

OFFICIAL

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Approved minutes of the Council meeting held at Novotel Reading Centre on 28 February – 1 March 2023

Council Members: Professor Mark E. Smith (Chair)
Professor Dame Lynn Gladden
Professor Deborah Greaves
Professor Nick Jennings (from dinner on Day 1)
Professor Dame Jane Jiang
Ms Siân John (from dinner on Day 1)
Professor Miles Padgett
Professor Martin Schröder
Dr Joe de Sousa
Professor Tim Whitley (until 13:55 on Day 2)
Professor Andy Wright

Observers: Professor Stephen Belcher (CSA)
Mr Alex van Someren (from dinner on Day 1)

Executive: Dr Andrew Bourne
Professor Jonathan Dawes
Ms Helen Morgan
Ms Jane Nicholson
Dr Kedar Pandya
Professor Mark Parsons
Dr Neil Viner
Dr Alison Wall (Items 1-6 only)
Dr Rachel Bishop (Item 7 only)
Ms Katie Daniel (Item 7 only)
Dr Ruth Kelman (Item 7 only)

Others: Dr Neil Robinson
Dr Nicola Bell (Item 4 only)
Dr Julian Fells (Item 4 only)
Professor Anthony Laing (Item 4 only)
Professor Maria Liakata (Item 4 only)
Dr Erica Thompson (Item 4 only)
Dr Ewelina Zatorska (Item 4 only)
Dr Katie Blaney (Item 7 only)
Dr Alexander Broomsgrove (Item 7 only)
Mr Nick Cook (Item 7 only)
Ms Ellie Gilvin (Item 7 only)
Dr Daniel Smith (Item 7 only)

Secretariat: Mrs Beth Amer
Ms Tracy Keys
Ms Kerry-Anne Young

1. Meeting Formalities

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Alison Etheridge and Peter Williams. Nick Jennings and Siân John would join Council from dinner on day one of Council.
- 1.2 Council welcomed EPSRC's new Deputy Executive Chair, Jonathan Dawes. Council also welcomed Alex van Someren, the Chief Scientific Adviser for National Security. Alex will be the Chief Scientific Adviser *ex-officio* Council member for EPSRC from April 2023, taking

OFFICIAL

over from Stephen Belcher. This March meeting was Stephen Belcher's last meeting, and EPSRC Council warmly thanked him for his years of service, advice, and support to UKRI.

1.3 There were no new declarations of interest from Council members.

2. Draft Minutes of the Meeting 6 December 2022

2.1 Council agreed with the record of the last meeting.

3. Actions and Matters Arising

3.1 There were six outstanding actions from the last meeting. Council noted those which were either completed or in hand.

4. Presentations from Early Career Fellows

4.1 Six early career Fellowship holders were invited to hold discussions with Council about their research, careers, opportunities, and challenges:

- Dr Julian Fells, EPSRC Early Career Research Fellow, University of Oxford: Multipoint Sensors for Extreme Environments
- Professor Anthony Laing, Early Career Research Fellow, University of Bristol: Quantum Photonics
- Dr Ewelina Zatorska, Early Career Research Fellow, Imperial College London: Nonlocal Hydrodynamic Models of Interacting Agents
- Professor Maria Liakata, Turing AI Fellow, Queen Mary University of London: Personalised Longitudinal Natural Language Processing and Beyond
- Dr Nicola Bell, EPSRC Open Fellow, University of Glasgow: Digital Tools for Highly Reactive & Hazardous Chemistry
- Dr Erica Thompson, UKRI Future Leader Fellow, London School of Economics and Political Science: Effective Use of Mathematical Models to Support Decisions.

4.2 Council preceded the interactive session with a discussion about the nature of the fellowships held by those attending Council. The breadth and variety of schemes were noted. Industrial Council members with Future Leaders Fellows in their organisation praised the scheme for enabling a clear route to application. Council noted that the uptake of Future Leaders Fellows into industry had increased in recent rounds.

4.3 The discussions following the presentations and over dinner focussed on ways UKRI could further support early career researchers, noting that any policy reflections would need to be UKRI-wide. Topics discussed included: the diversity of the Fellows' career paths; the need for increased support for those with caring responsibilities; the importance of media training for making new contacts; barriers to building connections and networks, demand management concerns given the potential impact of failed applications (especially without revise and resubmit options); cost of living increases and the resulting challenges to attracting talent; the challenges of recruiting overseas students; the need for management training and ongoing support, and the importance of mentorship.

4.4 Council welcomed the interaction with all Fellowship holders, thanking them for their insightful, varied presentations and discussions. Council looks forward to the autumn networking event arranged by EPSRC with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Fellowship recipients.

5. Review of Day One

OFFICIAL

- 5.1 Council summarised day one of the meeting and reflected on the discussions held with the Early Career Fellows. Council discussed the role of UKRI and institutions in supporting the Fellows to maximise their impact. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

6. Executive Update

- 6.1 Council was updated on EPSRC's new Health Technologies Strategy. Council commented positively on the clarity of the vision, the shift from healthcare to health, and the thorough and holistic approach to refreshing the strategy and its three core challenges. Council advised clarifying that the strategy is complementary to the remits and strategic missions of other UKRI Councils, and where appropriate, will be delivered in partnership.
- 6.2 Council received an update on Exascale computing. This update was presented in the context of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's Independent Review of The Future of Compute. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.3 Council was given a Horizon Europe update. Council thanked UKRI colleagues for their work progressing plans for the association and the non-association scenario, the Pioneer Programme. Council agrees that association with Horizon Europe remains a priority. Council noted and welcomed the ambition of the proposed Pioneer Programme. Council felt that in the long-term, an integrated approach between Horizon Europe and the Pioneer Programme might benefit the UK, enabling a global scientific engagement strategy.
- 6.4 Council was updated on student stipends. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- 6.5 Council received an update on the UK Machinery of Government Changes, noting the recent creation of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). DSIT will be UKRI's new sponsor department. Council looks forward to future engagement with DSIT.
- 6.6 Council was updated on Executive Chair recruitment for EPSRC, noting that colleagues are working hard to progress this work. Council members did, however, express significant concern about the lack of overall progress in this process.

7. EPSRC Engagement Presentations

- 7.1 Council received updates from colleagues about the Physical and Mathematical Sciences Powerhouse, Place, and International Partnerships. Council found these updates engaging and informative and was particularly impressed with the priorities and ambitions presented by EPSRC colleagues. Council also noted and thanked EPSRC colleagues for their work on Trusted Research challenges in creating a robust response and approach which has been adopted by UKRI colleagues more widely.

8. Wider UKRI Update

- 8.1 This item allowed Council to engage in areas of emerging strategy and change in UKRI. Multiple topics were discussed, including UKRI Strategic Themes, Technology Missions Fund, Cross-Council Responsive Mode and UKRI Change Programmes, including the UKRI Operating Model and The Funding Service (TFS).
- 8.2 The following points summarise the discussion:

OFFICIAL

- Council was encouraged by the progress made on TFS. Council thanked UKRI colleagues for their work on this and looked forward to future updates.
- Council welcomed the UKRI Cross Research Council Responsive Mode Pilot Scheme. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council discussed ways of ensuring the promotion of the scheme to our communities to ensure uptake of this scheme early on in its pilot phase. Council was particularly interested in understanding what UKRI considers as the specific success criteria for this pilot scheme.
- Council received an update on the content of the five UKRI Strategic Themes and recognised the active contributions made by EPSRC across all of them in a number of different ways. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.** Council received an update on the Technology Missions Fund (TMF), noted EPSRC's role in building strategic leadership for UKRI. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**
- Council members noted that UKRI have approved an Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and that EPSRC's response to this, the EPSRC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan 2022 to 2025, has been published.
- **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 Council agreed on which points of interest from this meeting would be included in a report to the UKRI Board.
- 9.2 Professor Miles Padgett and Professor Deborah Greaves were thanked for joining EPSRC's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion advisory group.

10. Next Meeting

- 10.1 The next EPSRC Council meeting will be held virtually on 3 May 2023.

11. **Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.**