

Minutes of UKRI-BBSRC Council meeting held on 9 December 2020 via Zoom

Those attending:

Professor Ewan Birney
John Bloomer
Dr Belinda Clarke
Professor Ian Graham
Professor Laura Green
Professor Gideon Henderson (items 1-8)
Professor Martin Humphries (Chair of the meeting, items 1-4)
Professor Andrew Millar
Professor Malcolm Skingle
Professor David Stephens
Professor Melanie Welham (UKRI-BBSRC Executive Chair, chaired items 5-11)

Also attending:

Dr Amanda Collis
Dr Karen Lewis
Dr Sarah Perkins
Bill Poll
Isobel Stephen (item 4 only)
Charlotte Hamilton (item 11 only)
Laura Notton (item 7 only)
Sarah Cresswell
Ksymena Grzybowska

ITEM 1. OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and government's guidance on social distancing this meeting was held virtually via Zoom.
2. The Chair welcomed Sarah Perkins, UKRI-BBSRC Executive Director, Strategic Planning, Evidence and Engagement, to her first Council meeting. Sarah joined BBSRC in October 2020. He also welcomed David Rogers, UKRI Deputy Director Investment Strategy, who was standing in for Rosie Cornelius, UKRI corporate observer on BBSRC Council.
3. Members were reminded to check their details currently being held on the conflicts register, circulated by email before the meeting, and 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 23 SEPTEMBER 2020 (UKRI -BBSRC 20/2020)

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

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

5. It was noted that all actions were completed or in hand.

ITEM 4. UPDATE FROM UKRI ON SPENDING REVIEW AND CORPORATE PLAN (ORAL)

6. Isobel Stephen (UKRI Executive Director of Strategy) attended the meeting and provided Council with an update on the Spending Review. She said that UKRI had been pleased with the announcement and noted that the overall figure was the BEIS figure for R&D, and allocations for UKRI and each Council were yet to be confirmed.
7. Isobel and Council members reflected on the Annual UKRI Board and Councils Conference and how much appetite there was for improving links with UKRI. Council commented the event had been a good opportunity for people to come together and there had been enthusiasm to do more. Council members discussed how we could harness that to help develop more connections.
8. Council suggested making pairwise connections amongst Councils, e.g. NERC and BBSRC, and use highlights to really drive the community more clearly towards inter- or multi-disciplinary applications that might benefit from cross-Council funding. Council also suggested triangulation with respect to other funders e.g. NIHR.
9. Council commented that community perception about cross-Council working was important and that UKRI should be more creative about translation of research and innovation and make more efforts to increase investment from the industry. To deliver this step change within UKRI, we need to think how we can incentivise capabilities, build on bottom-up approaches in Councils and engage early on. Team Science was highlighted as an example we could learn from.
10. Council discussed focusing on top five topics within UKRI to identify synergies and provide some common ground for communities. This could be an action on all Executives.
11. Council suggested being more proactive in making connections in specific areas to promote interdisciplinarity and raise awareness with the UKRI Board.
12. The Chair thanked Isobel for attending Council meeting and she offered to attend future Council meetings.

Action UKRI BBSRC 36/2020: Identify five topics within UKRI that require synergies and provide some common ground for communities. This could be an action on all Executives and the topics could be individual agenda items for future strategic discussions at Council (Melanie Welham; Martin Humphries)

ITEM 5. EXECUTIVE CHAIR'S REPORT (UKRI BBSRC 21/2020)

13. Melanie Welham introduced this paper. Council noted the report and was particularly interested in the update on the recent grants round. Council noted that the number of applications received for 20RM3 was more in line with expectations.
14. Council asked about the stakeholder engagement work that would feed into the UKRI's engagement strategy. It was suggested that companies such as Airbus, Google and Amazon were included.
15. Council noted that the UK Plant Science Strategy and BBSRC's initial response would be published in due course.
16. Melanie took over chairing the meeting at this point due to technical issues experienced by the Chair.

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

17. The Chair invited Gideon Henderson to share his updates with Council. He commented on the Spending Review announcement and noted the strong drive to do more in the innovation space.
18. He welcomed the statement of intent that all research establishments would be eligible for funding, including PSREs.

19. Gideon provided an update on environmental land management legislation as a consequence of the Agricultural Bill. He invited scientific input into a two phased consultation (gene editing and GMO) which would be published soon.
20. Council noted ongoing conversations between NERC, BBSRC and DEFRA on NetZero.
21. Council discussed extending UKRI focus to include all Devolved Administrations. The Executive Chair would raise this with UKRI.
22. The Chair thanked Gideon for his updates.

ITEM 7. SPENDING REVIEW UPDATE (UKRI BBSRC 22/2020)

23. Laura Notton introduced this paper, the aim of which was to seek Council's advice on key principles to guide BBSRC's investment plans in response to different allocation scenarios, focusing on desired outcomes and reflecting BBSRC's role in the research and innovation funding system.

Sections below were recorded separately as they related to business sensitive information and deemed work in progress.

24. Melanie thanked Council for their comments and more updates on the Spending Review would be provided at the next Council meeting in March 2021. An extraordinary meeting would be scheduled if required.

Action UKRI BBSRC 37/2020: add Net Zero Agriculture for future Council meeting agenda (Amanda Collis, Ksymena Grzybowska)

Action UKRI BBSRC 38/2020: add the Spending Review updates for March Council meeting agenda (Ksymena Grzybowska).

ITEM 8. DEVELOPMENT OF A HIGH-LEVEL UKRI -BBSRC INSTITUTE STRATEGY – UPDATE (UKRI BBSRC 23/2020)

25. Sarah Perkins introduced this paper. Council noted the update on activities to develop a strategy for BBSRC support of stand-alone Institutes, including feedback from the Institute Directors and outputs from the first meeting of the Council Task and Finish Group (Laura Green, David Stephens and Malcolm Skingle were members of the Group). Council commented on the direction of travel and fed back into the revised vision and principles for support. Council advised that the strategy should acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of organisations, explain why Institutes were needed, consider any gaps and whether the portfolio meets BBSRC's needs. Fostering honest conversations with institutes would be key.
26. Council noted that the current funding model drove competition rather than collaboration and we should aim to change this.
27. Council noted that there was a separate strategy for innovation campuses and BBSRC would reflect whether there was scope to join institutes and innovation campuses strategies together.

Action UKRI BBSRC 39/2020: BBSRC would reflect whether there was scope to join institutes and innovation campuses strategies together (Sarah Perkins).

ITEM 9. BIANNUAL RISK UPDATE, REVIEW AND DISCUSSION (UKRI BBSRC 24/2020)

28. The Chair welcomed Charlotte Hamilton (UKRI Risk & Assurance Business Partner) to the meeting who provided Council with updates and oversight of UKRI Risk Management activities operated by BBSRC.

Sections below were recorded separately as they related to business sensitive information.

29. Council thanked Charlotte for a very comprehensive paper.

ITEM 10. ANNUAL APPRAISAL OF UKRI-BBSRC COUNCIL - RESULTS (UKRI BBSRC 25/2020)

30. Melanie Welham introduced this paper which presented the results of the annual appraisal survey.

31. Overall, the results were positive. Council highlighted the comments around stronger links between Councils and UKRI, more clarity on the role of SIM and their interactions with UKRI. Council discussed the importance of the strategy cycle and the balance of Council agendas (high-level strategy vs more detailed portfolio discussions). Council noted that BBSRC was planning for a strategic workshop as part of the annual cycle, which had been postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic. An important aspect of the strategic advice cycle is connectivity with Strategic Advisory Panels, whereby work undertaken by SAPs surfaces to Council.

32. Council reflected that dinners were very useful, especially for new members to get to know other Council members, build collegiality, and develop a better understanding of BBSRC.

33. Council indicated that it would be valuable to discuss infrastructure. BBSRC infrastructure is unique and it is timely to look at it at Council level.

34. Council also suggested incorporating science sessions as part of future agendas (e.g. inviting scientists to Council meetings).

Action UKRI BBSRC 41/2020: Martin and Melanie will discuss future Council agendas (Martin Humphries, Melanie Welham)

Action UKRI BBSRC 42/2020: UKRI BBSRC: updates from Strategic Advisory Panels to feature on Council agendas when available (Amanda Collis, Ksymena Grzybowska)

Action UKRI BBSRC 43/2020: add infrastructure to a future Council meeting (Amanda Collis, Ksymena Grzybowska)

Action UKRI BBSRC 44/2020: Council members were invited to send any ideas of future science topics (Council members)

ITEM 11. COUNCIL FORWARD LOOK AND AOB (UKRI BBSRC 26/2020)

35. It was noted that innovation item would be added to the Council Forward Look.

36. It was suggested that Task and Finish Group reports could be captured as part of the Executive Chair's report to Council.

Council Secretariat

February 2020

Agenda Item	Action Description	Owner	Delivery Date	Status
	Actions from 23 September 2020			
7	<i>Action UKRI-BBSRC 34/2020 - further refinement, and consideration of how recommendations would be taken forward, including engagement with different partners (e.g. Defra), would continue and be led by Jane Langdale and Melanie Welham. (Melanie Welham, Jane Langdale)</i>	Melanie Welham Jane Langdale	February 2021	Ongoing
9	<i>Action UKRI BBSRC 35/2020 - The Executive would consider mechanisms for engaging Council in providing advice on the big ideas pipeline programme (Amanda Collis)</i>	Amanda Collis	May 2021	Ongoing
	Actions from 9 December 2020			
4.	<i>Action UKRI BBSRC 36/2020: Identify five topics within UKRI that require synergies and provide some common ground for communities. This could be an action on all Executives and the topics could be individual agenda items for future strategic discussions at Council (Melanie Welham; Martin Humphries)</i>	Melanie Welham Martin Humphries	June 2021	Ongoing
7.	<i>Action UKRI BBSRC 37/2020: add Net Zero Agriculture for future Council meeting agenda (Amanda Collis, Ksymena Grzybowska)</i>	Ksymena Grzybowska Amanda Collis	February 2021	Added

7.	Action UKRI BBSRC 38/2020: add the Spending Review updates for March Council meeting agenda (Ksymena Grzybowska).	Ksymena Grzybowska	February 2021	Added
8.	Action UKRI BBSRC 39/2020: BBSRC would reflect whether there was scope to join institutes and innovation campuses strategies together (Sarah Perkins).	Sarah Perkins	March 2021	Ongoing
	<i>This section was removed as it related to business sensitive information.</i>			
10.	Action UKRI BBSRC 41/2020: Martin and Melanie will discuss future Council agenda (Martin Humphries, Melanie Welham)	Melanie Welham Martin Humphries	February 2021	Completed
10.	Action UKRI BBSRC 42/2020: UKRI BBSRC: updates from Strategic Advisory Panels to feature on Council agendas when available (Amanda Collis, Ksymena Grzybowska)	Ksymena Grzybowska Amanda Collis	February 2021	Added
10.	Action UKRI BBSRC 43/2020: add infrastructure to a future Council meeting. (Amanda Collis, Ksymena Grzybowska)	Ksymena Grzybowska Amanda Collis	February 2021	Added
10.	Action UKRI BBSRC 44/2020: Council members were invited to send any ideas of future science topics (Council members)	Council members	March 2021	Ongoing