



Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 15th January 2025
Location: Polaris House, Swindon
Time: 10:00 – 17:00

Board Members and Observers	
Sir Andrew Mackenzie (UKRI Chair)	Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser (UKRI, CEO)	Jane Norman
Siobhan Peters CMG (UKRI, CFO)	Russell Schofield-Bezer
The Baroness Bull CBE	Ruwan Weerasekera
Annie Callanan	Alexandra Jones CBE (DSIT)
Professor Sir Ian Chapman	Professor Charlotte Deane (EPSRC Executive Chair) – observer
Rita Dhut	Professor Michele Dougherty (STFC Executive Chair) - observer
Priya Guha MBE	

Attendees	
Dan Shah (Interim UKRI Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy)	Poli Stuart-Lacey (UKRI, Chief of External Affairs and Communications)
Angela Paradise (Interim Chief People Officer)	Chris Ball (Chief People Officer)
Professor Christopher Smith (AHRC Executive Chair) – for item 1	Professor Anne Ferguson Smith (BBSRC Executive Chair) – for item 1
Stian Westlake (ESRC Executive Chair) – for item 1	Dr Stella Peace (Interim IUK Executive Chair) – for item 1
Professor Patrick Chinnery (MRC Executive Chair) – for item 1	Professor Louise Heathwaite (NERC Executive Chair) – for item 1
Professor Dame Jessica Corner (RE Executive Chair) – for item 1	Deputy Director of Corporate Strategy, Governance & Performance – for item 7, 8 & 13
Deputy Director of Analysis and Performance – for item 7 & 8	Head of Policy Analysis – for item 7 & 8
Head of Corporate Planning and Performance – for item 7, 8 & 13	UKRI Performance Lead – for item 7 & 8
UKRI Evaluation and Performance Lead – for item 7 & 8	Senior Evaluation Analyst – for item 7 & 8
Planning and Performance Specialist – for item 7 & 8	Senior Evaluation and Performance Analyst – for item 7 & 8
Lead Policy Analyst for Place and Commercialisation – for item 7, 8 & 9	Director of Commercialisation – for item 9
UKRI Strategy Advisor – for item 9	UKRI Head of Risk and Management Assurance – for item 10
UKRI Director of Risk, Assurance and Counter Fraud – for item 10	UKRI Deputy Director of Investment Strategy - for item 12
UKRI Head of investment Planning - for item 12	UKRI Partnership Lead - for item 12
UKRI Head of Strategic Business Partnering - for item 12	Deputy Director, Communications and Engagement – for item 14

Deputy Director of External Affairs and Communications – for item 14	UKRI Brand Manager – for item 14
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Apologies	
Nigel Toon	

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

1. Update from Lord Patrick Vallance, Minister for Science for the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology

- 1.1. Lord Vallance addressed the UKRI Board and Executive Committee, outlining his key vision for UKRI and the wider UK research and innovation system. Lord Vallance highlighted he felt that it was difficult for a government to work effectively without a strong research and development system and hoped to ensure that the UK has the most effective R&D system possible.
- 1.2. Lord Vallance highlighted three key areas for delivery;
 - We should support curiosity led research as the foundation of a knowledge economy
 - We should ensure closer alignment to government priorities, articulating what UKRI is delivering and giving assurance to government
 - We should catalyse the establishment and scale-up of innovative businesses in the UK
- 1.3. The Board noted the update on the UK Government’s missions, noting that the Mission Boards will need to define problems that are blockers to rapid mission delivery. UKRI is working with the Minister to establish an R&D Missions programme to identify solutions to these problems, which the Mission Boards will pull through to drive impact.
- 1.4. Lord Vallance noted the need to demonstrate benefits to all citizens and that UKRI’s wide remit was well placed to ensure this was the case.
- 1.5. The Minister was keen that UKRI demonstrate an ability to be flexible and agile with its budget. Lord Vallance encouraged the Board to ensure that the spending review bid focuses on growth.
- 1.6. The Board noted that Lord Vallance was keen for them to fully understand their role, noting they are not a scientific advisory board, but should offer assurance and steer UKRI strategic direction.

2. Welcome and Introductions

- 2.1. Andrew Mackenzie welcomed members to the Board meeting and noted apologies. Andrew highlighted that Nigel Toon had provided comments on the papers ahead of the meeting.
- 2.2. Andrew welcomed Angela Paradise, incoming interim Chief People Officer, and thanked Chris Ball for his work as Chief People Officer since March 2022. The Board welcomed Professor Michele Dougherty, newly appointed STFC Executive Chair, to her first Board meeting as an observer.



- 2.3. Andrew updated the Board on his activities since the last Board meeting, in particular noting that all interviews and follow up conversations for the UKRI CEO recruitment campaign had been completed. Andrew thanked members of UKRI's Nomination and Remuneration Committee who have spent time with each of the final candidates to help them understand the organisation better. Andrew noted that each of the final candidates met with members of the Executive Committee. Andrew explained that the final decision is currently with No 10 and a formal announcement will hopefully be made in the next few weeks.
- 2.4. Andrew noted he had a series of connected conversations with people in the new government, including;
 - Lord Spencer Livermore (Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Growth Minister), with whom he had a valuable and enthusiastic discussion about the role UKRI can play in the growth agenda
 - Gareth Davies, Permanent Secretary to the Department for Business and Trade, to discuss the Industrial Strategy. Andrew noted that Gareth will be joining the Board for dinner in May 2025.
 - Varun Chandra, Business Advisor to the Prime Minister to discuss the growth mission.
- 2.5. Andrew highlighted to the Board that Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, who was previously a member of the UKRI Board, has been awarded the King's highest honour, the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire for his services to cancer research, clinical research, medicine and to charities.

3. a) Minutes of November 2024 UKRI Board meeting; b) Action Log; and c) Forward Schedule

- 3.1. The Board approved the minutes of the 13 November 2024.

DECISION: The Board approved the minutes of 13 November 2024 meeting.

- 3.2. The Board noted the action log and forward schedule.
- 3.3. The Board noted that through the Nominations and Remuneration Committee there is a strong push to increase diversity on the UKRI council's Councils. Therefore the Board were happy to close the related action.
- 3.4. Andrew noted that an update on the UKRI Catapults Programme is included in the reading room. The board noted a review of catapults is underway and that a further update will come back to the Board for discussion. The Board requested that any further update would include more information about the future direction of the programme.
- 3.5. Andrew reminded the Board to let the Secretariat know if there were any items they would like included on the forward schedule.

4. Board Committee Updates

a) Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NomCo)



- 4.1. Andrew Mackenzie, Chair of the UKRI Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NomCo) noted that there has been no NomCo meeting held today as the time was used for the Board to meet with Lord Vallance, Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation. Andrew noted that papers had been circulated. Members confirmed they were happy to approve the minutes of the 18 September 2024 meeting.

DECISION: The Nominations and Remuneration Committee approved the minutes of the 18 September 2024 meeting.

- 4.2. The committee noted the new Council member appointments to the EPSRC Council.
- 4.3. Ottoline flagged the council's Councils' EDI report, previously requested by the Board, which was shared in the corporate reading room. She noted that the report has been a useful tool to use while considering council recruitment.

b) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) & Organisation Change Committee (OCC)

- 4.4. Ruwan Weerasekera, Chair of ARAC, provided an update to the Board. Ruwan noted that ARAC had held a deep dive on funding assurance, where they met as a committee to look at the funding assurance plan. The committee were fully supportive of the direction of travel and funding assurance moved into ARAC business as usual.
- 4.5. Ruwan noted that on 9 December 2024 a joint ARAC and Organisation Change Committee (OCC) was held. At this meeting the decision was taken to formally retire the OCC, with its remit transferring to ARAC. At the meeting the committees discussed organisational change, with a strong focus on the two key technology platform programmes: SHARP and Simpler and Better Funding (SBF).
- 4.6. Siobhan Peters noted that the SHARP programme is now discussing the minutia of what happens, and when it needs to happen, in order to make the transition a success. The Board noted that the data cleansing exercise had gone very well. Ruwan highlighted that conversations with the trade unions were ongoing.
- 4.7. The Board noted that a period of hypercare is planned for post implementation to ensure staff are supported throughout.
- 4.8. Siobhan noted that scale up of The Funding Service (TFS) was going well, and has been well received by staff across UKRI. The Board noted there were still some areas to work through, and that the team continue to listen to staff.

a) Board Investment Committee (BIC)

- 4.9. Priya Guha, Chair of BIC, provided an update on the Committee noting that it had not formally met since the last Board. Priya highlighted the BIC outreach meeting being held in the British Antarctic Survey later in January. The Board noted that the outreach visits offer the committee an opportunity to understand any issues or concerns about UKRI's key infrastructures.



- 4.10. At the outreach meeting, Priya noted that the agenda will include the usual updates on strategic investment, physical and digital research infrastructure and UKRI's large project portfolio. The Board noted the committee will also consider the best way for BIC to help support the Board's role in the spending review process.
- 4.11. Priya highlighted that she and Ruwan continue to work closely and she will be attending an ARAC meeting in February to ensure join up.

5. CEO Priorities

- 5.1. Ottoline Leyser provided an update to the Board. She noted that much of what is on her mind is included in the main agenda. Ottoline highlighted how there were much stronger working relationships across UKRI, which is supporting high quality collaborative and collective working, such progress toward constructing a more flexible budget.
- 5.2. Ottoline noted that the improved collective working also meant key areas, such a research commercialisation, were progressing at pace and delivering benefits.
- 5.3. Ottoline highlighted key areas where UKRI could do better, such as rapid portfolio analysis, noting that the SHARP and TFS programmes, when complete, should make many of these easier.
- 5.4. Ottoline noted that implementation of the technology platforms is progressing well, for example with the scale up of end-to-end grant processing on TFS. However, there is still a way to go and there continue to be significant workload pressures on staff, with impacts on wellbeing. She noted work is ongoing to address this important issue. The Board noted that despite the pressure staff were under they continue to deliver and do an amazing job.
- 5.5. Ottoline highlighted the launch of the Cross Council Responsive Mode scheme. This is a scheme where applicants that provides funding for interdisciplinary work that does not fit within existing response mode panel structures. Ottoline noted that the scheme is currently running as a pilot, with the Metascience Unit embedded in monitoring its impact. The Board noted there are significant opportunities for the scheme to expand.
- 5.6. Ottoline noted that UKRI is integral in building the UK Research and Development Missions Programme, which is an exciting programme that embeds the importance of R&D as a tool for improved policy delivery. The Board noted this is a high priority for Lord Vallance, and the team continue to work closely with DSIT, and the Missions, on its establishment.

6. CFO Update

- 6.1. Siobhan Peters highlighted the finance update included in the papers. She noted that UKRI is expecting to come in on budget, but that continuous improvement to financial reporting and forecasting will be needed in the future.
- 6.2. Siobhan highlighted that the January meeting is Chris Ball's final Board meeting, with Angela Paradise joining as interim Chief People Officer. Siobhan thanked Chris for his time at UKRI explaining that he had created space for change. Siobhan noted that the CPO recruitment will go live shortly.
- 6.3. <withheld from publication>



- 6.4. Finally, Siobhan highlighted that the UKRI Health and Safety Policy is a responsibility of the Board. The annual report and minor policy refreshes are usually shared below the line. Going forward, the policy approval will be brought above the line for discussion. The Board noted that at ARAC, a health and safety update will be included as a lead item in Siobhan's CFO update. Going forward, the Board will have an opportunity to consider whether Health and Safety considerations are covered adequately at ARAC or whether further discussions are needed at Board level.

ACTION: The Board will have considered whether Health and Safety considerations need to be brought to Board for regular discussion.

7. UKRI's Framework for Performance: Q2 Progress and Performance Report and Annual Balanced Scorecard

- 7.1. Dan Shah introduced the item, highlighting that the progress and performance report is part of a suite of performance framework documents, including the balanced scorecard, which is used by many different groups, including Executive Committee, the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and to input into the Annual Report and Accounts.
- 7.2. The Board noted that it while it is difficult to include a lot of individual council granularity in the progress and performance report, this will be managed informally by encouraging Executive Chairs to attend future board meetings.
- 7.3. The Board thanked the team for the significant work which has gone into developing the UKRI's Framework for Performance, noting the substantial progress that has been made in being able to track delivery of UKRI's strategy against key agreed measures.
- 7.4. Dan noted that the ongoing IT change programmes should allow the team to capture research data and outcomes in different ways, opening up the potential to look at data closer to real time. Dan also noted that while some data collection is automated, the ongoing IT programmes will hopefully mean more data can be collected automatically reducing the significant people hours needed for data collections.
- 7.5. Poli Stuart Lacey highlighted that a public perception survey had been completed and that we are likely to have early headlines in a couple of weeks. Outcomes from the survey will be included in future balance scorecards.
- 7.6. The Board suggested that the team consider the public facing narrative of the performance documents. Poli proposed developing a prototype for a CEO quarterly performance update that captures key areas of focus and delivery for a public facing narrative, with an aim of being as transparent as an organisation as possible.

ACTION: Poli Stuart-Lacey, Chief of External Affairs and Communications, will have worked with the incoming CEO to consider a prototype for a CEO quarterly performance update.

- 7.7. Dan Shah suggested arranging an optional teach in for Board members on the full suite of UKRI performance framework documents in order to help support the board in understanding what data, information and narrative is available.



ACTION: Dan will have held an optional drop in session with Board members to help understand the suite of performance documents

- 7.8. The Board noted they would welcome a more detailed cover paper that highlights the key areas of concern to help them navigate the reports.

ACTION: Dan Shah will have provided a focussed cover note for the quarterly progress and performance and balanced scorecard reports going forward to help Board members navigate the key issues and/or concerns.

8. UKRI's Framework for Performance: Co-investment Deep Dive

- 8.1. Dan Shah, interim Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy introduced the co-investment deep dive paper, which arose from concerns about reduced co-investment flagged in the performance report. He highlighted that the paper only measures co-investment at time of grant award, and therefore does not cover all co-investment across UKRI.

- 8.2. The Board noted that while university-co-investment was reducing, private sector co-investment was increasing. The Board requested that where possible it would be useful to split out the data by research council to understand the differences across UKRI. The Board noted that where possible this would be included alongside future iterations of the balanced scorecard.

ACTION: Dan Shah will have provided a breakdown of co-investment at individual council level alongside the next iteration of the balanced scorecard.

- 8.3. Ottoline noted that the Executive Committee use the performance metrics as a way of understanding current trends, allowing the team to investigate further if needed, as with this paper. The Board noted that the data presented demonstrates private sector partnerships occurring across all parts of UKRI.

- 8.4. The Board encouraged the team to consider how philanthropic contributions could be captured in future. Dan noted that the scorecard captures charity funding when it is via a charity partner in relation to a grant, but philanthropic or charitable donations that form part of a university's revenue are not captured.

- 8.5. The Board thanked the team for the significant ongoing work in this space, noting the importance of understanding 'what good looks like' in regard to co-investment with an aim of identifying the ideal ratio of investment across the portfolio.

9. Update on Research Commercialisation

- 9.1. Charlotte Deane, Executive Chair for Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), and Executive Champion for commercialisation, introduced the item, providing the Board with an update on research commercialisation.

- 9.2. Charlotte noted she would welcome thoughts from the Board on the Commercialisation Impact Dashboard. The Board endorsed the development of the Impact Dashboard and provided feedback.



- 9.3. The Board discussed UKRI's roles in commercialisation, including beyond providing grants. The Board noted the need for UKRI to understand its role within the wider landscape at the various stages of commercialisation, which may be different for different sectors. The plan for UKRI to have a clear vision and ambition that articulates these various UKRI roles, including as an enabler of commercialisation, was endorsed.
- 9.4. Ottoline highlighted the opportunity for the proposed new UKRI Board level Growth Committee to help drive the research commercialisation agenda and support the executive in developing clear actions. The Board noted that the committee's remit would need to include the wider innovation ecosystem, including how to optimise commercialisation across research and development. The Board noted there would need to be a core membership of Board members with the Executive Champion for commercialisation and Innovate UK's Executive Chair as the key executive contacts.

ACTION: The Secretariat will work with the Board and executive contacts to scope the UKRI Growth Committee by the March Board.

- 9.5. <withheld from publication> The need to ensure clarity and simplicity wherever possible was highlighted.
- 9.6. Charlotte updated the Board on the DSIT-UKRI assessment of the UKRI commercialisation portfolio and any areas of suggested improvement. The board noted the need to ensure join up of this assessment across the wider landscape and how that links in with broader UK Government priorities.
- 9.7. Andrew noted that additional comments would be welcome and could be shared with the UKRI Secretariat.

10. UKRI Board Risk Update

- 10.1. Siobhan Peters introduced the risk update, including highlighting the four risk deep dives that have been reviewed by Executive Committee since the last Board meeting. Siobhan noted that UKRI's risk appetites will be reviewed in 2025. The Board agreed that there should be a low risk appetite for risks around legal or regulatory requirements, but that the team should be bolder in other areas.
- 10.2. The Board noted that they would welcome the opportunity to review the risk quadrant, now that it has been in use for a couple of years. Ottoline noted that the quadrant is always evolving to reflect the changing risk landscape. The Board approved the annual risk review, discussed assessment of the relationship between risks across the organisation and noted that the majority of councils have adopted the risk quadrant diagram, ensuring consistency in the way in which top level risk is viewed is in alignment across UKRI.
- 10.3. The Board noted the importance of ensuring it is as well informed as possible on changes in the policy landscape that are relevant to UKRI and requested that relevant documentation is shared with the Board in a way that supports easy access.

ACTION: The Secretariat will have shared useful and relevant documents with the Board as they are made available.



10.4. The Board thanked the team for the ongoing work, noting that the update is very comprehensive. The Board noted that future iterations should include the person or team responsible for managing the risk flightpath.

11. UKRI People Survey Action Plan

11.1. Chris Ball introduced the UKRI People Survey Action Plan, highlighting that in general the results of the People Survey showed an improving trajectory.

11.2. The Board noted that the question around 'Do you consider UKRI a great place to work' is a very important measure.

11.3. The Board noted their continued interest in this space and would welcome further discussions at a future Board meeting.

12. 2025 Spending Review and FY 2025/26 allocations

12.1. Alex Jones updated the Board on the allocations commission that has been sent to UKRI from DSIT. The Board noted that the allocations advice would need to be approved by Board and therefore an extraordinary meeting may be needed.

12.2. Dan Shah provided an update on the allocations, noting that there are significant pressures such as work on the five critical technologies, that will need to be absorbed into a flat cash settlement. <withheld from publication>

ACTION: The Secretariat, working with the SR team, will have set up an extraordinary meeting of the Board to discuss and agree the allocations advice for DSIT.

12.3. Ottoline welcomed the Board's input on the decision to pause Smart grant investment as part of the SR allocations plan, which would support an important strategic review of this programme. The Board were supportive of this decision, highlighting the need to ensure appropriate comms are in place before the decision is announced. The Board encouraged the comms teams to highlight what opportunities are available outside of the Smart grants. Alex Jones noted the need to explain to the community why this was the right decision for business.

12.4. The Board requested that all acronyms are clearly written in full at first mention in all papers.

ACTION: The Secretariat will have made sure all acronyms in paperwork are written in full as standard at first mention

12.5. The Board encouraged the team to think strategically about right-shaping the future portfolio and encouraged the team to identify ways in which the Board could support the SR preparations.

12.6. The Board noted the desire to create a more flexible portfolio, ensuring sufficient annual turnover to allow new strategic investments to be made. The Board were keen to understand the SR 2 narrative further and requested more information be shared with them. The team noted that time in the extraordinary meeting will be used to update Board on the SR2 narrative.



ACTION: The Secretariat, working with the Investment Planning and Strategy Team, will have shared an update on the SR2 narrative with the Board by end of Jan 2025

13. Strategic Planning Suite

- 13.1. The Board noted the proposed staged updates to the Strategic Delivery Plans and Corporate Plan reflecting the single year budget for 25/26 ahead of the longer term spending review.
- 13.2. The Board approved the proposed approach to developing the next suite of strategic planning documents, including noting the buddying up system. Ottoline highlighted that the buddying up system had worked well in the past and the Board were reassured that further guidance would be shared with them.

DECISION: The Board approved the proposed approach to developing the next suite of strategic planning documents, including the proposed allocations for the 'buddying-up' system

14. Improving Lives and Livelihoods: UKRI External Affairs and Comms Plan for 2025

- 14.1. Poli Stuart Lacey introduced the item, noting that the marketing strategy is a new approach for UKRI. Poli highlighted the significant events that are happening over the next 12 months, including the spending review and change of UKRI CEO. The Board noted that 'Improving Lives and Livelihood focuses on impact rather than who UKRI is. Poli noted that the team continue to work closely with DSIT, sharing key themes for each quarter.
- 14.2. The Board noted that by having a unifying theme it allows us to draw in resource from across UKRI in order to tell a story. Poli highlighted the ambition for UKRI be a valued partner, working closely with other organisations to ensure we are delivering excellence in science communications.
- 14.3. The Board provided feedback on the external affairs and comms plan, including highlighting the need to be clear about who the plan is aimed at and ensuring that the team work closely with key stakeholders including DSIT, universities and other funding bodies.
- 14.4. The Board noted the importance of ensuring UKRI is valued by the public and that the UK is able to feel pride in the outputs of UKRI. The Board encouraged the team to be more visible, noting that other similar organisations have a strong presence online. Poli noted that a lack of consistency around how the UKRI and individual council brands are used has meant the impact has been limited.
- 14.5. The Board thanked Poli and her team for the ongoing work, noting they were very supportive of the direction of travel for the marketing plan and for the UKRI brand.

15. AOB

- 15.1. The Board requested a discussion on ten year funding budgets to come back to the Board at a future date. Alex Jones noted that the Government is currently working through what ten year budgets would look like and how they would work in practice.



15.2. The Board noted the importance of being kept up to date with plans for phase 2 of the spending review. The Board requested to see the SR2 narrative that will be submitted to DSIT in February ahead of the extraordinary meeting of the Board to approve the SR1 allocations advice to DSIT.

15.3. Ottoline highlighted the update on the UK Committee on Research Integrity, noting that conversations about extended funding are happening at Executive Committee level. The Board noted the need to ensure the focus across the research and innovation community remains on the importance of integrity.

15.4. The Board noted the following:

- UKRI Finance Update
- Health and Safety Policy update
- UKRI Executive Committee minutes
 - 22 October 2024
 - 19 November 2024
- Audit and Risk Assurance Minutes
 - 16 September 2024
 - 4 November 2024

16. Non-Executive Session