

Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 19 March 2025
Location: The Walton Room, STFC Daresbury Laboratory
Time: 10am to 4:30pm

Board Members	
Nigel Toon, Chair (deputising for Sir Andrew Mackenzie)	Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, UKRI, CEO	Professor Jane Norman
Siobhan Peters CMG, UKRI CFO	Russell Schofield-Bezer
The Baroness Bull CBE	Ruwan Weerasekera
Annie Callanan	Alexandra Jones CBE (DSIT)
Rita Dhut	Professor Sir Ian Chapman, Board Observer
Priya Guha MBE	

UKRI Attendees	
Professor Charlotte Deane, EPSRC Executive Chair	Dan Shah, UKRI Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy
Poli Stuart-Lacey, UKRI Chief of External Affairs and Communications	

Attendees for items only	
UKRI Deputy Director of Corporate Strategy and Performance (for item 5)	UKRI Head of Corporate Planning and Performance (for item 5)
UKRI Performance Lead (for item 5)	UKRI Planning and Performance Specialist (for item 5)
UKRI Head of Risk and Management Assurance (for item 6)	UKRI Director of Risk, Assurance and Counter Fraud (for item 6)
UKRI Deputy Director of Investment Strategy (for item 7)	UKRI Head of Investment Planning (for item 7)
UKRI Partnership Lead (for item 7)	UKRI Infrastructure Fund Programme Director (for item 8)

Secretariat / Observers	
UKRI Board Secretariat Lead	UKRI Head of Governance & Secretariat
Senior Private Secretary to Sir Andrew Mackenzie	

Apologies	
Sir Andrew Mackenzie (UKRI Chair)	

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Nigel Toon welcomed Board members to the meeting, noting that Sir Andrew Mackenzie had sent his apologies. Nigel noted that Andrew had reviewed papers and that Nigel would feed in his comments throughout the meeting as appropriate.



- 1.2. Nigel and the Board congratulated Professor Sir Ian Chapman on his appointment as the new UKRI Chief Executive Officer, noting he will be taking up the role in August 2025. Nigel noted that Ian had formally resigned as a Board member, but will attend Board meetings as an observer until he takes up the role of CEO. Ruwan Weerasekera noted that Ian will remain an independent non-executive member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), but will step down as ARAC Deputy Chair, as the ARAC terms of reference states the deputy chair must be a Board member. Ruwan noted that he has asked Rita Dhut to act as Deputy Chair in the interim until a new deputy is recruited.

DECISION: The Board ratified the decision to appoint Rita Dhut as interim Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

- 1.3. Nigel highlighted that Dan Shah and Hugh Harris had been formally appointed as a job share to the Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy role. The Board congratulated Dan and Hugh on their appointment.
- 1.4. Nigel noted that there was a robust discussion held at the Board dinner around the challenges and opportunities around the international context and geopolitics.

2. a) Minutes of 15 January 2025 UKRI Board meeting; b) Action Log; and c) Forward Schedule

- 2.1. The Board approved the minutes of the 15 January 2025, but suggested we include a short section on the update provided by Lord Patrick Vallance ahead of the January Board meeting.

ACTION: The Secretariat will have added a note of the Lord Vallance session with Board members and Executive Committee, which was held ahead of the Board meeting on 15th January 2025, to the January minutes.

DECISION: The Board approved the minutes of the main UKRI Board meeting on 15 January 2025.

- 2.2. The Board noted the action log and highlighted the need to ensure actions are only closed once they have been fully completed. The Board delayed the discussion on the Forward Schedule until Any Other Business.

**3. Board Committee Updates
a. UKRI Growth Committee**

- 3.1. Nigel Toon updated the Board on the new UKRI Growth Committee which is due to meet for the first time in early April. The Board highlighted the need to ensure discussions were focused on UKRI's role in driving economic impact. The Board encouraged Ottoline to ensure that there is link up between the UKRI Growth Committee and the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology's Growth Committee. Alex Jones noted that there is a huge amount of work ongoing regarding the growth mission and will ensure the team in DSIT continues to work closely with UKRI.
- 3.2. The Board noted the need to ensure the relevant Executive Chairs attended the Growth Committee meeting alongside Board members.



a. Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NomCo)

- 3.3. Nigel Toon updated the Board on the Nominations and Remuneration Committee meeting that took place immediately before the Board. Nigel noted that he was acting chair in Andrew Mackenzie's absence.
- 3.4. The Board noted that Angela Paradise, Interim Chief People Officer, provided an overview of the ongoing HR review, noting that an update will come to a future Board meeting.
- 3.5. Nigel highlighted that the committee thanked the Interim Head of Senior and Public Appointments for their professionalism throughout the UKRI CEO and Innovate UK Executive Chair appointments, noting that both positions had now been appointed and announced. The Board noted that the committee also discussed Executive Chair succession planning.
- 3.6. The Board noted that the committee discussed Board member succession planning, noting there are currently three open Board member positions. The Board noted that the priority was to recruit a member with a strong finance background that could be appointed to ARAC as the deputy and potential successor to Ruwan when his term ends in 2028.
- 3.7. The Board noted the committee also discussed pensions, the gender pay gap and senior performance related pay.

b. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 3.8. Ruwan Weerasekera, Chair of ARAC, provided an update to the Board. Ruwan noted that ARAC met on 9 February and discussed the Annual Report and Accounts, including an update on accounting policies and judgements. Ruwan noted there were four interlinked National Audit Office (NAO) management letter points which are being actively managed by the relevant teams. Ruwan noted these will need to be completed ahead of finalising the Annual Report and Accounts.
- 3.9. Ruwan thanked Priya Guha, chair of Board Investment Committee, for attending ARAC as an observer to strengthen links between the two committees.
- 3.10. Ruwan noted that Charlotte Deane, Executive Chair for the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) came to the February meeting to discuss her council and cross cutting area's Board level risks. Ruwan highlighted that the committee also discussed security and resilience, the UKRI people survey action plan and the Government Internal Audit Agency's (GIAA) progress report.
- 3.11. Nigel Toon noted that Ruwan is UKRI's Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, meaning that Ruwan receives all whistleblowing cases and is able to see how they are managed by the executive. Ruwan noted that while all cases remain confidential, a lessons learnt discussion on the complex case work will be included at the closed session at the next Board meeting.

c. Board Investment Committee (BIC)

- 3.12. Priya Guha, provided an update on the Committee noting that the annual off-site meeting of the committee was held at the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge in January. The Board



noted that one of the aims of the programme of BIC's visits is to show the committee any challenges or concerns that are arising with UKRI's physical infrastructure.

3.13. Priya noted that the committee discussed the usual standing items around physical and digital infrastructure and any large potential projects. She highlighted the committee also discussed the ongoing right shaping work around infrastructure that will come to Board in July. The committee also discussed three business cases in depth, providing challenge and guidance. In particular, Priya noted the committee is flagging business cases where there appear to be unfunded lifetime costs.

3.14. Priya noted the committee also held a deep dive into the spending review (SR) process and will continue to support the teams as we move through allocations and SR phase 2.

4. CFO Verbal Update

4.1. Siobhan Peters provided a verbal update to the Board, highlighting the finance update that is shared for discussion by exception. Siobhan noted that Executive Committee (ExCo) had come together to ensure there was no overspend at year end. The Board thanked ExCo and the finance teams for their work in this area.

4.2. Siobhan noted that she had commissioned a HR review, which will report back to her over the next couple of months and will inform the UKRI HR function. Siobhan noted that an update will come back to Board, including in her update in May 2025. <withheld from publication>

4.3. Siobhan updated the Board on Global Staff Mobility, noting that we are well advanced in this work. Siobhan provided an update on the transition to new arrangements for supporting EU collaborations.

4.4. Siobhan noted there have been no health and safety incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) during this reporting period. Siobhan highlighted that a series of health and safety leadership courses had been launched and had been well received by senior leaders across the organisation.

4.5. Siobhan provided an update on Organisational Change, including the operational expenditure costs associated with the new technology platforms when they transition to as business as usual, ensuring staff and systems are appropriately supported. The Board noted the need to continue to think carefully about how UKRI will operate beyond the current contract for Oracle Fusion. This will come to Board for further discussion after the summer.

5. UKRI's Framework for Performance: Q3 Progress and Performance Report

5.1. Dan Shah introduced the Q3 Progress and Performance Report, noting it tracks delivery of our strategy against agreed measures. The board noted that the report is developed with input from across the organisation, including from Executive Committee (ExCo), Strategy Committee and People, Finance and Operations Committee. Dan noted that the team continue to work with DSIT on the development of UKRI objectives, which the team will use to ensure the appropriate outcomes are reflected in the report.



- 5.2. The Board noted the data on the grant processing times and would welcome further discussion at a future meeting. Dan highlighted that some process improvements were expected once The Funding Service is fully operational. Ottoline noted that the peer review process requires time to recruit reviewers, for them to provide their evaluations, for applicants to respond to reviewers' comments, and for panel to assess all this information before meeting to make their decisions. The research and innovation community are keen to retain these features, which constrains the minimum time from grant submission to award.

ACTION: At the July Board, with the next iteration of the Quarterly Progress and Performance Pack, the team will have reviewed grant processing times, including highlighting what measures and actions have been taken to reduce them.

- 5.3. Dan noted that the report demonstrates that UKRI is on track regarding Operating Expenditure and head count targets. He also highlighted that the number of Global Talent Visas endorsed by UKRI continues to track ahead of previous years. The Board also noted that there's now more funding currently being spent outside of the Greater South East, than within.
- 5.4. The Board raised questions about how much of the report is generated by people, highlighting that Artificial Intelligence could be of help in this area. Charlotte Deane noted that an item on the use of AI across UKRI is due to come to the May Board for discussion.

The Board thanked the team for the ongoing excellent work in this area, highlighting how far it has come since it was first developed. The Board noted that there was still some work to be done on improving the narrative around the report for specific audiences.

ACTION: At the July meeting, the team will have considered the narrative of the Progress and Performance report and provided an update on ongoing work on improving the presentation of, and comms around, the report.

6. UKRI Board Risk Update

- 6.1. Siobhan Peters introduced the risk update, noting that the paper provides an update on the UKRI Board level principal risks, as well as summaries of the Executive Committee risk deep dives completed in December 2024 and January 2025. Siobhan highlighted the significant amount of work that is ongoing to fully understand the financial controls, including understanding the importance of forecasting.
- 6.2. Siobhan noted that while the Board review is focused on Board level risks, there is significant ongoing work to understand and manage risks below the level that is considered at Board or the UKRI Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- 6.3. Charlotte Deane introduced the new principal Board level risk, 4031-Effective Management of Intellectual Property. The Board noted that UKRI generates and enables a large amount of IP for the UK and the new risk considers what controls are in place to ensure we are supportive of the exploitation of IP generated through UKRI funding. Charlotte highlighted that we very deliberately devolve IP ownership to grant holders and reiterated that UKRI has no intention of changing that approach. Charlotte explained that this way of managing IP was the most effective way of ensuring IP is used as widely as possible.



- 6.4. Charlotte Deane noted that the Knowledge Assets Programme work is a big opportunity in this space. The Board requested that additional information about the programme be shared with them.

ACTION: The Secretariat will have shared information about the Knowledge Assets Programme with the Board in the Corporate Reading Room.

- 6.5. Charlotte explained to the Board that she is in regular contact with the Government Office for Technology Transfer (GOTT) with an aim of ensuring government exploit UKRI generated IP whenever possible.
- 6.6. The Board raised the possibility of creating an IP registry covering all IP generated from UKRI funding. Ottoline noted that there would be significant challenges as the list would be long and unmanageable, as well as noting that we would need to rely solely on self-reporting. The Board noted that while the challenges would be large, there would be benefit to understanding what IP exists and where it is being exploited.
- 6.7. The Board welcomed further discussion on how we can ensure that the right people are exploiting UKRI generated IP, including whether those people are based in the UK or elsewhere. The Board noted this should be discussed at a future UKRI Growth Committee meeting, including understanding how universities manage UKRI enabled IP and what would be considered best practice.
- 6.8. Alex Jones highlighted that both the Government Office for Technology Transfer (GOTT) and the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) come under DSIT and she encouraged the team to link up with them where possible.
- 6.9. The Board noted that Environmental Sustainability remains a significant risk and would welcome a further discussion on the risk at a future Board meeting. The Board noted the importance of considering the environmental sustainability in the context of how UKRI is managing the interlinked requirements of an aging estate, the approach to infrastructure funding for the sector and the need to meet environmental sustainability requirements. In particular, Board would welcome a broader understanding of our legal obligations in this space.

ACTION: A cohesive item across Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability will have been added to a future Board agenda, following evaluation by Executive Committee in the summer.

7. 2025 Spending Review and FY 2025/26 allocations

- 7.1. Dan Shah outlined the timeline of the spending review discussions, noting that the allocations advice presented to Board previously is largely unchanged and a draft has been shared with DSIT. The Board noted that DSIT ministers have signalled they are broadly content with the allocations presented previously, and have highlighted their priority areas for further investment should underspend become available in year.
- 7.2. The Board highlighted that while the allocations advice clearly outlined the impact on individual councils it was important to demonstrate the cross UKRI impacts as a collective voice. Dan noted that the allocations advice responds to specific requests from DSIT, whilst the public facing allocations explainer will take a one UKRI position.



- 7.3. Alex Jones noted that the team in DSIT are working to publish allocations as soon as possible, noting that work with UKRI is ongoing and thanked the team for the continued close working relationship.
- 7.4. The Board thanked the team for the extensive ongoing work in this area and formally endorsed the allocations advice to the DSIT Secretary of State for FY2025-26.

DECISION: The UKRI Board endorsed the formal allocations advice to the DSIT Secretary of State for FY 2025-26.

- 7.5. The Board noted that the initial bid for spending Review phase 2 had been submitted to ministers, highlighting that detailed negotiations are now beginning. The Board noted the importance of getting the SR bid narrative right, outlining what activities we can do versus what we can't do within the expected envelope. Dan also noted the need to articulate what this means for the financial sustainability of the wider system.
- 7.6. Alex Jones noted that while negotiations regarding the bid are ongoing, formal department settlements for phase 2 are due in June. After the departmental settlement is known there will then be further discussion to agree the UKRI allocation. Alex also highlighted that UKRI delivers work that is critical for a wide range of government departments and while this should be encouraged, it is important to articulate the financial cost of this and therefore the importance of the UKRI budget across the whole of government. The Board noted that UKRI also acts as the delivery arm of other government department's research and development budgets.
- 7.7. The team highlighted that a discussion on right shaping of the UKRI's portfolio will be coming to the Board for further discussion in July, with an aim to create more agility in the portfolio as a whole, enabling investment to be responsive to new opportunities and national priorities.
- 7.8. The Board raised questions about how the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) will be complementary to the work in UKRI and requested a future board agenda item on ARIA to be added to the forward schedule. The Board would also welcome a discussion on the AI Opportunities Plan.
- 7.9. Alex Jones highlighted that it is part of her role to make UKRI's successes clear across government, including Treasury. Alex noted that she will continue to work with teams across UKRI to help support this. The Board noted they are able to work as advocates for UKRI and would welcome wider information on policy points.
- 7.10. Dan noted that his team, working closely with the External Affairs and Communications Team, are developing a high-level narrative to share with Executive Committee and the Board to help support conversations with external stakeholders. Poli noted that a series of roundtables are being organised to engage with key stakeholder and would welcome attendance from Board as appropriate.

ACTION: The Secretariat will have worked with the SR team to share a high level narrative, policy points and wider data to help support the Board in advocating for both UKRI and the wider research and innovation system.



ACTION: The Secretariat will have shared the dates and additional details of the SR roundtables with the Board.

- 7.11. The team noted that due to fast moving timelines, they may need to share further information with the Board outside of the normal Board schedule. The Board agreed that an additional extraordinary meeting should be put in diaries to be used to discuss the SR2 submission to DSIT, if needed.

ACTION: The Secretariat will have put an extraordinary meeting of the Board in diaries for the end of April 2025 to update the board on the spending review phase 2 submission to DSIT.

8. UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap Refresh

- 8.1. The UKRI Infrastructure Programme Director introduced the item, highlighting that in partnership with government, UKRI is undertaking a refresh of the research and innovation infrastructure roadmap. The Board noted that the initial roadmap was completed in 2019, noting that the programme to refresh the roadmap aims to;
- Demonstrate the importance and impact of a strong infrastructure ecosystem in underpinning the UK's research and innovation capability
 - to showcase the UK's R&I infrastructure capability and capacity, and
 - to refresh our evidence base to aid long-term, strategic planning for UK R&I investments
- 8.2. The Board noted that the refreshed roadmap will focus on three pillars and is more light touch than the initial programme as the team are not starting from scratch. The Programme Director highlighted the opportunity for the team to evolve the scope of the roadmap, increasing understanding of the wider infrastructure landscape.
- 8.3. The Board noted that the refresh programme has conducted a survey with over 300 infrastructures across the UK to attempt to fully understand the characteristics and challenges of the landscape. The programme will also use existing impact studies and evaluate the portfolio against key strategic drivers.
- 8.4. Priya Guha, chair of BIC, noted that the refresh programme had been discussed at BIC previously and will come back for further discussion and review in the future. Priya noted that while government are the primary audience, the refreshed roadmap will represent the UK national picture and therefore will be used more widely. The Board acknowledged that this was a good example of UKRI's expertise being recognised.
- 8.5. The Programme Director noted that use of case studies will bring to life some of the data.
- 8.6. The Board highlighted the need to ensure that environmental sustainability is considered as part of the programme.
- 8.7. The Board noted the ambitious timeline of the refresh, but were reassured that timelines has been considered and were achievable. The Board thanked the UKRI Infrastructure Programme Director and would welcome a follow up discussion after the refreshed roadmap had been published.



ACTION: Following publication of the Infrastructure Roadmap Refresh, the team will have come back to Board to share findings and planned next steps

9. AOB

- 9.1. The Board highlighted the need to ensure future agendas included a focus on getting economic value. The Board noted that the first meeting of the UKRI Growth Committee will take place on 3 April 2025 and would encourage the committee to identify broader discussions to come to future meetings.
- 9.2. The Board reiterated the need for a discussion on the environmental sustainability of our infrastructure portfolio. The Board also noted they would welcome in depth discussions on UKRI's relationship with key international partners, including India, China and the European Union. The Board were keen that financial sustainability remained a key area of focus for them.
- 9.3. The Board noted the following:
 - UKRI Finance Update
 - UKRI Executive Committee minutes
 - 10 December 2025
 - 28 January 2025
 - Board Investment Committee minutes
 - 21 October 2024

10. Non-Executive Session