



Council Meeting
Thursday, 2 February 2023
10:30 – 13:30
Virtual Meeting

Minutes

Attendees	
Council Members:	Professor Dame Jessica Corner (JC) (Chair) Dr Richard Armour (RA) Ms Kellie Beirne (KB) Dr Phil Clare (PC) Dame Janet Finch (JF) Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan (CGH) Professor Ian Greer (IG) (virtual) Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon (AMI) Ms Bronwen Maddox (BM), RE Council Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad (CRP) Mr Mike Rees (SIM) (MR) Professor Graeme Reid (GR)
Observers:	Dr David Blaney (DB), HEFCW Ms Helen Cross (HC), SFC Professor Trevor McMillan (TM), KE Framework Champion RE Head of Strategy and Planning Mr Dan Shah (DSH), UKRI
Officers:	Ms Alice Frost (AF) Dr Steven Hill (SH) Mr Ed Hughes (EH)
Guests:	Head of Data and Evidence, RE (for Item 7) Associate Director for Research Environment, RE (for Item 5) Associate Director of Knowledge Exchange, RE (for Items 1–7)
Apologies:	Professor Naren Barfield (NB), I&E Champion Dr Carol Bell (CB), RE Council Member Ms Heather Cousins (HC), DfE NI Ms Jacqui Dovey (JD), RE Ms Susan Lapworth (SL), OfS
Secretariat:	Head of Governance and Risk Secretariat Officer



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1.	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	JC welcomed all to the meeting. In particular, she welcomed Helen Cross, the new Director of Research and Innovation at the Scottish Funding Council. She noted that RE's Associate Director of Knowledge Exchange (KE) would be attending the meeting up to the KE Review item and that RE's Head of Data and Evidence (within the KE team) would be joining the meeting, specifically for the KE Review item.
1.2	JC acknowledged that this would be the final meeting for RA and KB, whom she thanked for their contribution to Council. RA was one of the founding members of RE Council and has been a member for five years. In addition to sitting on the Research England Development (RED) Fund panel, he has contributed to various other RE panels and working groups; has been the Council lead on Trusted Research, security, and international issues; and has represented RE at cross-UKRI events. KB has been a member of RE Council for three years and has also made a significant contribution to Council, including sitting on the HEIF Eligibility Sub-Group. JC noted that the work of the sub-group is still underway; both RA and KB will continue to be involved for a few more months to see the work through to fruition. RA and KB were both very positive about their time on RE Council.
1.3	Apologies were received from Naren Barfield (Insight & Engagement Champion), Carol Bell (RE Council member), Heather Cousins (DfE NI), Jacqui Dovey (RE), and Susan Lapworth (Chief Executive, OfS).
1.4	JC informed Council that the relocation of UKRI to its new Caxton House offices is now complete.
2.	Minutes and Actions of the meeting held on 24 November 2022
	<u>Minutes</u>
2.1	The minutes were accepted as being an accurate record of the previous meeting.
	<u>Actions</u>
2.2	<p>There were two outstanding actions on the Action Log:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 10.5 (28 April 2022): A review of RE's strategic risks was carried out by the RE Executive Group on 28 November 2022. The outcomes of this will be presented to Council in due course. Action 7.4 (29 September 2022): DSH will provide an update on the UKRI Performance Management Framework during his update. <p>All other actions have been completed and will be closed following this meeting.</p>
	<u>Matters Arising</u>
2.3	There were no matters arising from the Minutes and Actions of the last meeting.
3.	UKRI Strategy Update
3.1	DSH provided an overview covering events of the recent past, current activity, and work to take place in the near future to include the following:



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of last year, the Autumn Statement did not re-open the existing R&D settlement, partly due to a lot of hard work behind the scenes. • There has been work to ensure that the Horizon Europe allocation was provided to the devolved administrations. • The National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) has been established, the first meeting of which will take place at Cabinet level next week. • The Integrated Review, describing the Government's vision for the UK's role in the world over the next decade, is going to be refreshed, possibly in the Spring. • There is increased government interest in the Place agenda (JC is the SRO for UKRI On Place): it will be very important to demonstrate how seriously UKRI is taking this agenda. • UKRI is exploring ways of becoming more visible and is looking at how to further contribute to prosperity and wellbeing across the UK. • The report from the independent review of the research, development and innovation organisational landscape led by Professor Sir Paul Nurse was released at the end of January. • The recommendations are quite general, so the challenge will be to address these more specifically. It will be crucial that any action plan is interpreted in the right way and that it projects confidence in the UKRI system. • Internally, a lot of work is underway on the operating model and on increasing UKRI's efficiency and effectiveness. • There was a deep dive into risk at the January UKRI Board and ExCo Away Day. • The risks and opportunities associated with Horizon Europe are being considered. • UKRI is responding to change in the dynamic policy environment. • The Away Day also included a working dinner with Matt Clifford, Chair of ARIA. • The UKRI Performance Framework has been shared with RE Council. The framework distinguishes between areas of regular reporting to Ministers to demonstrate that UKRI is on track, and information needed at an organisational level to enable informed decision-making. Councils can use the framework as a structure to help with their own monitoring. • In terms of things to note in the near future, the Government is interested in unique technologies and future growth. • UKRI needs to be alive to new opportunities; however, needs to recognise the risk of there being inadequate resource to administer new funding. • The Government position remains that Horizon Europe association would be best. There is a lot of work going on behind the scenes to respond at pace and to provide transitional stabilising measures within a short time frame, if necessary. • Concerns lie around doing the best possible job under impossible constraints; making the best use of public funds; mobilising and engaging with the community/ sector; and challenges around deliverability (OpEx, resource constraints).
3.2	KB stated that actors are at the mercy of geopolitical risks and tensions. She noted that one of the biggest contributors to the Welsh economy is the semiconductor sector and



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	that the related SIPF project is critical in terms of taking forward sovereign technological capability for the UK. She stated that many companies are reconsidering their involvement due to the current situation and are considering investing elsewhere. She wanted to know what is happening to the DCMS semiconductor strategy and asked what UKRI can do to help drive the message across government about the importance of such sectors and their relevance to UK PC.
3.3	DSH stated that the semiconductor strategy is being developed, and it is hoped that it will be published soon. He also stated that semiconductors is a niche technology and that investment in key technologies is one of the areas for discussion at the upcoming NSTC meeting. He stated that he would pick this up with KB offline.
3.4	During the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:
3.5	Members were struck by the speed of change in the landscape and wondered what guidance should be given to universities and to companies about how they should go about making decisions. Many universities are acting on the basis of Horizon Europe funding not being accessible. DSH stated that the Guarantee should help with decision making. He also stated that universities would, irrespectively and most likely, be careful and balanced about who they would work with across the world anyway.
3.6	Members asked whether it is likely that the Government or UKRI will make a formal response to the Grant Review. They also asked if the Nurse Review says anything about the financial sustainability of research, full economic cost (FEC), and the likely impact of inflationary effects. DSH stated that, initially the response to the two Reviews were being combined; however, they are now being decoupled. Many of the recommendations cover work already underway within UKRI. Sir David Grant will be invited to attend the June UKRI Board meeting. There is a dashboard of all of the recommendations to show work completed and in hand. Regarding the Nurse Review, interpretation and enactment of the recommendations will be key.
3.7	Members queried whether there are different models of association being discussed or if there is a legal constraint around what association will be. DSH stated that there has been speculation about a partial association model; however, he is not aware of this being offered to the UK.
3.8	Members queried how collaborations are being incentivised by UKRI and that a Levelling-Up or Place-based strategy will only work via links between players. They queried how research councils are working together to enable this. DSH stated that there is a cross research council collaborative group looking at the Place agenda. He stated that there are both soft and hard incentives across research councils. There is not a hypothecated pot of funding for this work; rather, the approach is to try and spread opportunities across the country. Successful past interventions, such as the Strength in Places Fund, are also being considered as exemplars and for additional investment.
3.9	Members enquired about the Integrated Review and Budget and whether there could be significant statements for this period. DSH stated that he has not seen a draft of the review but that it would be difficult to take on new activity without new funding. He also



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	stated that, in a finely balanced allocation, a new announcement without additional resource would, essentially, be a cut elsewhere in the budget. He felt that there would likely be an announcement in the near future around Horizon Europe. He also stated that there is resource indicated in the Innovation Strategy for technologies.
4.	Executive Chair's Report
4.1	JC stated that, since the last meeting, she has continued with a programme of meetings and engagement, including an Eastern Arc meeting at the University of Essex, and a University of Sunderland visit. These engagements have enabled her to tap into sector sentiment similar to the way in which EH's team gathers information. Universities are asking many of the same questions and have concerns about financial sustainability, queries regarding Horizon Europe and where it is going, and questions about FRAP.
4.2	JC met with Sir Patrick Vallance and Professor Paul Monks (CSA for BEIS) who want RE to have a strong link to the CSA network with a presence within Council. JC has discussed this MR, and RE will consider where CSAs can be invited to come and talk to RE Council rather than formally sit on Council.
4.3	JC noted that, when Council last met, the country was in the midst of a change in administration and were awaiting information on their priorities and focus: this is now beginning to gather momentum.
4.4	Since the last meeting, JC has taken on the champion role for Place and Levelling-Up within UKRI. The BEIS target that 55% of the budget should be spent outside of the Greater South-East by 2024/25, has come into sharp focus, and UKRI is being asked to consider this. <withheld from publication>. RE may wish to consider ways in which the perspective of Place can be sharpened in programmes such as UKRPIF and E3.
4.5	<withheld from publication>.
4.6	Work is continuing on development of the UKRI operational model. RE is actively involved and will consider any implications for RE.
4.7	Work on design of the Horizon Europe replacement scheme is underway. RE responded quickly at the end of December to assist with the allocation of some pre-decision funding via the QR mechanism. Council asked about the level of pre-decision funding remaining, stating that it is likely there is a sizable underspend as all funds do not appear to have been allocated. DSH stated that, without decisions, allocation of funding has been difficult, although there has been some guarantee/pre-decision spend. Funding has been set aside for association: UKRI will make a strong case for this in the event of association. MR stated that there is a lot of work going on behind closed doors and that there are political drivers for the situation to be resolved before the end of February.
	<u>NCUB</u>
4.8	<i>GR declared a conflict of interest (he has an advisory role at NCUB), so recused himself from the discussion.</i>

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4.9	Council was asked to endorse the proposal to increase the NUCB grant for 2023-24 to take account of additional activities. <withheld from publication>.
4.10	Council endorsed a total grant award (for both core activity & konfer, the online brokerage platform) of £2,528,158 for 2023/24; and a total grant award of £2,585,000 for 2024/25 provided there is additional scrutiny during the next stage.
	<u>T&CS</u>
4.11	Council endorsed the amendment to the Terms and Conditions of RE Funding.
5.	Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP) Update
5.1	SH introduced the paper, providing an update on recent activities and inviting Council to discuss drivers for change and the possible solutions outlined in the paper.
5.2	<p>CF followed with a presentation to Council to include the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FRAP Programme Board met on 26 January in Belfast. • The Board discussed proposals on staff participation and output submission, expanding the definition of excellence across all three assessment elements, weighting of the assessment elements, and timing of the next exercise. • It was recommended that the next exercise be held in 2028 to strike a balance between currency of information and stability of outcomes. • In terms of staff participation, it was agreed to retain the criterion of significant responsibility for research to identify staff who contribute to the volume measure; to use the average FTE across 2024/25 and 2025/26 and signal the intention to use the average over a longer period in subsequent exercises; and to explore the ability to draw information directly from HESA rather than from a list of staff submitted by an institution. • In terms of output requirements, it was agreed in principle to fully break the link between individual and outputs submitted and allow submission of outputs by individuals who did not contribute to the volume measure (those on non-academic contracts). However, questions remain around eligibility requirements, such as inclusion of research produced by staff on teaching-only contracts, and the extent to which outputs are determined as being representative of the research activity of a unit. • There will be a change in the title of each of the three categories of assessment. • It was agreed to expand the understanding of excellence to cover these three categories. • Agreement has not yet been reached on weighting between the elements. • It has been agreed that identification of a range of outcome indicators for each assessment element is required via consultation with the sector and following discussion with the main and sub panels. • Discussion is required on adjusting volume requirements for outputs and impact case studies. • Other areas for discussion include a consideration of staff circumstances (particularly in the case of those with long-term caring responsibilities) and open access requirements.



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5.3	<p>During the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <withheld from publication>. • One of the big changes between this and previous exercises is that RE is now part of UKRI. It is, therefore, likely that research councils and Innovate UK, as well as other user communities, will have a valuable perspective on this exercise.
5.4	<withheld from publication>.
5.5	<withheld from publication>.
5.6	<withheld from publication>.
6.	RE EDI Action Plan
6.1	EH provided an update on the RE EDI Action Plan, stating that the RE Council mini session held on 12 December 2022 had been very helpful and had helped to shape thinking. During the mini session, Council had underlined the importance of ensuring that the work is delivered well and that the focus is on RE's role as an employer as well as its unique role and positioning in the sector.
6.2	During the Executive Group discussion on 30 January, an extension of the timeline for production of the action plan was agreed. Subject to resourcing, it will be published in October 2023: this will enable the advisory group to contribute to its development. The preference is to appoint the expert advisory group chair via open recruitment and then for the chair to participate in the recruitment of the rest of the group. The Executive Group also agreed that momentum in this space should be maintained and that progression of RE EDI activities does not need to wait on completion of the action plan. The importance of having a broader understanding in the employer space and the building of expertise was acknowledged, particularly in the context of wider UKRI EDI work.
7.	Knowledge Exchange (KE) Review
7.1	<p>The Associate Director of Knowledge Exchange (KE) provided an overview of the review of KE funding. In February 2022, Council endorsed objectives, timetable and workplan for a review of KE funding and related policies. A sub-group, chaired by Carol Bell and involving Richard Armour and Kellie Beirne, was set up to consider HEIF eligibility with a view to advising the RE Executive Chair. The sub-group has made good process, has sought views, and is preparing options for eligibility criteria. <withheld from publication>. The sub-group has, therefore, been asked to convene for a few more months to see this work through to fruition. This aspect of the review will come to the May RE Council meeting.</p>
7.2	KB stated that this has been a robust piece of work, which has been data driven and evidence-led. Work has progressed to a good stage, reflecting the wider policy environment as well as applying some stress tests. Following additional checks and balances being put in place, it is hoped that a decision will be reached in May. The

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	work has also shed light on areas to be addressed in the next stage of KE Review to better reflect the current policy environment. She thanked the team, who have effectively guided the sub-group through a complex process.
7.3	EB provided an overview of the first phase, which included an extensive listening exercise with the sector and process to give feedback to those providing input. BEIS has also indicated that the approach has informed their thinking.
7.4	The paper frames initial decisions on the current approach, building on previous advice from Council received during the mini session held in July 2022 and discussion during the November 2022 RE Council meeting on metrics. How to evolve data based on rigour and academic expertise underpins recommendations within this paper. The review also includes a review of the HEIF threshold, which is linked to work on HE funding eligibility.
7.5	The paper also includes the proposal to develop a national centre for metrics to aid in development of the KEF and for use in funding mechanisms. PC, GR and JF have been invited to act as a sounding board for the centre, and input will be sought from wider Council members as this develops.
7.6	JC pointed to changes within the sector and other drivers that will need to be accounted for. The national centre will be based on capability that already exists and will enable the provision of better evidence to respond to questions that are constantly being asked.
7.7	AF stated that there has always been a poverty of metrics in, for example, local growth and regeneration, which will need to be one of the centre's focuses. There are, however, many different domains to be understood, and potentially a lot of different academic insights within those different domains. The background work on the centre will be shared with the sounding board and then with Council. Currently, the critical posts required are being scoped as well as capabilities that may be needed over the longer term as this is an area of special capabilities. <withheld from publication>. The centre will be a valuable resource for the whole HE sector and for government.
7.8	PC stated that the KEF has been a great stride forward in developing sound metrics. He expressed full support for the proposed investment in a new centre, recognising the challenges outlined by AF. TM echoed PC's sentiments.
7.9	AF stated that there is still work to be done on the long-term approach with KEF/KEC. UUK have taken the KEC forward with RE funding and expertise. A combination of a performance framework with forward looking tools is what should be supported, noting that UKRI should be engaged, given that principles and good practice are relevant to all councils.
7.10	The Associate Director of KE stated that the sector-led KEC extends beyond England, so consideration of what is appropriate across the four nations also needs to be taken into account. There also needs to clearer alignment between the KEF and KEC.



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7.11	DSH noted that the importance of this work is disproportionately high when compared to the internal resource available to implement it, highlighting that KE evidence is an important means of demonstrating to the public/taxpayers the benefits of research and innovation more generally.
7.12	Council was supportive of the centre but felt that RE should have an open mind on best approach and location of the centre. They also felt that there is a need to ensure that the initiative is agile and adaptable and that its scope is optimised.
7.13	The actions outlined below (in relation to Item C23/05) were endorsed by RE Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The approach on HEIF. • The approach on the KEF and sector-led KE Concordat. • The approach on metrics and evidence, <withheld from publication> to develop a national centre of university metrics and evidence.
8.	Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) Update
8.1	JC stated that the SDP shared with RE Council represents a well-developed draft. The plan covers 2022/23 but outlines a longer term vision and unique contribution to RE's longer term strategy and delivery of government priorities.
8.2	Council was asked to note the compressed timeline in the lead up to the publication date but advised that they could provide feedback up until 9 February prior to the SDP being submitted to the UKRI Chief Executive for sign off. The Head of Strategic Coordination noted that publication of the SDP will coincide with the fifth birthday of UKRI. RE also needs to be mindful of how the SDP is situated in terms of the Spring budget and Integrated Review. Information around its publication will be incorporated into a Comms plan, which will include details on how the document will be socialised with staff. The UKRI Directors of Strategy have provided feedback on the document and are broadly content. JC thanked Council for their input.
8.3	Council requested additional clarity around the references to Place. Council also felt that there could be greater distinctiveness between the five tenets, stating that there is currently an overlap in the way in which they are described.
8.4	Taking into account the feedback provided, RE Council endorsed the approach and the document. The plan will be shared again with Council prior to publication. The Head of Strategic Coordination was thanked for all of their hard work in drafting the SDP.
9.	Risk, Assurance and Governance Report
9.1	MR provided an overview of the Risk, Assurance and Governance report, noting that the overall risk tendency is represented as having a downward trajectory in spite of increased uncertainty. A review of strategic risks has been carried out, the findings of which shall come to Council in May. The May Risk, Assurance and Governance Report will also include a section on Whistleblowing and Speaking Up. The RE risk that appeared on the UKRI corporate risk register has now been removed following the system going live in December 2022.



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9.2	<withheld from publication>.
9.3	<withheld from publication>.
9.4	<withheld from publication>.
9.5	<withheld from publication>.
9.6	<withheld from publication>.
10.	AOB
10.1	<p>JC asked RE Council observers if they had any comments that they wished to make. Responses were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB stated that it is always good to learn more about what is happening across the piece. He stated that HEFCW are still awaiting their pre-decision funding. • HC stated that the session has been valuable and that there is resonance across the UK in many of the issues that have been raised. She welcomed working with RE and seeking alignment on various issues and areas. • TM expressed gratitude to RE staff for their support on KE and the KEC, which still seemed to be well received by institutions.

Date and Time of next Meeting: Thursday, 23 May 2023, 12:30–15:30
(Closed Session 15:30 – 16:00)

Venue of the next Meeting: Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA