



**Council Meeting
Thursday, 6 February 2025
14:00 – 17:00
Hybrid Meeting**

Minutes

Attendees	
Council Members:	Dame Jessica Corner (JC) (Chair) Dr Carol Bell (CB) Dr Sharon Ellis (SE) Professor Colette Fagan (CF) Dame Janet Finch (JF) Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan (CGH) Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon (AMI) Ms Bronwen Maddox (BM) Mr Mike Rees (MR) (SIM) Professor Graeme Reid (GR) Professor Colin Riordan (CR) Mr Mark Smith (MS)
Observers	Ms Harriet Barnes (HB), Medr Dr Helen Cross (HC), SFC
Officers	Ms Jacqui Dovey (JD) Dr Kim Hackett (KH) Dr Steven Hill (SH) Associate Directors of Knowledge Exchange
UKRI	Mr Daniel Shah (DS), UKRI Strategy Directorate (for Item 2)
Apologies	Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad (CRP), RE Council Ms Susan Lapworth (SL), OfS, Observer Mr Mark Lee (ML), DfE-NI, Observer
Guests	Professor Chris Johnson, (CJ) CSA, DSIT (for Item 5) RE Associate Director of Strategy, Planning and Implementation (for Item 3) RE Engagement Lead, Insight & Engagement (for Item 3) RE Operational Project & Engagement Manager (for Items 3 & 5) Mrs Siobhan Peters (SP), UKRI (for Item 6)
Secretariat	Council Secretariat

Item	
1.	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	JC welcomed all to the meeting. She acknowledged the sterling contribution of retiring members, Dame Janet Finch, Graeme Reid and Bronwen Maddox, noting that this would be their final meeting.
1.2	JC confirmed that Professor Chris Johnson, Chief Scientific Adviser at DSIT, would be attending part of the meeting to provide Council with insights into the workings of his department and insights into his role as related to the research and innovation sector.
1.3	Apologies were received from Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad and observers, Susan Lapworth and Mark Lee.
1.4	No conflicts of interest were declared at the meeting beyond those already declared.
Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 November 2024	
	<u>Minutes</u>
1.5	MS noted that he had attended the last meeting but that his name had been omitted from the record of attendance. With the incorporation of this change, the minutes were accepted as being an accurate reflection of the last meeting.
	<u>Actions</u>
1.6	Action 6.5 (Council to provide feedback on the RE EDI Action Plan): KH stated that she would be happy to receive any additional comments from members. This action will, however, be closed. <i>Post meeting note: An EDI Council mini session is being convened in March for further engagement and to provide an update for Council.</i>
1.7	Actions 7.2 and 7.3 will be addressed within this meeting so were also both closed.
	<u>Matters Arising</u>
1.8	No matters arising were raised at the meeting.
2.	UKRI Strategy Update
2.1	DS thanked the outgoing members for their significant contribution, then updated Council on Spending Review (SR) development as below:
	<u>SR – Phase 1</u>
2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SR is dominating much of the Strategy team's time as they compile the case for SR1 and SR2. • Economic conditions are challenging, and 2025/26 will be highly constrained. • Funding is essential for growth; however, UKRI is operating within limited headroom. • Changes will tend to be on the capital side.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI is committed to maintaining innovation, protecting talent, preserving the dual support system, and encouraging the flow of curiosity driven research.
	SR – Phase 2
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI is in discussions with DSIT regarding Phase 2 returns. The UKRI bid seeks to prioritise economic growth, public services for the wider public good, protecting curiosity driven research, and enabling investments. UKRI is focused on efficiency of processes and increasing its flexibility. UKRI is providing a strong case for the value of research and innovation to organisations, providing evidence (backed with new data science tools) and with a focus on financial sustainability.
2.4	<p>During the discussion, the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was recognition that the UK's long term financial outlook remains challenging. Council acknowledged the extended duration of the allocations process and the new government's requirement for an increased level of clarity and scrutiny. There was a desire for freedom of flexibility on investments for better returns. Council showed support for the alignment of departments, cross-functional collaboration, and operational efficiency. There was also a desire from Council to communicate how RE's use of public spending on research funding benefits people's lives.
3.	Spending Review (SR) Update
3.1	SH presented Council with the progress of RE's SR Phase 1 and SR Phase 2 work, highlighting SR timelines and noting the following key points:
3.2	<p><u>SR1 (Phase 1) (FY2025/26 budget)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SR settlement allocations process is ongoing with further work required regarding Phase 1 advice as allocations for Phase 1 have not yet been confirmed. <p><u>SR2 (Phase 2) (FY 2026/27 budget; setting budgets to FY 2029/30)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI is considering relatively constrained options in its return to DSIT. A four-year budget has been confirmed but presented as 1+4 (2025/26 + 2026/27 through to 2029/30). The DSIT commission was received by UKRI on 21 January 2025 with a deadline of 4 February. The departmental allocations announcement is anticipated for 11 June 2025.
3.3	<p>SH proposed three scenarios for consideration by Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> flat cash scenario 1% decrease 2% increase (best estimate of a real terms increase)
3.4	SH also raised other considerations, including key questions on capital infrastructure, RPIF-levering, balancing the core research funding pot, and the approach within research funding.
3.5	Council's comments and recommendations were as follows:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RE should articulate the way its funding streams support the Government's agenda on economic growth. • Output should be maximised with existing mechanisms rather than by initiating new projects. • RE must be distinctive and demonstrate added value in terms of the Government's missions. • The significant role that universities play should be highlighted (their contribution to growth and the need for them to have maximum agility in order to support the growth agenda). • In a flat cash scenario, protecting QR and HEIF are high priority as they make a significant contribution to research impact. • Anticipatory plans for capital need and expenditure should be developed. • Collaboration and innovation should both be promoted as providing benefit to the sector, for example, as demonstrated by projects funded through the RED Fund. • If necessary, funding should be concentrated rather than spreading it too thinly. • The contribution of RE to capital infrastructure via RCIF should be highlighted. • Commercial collaboration and sustainability should be encouraged. • RE arguments for the public benefits of research should be refreshed; the positive effect of RE funding streams on the public should be demonstrated.
3.6	SH thanked Council for their input and direction.
4.	RE Executive Chair's Report
4.1	JC provided an overview of her report, highlighting activities and strategic matters of interest.
	<u>CCF-RED Ecosystems</u>
4.2	The Associate Director of KE provided an overview of four proposals recommended for funding. Council endorsed the recommendations as provided.
	<u>NCUB</u>
4.3	The Associate Director of KE also noted that RE's Senior Leadership Team has recommended funding NCUB for a further four-year period (2025-2029). Council was supportive of the continuation of funding to NCUB.
4.6	JC stated that the new Director of KE will be announced shortly.
5.	CSA Remarks
5.1	The CSA provided some introductory remarks and responded to general questions from Council on the role of his department and their engagement with the sector.
6.	<withheld from publication>
6.1	<withheld from publication>.



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6.2	<withheld from publication>.
7.	Risk, Assurance and Governance Report
7.1	MR chaired this section of the meeting. He noted the highest scoring risks. <withheld from publication>.
	<u><withheld from publication</u>
7.2	<withheld from publication>.
8.	AOB
8.1	It was noted that Teams rather than Zoom would be used for future meetings following UKRI's decision to switch over to Teams at the beginning of March.
8.2	The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 5 June 2025, at Caxton House.