



Natural
Environment
Research Council

60
years
of NERC



Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Director of Research and Innovation

Candidate Prospectus
October 2025

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Candidate Prospectus
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Welcome



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Director of Research and Innovation 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. We do this to enable sustainable growth and security, addressing the triple lock on resilience of biodiversity decline, climate change and pollution. As custodians of environmental science funding in the UK we seek to ensure tangible benefits to the country and its citizens through informed investment to deliver a green economy.

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, had a core budget of £325m in addition to cross-cutting funds from UKRI and the Antarctic Logistics and Infrastructure partition.

Welcome (cont.)

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).

About NERC



NERC funds environmental science which is ambitious, novel and a force for innovation, and provides the training, skills, and infrastructure the UK needs to remain at the forefront of environmental science. Our science covers the whole earth system from the atmosphere to the biosphere, hydrosphere, sub-surface, oceanic and polar science. NERC provides a national capability through the large research infrastructure, services, facilities and data centres that enable this research and make its results available. This includes research stations around the globe, a fleet of ships and aircraft, and satellite technology to monitor environmental change on a global scale. The long-term data which these NERC investments enable is a critical national resource supporting economic growth and enabling the UK's global leadership on environmental issues.

NERC's core role is to tackle global environmental challenges, increase societal resilience, and enable sustainable economic growth through strategic investment in researchers, innovators, facilities and data, which together deliver a world-leading environmental science capability. NERC is a thought leader for environmental science. We drive new research and innovation to advance the frontiers of science and benefit society. We invest in building a community of environmental scientists who work across disciplines in research and industry. 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.

About NERC (cont.)



- 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.

About the role

We are seeking a **dynamic, creative environmental science research leader** with standing in the profession who thrives on making a difference in the science community and turning complex challenges into opportunities. This isn't just another role — it's your chance to place cutting edge environmental science at the very heart of green growth and government priorities.

You'll bring:

- **Science Leadership** across environmental domains with a track record of building bridges between disciplinary fields to unlock transformative research outcomes.
- **Research delivery experience** drawn from universities, institutes, or research centres, where you can show credible, impactful results.
- **Entrepreneurial vision** that sees challenges as catalysts for innovation
- **A collaborative and engaged mindset** as you join our new executive team and exemplify credible, empathetic, and effective leadership working with diverse partners.

Your impact:

- **Strategic influence** with environmental science as its foundation
- **National presence** as NERC's authoritative voice and senior liaison across the UK's research ecosystem
- **Direct engagement** across university and national research organisations
- **Leading role** in delivering research that will define the nation's environmental future under NERC's Forward Look

About the role (cont.)

Purpose of the role

As Director of Research and Innovation you will play a key leadership role at the heart of the executive team and build an exciting new agenda under the NERC Forward Look, delivering innovative solutions for the economy and for society over the next decade. The role has direct responsibility for NERC budget lines delivering curiosity-driven research, talent and skills funding, and strategic research programmes, ensuring that outcomes align with our Forward Look, UKRI's priorities, and that NERC keeps pace with evolving science needs and changing technological and computational capabilities. It will be important to seek out opportunities to create funding partnerships with others, including other research councils, government departments, and international funding agencies where appropriate, particularly across domains with key intersections with environment, such as health, energy, and resilience in urban and engineered environments. You will need to command esteem and pro-actively engage across NERC's science community, both to keep pace with their insights on new developments and to communicate NERC's agenda, particularly to senior leaders.

You will join a strongly collaborative executive team, working closely with NERC's Directors to ensure that research priorities overall are coherent and optimised across all research programmes, including those in the NERC Centres that receive 'national capability' funding to deliver long-term, large-scale research and infrastructure platforms for the science community

Key Accountabilities

Reporting directly to the NERC Deputy Executive Chair you will have responsibility for:

- Delivery of over £100M per year of UKRI's research and talent budget, programme evaluation, and direct responsibility for the leadership management and development of c50 staff.
- Leading the development of research and innovation priorities for the whole of NERC
- Leading on the inception, direction and timely delivery of well-designed curiosity-driven research, talent and skills funding, and strategic research programmes
- Working collaboratively across UKRI to align with UKRI policies and to inform and shape the latest thinking to continually improve the efficiency and effectiveness of science funding.
- Exploiting your NERC domain expertise to seek out opportunities for collaborations that leverage partnerships including international collaboration.
- NERC Community Liaison: Being a critical point of contact across the NERC community, winning trust and confidence at senior level to pick up the latest intelligence on scientific developments, to ensure the smooth running of NERC's funding programmes, and to empower Head Office with scientific insights.
- Stakeholder relationships: Liaison across relevant UKRI teams (including international, commercialisation, and Innovate UK) and with external partners including business and industry to ensure that NERC delivers the best possible outcomes against our priorities. You will act as a senior ambassador for NERC and ensure that NERC and its community provide a strong, unified voice for science, research, and innovation.
- Contributing to the corporate management of NERC as a member of an inclusive and collegiate executive team and representing NERC and UKRI at senior level to a wide range of communities and stakeholders, leading through change as responsibilities continue to evolve.
- Participating in the council's evaluation and planning activities
- Championing equality, diversity and inclusion



Your skills and experience

We understand that individuals might hesitate to apply if they don't meet each of the criteria. If you're enthusiastic about joining our organisation and possess a majority of these skills or experience, we encourage you to proceed with an application. We recognise that a variety of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences enriches our work environment and therefore we actively welcome applications from a diverse range of candidates.

Candidates will be assessed against the following criteria throughout the recruitment process.

Essential Criteria:

- Qualified at PhD level with a strong personal record of scientific achievement and a deep understanding of environmental science and its applications sufficient to gain the confidence of the scientific community.
- A sustained first-class track record of senior roles relevant to the environmental sciences, with experience leading and managing major scientific initiatives and programmes.
- Senior level experience of stakeholder management including the ability to negotiate with partners to build effective relationships for mutual benefit, reconcile potentially conflicting interests and influence others not in your management line to achieve desired outcomes.
- Experience of portfolio budget management, profiling spend against well-defined delivery criteria and outcomes.
- Demonstrable experience of effective management of staff performance and development.

Terms of Appointment

Appointment Term: Due to the nature of the role, we can accommodate several flexible options based around the successful candidates’ preferences and current professional commitments, including fixed-term, secondment, and permanent contract as well as hybrid working arrangements.

The minimum commitment duration is 36 months and minimum hours required is 0.8 FTE (Full FTE 37 hours) per week.

Remuneration: £94,931 - £117,800 per annum (depending on skills and experience)

Office base in Swindon, with regular travel to London and significant travel to other locations as required to connect with researchers nationwide.

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	Sunday 2 November 2025 at 23:55
Shortlisting date	Wednesday 5 November 2025
Panel interviews	Wednesday 26 November 2025

How to apply

Please submit your application via the [UKRI Careers Portal](#) **by 23:55 on Sunday 2nd November 2025.**

You will need to supply:

- A curriculum vitae (**up to two pages**)
- A statement of suitability (**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.