



**Natural
Environment
Research Council**

NERC Science Committee 12th Meeting

Summary of Discussion

02 February 2022 via zoom

Members Present: Professor Graham Underwood (Chair), Dr Adrian Baker, Professor Nichola Beaumont, Professor Mike Bentley, Professor Jane Hill, Dr Anna Jones, Professor Christine Maggs, Professor Stefan Reis, Professor Simon Vosper, Dr Doug Wilson, Professor Dan Parsons, Professor David Viner and Professor Helen Williams.

Ex-Officio: Professor Susan Waldron (NERC Director, Research and Skills)

Apologies: 21st October: Professor Alberto Naveira Garabato and Professor Richard Pancost.

Other Attendees: Whole meeting: Dr Sarah Turner (NERC Associate Director, Strategic Programme Generation & Delivery). Dr Iain Williams (NERC Director, Strategic Partnerships). **Item 3:** Jemima Brinton (Senior Programme Manager, Strategic Programme Generation & Delivery), Simon Kerley (NERC Head of Terrestrial, Freshwater & Earth), Wendy Matcham (NERC Head of Resilient Environment), Shewly Choudury & Sophie Laurie (Associate Directors, Interdisciplinary Capacity (Strategic Partnerships), Mike Webb (NERC Head of Marine) and Gemma Trulove (NERC Senior Programme Manager, Strategic Partnerships). **Item 4:** Professor Sir Duncan Wingham. **Item 5:** Sally Reid (NERC Head of NC Science Policy) and Jessica Pollitt (NERC Senior Programme Manager, NC Science), **CHAMFER** - Laurent Amoudry (NOC), Angus Garbutt (UKCEH), Andres Payo (BGS), **MOET** - Emrys Phillips (BGS), Jerry Blackford (PML), Angus Best (NOC). **Item 6:** Sally Reid (NERC Head of NC Science Policy) and Rebecca Scott (NERC Senior Programme Manager National Capability Science), **Hydro – JULES** – Simon Dadson (UKCEH), Andrew Hughes (BGS), Bryan Lawrence (NCAS). **Item 10:** Liam Haydon (Head of Strategy, Corporate Affairs).

Secretary: Gemma Davies

Key issues discussed

Executive Chair update

A brief update on the spending review was given, noting the need to be more prepared to work cross-council with the budget. Horizon, and the white paper on levelling up, containing commitments to increases in research and development funding, were also reported on, noting that time is needed to see the implications of these for UKRI.

Achieving Delivery Plan ambitions: SRI Investments

Science Committee were supportive of the three strategic research programmes supported by Council and planned to launch in 2022/23. Science Committee provided advice as to

how programme design and content could be strengthened to maximise science excellence in support of NERC's strategic ambitions.

NC Science Multi-Centre: Consideration of the revised proposals for Round 2 (CHAMFER & MOET)

NERC [national capability](#) (NC) supports the UK to deliver world-leading environmental science, support national strategic needs, and respond to emergencies. NC Multi-Centre Science programmes bring multiple NC skill sets together to enable more ambitious science than a single NC could deliver, increasing the returns from investments by generating new science opportunities and leverage of additional benefits via other funding streams.

Two of the six proposals that were presented at the October 2021 Science Committee meeting returned with revised proposals. Science Committee reviewed and discussed these in turn and provided advice on how well the feedback from October was addressed, along with recommendations to the Executive.

NC Hydro-Jules Mid- Term Review

Science Committee reviewed and discussed the Hydro-JULES NC Science Multi-Centre award against the proposed objectives identified in their original proposal and provided advice to the Executive. Unlike the other NC Science Multi- centre awards, Hydro-JULES, started in April 2018 so this review has been after the other awards.

Development of options and bids for UKRI Infrastructure

The Committee were updated on the progress of the NERC infrastructure pipeline activities. The infrastructure pipeline delivers activities that are cross-cutting and reach all areas of the NERC Delivery Plan. Resultant investments will support the “best environment for research and innovation” and “the facilities, resources and services required for UK environmental science to flourish”. In the UKRI Corporate Plan, NERC makes a commitment, “to invest strategically in capital infrastructure that enables a step change in UK science capability and support our net zero ambitions by reducing carbon emissions”.

HT Topic Analysis Update

Science Committee agreed with timeline and process for HT idea prioritisation in Autumn 2022.

Science committee reviewed the award outcomes in the context of gender (male / female) and ethnicity (non-white ethnic minority / white). Neither showed significant bias in outcomes. Additional statistical information looking at intersectionality was requested but it was clarified that for Highlight Topics the numbers would be too small to analyse in a meaningful way.

Delivery Plan refresh and strategy introduction

The Committee were informed that UKRI are in the process of finalising their first strategy and that NERC were updating their Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP). This draft SDP will go out shortly to Science Committee for feedback.

Standing items

The Committee confirmed the minutes and noted feedback from the Council meeting and the information papers: Discipline Balance; Financial Forecasts, and the forward agenda.