UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
Minutes of the EPSRC Council
Date: 17-18 June 2026
Location: Swindon

Attendees

Members of EPSRC Council

Professor Charlotte Deane (EPSRC Executive Chair)
Professor Jeremy Baumberg (Senior Independent Member)
Professor Nigel Brandon
Professor Deborah Greaves
Professor Jane Hillston
Professor Catherine Hobbs
Professor Dame Jane Jiang
Dr Simon King
Professor Robert Mokaya
Mr Alan Newby
Professor Martin Schröder
Dr Jon-Paul Sherlock
Dr Dave Smith (National Technology Adviser)
Professor Marika Taylor
Professor Ian White

EPSRC attendees

Andrew Bourne (Executive Director, Innovation and Partnerships Directorate)
Nicola Goldberg (Chief Operating Officer)
Jane Nicholson (Executive Director, Research Directorate)
Kedar Pandya (Executive Director, Strategy Directorate)
Garth Wells (Deputy Executive Chair)
Derek Craig (Programme Director, Quantum)
Samantha Francis (Programme Director, Artificial Intelligence (AI))
Kathryn Magnay (Programme Director, Defence and National Security)
Justin O'Byrne (Programme Director, Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT), Cybersecurity and Semiconductors)
Robert Felstead (Deputy Director, Engineering and Healthcare Technologies)
James Dracott (Deputy Director, IS8 AI)
Rachel Bishop (Deputy Director, Sustainable Manufacturing)
Stephen Gilligan (Senior Manager, Governance)

UKRI attendees and guests

Melissa Zanocco (ESRC, Research and Innovation Challenge Director: Growth Mission, Kickstart Economic Growth Challenge Director) - virtual
Juliette Meek (Finance Director, UKRI) - virtual
Gemma Bailey (Chief People Officer, UKRI)
Lyanne Maclean (Transformation Director, UKRI)
David Spence (Innovate UK, Head of Applied AI) - virtual
Bruce Adderley (Innovate UK, interim IS8 Advanced Manufacturing)

Secretariat/Observers

Cerianne Whitehead (Head of Private Office, Secretary to Council)
Gillian Bartoszewska (Senior Governance and Operations Manager)
Megan Maycock (Executive Assistant and Governance Manager)

Apologies

Ms Siân John
David Stiles (UKRI Senior Finance Business Partner)

1. **Welcome, introductions and declaration of interests**

1.1. Jeremy welcomed attendees, confirmed quoracy and noted apologies. Council welcomed new members Catherine Hobbs, Jon-Paul Sherlock, Marika Taylor and Nigel Brandon to Council.

1.2. Members were reminded to update their declaration of interests during the year. Members were asked to raise any conflicts arising during the course of the meeting. No new declarations were raised.

2. **Minutes and actions**

2.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

2.2. Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.

3. **Executive report**

3.1. Council reflected on the previous day's networking sessions with EPSRC colleagues. Newer members in particular valued the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of team portfolios and the complexity and dependencies across the organisation. Council noted the enthusiasm and overall positive mood, which reflected successful leadership during a period of change.

3.2. Council received updates from the EPSRC executive:

3.2.1. UKRI Strategy and Delivery Plan - Council noted progress against the timeline and submission to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology. Council discussed how they could support messaging within the community, particularly around Objectives and Key Results within the context of EPSRC's continued breadth of interests.

3.2.2. Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB) update – Council noted membership changes and recent discussions on future doctoral training, EPSRC community communications, future computing paradigms and future topics for discussion. Council briefly discussed CDT models within a changing landscape and their positive impact on the wider PhD system. Council discussed targeted international collaboration opportunities and how best to share understanding across UKRI, government departments and learned societies.

3.3. Council noted written updates on IS-8 Programmes Advisory Structures, Operations update, Financial Update, UKRI staffing & Senior appointments.

4. **Research and Development Missions Accelerator Programme (RDMAP) Challenge Director update**

4.1. Council welcomed Melissa Zanocco and Rob Felstead to the meeting.

4.2. Council were provided with background on the £500 million Research and Development Missions Accelerator Programme supporting research and innovation that aligns with the UK government's five national missions, focussing on new ideas that can improve lives, strengthen public services and support the economy.

4.3. Council noted the RDMAP process phases and were updated on the economic growth mission and progress against its aims to build a digital marketplace that revolutionises how the UK will construct homes and infrastructure, and a creative content exchange to connect UK creative and cultural content owners with AI developers and data consumers to enable innovation, growth and value creation in the creative sector and beyond.

4.4. Council discussed a variety of challenges and opportunities including cross council and government department working, documenting the impact of underpinning research, recording the lower technology readiness levels (TRLs) interventions that will drive future programmes, capturing research problems to be tackled by our research base or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and models for self-sustaining legal entities.

5. **Pre-UKRI colleagues update discussion**

5.1. Council agreed on topics that would merit discussion with UKRI colleagues

6. **UKRI colleague update**

6.1. Council welcomed Gemma Bailey, Lyanne Maclean and Juliette Meek to the meeting.

6.2. Juliette spoke on work with UKRI external affairs to increase public recognition and awareness that publicly funded research and innovation improves lives and livelihoods across the UK; and to demonstrate the economic impact of publicly funded research and innovation to strengthen UKRI's position as the leading partner for business and R&D investors. Council commended UKRI Finance, EPSRC Directors and teams for meeting 2025-2026 budgetary targets and noted the 2026-2027 financial timeline, delegations, external dependencies and constraints, maintaining a golden thread through UKRI Missions, strategy, and objectives and key results.

6.3. Gemma spoke on recent senior appointments and recruitment activities and summarised the review of UKRI's hybrid working policy.

6.4. Lyanne spoke on Shaping our Future transformation activities supporting UKRI as a world class organisation and summarised current work programmes.

6.5. Council discussed measures to support colleagues through change, co-creating solutions, and developing leadership management. Council reflected on how enterprise portfolio management approaches could support UKRI to adapt through Spending Review periods and the importance of good governance for effective management of cross-functional teams and reporting lines.

7. **Post UKRI colleague update reflections**

7.1. Council reflected on the size of the challenge and ambition for change and welcomed the consistent messaging and open discussion. Council recommended maintaining a swift pace across functions, identification of near-term structures and tools, and providing clarity of scope at the first opportunity.

8. **UKRI IS-8 programme deep-dive - AI**

8.1. Council welcomed David Spence and James Dracott to the meeting.

8.2. Council were provided with the context on UKRI's role to build UK AI capability, accelerate adoption and deliver growth. The UKRI AI strategic framework and proposed delivery of the UKRI AI priority programme were presented. Six pillars provide a strategic framing for UKRI AI activity and areas of long-term capability development.

8.3. Council noted the programme was intended to move beyond a traditional research and innovation portfolio, operating as a focused industrial strategy intervention for AI: selective, value-led, clear about the market failures UKRI is addressing, and explicit about where UKRI should act directly, work with partners or deliberately not act.

8.4. Council were supportive of the strategic direction proposed and discussed the emerging value-capture thesis, priority areas and trade-offs, inclusion of novel hardware, identifying UK users, markets and adopters, and evidence that should guide investment progression, scaling, reshaping or de-prioritisation.

9. **UKRI IS-8 programme deep-dive – Advanced Manufacturing**

9.1. Council welcomed Bruce Adderley and Rachel Bishop to the meeting.

9.2. Council were provided with context on how relevant teams would be commissioned by IS8 priority programmes to provide subject matter expertise and to support delivery against programme requirements. Council noted advanced manufacturing had a strong applied research interest with a significant leverage record within EPSRC.

9.3. Council were updated on collaboration with the departments for Business and Trade (DBT) and for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) to understand their priorities that align with the UKRI mission, and development of investments by a cross-UKRI delivery group to target the high growth industries within the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan and compliment other government investments. Council noted expected benefits to advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth.

9.4. Council discussed the timeline for progressing through the proposed phases, the ability to pivot existing investments, influencing Local Innovation Partnerships Funds (LIPFs), development of dual use technologies linked in with other government departments and where fundamental research might be required to underpin delivery.

10. **UKRI IS-8 programme deep-dive reflections**

10.1. Council reflected that the IS-8 Programme updates had been informative and helpful and would welcome continued engagement where Council could advise on a specific question or issue.

10.2. Council discussed how updated funding landscape mapping would be beneficial to the community and they would welcome additional guidance where fundamental research was requested within IS8 programmes and what should remain within curiosity driven research.

11. **Risk update**

11.1. Council welcomed Stephen Gilligan to the meeting.

11.2. Council were updated on the bi-annual risk management report and EPSRC's risk register and noted changes to the risk register. Council noted the EPSRC Risk and Issue Register had been updated to align with EPSRC's strategic objectives and to account for recent changes in the structure of UKRI.

11.3. Council discussed whether UKRI had the tools and processes in place to manage and track data relating to IS8 programmes and UKRI's own readiness to respond to AI developments and challenges.

12. **Information papers**

12.1. Council noted the information papers on UKRI External Affairs and Communications Audience Report, EPSRC Case studies and strategic advisory teams (SATs) update.

12.2. Council suggested opportunities for promoting exchanges between SATs.

13. **Any other business**

13.1. Council thanked EPSRC colleagues who contributed to the meeting, networking session, logistical and admin support, and who provided contributions to the wide range of briefing materials.

13.2. Council thanked Jeremy Baumberg as he passed the Council Senior Independent Member role over to Ian White.

13.3. The next meeting will be held on 23-24 September.