Item: 2.1
Paper: 2627-B001
Approved by UKRI Board: 13 May 2026
Author: UKRI Secretariat

APPROVED Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 18 March 2026
Location: Caxton House, London
Time: 10:00am – 5:00pm

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

Executive Committee Attendees	
Juliette Meek (UKRI Finance Director) (deputising for Siobhan Peters)	Gemma Bailey (UKRI Chief People Officer)
Dan Shah (UKRI Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy)	Charlotte Deane (EPSRC Exec Chair) – from item 8
Christopher Smith (AHRC Exec Chair) – from item 8	Tom Adeyoola (IUK Exec Chair) – from item 11

Attendees for items only	
UKRI Transformation Director - for item 6	Lord Patrick Vallance (Minister for Science, Innovation, Research and Nuclear) – for item 7
UKRI Head of Corporate Planning and Performance - for item 7 & 8	UKRI Corporate Performance Lead - for item 7
UKRI Evaluation and Performance Lead - for item 7	UKRI Planning and Performance Specialist - for item 7
UKRI Senior Evaluation and Performance Analyst – for item 7	UKRI Corporate Planning Lead - for item 8
UKRI Head of Evaluation and Performance – for item 9	UKRI International Director - for item 11 and 12
UKRI International Deputy Director - for item 11 and 12	

Apologies	
Siobhan Peters, UKRI CFO	

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

UK Research and Innovation

1. **Welcome and Introductions**
   1.1. Andrew Mackenzie welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies from Siobhan Peters, UKRI Chief Financial Officer.

   1.2. The Board noted the ongoing work to ensure sharing of Board meeting paperwork is compliant with UKRI security and data handling standards. The Board noted that the secretariat is continuing to work with relevant teams and will provide an update ahead of the next meeting.

2. **a) Minutes of the 21 January 2026 UKRI Board meeting; b) Action Log; and c) Forward Schedule**
   2.1. Following minor suggested amendments, the Board approved the minutes of the 21 January 2026 meeting.

DECISION: The Board approved the minutes of 21 January 2026 meeting.

   2.2. The Board noted the action log. They were satisfied with progress to closure on all open actions.

   2.3. The Board noted the forward schedule, highlighting how it had evolved since the last meeting to be much more comprehensive. The Board noted that the UKRI strategy and associated single UKRI Delivery Plan will come to the May 2026 meeting for approval. The Board welcomed the ongoing engagement with individual Board members outside of meetings to ensure feedback is incorporated into the documents ahead of the May meeting.

3. **Board Committee Updates**
   a) Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NomCo)
   3.1. Andrew Mackenzie updated the Board on the recent NomCo meeting, held the hour before the Board. Andrew noted that discussions focused primarily on UKRI Board Chair succession planning and on the 2026/27 objectives of the UKRI CEO and Executive Committee.

   3.2. The Board noted that NomCo discussed the planned updates to the process for assessing against objectives for Band X and Band Y staff. NomCo noted that a Band Y moderation panel will consist of the CEO, CPO, CFO and two non-executive members. Ruwan Weerasekera and Priya Guha volunteered to be included in the moderation panel. This change in process is intended to strengthen the calibration and scaling of performance assessments for the next reporting cycle. It was agreed that the secretariat will share the UKRI CEO's objectives for 2026/27 with the whole Board.

ACTION: Secretariat to share CEO objectives with the Board ahead of the May 2026 Board meeting.

   3.3. The Board noted that a preferred candidate for the UKRI Chair role has been identified and is expected to be announced shortly. Andrew also updated the Board on other senior and public appointments, including the campaign to identify a new Executive Chair for AHRC.

   b) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)
   3.4. Ruwan Weerasekera, Chair of ARAC, updated the Board on the meeting held on 2 February 2026. The Board noted that regular updates had been received, and that the committee noted that action was being taken to address the backlog of management actions identified at the end of the previous year.

3.5. The Board noted that ARAC discussed the findings from two recent GIAA audits (one on Research England and the other on UKRI's Integrated Governance, Risk and Assurance Framework (IGRAF)) and the limited assurance rating assigned to estate management. Ruwan also highlighted that ARAC had commenced preparatory work for the forthcoming Annual Report and Accounts.

3.6. Ruwan noted that a series of deep dives took place, including a deep dive into the NERC aviation assurance panel, which reviewed the robustness and applicability of current arrangements with the expectation of establishing an informed baseline. Research England also undertook a deep dive focusing on management assurance and risk.

3.7. The Board noted that outside the formal committee meetings, an accounting policy review session had been held, with outcomes due to be reported back shortly.

c) Board Investment Committee (BIC)

3.8. Priya Guha, Chair of BIC reported that the committee had not met since the last Board meeting but had received routine updates out of committee. Priya highlighted that the National Audit Office (NAO) report on research infrastructure was published on 12 March. The report recognised that UKRI had implemented most of their recommendations since 2016 for good prioritisation decisions on infrastructure investment. Priya explained that the report highlighted opportunities to address early-stage optimism bias in cost estimation of infrastructure projects, insufficient investment in the maintenance of facilities and the absence of a coherent approach to portfolio management. The Board noted that BIC is expected to play a key role in advancing whole life infrastructure portfolio management across all of UKRI's infrastructure instruments.

3.9. Priya noted that BIC will meet in April to consider the NAO report in detail, as well as updates on the Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF), oversight of large-scale infrastructure risks, the National Infrastructure Roadmap and the overall portfolio position. The committee will also review the business case for the National Cryogenics Facility.

d) Growth Committee

3.10. Nigel Toon, Chair of Growth Committee, updated the Board on the meeting held on 4 March 2026. The committee discussed the strategic direction of Innovate UK ahead of the Board discussion later in the agenda.

3.11. The Board noted the ongoing discussions on UKRI's Intellectual Property (IP) portfolio, specifically how IP is tracked and how mechanisms might be strengthened to anchor IP within the UK. The committee also considered the deepening of university-investor connections, drawing on the recent review undertaken by Tony Hickson.

3.12. Nigel noted that a broader discussion regarding the future of the Growth Committee and its objectives took place. The committee noted the high level of Board engagement and its cross-cutting importance to UKRI and discussed whether the topics would be better included on the main agenda. The committee agreed that the final decision should be taken by the incoming Chair, noting that accommodating the committee's remit within already full Board agendas may be challenging.

4. CEO (Accounting Officer) Update

4.1. Ian presented his CEO update to the Board, including highlighting the growing external pressures facing UKRI and the importance of visible Board support.

4.2. Ian noted that the Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF) process has been significantly compressed in response to government requests. UKRI must finalise the process shortly and submit recommendations to ministers, with a decision expected by 24 March 2026.

4.3. Ian updated the Board on the ongoing work to review governance arrangements for Centres, Units and Institutes. The review is expected to deliver a clear set of future options and levers. The Board acknowledged that UKRI holds both the financial and reputational risk in these areas.

4.4. <withheld from publication>

ACTION: Ian Chapman will update the Board on the REF gateway review at the next meeting.

5. CFO Update

5.1. Juliette Meek updated the Board on highlights in the following areas

- **Costing model -** The Board noted that work on the direct and indirect cost model has progressed, with UKRI agreeing policy principles with the Treasury and the team will continue to work with DSIT on cost-transparency elements of the overhead model.

- **IR35 Compliance -** Juliette highlighted that UKRI continues to work with government auditors on IR35 compliance, with findings feeding into the Annual Report and Accounts. The Board noted that a working group, chaired by Juliette Meek and Gemma Bailey, has been established to monitor implementation and assurance.

- **Geopolitical risk –** Juliette updated the Board on ongoing work with security and resilience colleagues regarding implications of current global conflicts. The Board noted that Mike Baker (UKRI Chief of Operational Delivery) is leading work to assess operational and grant-related impacts and determine mitigations for the organisation.

- <withheld from publication>

5.2. Ian Chapman highlighted the excellent work being undertaken by Juliette and the UKRI Finance team, noting that UKRI is due to land within 1% of its budget.

6. Shaping our Future – Case for Change

6.1. <withheld from publication>

6.2. <withheld from publication>

6.3. <withheld from publication>

6.4. <withheld from publication>

6.5. <withheld from publication>

6.6. <withheld from publication>

7. UKRI's Framework for Performance: Quarter 3 Progress and Performance Report

7.1. Dan Shah introduced the Q3 Progress and Performance Report, noting that this is a transition year as UKRI moves towards a refreshed performance framework aligned with new Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) and the emerging refreshed Strategy.

7.2. The Board discussed ongoing challenges with data completeness and quality, including issues that have previously been raised at the UKRI Growth Committee such as the reported decline in spinouts. The Board noted that a new UKRI Data Officer has now been appointed and that there is significant opportunity to improve data collection and analysis, which is a priority for the organisation.

7.3. Members thanked the team for the work undertaken, noting this was the first instance of reporting through the new format.

8. Key results for 2026-27

8.1. Dan Shah introduced the proposed Key Results (KRs) for 2026–27. Dan thanked the Corporate Performance Team for their work in establishing a single delivery plan and ensuring the OKRs form an integral part of UKRI's management framework. The Board noted the extensive iteration undertaken, incorporating feedback from both the Board and Executive Committee.

8.2. The Board discussed two themes referenced earlier in the meeting, organisational transformation and the use of AI, and agreed that early articulation of these priorities within the KRs is important. The Board agreed that the absence of explicit reference to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within the proposed KRs was a concern, highlighting the importance of UKRI using its influence to drive improvements in EDI considerations.

8.3. The Board observed that the Key Results are not drafted consistently, and would welcome further work to standardise language.

ACTION: Dan Shah to incorporate OKRs revisions in line with comments made by the Board by end of April 2026.

DECISION: The Board approved the Key Results for 2026–27, subject to the modifications discussed.

9. UKRI IS8 Programme Deep Dive – Artificial Intelligence

9.1. Charlotte Deane introduced the deep dive on Artificial Intelligence (AI), noting that UKRI's approach to AI reflects the organisation's complexity. She emphasised that there is currently no uniform model for how UKRI should engage with AI, and that the requirements for AI internally differ significantly from the requirements associated with AI research and innovation.

9.2. The Board noted that Government interest in this area is substantial, but there is currently no complete view of UKRI's total investment in AI. Charlotte highlighted that this would continue to evolve as the landscape develops.

9.3. The Board highlighted several major risks, including the risk of fragmentation of effort across the system and significant constraints around compute capacity. Uneven uptake of AI across disciplines and teams was highlighted as a further barrier to progress.

9.4. The Board raised concerns about resource constraints given the scale of the AI portfolio. Charlotte confirmed that efforts are underway to understand capacity, ensure coherence and highlight opportunities for staff movement to support future needs.

9.5. Board members commented on the challenge of steering an AI strategy within a rapidly changing environment, suggesting that the AI landscape operates at a pace that is incompatible with traditional procedural cycles. Members encouraged consideration of mechanisms to support UKRI AI-related activities more efficiently and at pace.

10. UKRI IS8 Programme Deep Dive - Creative Industries

10.1. Christopher Smith introduced the deep dive on Creative Industries. The Board noted that UKRI acts as the sponsoring department for R&D in the creative industries and the programme continues to build on the five strategic pillars that have underpinned UKRI's work to date, including skills development, scaling capability and strengthening industry links.

10.2. The Board discussed the role of Convergent Screen Technologies And performance in Realtime (CoSTAR) network within the programme and noted the substantial value delivered through its national lab model, including high quality facilities, advanced gaming capacity and the UK's most significant screen-based infrastructure. Members reflected on the importance of capitalising on the sector's rapidly growing pipeline and ensuring continued alignment between CoSTAR and the wider Creative Industries programme.

10.3. The Board welcomed plans to move into a new phase of aggregated data analysis to provide a more complete picture. Members also noted the EDI implications set out in the paper and that the Programme Director intends to introduce new approaches to panel composition to improve diversity and broaden participation.

10.4. The Board highlighted the importance of close collaboration with the AI programme, including forthcoming AI sandpits involving humanities expertise. The Board noted the strategic risk of divergence between AI and Creative Industries programmes and welcomed the growing mutual representation between the two programme boards.

11. International Prioritisation

11.1. The Board received an update on the development of UKRI's international prioritisation framework. The purpose of the work is to establish an evidence-based set of priorities that reflects UKRI's delivery capacity and strategic direction, while ensuring alignment with wider government objectives.

11.2. The Board discussed the draft classification and noted the value it may provide to the research community. Ian Chapman emphasised the need for UKRI to maintain its own organisational judgement, noting that some countries may be strategically important in specific domains even if their overall classification differs. The Board agreed that councils would retain the ability to pursue priorities in countries not included on the central list where appropriate.

11.3. The Board also considered the practical implications of the new framework. Country plans will remain bespoke but will draw on existing relationships and partnerships, ensuring continuity while providing a clearer strategy for future engagement.

DECISION: The Board approved the proposed international prioritisation approach.

12. Framework to assess value for money of association to Horizon Europe

12.1. The Board received an update on early work to develop a framework for assessing the value for money of potential future association to Horizon Europe. The purpose of the framework is to support UKRI in providing clear, evidence-based advice to DSIT, recognising that decisions on association will be a government decision.

12.2. Board members noted that the paper represents an initial attempt to structure the assessment and that further refinement will be required. The framework aims to highlight where the approach is most informative and where additional evidence or clarity is needed. The Board acknowledged that this exercise has already helped to identify important gaps in UKRI's understanding of benefits, costs and participation patterns.

12.3. The Board discussed the need to differentiate between benefits to the research community and benefits to business, recognising that the relevant metrics and expected outcomes differ across these domains.

13. Strategic framework for Innovate UK

13.1. The Board received the proposed Strategic Framework for Innovate UK, which had previously been considered by the Growth Committee and circulated to Board members in advance of the meeting for comment.

13.2. Tom Adeyoola thanked the Board for the extensive feedback provided throughout the development process. He noted that a significant amount of stakeholder engagement and socialisation had been required to maintain clarity of purpose while accommodating a broad set of perspectives. Tom agreed to share lines to take and a press release with the Board.

13.3. Tom highlighted that the main challenge he faces is the need to ensure sufficient operational capacity, particularly in light of leadership changes. The Board thanked Tom for his work on developing the strategic direction and associated prospectus, noting that the framework exceeded the Board's expectations. Alex Jones added her thanks and confirmed that DSIT intends to support the launch of the prospectus in their planned communications.

ACTION: Tom Adeyoola to share lines to take and press release with the Board ahead of the next meeting.

DECISION: The Board approved the Strategic Framework for Innovate UK.

14. AOB

14.1. The Board noted they would welcome a discussion at a future meeting on the plan for AI adoption within UKRI.

14.2. The Board **approved** the resolution to appoint three new authorised signatories who can execute legal documents and validate the seal on behalf of the legacy MRC.

14.3. The Board noted the following:

- UKRI Finance Update
- External Affairs and Communications Audience Report
- Executive Committee minutes – 16 December 2025 and 27 January 2026
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee minutes – 2 February 2026
- Growth Committee minutes - 16 January 2026

15. Non-Executive Session