

**UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
Minutes of the EPSRC Council**

Date: 18/19 June 2025

Location: Rolls-Royce, Derby

Attendees

Members of EPSRC Council

Professor Charlotte Deane (EPSRC Executive Chair)
Professor Jeremy Baumberg (Senior Independent Member)
Professor Alison Etheridge
Professor Deborah Greaves
Professor Jane Hillston
Professor Dames Jane Jiang
Ms Siân John
Dr Simon King
Mr Alan Newby
Professor Martin Schröder
Dr Dave Smith (National Technology Adviser)
Professor Ian White
Professor Andy Wright

UKRI/EPSRC attendees

Andrew Bourne (Executive Director, Partnerships)
Jonathan Dawes (Deputy Executive Chair)
Nicola Goldberg (Chief Operating Officer)
Jane Nicholson (Executive Director, Research Base)
Christine Ashton (Chief Information Officer) Remote
Robyn Thomas (UKRI Deputy Director of Funding Services)
Alice Summers (Head of Risk and Assurance)
Poli Stuart-Lacey (Chief of External Affairs and Communications)
Kedar Pandya (Executive Director, Cross-Council Programmes)
Tony Chapman (Senior Portfolio Manager, Research Infrastructure)
Stephen Gilligan (Senior Manager, Governance)

Secretariat/Observers

Cerianne Whitehead (Head of Private Office, Secretary to Council)
Gillian Bartoszewska (Senior Governance and Operations Manager)
Megan Maycock (Executive Assistant and Governance Manager)

Apologies

Dr Joe de Sousa (day 2)
Helen Morgan (UKRI Senior Finance Business Partner)

1. Welcome, introductions and declaration of interests

- 1.1. Jeremy Baumberg welcomed attendees, confirmed quoracy and noted apologies.
- 1.2. Members were reminded to update their declaration of interests during the year. Members were asked to raise any conflicts arising during the course of the meeting. Charlotte Deane declared a new interest and no action was deemed necessary in this meeting.

2. Minutes and actions

- 2.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.
- 2.2. Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.

3. Reflections on Rolls Royce engagement

- 3.1. Council noted their formal thanks to Rolls Royce for providing a very engaging and thought-provoking day of activities and discussion, and Council thanked all those who had contributed to making it a successful visit, especially the apprentices and those earlier in their careers. Council noted the partnerships between Rolls Royce and UK universities and the importance of building fundamental knowledge in driving the big innovations that change the sector.
- 3.2. Building on the insights of the visit, Council had a rich discussion around talent pipelines and the diversity of routes to develop a skilled engineering workforce in the UK, and how partnerships between academia and industry were critical to solve real world problems.

4. Executive Report

- 4.1. Council received updates from the EPSRC executive:
 - 4.1.1. Council were notified in confidence of the appointment of the new EPSRC Deputy Executive Chair pending an official announcement.
 - 4.1.2. Council were updated on headline figures from the Spending Review in EPSRC areas of interest including AI, Health, National Security and Defence, Energy, and specific funds already announced such as the R&D Missions Accelerator Programme, Local Innovation Partnership Fund, Horizon Europe and its successor, ARIA, and the AI Opportunities Action Plan.

Council commended EPSRC's joined up thinking and work across the piece to effectively engage with government during the development and drafting of the Spending Review. Council recognised collaborative opportunities would arise from the Industrial Strategy.
 - 4.1.3. Council noted the draft Strategic Delivery Plan and that it had been signed off by Ottoline Leyser (CEO UKRI).
 - 4.1.4. Council noted place-based Impact Acceleration Accounts were included in Ottoline's reflections under 'fully joined up research and innovation system most proud moments' and noted the appointment of a new Director of UKRI Place Programme.
 - 4.1.5. Council were updated on the Science, Engineering and Technology Board (SETB) meeting on 19 May which included a discussion on infrastructure and facilities to meet EPSRC's scientific priorities, options for in-year investment, and AI for science strategy development including an analysis of current AI use, and the opportunities and risks for potential upscaling of AI use. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 4.2. Council noted the written financial update.
- 4.3. UKRI Infrastructure Fund phase four prioritisation
 - 4.3.1. Secretary's Note: For this item, a specific declaration of interest had been made by Deborah Greaves who withdrew from the meeting for this item and had not been given access to the paper prior to the meeting.
 - 4.3.2. Council were provided with a short summary of the proposal. Council discussed assurance and risk management that would be included in the business case following a successful bid and prior to funding.
 - 4.3.3. Council advised the Executive that this proposal is submitted by EPSRC to the Infrastructure Advisory committee as part of wave 4 of the UKRI Infrastructure Fund.

5. **Risk**

- 5.1. Council welcomed Alice Summers to the meeting.
- 5.2. Council were updated on the bi-annual risk management report, the UKRI corporate risk register and the EPSRC corporate risk and issue register.
- 5.3. Alice provided an overview of UKRI's Risk & Assurance Management Approach, the review of the Risk Management Framework and new approaches developed to help UKRI refresh risk registers focusing on the principal risks that matter most to achieving UKRI's objectives, and compliance risk relating to legal, regulatory and government standards. Scenario based risk flightpaths were introduced to provide a standard visualisation of the planned trajectory of risk reduction. Council discussed embracing risk opportunities and horizon scanning activities.
- 5.4. Council were updated on two new risks added to the register and Council discussed mitigations. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

6. **Discussion on the Funding Service (TFS) with UKRI colleagues**

- 6.1. Council welcomed Christine Ashton and Robyn Thomas to the meeting.
- 6.2. Christine spoke on TFS business as usual and continuous improvement activities, health checks and risk flightpaths. Council questioned data availability and noted work was being undertaken to understand what reports should be generated for business need rather than duplicating old systems.
- 6.3. Robyn outlined to Council proposed changes to the way UKRI manages research grant funding, Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 6.4. Council recommended a pilot approach to the proposed changes to enable community engagement and to ensure a wide diversity of fields, including those with particular technical requirements, are not impacted in an unpredictable way.

7. **Levers for in-year expenditure**

- 7.1. Councils discussed levers available to maximise the spend on in-year investments in the engineering and physical sciences should financial resource becoming available to be spent within a financial year. Council considered a range of options. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

8. **Articulating EPSRC's strategic science priorities**

- 8.1. Council were apprised of work by EPSRC's Executive Board to articulate EPSRC's strategic science priorities to lay out a clear science strategy, initially for the new UKRI CEO. Council noted this would not be a definitive list encapsulating all that EPSRC does and EPSRC would continue to support and champion other areas. Council discussed the proposed headings, and suggested combinations and additions. Touching on delivery models, Council noted New Horizons would come back to Council in December along with Big Ideas.

9. **UKRI colleague update**

- 9.1. Council welcomed Poli Stuart-Lacey to the meeting.
- 9.2. Poli presented on UKRI's approach to strategic communications in a changing media ecosystem, including increasing the visibility of subject leaders within the organisation, working on CEO transition planning, brand strategy and engaging with government departments to maximise reach and impact.

9.3. Council discussed opportunities to work with their comms networks in academia and industry, presenting to captive audiences and increasing public engagement.

10. **Information papers**

10.1. Council noted the information paper on EPSRC Communications and Impact Stories update.

11. **Any other business**

11.1. Council thanked EPSRC colleagues who contributed to the meeting, networking session, logistical and admin support, and who provided contributions to the wide range of briefing materials.

11.2. Council noted this was Jonathan Dawes last meeting and thanked him for his service with EPSRC Executive Board.

11.3. The next meeting will be held on 24-25 September 2025.