



Natural  
Environment  
Research Council

## Minutes of the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of NERC Council in UK Research and Innovation (redacted)

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### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Twenty-eighth meeting of NERC Council in UK Research and Innovation held at Polaris House, Swindon on Thursday, 6 March 2025.

#### Members present:

Professor Louise Heathwaite (Chair), Cathrine Armour, Professor Hannah Cloke, Professor Kevin Gaston, Professor Sir Stephen Holgate, Professor Mike Kendall, Michael Lewis, Professor Peter Liss, Gordon McGregor, Rashik Parmar, Professor John Pyle

#### Observers:

Professor David Hannah, Chair, Science Committee, Professor Gideon Henderson, CSA, Defra, Charlie McNichol-Fardon, Chair, Future Leaders Council (via Teams)

**NERC/UKRI Directors (Head Office):** Dr Kate Hamer (Interim Director of Strategy and Analysis), Jen Jamieson-Ball (Deputy Director, Major Programmes and Infrastructure), Wendy Selby-Brown (NERC Finance Business Partner), Michaela Simpson (Interim Director People, Culture and Operations), Dr Tracy Shimmield (Interim Director Research and Skills), Dr Iain Williams (Director, Strategic Partnerships)

**Apologies:** Clare Matterson

**Other attendees:** Dr Liam Haydon, (items 3 and 6), Sophie Hodgson (item 5), Thomas Haynes (item 5, via Teams), Oliver Knevitt (item 7, via Teams), Poli Stuart-Lacey (item 8, via Teams)

**Secretariat:** Helen Page, Jane Kendall

#### Introductory items

#### 1. Executive Chair's welcome, unconfirmed minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of NERC Council and Decisions and Actions (NERC 25/01, NERC 25/02)

- 1.1 Louise Heathwaite welcomed members to the twenty-eighth meeting of NERC Council and noted that apologies had been received for the meeting from Clare Matterson.
- 1.2 Louise Heathwaite advised Council that this would be the last meeting for Professor Sir Stephen Holgate, Professor Peter Liss and Gordon McGregor and thanked them for their excellent support for NERC over many years.
- 1.3 Louise Heathwaite reminded members that the annual update to declared interests was now due and asked members to advise Helen Page of any relevant updates.
- 1.4 Louise Heathwaite asked if there were any vested interests in any of the items being discussed today. None were declared.

1.5 Louise Heathwaite congratulated the following who were honoured in the King's New Year Honours:

- **CB (Companion of the Bath):** Professor Paul Monks, Chief Scientific Adviser, DESNZ/Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry and Earth Observation Science, University of Leicester for services to Science in Government
- **CBE:** Michael Lewis, Uniper CEO and NERC Council member, for services to Energy Security and Net Zero
- **CBE:** Professor Frank Kelly, Imperial College London, for services to Air Pollution Research and to Human Health
- **OBE:** Professor Philip Jones, Professorial Fellow, Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia for services to Climatology
- **OBE:** Professor Rosalind Rickaby FRS, Chair of Geology, University of Oxford, for services to Biogeochemistry
- **OBE:** Professor Nathalie Pettorelli, Head of Environmental Monitoring and Conservation Modelling, Zoological Society of London for services to Conservation and to Outreach
- **OBE:** Dr Matthew Hort, Principal Fellow, Atmospheric Dispersion and Air Quality, Met Office for services to Atmospheric Dispersion Science and Emergency Response
- **OBE:** Professor Nicholas Jenkins, Professor of Renewable Energy, Cardiff University for services to Renewable Energy and Smart Grid Technologies
- **MBE:** Dr Elizabeth Kent, Associate Head, Marine Physics and Ocean Climate, National Oceanography Centre, for services to Tracking Global Temperatures
- **MBE:** Professor Martin Wooster, Professor of Earth Observation Science, King's College London, for services to Landscape Fire Research and Wildfire Monitoring
- **MBE:** Rod Arnold, Head of Air Unit, British Antarctic Survey for services to Polar Science and Aviation in the British Antarctic Territory

1.6 Louise Heathwaite reminded Council that suggestions for potential nominees for future Honours were always welcome.

1.7 Louise Heathwaite asked members for any amendments and matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting. No amendments were made, and the minutes of the twenty-seventh meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

1.8 Tracy Shimmield provided an update on the outstanding action from the previous meeting relating to Demand Management. She advised that NERC was working closely on harmonisation with UKRI and a further discussion was scheduled for the September 2025 Council meeting.

## **2. Executive Chair's Update (Oral)**

2.1 Louise Heathwaite informed Council that Sir Ian Chapman, currently CEO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority and a member of the UKRI Board, had recently been appointed as the new CEO, UKRI and would join UKRI in the summer 2025. Helen Page added that Sir Ian Chapman was expected to join NERC Council at its meeting in December 2025.

2.2 Louise Heathwaite added that Dr Rupert Lewis, currently Chief Science Policy Officer at the Royal Society, had been appointed as the NERC Deputy Executive Chair and would join NERC in April 2025. She added that the recruitment campaign for the NERC Chief Operating Officer was progressing well.

2.3 Louise Heathwaite informed Council that four new members had been appointed to NERC Council from 1 April 2025, noting that this information would remain confidential until the formal announcement was made on 1 April:

- Professor Richard Bardgett, Lancaster University

- Professor Peter Cox, University of Exeter
- Mr Nick Folland, M&S plc

[Note: the fourth candidate subsequently withdrew their application]

- 2.4 Louise Heathwaite informed Council that it was intended to recruit a Senior Independent Member for NERC Council to start in October 2025. She added that the next recruitment round for up to five new members of NERC Council would commence in the spring 2025 with a focus on improving the gender and diversity balance on NERC Council.
- 2.5 Louise Heathwaite provided some reflections on her first year as the NERC Executive Chair. She reminded members that there had been an early focus on ensuring NERC as an organisation was safe, healthy and resilient, adding that there had been considerable change over the past year both within NERC, UKRI and at government level. She thanked the NERC Director, NERC interim Directors and the NERC Finance Business Partner for their valuable support over the past year.
- 2.6 Louise Heathwaite informed Council that, in helping to ensure NERC was resilient, a workforce planning exercise was being undertaken to ensure operational effectiveness in NERC whilst working with a reduced headcount. She added that it would be important for the newly appointed Deputy Executive Chair and incoming Chief Operating Officer to work together to ensure there was close engagement between the funding and operational aspects of NERC science. Louise Heathwaite informed Council that a review of NERC governance was also being initiated to ensure that the governance structure was appropriate and that expertise, including on Council and Science Committee, was utilised fully.
- 2.7 Louise Heathwaite acknowledged the importance of safety within NERC which was a significant focus given the work NERC conducted in extreme environments. She added that assurance for aviation had been increased over the past two years to ensure a high level of rigour and progress was being made on maritime assurance. Louise Heathwaite commented that the UKRI Board Investment Committee had recently met at the British Antarctic Survey which had provided an opportunity to better understand the NERC estate and operating to health and safety standards.
- 2.8 Louise Heathwaite emphasised the importance of supporting people's well-being and mental health within NERC, particularly at a time of significant change, adding that the workforce planning and governance review was intended to help with this.
- 2.9 Louise Heathwaite thanked Kate Hamer and Liam Haydon for their work on progressing the *Forward Look* which was being discussed later in the meeting adding that considerable consultation had now taken place.
- 2.10 Louise Heathwaite emphasised the current focus of both the Science Minister and incoming UKRI CEO on economic growth and the importance of determining where NERC might have a role to play. She added that a recent meeting had been held with His Majesty's Treasury to help map out the scale of the government ambition on net zero and understand the resource which might be needed to achieve it. Louise Heathwaite noted that working together with other research councils on cross-council initiatives such as the Building a Green Future Strategic Theme remained important.
- 2.11 Louise Heathwaite commented that NERC had a role to play in identifying Research and Innovation which would help to deliver national security, such as monitoring and modelling to help underpin what the implications might be from cyber-attacks. She added that the British Geological Survey had a key role to play around critical minerals and that NERC research infrastructures provided connectivity between physical interfaces and data infrastructures in marine, terrestrial and atmospheric environments.

- 2.12 Louise Heathwaite informed Council that there was a lead Executive Chair for each of the Government R&D missions adding that she was the lead for the Clean Energy Superpower mission and that a Challenge Director for each mission was due to be appointed shortly.
- 2.13 Council asked whether there was any benefit in bringing together net zero and security given that they were closely related. Louise Heathwaite agreed that this was an important point and welcomed Council support to move this narrative forward.
- 2.14 Council welcomed the announcement of seven new research hubs, funded by UKRI and National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), which would help to realise the health benefits of net zero. Council added that Defra would shortly be publishing its Air Quality Information System review which would provide better access to information on air pollution. The Royal College of Physicians would also publish a new report on the health effects of air quality in June.
- 2.15 Council commented that it would be important to provide more granularity, in particular on what we are going to do about issues such as critical minerals and how to determine what disruptive technologies might be needed. Louise Heathwaite added that this might be something for Science Committee to consider at a future meeting.

### **Items for discussion**

#### **3. Update on the HMG Spending Review (Oral)**

- 3.1 Kate Hamer provided an overview on the current position with the Spending Review. Liam Haydon observed this item.
- 3.2 Kate Hamer reminded Council that the Spending Review was in two phases and that the allocation for 2025/26 would be confirmed soon. She informed Council that the allocation was expected to be 'flat cash' (or just below), adding that UKRI had agreed to help with some financial pressures within NERC, including the Antarctic Logistics Infrastructure (ALI) budget.
- 3.3 Kate Hamer advised Council that His Majesty's Treasury had launched phase 2 of the Spending Review in December 2024 which would apply to budgets for 2026/27-2029/30 adding that the UKRI bid was part of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) bid with a final submission due in April 2025. She informed Council that the outcome of phase 2 of the Spending Review would be delivered in June 2025, adding that 'flat real' would be a good outcome for NERC and that a range of scenarios was being planned for.
- 3.4 Gideon Henderson commented that the current expectation was for a flat settlement for future years which may also be ringfenced. He emphasised the government focus on growth and the importance of any Research & Development spending leading to economic growth.
- 3.5 Council asked whether the ambition for net zero was achievable given the financial constraints. Louise Heathwaite added that a transition to net zero rather than setting targets might be more appropriate.
- 3.6 Council advised that it would be important to demonstrate economic benefit and present opportunities when engaging with government and in building partnerships with the private sector.

#### **4. NERC Council Finance Report (NERC 25/03)**

- 4.1 Wendy Selby-Brown introduced this item to outline the position for the current financial year.
- 4.2 Wendy Selby-Brown reminded Council that NERC was subject, along with the other research councils, to budget re-sets in 2024/25 which had comprised of two targets. She added that NERC had offered funding to UKRI to reduce pressures which would be returned to NERC in 2025/26. She noted that additional funding had also been secured from UKRI to address inflationary pressures on the ALI budget.
- 4.3 Wendy Selby-Brown confirmed that NERC was on track to meet its headcount target for 2024/25.
- 4.4 Louise Heathwaite expressed thanks, on behalf of Council, to Wendy Selby-Brown for her assistance with the management of NERC finances.
- 4.5 Council asked whether there would be continuing pressure regarding the ringfenced budget for ALI. Louise Heathwaite acknowledged that this pressure would be ongoing although she was confident that the Executive Chairs were supportive and had been keen to learn more about the issue.
- 4.6 Council asked what the assumption was for the budget for 2025/26. Kate Hamer explained that the assumption was flat cash which would provide a similar budget to 2024/25 but without any additional funding for inflationary pressure.
- 4.7 Council asked whether there would be any follow-on funding for cross-council opportunities, such as the Future Leaders Fellowships. Louise Heathwaite explained that any decisions would be taken once the budget allocation was known.

#### **5. NERC National Capability Budgets 2025/26 and 2026/27 (NERC 25/04)**

- 5.1 Iain Williams introduced this item to set out the changes to NERC's National Capability (NC) budgets and the plan for their implementation. Sophie Hodgson and Thomas Haynes observed this item.
- 5.2 Iain Williams explained that, given the current financial constraints, a decision had been taken to reduce the NC budgets by a minimum of 4.5% in 2025/26 adding that the research centres had been given notice of this reduction in line with their Strategic Relationship Agreements (SRAs).
- 5.3 Iain Williams informed Council that NERC was working closely with the research centres and that they had been asked to provide options for managing the reduction which were currently being reviewed. He added that the centres had been asked to articulate the impact of the reductions on both the centres and the wider environmental science community. Iain Williams explained that engagement with stakeholders to explain the reduction in capability and services would be considered once the impact of the reductions was known.
- 5.4 Iain Williams added that the centres would also be receiving notification of a reduction in 2026/27 explaining that the exact amount of the reduction would only be known once the SR allocation was determined.
- 5.5 Louise Heathwaite added that it would be important to continue to work collaboratively with the research centres to ensure they were sustainable which would include encouraging more diversity of funding.
- 5.6 Council asked how NERC might ensure that those research centres without high infrastructure costs weren't adversely affected. Iain Williams added that it would be

important to ensure any impact was balanced across the centres and Louise Heathwaite confirmed that discussions with centre directors were ongoing, adding that it would be important to consider NERC research infrastructures carefully in terms of the ongoing costs in maintaining and operating them.

- 5.7 Council asked whether there was any intention to re-negotiate the Strategic Relationship Agreements. Iain Williams confirmed that the SRAs were enduring and covered both owned and independent centres.
- 5.8 Council asked whether the reduction in research centre budgets was set. Louise Heathwaite responded that the reduction would only be confirmed once the budget for 2025/26 was known.
- 5.9 Council commented that it would be important to ensure that any decisions taken to reduce the budget for National Capability did not impact on planned activity, for example, within the NERC *Forward Look*. Iain Williams confirmed that the proposals made by the research centres would be reviewed to ensure they were aligned with future planned activity.

## **6. NERC *Forward Look* Engagement and Development (NERC 25/05)**

- 6.1 Kate Hamer presented this item, reminding Council that the purpose of the *Forward Look* was to set out the direction of travel for NERC over the next ten years. Liam Haydon observed this item.
- 6.2 Kate Hamer informed Council that the *Forward Look* had been revised based on the feedback received at the previous Council meeting and from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. She added that the document was planned for publication in the spring before inviting Council to comment on the latest draft.
- 6.3 Council was supportive of the latest draft, commenting that it was much improved, clearer and with better articulated outcomes. Council noted that it would be important to strengthen partnership working and to engage with the industrial sector, particularly to demonstrate how environmental science might help to grow the economy.
- 6.4 Council asked what role NERC might play in building multi- and inter-disciplinary teams to address the priority areas. It suggested that the Foreword from the Executive Chair might refer to 'expanding' rather than 'growing' the community. Council also recommended that the sections entitled 'our goals' might benefit from further revision to ensure consistency, noting that the goals were very broad.
- 6.5 Council emphasised the importance of working in partnership with universities to deliver on the *Forward Look*. It was also noted that the *Forward Look* did not include any reference to environmental pollution and Kate Hamer responded to say that this was included when making reference to clean air quality and clean water but might be made more explicit.
- 6.6 David Hannah commented that Science Committee had also reviewed the latest draft which had been received positively. He added that Science Committee had been supportive of consultation with universities on the *Forward Look*.
- 6.7 Gideon Henderson asked for clarity on whether the title of the document referred to environmental science within the UK, internationally or within UKRI as this might be made clearer. He noted that one of the case studies related to the Met Office and asked whether other parts of the science endeavour should be included if the document was intended to be representative of UK activity. He was supportive of the framing of environmental risks around risks that NERC might help to mitigate, such as air and water quality, adaptation and flood risk.

- 6.8 Council suggested that it would be helpful to have some 'critical friends' read through the document given its emphasis on partnership working. It also emphasised the importance of sustaining partnerships rather than just creating them and suggested that the case studies be more consistent.
- 6.9 Council suggested that the Foreword by the Executive Chair should draw together the points raised and be clear on how each priority would address the challenges. It suggested that icons might be used to help navigate, and make links between, the various sections of the document. Council highlighted that it would be important to ensure that the key science, and the technology needed to deliver it, was drawn out and to consider the different audiences for the document and socialise it with them.
- 6.10 Council highlighted the importance of both academic and industrial partnerships and the need to consider partnership working in the broadest sense.
- 6.11 Louise Heathwaite commented that it would be important to consider any areas missing from the *Forward Look* given its ambition to 'reimagine the frontiers of environmental science.' David Hannah confirmed that Science Committee had previously conducted an exercise to explore this aspect and it was agreed to share the output.
- 6.12 Kate Hamer confirmed that private sector engagement was planned prior to finalising the *Forward Look*. She asked Council to send any final comments to either her or Liam Haydon, adding that a final version of the document would be shared via correspondence prior to publication.

**ACTION: Final comments on the *Forward Look* to be sent to Kate Hamer/Liam Haydon**

## **7 NERC and the UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap Programme (NERC 25/06)**

- 7.1 Iain Williams introduced this item. Oliver Knevitt observed this item.
- 7.2 Iain Williams reminded Council that the first UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap had been published in 2019 and it was now intended to publish a refresh of this report in the autumn.
- 7.3 Iain Williams explained that the roadmap would have six sectors adding that NERC was leading on the environment sector and would contribute to the other sectors and outlined the proposed opportunity themes and capability areas. He expressed his thanks to Gideon Henderson and Mike Kendall who had, as members of the task and finish group, helped to shape NERC's approach and also thanked members of Science Committee and the Future Leaders Council who had also provided input.
- 7.4 Louise Heathwaite commented that it would be important to ensure the document highlighted where there were links between councils to help with partnership working.
- 7.5 Gideon Henderson suggested that some of the positioning within the emerging capability areas (Annex B), might need refining.
- 7.6 Council asked where non-NERC infrastructure fitted into the roadmap, for example, it was noted that the Environment Agency had their own networks and the research community might be able to buy/borrow, rather than build, new infrastructures. It also asked whether international aspects had been considered in the refresh.
- 7.7 David Hannah commented that Science Committee had reviewed the roadmap at its meeting and considered how it linked to the ambitions of the science community, how best to catalyse partnerships and to ensure the roadmap linked with the *Forward Look*.

7.8 Council commented that it would be useful to include 'hazards' or early warning systems in the roadmap. Louise Heathwaite added that it would be important to ensure that the document captured both what was being funded through NERC research centres and universities. Iain Williams explained that a landscape analysis of the entire infrastructure portfolio, including that at universities and in government, was included in the paper (Annex C), adding that this could be brought out more in the roadmap. He added that both the commercial and international aspects needed further consideration.

7.9 Council asked whether UKRI had an international strategy and Kate Hamer advised that there was a UKRI international framework.

## **8. UKRI Strategic Communications and UKRI Update (Oral)**

8.1 Poli Stuart Lacey, UKRI Chief of External Affairs and Communications, attended Council to provide an update on the UKRI approach to Strategic Communications.

8.2 Poli Stuart-Lacey advised Council that she was establishing a new strategic communications unit within External Affairs and Communications (the UKRI communications function) which would have an increased focus on strategic communication and engagement with the wider stakeholder landscape. She added that it would be important to take a long-term view and adopt a more pro-active approach, as well as learning and sharing insight more widely, for example, the team now produced a bi-monthly board report providing a snapshot of activity and impact, as well as a monthly report.

8.3 Poli-Stuart-Lacey informed Council that a 2025 communications plan, *Improving Lives and Livelihoods*, had been presented to the UKRI Board in January 2025 which set out the direction of travel for this year. The plan was centred around three key areas: proactive storytelling with impact; our value as an organisation and transition to the new UKRI CEO.

8.4 Poli Stuart-Lacey commented that the External Affairs and Comms (EAC) team was working closely with DSIT, sharing a joint objective around improving citizens lives. The activity was centred around four themes for the year: Artificial Intelligence, regional innovation, health and public service delivery. She added that work to evolve the UKRI brand strategy (2.0) was ongoing and emphasised the importance of ensuring each Council was represented in a complementary way to promoting the UKRI brand.

8.5 Louise Heathwaite asked how the strategic communications function might better address the balance between communications at UKRI level and council level. Poli Stuart-Lacey explained that, through establishing a better long-term planning approach, EAC would provide more resource for the main milestones NERC was planning (and across UKRI), rather than relying only on the business partnering model.

8.6 Council commented that the focus on UKRI branding had led to a decreased focus on research council branding and asked how the UKRI communications function linked up with NERC. Louise Heathwaite commented that the NERC Comms Business Partner had a role to play in ensuring integration.

8.7 Council asked whether comms had a role to play in relation to mitigating reputational risk. Poli Stuart-Lacey responded that her external communications team focused on protecting and promoting reputational risk and worked closely with the UKRI strategy team on engagement with DSIT and other government departments to highlight the work across UKRI. She agreed that adopting a thematic approach would help to ensure the breadth and depth of stories from across the councils were represented.

8.8 Council asked whether the focus of the comms team was national or international. Poli Stuart-Lacey confirmed that the primary focus was within the UK, but that her team did



include international business partners.

8.9 David Hannah asked about stakeholder mapping in terms of what that had shown about the key audiences to engage with. He also highlighted the success of partnering with universities who had some successful approaches to comms which UKRI might learn from. Poli Stuart-Lacey commented that the information gathered from the stakeholder perception survey was currently being analysed.

8.10 Council asked whether the impacts of NERC funded science, which were shared routinely with Council, might be disseminated more widely. Kate Hamer confirmed that the impact team within NERC worked closely with the UKRI comms team adding that she supported wider dissemination of these impacts which would be taken forward.

8.11 Poli Stuart-Lacey provided a brief UKRI update covering:

- Simpler Better Funding/The Funding Service
- Services for HR, Accounting, Reporting and Procurement (SHARP)/Oracle Fusion implementation
- Spending Review
- CEO induction/handover

[A NERC Showcase was held during the lunch period and feedback gathered from members before the meeting resumed. Council was extremely supportive of this event, commenting positively on the information shared and the opportunity to engage with Head Office staff and suggesting that similar events be held more widely, for example as part of university visits or meetings with Head of Environmental Departments]

## **9. NERC Top Risks – Quarterly Risk Review (NERC 25/07)**

9.1 Tracy Shimmield introduced this item which provided Council with an opportunity to review NERC's top risks, note any changes since the previous meeting and highlight any risks which might be missing.

9.2 Tracy Shimmield advised Council that NERC had reviewed the risk register since the previous Council meeting, adding that the NERC approach to risk was under review with a workshop with the UKRI Head of Risk and Assurance and NERC Executive planned for April. She added that NERC had recently recruited a risk specialist and an Operational Safety Assurance Manager for aviation and maritime.

9.3 Council asked whether the Operational Safety Assurance Manager was a full-time post. Jen Jamieson-Ball confirmed that this was a full-time role within Major Programmes to backfill a vacant post, adding that the new appointee had safety case experience and a background in the Ministry of Defence.

## **10. Update by Chief Scientific Adviser, Defra (Oral)**

10.1 Gideon Henderson provided an update under the following headings:

- UKRI CEO appointment
- King's New Year Honours: Professor Lin Field, Chris Stark
- Recruitment campaign for CSA, Defra
- NERC Council appointments and links to Defra
- Annual meeting of Science Advisory Group Chairs
- Defra R&D fellows
- Engagement with the Advanced Research Innovation Agency
- Innovation in environmental monitoring programme
- Spending Review

- Clean energy superpower mission/net zero
- Publication of carbon budget 7 by the Committee for Climate Change
- International geopolitics
- Official Development Assistance budgets

## **11. NERC Science Committee (Oral)**

11.1 David Hannah introduced this item to inform Council of key matters discussed at the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of NERC Science Committee.

11.2 David Hannah informed Council that Science Committee had met on 5 March and that four new members had attended their first meeting. Topics for discussion had included: a pre-dinner talk by Dr Adrian Glover, Natural History Museum; a light-touch induction for the new members; the annual self-assessment of Science Committee; NERC town hall meeting reflections; UKRI carbon budget and NERC carbon forecast; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion including a review of the Living Action Plan; NERC discipline hopping scheme evaluation; NERC highlight topic evaluation; strategic programmes evaluation; and the UKRI infrastructure roadmap.

11.3 David Hannah advised Council that the next meeting of Science Committee would take place virtually in July. The items for discussion would include: insights data; Strategic Research Investment metrics: NERC *Forward Look*; interaction with FLC.

11.4 David Hannah reminded Council members that there was a standing invitation to attend a Science Committee meeting in an observer capacity and members were invited to contact Helen Page if they wished to take up this offer.

## **12. Update from the NERC Assurance Board (Oral)**

12.1 Rashik Parmer introduced this item to inform Council of any issues arising from the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NERC Assurance Board held in February 2025.

12.2 Rashik Parmer informed Council that topics for discussion at the last meeting had included: Spending Review; recruitment of a risk specialist and operational safety officer; NERC governance structure; the annual assurance statement on aviation; Integrated Governance Risk and Assurance Framework (IGRAF).

## **13. NERC Council forward agendas (including rolling programme of business) (NERC 25/08)**

13.1 Rashik Parmar introduced this item and reminded Council that topics for discussion at future meetings might be submitted to him or to Helen Page at any point. He added that it would be important for Council members to consider how they might best support Louise Heathwaite and the NERC Executive, for example in discovering new pathways to funding.

## **14. Any Other Business (Oral)**

14.1 There was no further business.