpose the Highlight Topic call to launch a Pandemic Response Highlight Topic call, focusing on the post COVID-19 world.
- 7.3 Graham Underwood added that Science Committee had been very supportive of both the hackathons and the ideas series and had suggested that the remit of the contributors be widened which had been taken on board. Science Committee had also agreed that it would be important to ensure that there was no overlap with the urgency grants.
- 7.4 Council highlighted the importance of ensuring the indoor environment was considered as there was a lack of research in this area despite its effect upon both physical and mental health and it was suggested that this would need to be a cross-council activity. Council also suggested that it would be important to ensure that resilience strategies were in place to enable institutions to be better prepared for future challenges in human health and that plant and animal health should also be considered.
- 7.5 Council were keen to ensure that any environmental benefit from the enforced 'rest from humanity' were sustained in a positive way. Council highlighted the importance of ensuring that any plan for economic recovery included environmental solutions and suggested that regional councils might have a role to play in thinking about an environmental master plan for their local area. Council suggested that NERC might work with MRC to research the physical and mental health benefits of access to green spaces on wellbeing.
- 7.6 Susan Waldron confirmed that consideration was being given to both NERC domain specific activities as well as those which might take place cross-council. Duncan Wingham explained, however, that any cross-council activity would be dependent upon the outcome of the spending review and the timing of this was uncertain whereas, if NERC wanted to move quickly, this repurposing of the Highlight Topic would provide that opportunity.
- 7.7 Susan Waldron noted that the descriptors Council were using to describe the research challenges that may exist arising from COVID-19 were consistent with the challenge areas in the Delivery Plan, for example Resilient and Healthy.

- 7.8 Council commented that it would be important to consider the issues which would be of most relevance to NERC and to consider a step approach with an initial call now and a second call further along. Susan Waldron explained that funding available would be approximately £4 million per year over a four-year period and Duncan Wingham agreed to consider whether a two-phase process might be used.
- 7.9 Council suggested that a mixed approach might be adopted where only part of the Highlight Topic was repurposed and that the applications already received were considered alongside the existing applications. Graham Underwood explained that Science Committee would be looking at the Highlight Topics at their meeting in September so that, if Council agreed to re-open the call, they could put the COVID-19 forward look proposals into the collective mix.
- 7.10 Summarising the discussion, Duncan Wingham commented that there was support for exploring COVID-19 related research to answer questions raised by the pandemic. He added that there was also agreement to repurpose some of the Highlight Topic funding with a requirement to ensure subject balance and to consider a funding profile that was different to the normal highlight topic investment, for example more smaller projects. Duncan Wingham suggested that NERC proceed to offer COVID-19 as part of the highlight topic investment and that an overview of the proposed research calls would be shared with Council at the September meeting.

**Decision: Council agreed to repurpose some of the Highlight Topic funding**  
**Action: Executive and Science Committee to consider the issue in detail and to come back to Council in September**

## **8. Delivery Plan Progress Report (NERC 20/18)**

- 8.1 Alison Robinson introduced this item to set out the progress made to date on achieving the ambitions in NERC's Delivery Plan (DP). She reminded Council that the intention was to discuss how to address the Delivery Plan gaps at the September meeting, with the focus at this meeting being on progress in delivery of the Plan overall. Jen Jennings observed this item.
- 8.2 Alison Robinson advised Council that, whilst there had been no formal request from UKRI or BEIS to re-refresh the 2019/20 Delivery Plan, it seemed timely to begin to consider what revisions might be necessary in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in light of progress made to date and the Executive would begin a refresh process in the next half of the year.
- 8.3 Alison Robinson drew Council's attention to the Delivery Plan summary tracker which provided information on the gaps identified in the Delivery Plan at March 2020. She explained that the formal evaluation of the strategy was new to NERC and that the process of looking objectively at performance would be improved and sharpened for future reports.
- 8.4 Council congratulated NERC on the clear and helpful information provided and commented that it would be useful to have additional information on areas which were perceived to be significant gaps in delivery to understand how management would put in place actions to address where progress was not as it should be.
- 8.5 Alison Robinson explained that some areas, such as Productive Environment, were currently marked as Red due to the timing of the evaluation but that plans were in place and she was confident that they would move to Amber/Green in a year's time. Digital Environment remained more challenging, noting this was an area requiring additional leadership to give it the emphasis and focus needed to meet the Delivery Plan ambitions. Iain Williams added that progress was being made and a paper would be discussed at the meeting in September as a starting point. Julia Slingo advised that the Royal Society were

holding a workshop on Digital Technologies for the Environment in October and suggested that NERC might wish to be involved.

8.6 Council were appreciative of the effort made to track progress against the strategy and asked whether the metric was based purely on input (for example the amount of money spent or emphasis put into a particular theme), or whether it captured quality or the impact of the output. Council also asked for clarification on where and how the short and long-term impact was recorded.

8.7 Alison Robinson responded that a range of processes were utilised in the evaluation including spend, feedback from stakeholders, areas of innovation and scientific importance. Whilst progress had been measured with a focus on outcomes, this was done qualitatively, and she agreed that adding in metrics where these would assist measuring progress and testing quality would be useful for next year.

8.8 Alison Robinson also outlined that impact resided in three places across the Delivery Plan: evaluation, best environment for research and innovation and developing an inclusive, professional workforce. Two of the actions to be taken forward under the final heading were to improve skills and capability and adopt a more systematic approach to external engagement. Duncan Wingham added that it might be useful for Council, at a future meeting, to consider how NERC measures impact and outcomes and uses this to inform improvement.

**Action: Measures of impact and outcomes to be added to the rolling programme for December 2020**

## **9. Delivery Plan ambitions: National Capability Multi-Centre Science planning (NERC 20/19) (Slide, item 9, June 2020)**

9.1 Iain Williams introduced this item and presented a slide to illustrate where Multi-Centre Science fitted within National Capability (NC) funding as a whole. Sophie Hodgson observed this item.

9.2 Iain Williams explained that the Multi-Centre Science programme currently had two distinctive criteria: 1) that projects were collaborations between at least two NERC centres and 2) each project was Principal Investigator led. Council were asked to agree to add a third criteria that projects contributed to meeting NERC Delivery Plan objectives and comment on the development of the second round of the NC Multi-Centre Science programme. Iain Williams added that NERC was looking for novel ideas rather than a continuation of funding from the first round. The intention would be to review outline proposals at the December 2020 Council meeting with full proposals for Council approval in Autumn/Winter 2021.

9.3 Council asked whether there was any connection between the Multi-Centre Science and the research evaluation of the centres which would be looking at how they deliver on this. Duncan Wingham confirmed that this was a separate exercise.

9.4 Council emphasised the importance of novel and ambitious ideas, whilst also sustaining and developing previous investment either within the Multi-Centre Science Programme or through other funding streams such as future highlight topics. Council also noted the importance of considering the international context and of working collaboratively in the broadest sense. Duncan Wingham added that one of the reasons he was keen to engage with the German Institutes was to explore the opportunity of aligning Multi-Centre Science funding and that he would re-engage with the Helmholtz Association to accelerate this.

**Action: Duncan Wingham to contact the Helmholtz Association**

9.5 Duncan Wingham suggested that the Digital Environment agenda be considered in the context of the Multi-Centre Science programme and asked for Council to explore this further. Council welcomed the opportunity for environment instrumentation and associated

data analysis to be enhanced through this programme. However, Council considered that it would be useful to engage with university groups in other areas of data science, including Artificial Intelligence, where most UK expertise exists.

9.6 In summary, Iain Williams noted that Council were very supportive of the programme especially the necessity for collaboration, broadening international involvement and emphasised the importance of novel and ambitious ideas whilst recognising that, in some areas, there was potential to leverage previous investments. Council also agreed the timeline set out within the paper.

**Decision: Council agreed that NC Multi-Centre Science might be utilised to meet NERC's Delivery Plan priorities and agreed to the timeline for their future involvement**

## **10. Infrastructure bids for UKRI funding (NERC 20/20)**

10.1 Iain Williams introduced this item and reminded Council that the UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap now known as 'Opportunities to Grow our Capability' was published in November 2019. It was explained that this item was to update Council on the NERC submission to round one of the UKRI Infrastructure Fund. Council was asked to prioritise up to three options for round two based on the priorities identified by Science Committee (annex B). Jen Jennings observed this item.

10.2 Graham Underwood added that Science Committee had ranked the options as high, medium or low priority based on science need and timeliness. Using the UKRI infrastructure criteria, the top five options were identified with the suggestion that two of these might be merged.

10.3 Council expressed their support for the round one bid on 'Flood and Drought Resilience' and asked that a dynamic and innovative approach was taken, and that effort was not concentrated in one place.

10.4 Council were supportive of the 'CO<sub>2</sub> storage testbed' proposal and noted that this area was important for the UK's future economic growth as well as globally differentiating the UK's Research and Innovation infrastructure. Council also added that opportunities to work internationally should be explored.

10.5 Council suggested that 'Geothermal and Heat Storage Demonstrator' might be expanded to include energy storage more broadly.

10.6 Council commented that a gap in the list related to coastal erosion and the coastal marine environment, which was missing from the 'National Infrastructure for Climate and Weather Observations' and suggested that coastal research infrastructure be considered further.

10.7 Council questioned the 'Net Zero Oceanographic Capability' proposal. Duncan Wingham clarified that the key factor in this submission was the development of new technologies (including robotics) to deliver oceanographic science, rather than specifically related to low-carbon shipping.

10.8 Council suggested that the 'Research Infrastructure to Monitor Air Pollution' was too narrow. Council noted that the infrastructure proposals focused on monitoring might be improved if they took a systems approach that cut across the air, land and water domains.

10.9 In response to a Council query on wider consideration of the ranked options, Duncan Wingham emphasised that converting these submissions to full business plans would require significant resource and therefore it would only be possible to take forward a small number. It would be important to ensure that any business case was written for a broad audience and outlined clearly the impact of the investment.

10.10 Duncan Wingham asked Graham Underwood for additional information on the Science Committee discussion on the 'Energy and Magma Testbed' and he responded that other options had been timelier which had led to it being ranked as a lower priority.

10.11 In summary, Iain Williams noted Council's support for the Floods and Droughts Resilience bid to round one and agreed to feedback comments from Council into the consultation. Iain Williams confirmed that a business case would be prepared for the CO<sub>2</sub> storage test bed. He agreed that more consideration of coastal research infrastructure and a systems-based approach across the air, land and water domains was required.

**Decision: Council agreed that a business case be prepared over the next 12 months for the CO<sub>2</sub> storage test bed**

## **11. Unconfirmed minutes of the 4th meeting of Science Committee, May 2020 (NERC 20/21)**

11.1 Graham Underwood updated Council on the fourth meeting of Science Committee held in May 2020.

11.2 Graham Underwood highlighted that they had presentations at their meeting in May on Digital Environment and Productive Economy as part of the Delivery Plan ambitions discussion.

11.3 Graham Underwood explained that Science Committee had looked at the EDI data related to Highlight Topics and suggested that it might be useful to look at the NERC funding balance in terms of gender, equality and diversity. Duncan Wingham added that NERC had actively been seeking EDI data and agreed that looking for differences between funding mechanisms would be a useful exercise.

11.4 The next meeting of the Science Committee would take place in September.

## **12. Rolling Programme (NERC 20/22)**

12.1 Helen Page reminded members that this item provided an opportunity for them to suggest items for forthcoming meetings.

## **13. Any Other Business**

13.1 No other business was raised.

13.2 Duncan Wingham thanked Council for a productive meeting.

13.3 The meeting was closed.