



**Natural  
Environment  
Research Council**

## **NERC Science Committee 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

### **Summary of Discussion**

**26 January 2023, via zoom**

**Members Present:** Professor David Hannah (Chair), Nicola Beaumont, Professor Michael Bentley, Professor Jane Hill, Dr Anna Jones, Professor Christine Maggs, Professor Dan Parsons, Professor Stefan Reis, Professor David Viner, Professor Simon Vosper, Professor Helen Williams and Dr Doug Wilson.

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

**Apologies:** None

**Other Attendees: Whole meeting:** Dr Sarah Turner (NERC Associate Director, Strategic Programme Generation & Delivery (SPG&D)). **Item 4:** Kate Hamer (NERC Associate Director, Building a Green Future), Simon Kerley (NERC Head of Terrestrial, Freshwater & Earth) and Thomas Haynes (NERC Head of Interdisciplinary Programmes & Evaluation (IPDM)). **Item 5:** Jemima Brinton (NERC Strategic Programme Manager, SPG&D), Liam Haydon (NERC Head of Strategy and Planning) and Matt Viner (NERC Senior Insights and Analysis Manager). **Item 6:** Professor Sir Duncan Wingham. **Item 7:** Jennifer Jennings (NERC Associate Director, Discovery and Highlight Science, Talent and Skills) and Jessica Lucia (NERC Programme Manager, Discovery and Highlight Science). **Item 9:** Dr Iain Williams (NERC Director, Strategic Partnerships), Jessica Pollitt (Senior Programme Manager: National Capability), Professor Simon Dadson (UKCEH Programme Director) and Dr Andrew Hughes (Principal Scientist, BGS). **Item 10:** Leigh Storey (Associate Director MP team and Senior Responsible Owner for AIMP and NZOC).

**Secretary:** Gemma Davies

### **Key issues discussed**

#### **UKRI Themes**

The Committee were updated on the 5 UKRI themes: Building a green future; Securing better health, ageing and wellbeing; Tackling infections; Building a secure and resilient world; Creating opportunities, improving outcomes.

#### **Executive Chair update**

The Committee were updated on the ongoing considerations around whether the U.K. associated with Horizon Europe or not, on the place agenda noting that challenges exist in supporting UK government targets here for research investment nationwide. The

Committee were also updated on the UKRI themes noting that a committee is being formed, including members of the research councils Council's to oversee the progress with the 'Building a Green Future' theme and to support commitment and co-ownership at this level.

### **Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) mapping**

Science Committee reviewed the balance of NERC current investment portfolio across SDP ambitions and suggested areas that should be reviewed for potential future strategic research investment. The committee also suggested ways to improve this information and discussed the usefulness of this information.

### **Highlight Topic Outcomes and EDI update**

The committee noted the updated submission form which now states that the summary and research questions must be appropriate for the announcement of opportunity (AO). The timeline for the autumn [2023 highlight topic process](#) was also discussed along with the previous success rates.

### **EDI report response**

The committee discussed the EDI grant report and noted this data will now be published annually as part of the [NERC diversity and inclusion plan](#). NERC have mandated that public statements be published on the DTP webpages to share what each is doing to enhance inclusivity, noting that NERC do not control the content. The importance of engaging with students early in their education was raised along with developing the culture to support diversity once recruited.

### **Round 2 full proposal of National Capability Multi-Centre Science (Hydro-JULES)**

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.

Conflicts of interest meant that 2 members left for this discussion. Science Committee provided advice to the NERC Executive on how well the proposal addresses agreed criteria and the potential to deliver the Multi-Centre science aims in context of [NERC's 2022 Strategic Delivery Plan](#)

### **Net Zero Oceanographic Capability Update**

Science Committee provided advice on how to move the marine science community towards adopting novel techniques for observing the ocean that utilise the potential of autonomy to deliver increased spatial/temporal cover, persistent presence and smarter research environments. The committee also discussed opportunities for national/international collaboration in the areas of marine autonomous technology development and demonstration and management of data collected autonomously.

### **Outcome of Self-assessment analysis**

Science Committee discussed and advised on improvements which might be made to the operation of NERC Science Committee

**Standing items**

The Committee confirmed the minutes and noted council feedback and the information papers, Discipline Balance and Financial Forecasts, and the forward agenda.