



Natural
Environment
Research Council

60
years
of NERC



Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Senior Independent Member

Candidate Prospectus
May 2025

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Candidate Prospectus
May 2025



Welcome



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Senior Independent Member at the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), one of the constituent councils within UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). This year is NERC's 60th Anniversary! We were formed in 1965 from the merger of several environmental research related organisations. NERC became part of UKRI in 2018 alongside the six other research councils, Research England and the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK.

NERC is the UK's main public funding body for research into the environmental sciences, ensuring the health of atmospheric, terrestrial, polar and marine science and addressing critical challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. NERC maintains a range of national science infrastructure such as polar research stations, Royal Research Ships, and aircraft that monitor atmospheric conditions as well as satellite technologies, data centres and monitoring stations around the world. NERC is also responsible for the British Antarctic Survey, which maintains the UK's scientific presence in Antarctica, as well as the British Geological Survey, responsible for advancing our understanding of the subsurface including monitoring seismic and other environmental activity.

The government is committed to tackling the linked climate and nature crises in ways which grow our economy sustainably and improve the lives of citizens. The research and innovation which NERC supports, itself and by leading partnerships across UKRI, will be a crucial part of delivering on this mission.

In 2024/25 NERC, operating from both Swindon, London and in Centres around the UK, has a core budget of £325m in addition to cross-cutting funds from UKRI and the Antarctic Logistics and Infrastructure partition.

In launching this recruitment campaign, we are committed to fair and open recruitment processes and actively encourage and hope to see applications from across the UK, and from a wide range of diverse backgrounds.

I trust you will find the information enclosed in this pack of interest and we look forward to receiving your application.

Professor Louise Heathwaite
NERC Executive Chair



About UKRI

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is the UK's largest public funder of research and innovation. We invest more than £8 billion annually to advance our understanding of society and the world around us and deliver benefits for society, the economy, and the environment.

Our organisation comprises nine councils – the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK, the seven disciplinary research councils and Research England, which is responsible for supporting research and knowledge exchange at higher education institutions in England. As a UK-wide organisation we work across the four UK nations and with the devolved funding bodies and governments to understand and support different priorities that span research and innovation in different parts of the UK.

Through our councils and the critical national capabilities provided by our centres, units and institutes, we deliver, support and champion the creativity and vibrancy of research and innovation in the UK, for the benefit of society.

UKRI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

Find out more in our 5-year strategy, [Transforming Tomorrow Together](#).

About NERC



NERC delivers environmental science which is ambitious, novel and a force for innovation.

Our mission

To tackle global environmental challenges, increase societal resilience, and enable sustainable economic growth through strategic investment in the researchers, innovators, facilities and data, which together deliver a world-leading environmental science capability.

To do this, NERC drives new research and innovation to advance the frontiers of science and benefit society. We invest to build a community of environmental scientists who work across disciplines in research and industry. We are a thought leader for UK environmental science.

The knowledge and data we generate are used for the benefit of citizens across the UK, enhancing their prosperity, safety and quality of life. Our funding supports the UK as an international leader in evidence-driven environmental policy.

NERC's responsibilities, as set out in the Higher Education & Research Act 2017, are to:

- carry out research into environmental science, technology and new ideas
- encourage and support the provision of postgraduate training in environmental science, technology, and new ideas
- facilitate, encourage, and support environmental research, technology and new ideas
- facilitate, encourage, and support the development and exploitation of environmental science, technology and new ideas
- facilitate, encourage, and support knowledge exchange in relation to environmental science, technology and new ideas
- collect, disseminate and advance knowledge in environmental science, technology and new ideas
- promote awareness and understanding of environmental science, technology, and new ideas
- provide advice on any matter relating to NERC functions
- promote awareness and understanding of NERC activities

NERC Council

NERC Council provides advice to the NERC Executive on the strategic vision, research and innovation priorities and long-term investments of the research council. Drawing expertise from research, business, and the public sector, Council provides feedback and challenge on topics including:

- investments in NERC discipline areas or fields of activity, including prioritising budgets within NERC delegated remits and the development of delivery plans
- ensuring the future of skilled specialists, researchers, scientists and others essential to the sustainability of the UK's research and innovation capacity
- collaborative work across the nine UKRI councils to foster strategic relationship. Council members engage with their community to develop ideas, raise awareness and disseminate strategic outputs.

Council is supported in this role by two subsidiary bodies. NERC Science Committee provides expert advice on the strategic investments NERC makes across its research, innovation, training and national capability portfolios. NERC Future Leaders Council was established to support emerging talent and offer a new perspective on NERC's strategic planning. It has a specific remit to provide advice on digital investments, sustainability, public engagement and diversity and inclusion.



Your skills and experience

Senior Independent Member (SIM) Responsibilities

The SIM is a critical anchor for NERC and its Council. A SIM's responsibility includes those of the ordinary Council member, in addition to:

- directly supporting the Executive Chair and providing advice on specific issues and how to deliver the most efficient and effective operation of the Council
- maintaining regular contact with Council members to understand their perspective and acting as an intermediary with the Executive Chair and NERC Executive Team, elevating concerns to the Executive Chair, UKRI CEO or UKRI Chair as required.
- supporting the Executive Chair in engaging with stakeholders and building and strengthening external partnerships
- this role will also chair the NERC Assurance Board

Individual Council Member Responsibilities

The Council members' responsibility includes but is not limited to:

- Supporting the UKRI Board, Executive Committee and council in operating effectively within the overall UKRI organisational framework
- Actively participating in Council business, acting as a critical friend and providing scrutiny, advice and challenge to the council Executive Chair
- Supporting the council Executive Chair, providing advice to ensure executive decision-making is robust and can stand up to external scrutiny
- Supporting the council Executive Chair in discharging responsibilities for risk and assurance in relation to large investments, and where applicable institutes and catapults
- Encouraging and facilitating collaborative work across UKRI as required Acting as an advocate supporting UKRI's vision and the importance of research and innovation to society and the economy
- Taking on ad hoc assignments as requested by the council Executive Chair, such as membership or chairing of subgroups, including cross-UKRI activity

Your skills and experience (cont.)

- Participating in the council's evaluation and planning activities
- Championing equality, diversity and inclusion
- Championing environmental sustainability
- If necessary, raising concerns about the operation of the council or, where policies and programmes do not appear to align with the Strategic Delivery Plan, with the Executive Chair and the Council Senior Independent Member

Essential Criteria

- Senior leader from the wider society including finance, business, industry, senior university leadership who possess a commitment to the importance of environmental science and the role of NERC with experience of finance, risk and Corporate Governance.
- Experience as a Trustee / Non-Executive Director / Committee Member and ideally also with experience in a Chair role.

Terms of Appointment

Time requirement: up to 20 days per year

An annual honorarium payment of £6,850 will be paid to eligible Council members. This is premised on an expected 20 days' contribution per year, to include regular meeting attendance. Government officials, civil or public, are not permitted to receive an honoraria payment.

Timescales and selection

The selection process will consist of a panel interview, which may include a presentation. Interviews will be held in person at UKRI's London head office. Please note, dates and details are subject to change.

Process	Date
Closing date	27 June 23:59
Shortlisting date	Week commencing 30 June 2025
Panel interviews	Week commencing 21 July
Candidates notified of outcomes	From 28 July 2025

How to apply

Please submit your application via the **UKRI Careers Portal** by **27 June 2025 23:59**.

You will need to supply:

- A curriculum vitae (up to two pages)
- A supporting statement/ cover letter (up to two pages)

Your Statement of Suitability should provide specific information about why you believe you would be suitable for this role. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience, personal attributes, and vision for the organisation, and take full advantage of the space available. Use practical examples where possible and ensure you refer directly to the essential criteria.

Please note, failure to provide a statement of suitability or failure to address the above points may result in your application not being considered.

You will only be assessed on the content of your CV and statement of suitability, not the 'experience' section of your application on the Careers Portal.

To apply via the UKRI Careers Portal you will receive a notification confirming your profile has successfully been created (if you have not previously set up an account) and a second notification confirming your application for this role has been submitted. If you do not receive the second notification confirming your application for this role has been submitted or experience issues applying, please contact seniorrecruitment@ukri.org, so we can ensure your application has been received.

General information

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UKRI believes that everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be provided with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed within an ethical and trusted working environment that is attractive and accessible to everyone who is interested in developing their career with us.

We are committed to increasing the diversity of our board and executive positions and bringing in talent, regardless of its origins. We encourage applications from all candidates regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity. We also value diversity of thought and experience and are committed to creating systems that value difference so that everyone can feel welcomed, included and nurtured throughout their time with us.

As a Disability Confident Leader, UKRI will offer interviews to disabled candidates who meet the published minimum requirements for a job or role. Whether you choose to apply under the Disability Confident scheme or not, you can still ask us to make particular adjustments for you when attending an interview.

We know actions speak louder than words. For further information, please visit the UKRI web page: [‘How we support EDI in the workforce’](#)

Pre-employment screening

To enable us to hire the very best people and to safeguard our people and our assets, we will conduct comprehensive pre-employment screening on successful applicants as part of the recruitment process.

UKRI supports research in areas that include animal health, agriculture and food security, and bioscience for health which includes research on animals, genetic modification, and stem cell research. Whilst you may not have direct involvement in this type of research, you should consider how this aligns with your personal values or beliefs. Our pre-employment requirements include a security check and an extreme organisation’s affiliation check.

The role holder will be required to have the appropriate level of security screening/ vetting required for the role. UKRI reserves the right to run or re-run security clearance as required during employment.

In addition, and as part of the overall recruitment process, the successful candidate will also be required to register their [Declarations of Interest](#).

General information

Standards

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way.

Consistent with the Commissioner's Code of Practice, applicants will be assessed on merit, and all candidates will need to uphold the standards of the UKRI Code of Conduct and conduct set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are:

Selflessness: Holders of Public Office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

Integrity: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity: Carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Complaints Procedure

If you feel you have reason to complain, you should direct your concerns in the first instance to the Senior Appointments team (SeniorRecruitment@ukri.org) who will make every effort to deal with this and respond to you within 48 hours.

If your complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily, you can find information about the steps you can take under UKRI Complaints Procedure.