



Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 12 November 2025
Location: Caxton House, London
Time: 10:00am – 5:30pm

Board Members and Observers	
Sir Andrew Mackenzie (UKRI Chair)	Professor Sir Ian Chapman (UKRI CEO) (item 5 onwards)
The Baroness Bull CBE (item 6 onwards)	Russell Schofield-Bezer
Annie Callanan	Nigel Toon (item 3 onwards)
Rita Dhut	Priya Guha MBE
Ruwan Weerasekera	Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas
Alexandra Jones (Director General for Science, Innovation and Growth, DSIT) (item 5 onwards)	Professor Jane Norman

Executive Committee Attendees	
Juliette Meek (UKRI Finance Director) (deputising for Siobhan Peters)	Gemma Bailey (UKRI Chief People Officer)
Daniel Shah (UKRI Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy)	Louise Heathwaite (NERC Exec Chair)
Patrick Chinnery (MRC Exec Chair)	Christine Ashton (UKRI Chief Information Officer)

Attendees for items only	
UKRI Deputy Director for Investment Strategy - for item 7	UKRI Head of Investment Planning - for item 7
UKRI Head of Allocations and Thematic Investment Strategy - for item 7	UKRI Deputy Director for Strategic Financial Planning – for item 7
UKRI Head of Cross Government Investment Strategy – for item 7	UKRI Director of Risk and Assurance - for item 8
UKRI Head of Risk & Assurance - for item 8	UKRI Director Environmental Sustainability Programme – for item 9
MRC Deputy Executive Chair – for item 10	

Apologies	
Siobhan Peters, UKRI CFO (Board Member)	

Secretariat	
UKRI Integrative Secretariat Function – Strategic Lead	UKRI Integrative Secretariat Function – Strategic Manager
Senior Private Secretary to Sir Andrew Mackenzie	



1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Andrew Mackenzie welcomed members to the Board meeting and noted apologies from Siobhan Peters, UKRI Chief Financial Officer. He reflected on the quality of discussion around Place and securing private investment at the previous night's dinner

2. a) Minutes of 17 September 2025 UKRI Board meeting; b) Action Log; and c) Forward Schedule

- 2.1. Following minor suggested amendments, the Board approved the minutes of the 17 September 2025 meeting.

DECISION: The Board approved the minutes of 17 September 2025 meeting.

- 2.2. The Board noted the action log. They were satisfied with those proposed to close and progress on open actions. Dan Shah reported back on action 36 regarding Innovate UK spin-outs, noting that there is a presentational difference in the data used in the quarter one performance report, and that the quarter two performance report will provide data that allows comparison to previous figures. The Board agreed to close this action.

- 2.3. The Board discussed and noted the forward schedule.

3. Board Committee Updates

a) Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NomCo)

- 3.1. Andrew Mackenzie updated the Board, following the NomCo meeting earlier the same day, reiterating the Committee's expectation to see faster progress in terms of diversity on Councils' Councils. He also reminded members of the succession planning process for both his role as Chair (ending in July 2026) and Ruwan Weerasekera's role as Chair of ARAC. DSIT will be announcing the UKRI Chair recruitment shortly.
- 3.2. Gemma Bailey added that consultation on the pay award 2025 is complete. She is also engaging with trade unions to work with them on the transfer from the Research Councils Pension Scheme (RCPS) to the Civil Service Pension Scheme (CSPS), which must complete by October 2026.

b) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 3.3. Ruwan Weerasekera, Chair of ARAC, provided an update to the Board on the meeting of 6 October 2025. He particularly highlighted:
 - that the Annual Report and Accounts process had gone particularly well for 2024-25, but 2025-26 will be the first time the process has been run using Fusion, and is being carefully planned on this basis
 - strong progress in terms of the National Audit Office management letter
 - the Committee's discussion on how to constructively challenge and support UKRI in terms of progress with audit actions
- 3.4. The next meeting is on 1 December 2025. He also noted that outside of Committee meetings, he is involved with the DSIT ARAC Chairs' network.



c) Board Investment Committee (BIC)

- 3.5. Priya Guha, Chair of BIC updated the Board following the meeting on 14 October, highlighting the outreach visit to the UK Astronomy Technology Centre (UK ATC). The meeting had a strong focus on super-computing, with consideration of the Next National Supercomputing Service (NNS) business case, and some members additionally visiting the Advanced Computing Facility (ACF) at the University of Edinburgh. Nigel Toon added that timing for this investment is absolutely critical.
- 3.6. The next meeting is on 13 January 2025 and will consider the European Spallation Service (ESS) business case and feedback from the DSIT 12-page business case pilot.
- 3.7. Priya added that DSIT have recently restructured their Investment Committee, so she will be working more closely with her counter-part there.

d) Growth Committee

- 3.8. There has not been a Growth Committee meeting since the last Board meeting, however, they are meeting informally later this week. The Innovate UK future strategy is key to their discussions.

4. CFO Update

- 4.1. Juliette Meek updated the Board on highlights in four main areas:

Finance and Operations

- the quarter two financial position is set out in the paper, and the Spending Review will be discussed later in the agenda
- some slippage has been identified at period six, and the finance teams are talking to teams about bringing forward spend from next year to manage this
- in terms of Operating Expenditure (OpEx), UKRI is just under budget against forecast. The team are working with DSIT to agree an approach to OpEx which delivers earlier certainty on the allocation for 2026/27
- the Health and Safety policy, with minor amendments, is included in the Board papers following ratification at Executive Committee and the Health and Safety Management Committee

People and Organisational Development

- the Chief People Officer is developing the HR Stabilisation and People Plans, addressing themes from the People Survey
- the People Survey closed in early October with a 55% response rate, which will be reported to Board in January-February 2026 following detailed analysis and response
- the latest leadership training cohorts are underway and the leadership offer is under review
- the hybrid working review is underway

Governance, risk and compliance

- the Delegations Framework is under review to reduce duplication and increase consistency
- the policy statement for Trusted Research and Innovation (TRI) has been published and will be supported by mandatory all-staff training
- the critical incident regarding invoices on hold has been rectified at pace, and service has returned to business as usual levels, with the incident due to be closed



- the incidents in relation to global staff mobility and pensions continue as planned
- Organisational Change**
- a workshop on moving forward with change in line with the UKRI vision was held in October
 - the Raising Concerns project will go live in Spring 2026, giving a digital front door for raising, reporting and responding to concerns
 - there is strong progress in terms of The Funding Service (TFS) and Oracle Fusion optimisation

4.2. In response to questions, Juliette clarified:

- that changes to the Chart of Accounts and reporting will be monitored via ARAC
- that Board support in moving towards a more proactive OpEx model would be welcome
- the difference between hybrid and flexible working

5. CEO (Accounting Officer) Update

5.1. Ian Chapman joined the meeting following a constructive meeting with HM Treasury and noted their support for a flexible approach to budgeting and for the case for UKRI reform. He also highlighted:

- his mission statement “to advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth” which will be launched and promoted subject to the Board’s support
- the UKRI Strategy timeline
- the late circulation of the UKRI Framework document and objectives for formal approval, which is expected to be published ahead of the November Growth Summit (little changed from the version last seen by Board)

DECISION: the Board **endorsed** the mission statement and UKRI Strategy development timeline

DECISION: the Board **approved** the UKRI Framework document

5.2. In response to questions, Ian clarified the role of a number of cross-government groups:

- Research and Development Reform Group (which is being successfully used to strengthen UKRI’s alignment and visibility with central government)
- Research and Development Oversight Group
- Public Finance Institutes meeting

5.3. He also added that while he had no major Health and Safety concerns, he will be seeking greater assurance on UKRI’s Health and Safety internal auditing process, and will report back to the Board in his CEO report in January 2026.

5.4. There was a discussion of the Post-16 Education and Skills white paper, which gives strong encouragement to universities to specialise and collaborate more. Jane Norman noted that it was a really helpful paper, but concerns remain about the international student levy and how the gap in funding for home teaching is bridged. There was a feeling that cross-UK oversight of how university course offerings are changing would be helpful. There are links to be made here with UKRI’s Place-based agenda.



6. Reforming UKRI

<withheld from publication>

7. Spending Review 2025 Allocations FY 26-27 to 29-30

7.1. Daniel Shah introduced the item, noting the depth of previous discussions. He reiterated that the approach is a profound shift for UKRI in terms of investing public money to deliver for UK citizens.

7.2. He also noted that this is part of an ongoing process, with links to portfolio management, and building the right systems and matrix teams, as well as part of the ongoing drive for stronger cross-government working.

7.3. There are reputational risks and it will be important for UKRI to work with the research and innovation community to manage these, building a strategic relationship supported by meaningful communications. The challenge will be to communicate in a way that meets both government and community needs and requirements.

7.4. In terms of the timeline, following Board approval, the allocations advice can be submitted to the Secretary of State. In parallel, Executive Committee members will also begin a series of meetings with their Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) counterparts. The team hope to publish a more detailed allocations explainer in December.

DECISION: the Board **approved** the allocations model and advice to the DSIT Secretary of State.

7.5. Ian Chapman and the Board extended their gratitude to the teams who worked on the advice for an exceptional piece of work at pace.

8. UKRI Board Risk Update

8.1. Juliette Meek presented the item. She noted that the Risk Appetite Statement is presented for approval, after engagement and input from the Board and other Committees. Further guidance on each risk appetite type is being developed.

DECISION: the Board **approved** the Risk Appetite Statement

8.2. She also reported that the National Audit Office are content with UKRI responses to their Value for Money report.

8.3. Recent risk deep dives have focused on the principal risks *Data and Information Management* and *Effectiveness of UKRI Systems and IT Infrastructure*. Christine Ashton, Chief Information Officer gave an update relating to managing cyber-risk.

8.4. She described UKRI's maturity journey in this area, noting the key priorities of:

- building our resilience to defend as a single organisation, rather than a collection of entities
- building and growing the capability of our people

8.5. *<withheld from publication>*



- 8.6. She added that UKRI has made good progress, with the implementation of well-architected and secure systems such as TFS and Oracle Fusion. *<withheld from publication>*
- 8.7. Christine, and Ruwan Weerasekera, as ARAC Chair, noted that ARAC will have a major role to play in monitoring and scrutinising the approach, including ensuring that all staff complete mandatory training. This will include ensuring that the Board receive the appropriate level of assurance.

ACTION: Christine Ashton will work with the ARAC Chair to develop a Cyber Scorecard to allow detailed monitoring and assurance of this area.

- 8.8. The Board acknowledged that this is a significant journey, with significant concerns, and that UKRI are taking an appropriate approach. They challenged the risk flight paths in terms of the pace of achieving target risk levels. Christine noted that there are several planned actions that should expedite this.

ACTION: Christine Ashton will present a revised view of the flight paths for these principal risks once key actions have been completed.

9. UKRI Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030

- 9.1. Louise Heathwaite introduced the item, highlighting that the strategy balances ambition with a pragmatic approach, and a viable and costed action plan. It has been recalibrated to align with achieving the UK Government's 2050 Net Zero target. She noted that the refreshed strategy links to the SR allocations approach terms of increasing the resilience and sustainability of the estate; will allow UKRI to make informed decisions about future investments; and will support UKRI in remaining innovation-driven.
- 9.2. An error was noted in annex 4, which the team will correct.
- 9.3. Noting the recalibrated target, the Board emphasised the importance of transparency in all messaging in relation to UKRI's current position and future ambition. Ian Chapman emphasised the need for balance between these ambitions and the drive to grow the UK economy.

DECISION: the Board **approved** the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, subject to the amendment to annex 4.

10. MRC Clinical Translation and Commercialisation Technical Deep Dive

- 10.1. Patrick Chinnery presented the deep dive on MRCs approach to supporting clinical translation and commercialisation. He noted that structured investment schemes have consistently attracted external investment and delivered high value spin outs returning £5.30 for every £1 from the public purse, with successes including medicines, tech and AI delivering impact for NHS patients. The milestone-driven, target-focussed funding model can be rapidly scaled up to deliver government priorities in Health and Life Sciences over the SR25 allocation period. This is directly aligned with UKRI's mission to advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth.



10.2. The Board were keen to discuss the transferability of this model as a lens for other Industrial Strategy thematic areas. They also noted strong links to UKRI's Place investment agenda and commercialisation strategy.

10.3. The Board highlighted the importance of ensuring the UK ecosystem supports the translation and commercialisation of life sciences research into the NHS.

11. AOB

11.1. Ian gave an update on the Research Excellence Framework (REF), noting positive progress and an imminent update on the pause.

11.2. Ian noted that he was likely to be called to a number of Select Committees early in 2026, for the Board's awareness.

11.3. The Board noted the following:

- UKRI Health and Safety Policy
- UKRI Finance Update
- Executive Committee minutes – 29 July and 30 September 2025

12. Non-Executive Session