Item: 2.1
Paper: 2627-B026
Approved by UKRI Board: 15 July 2026
Author: UKRI Secretariat

APPROVED Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 13 May 2026
Location: University of Sunderland, Sunderland
Time: 9:00am – 4:30pm

Board Members and Observers	
Nigel Toon (Chair, deputising for Andrew Mackenzie)	Nola Hewitt-Dundas
Ian Chapman (UKRI CEO)	Russell Schofield-Bezer
Annie Callanan - via Teams	Ruwan Weerasekera
Rita Dhut	Jane Norman
Alexandra Jones (DSIT) *until 3pm*	

Attendees	
Juliette Meek (UKRI Finance Director) (deputising for Siobhan Peters)	Gemma Bailey (UKRI Chief People Officer)
Hugh Harris (UKRI Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy)	Christine Ashton (UKRI Chief Information Officer)
Poli Stuart Lacey (UKRI Chief of External Affairs) *until 2.45pm*	Charlotte Deane (EPSRC Exec Chair) *until 2pm*
UKRI Transformation Director – for items 6 to 12	Jessica Corner (Research England Exec Chair) *from lunch*
Deputy Director of Strategy, Insights and Sponsorship - for item 7	Interim Head of Corporate Strategy and Sponsorship – for item 7
Corporate Planning Lead - for item 7	Corporate Strategy Lead – for item 7
Strategy and Planning Lead - for item 7	IS-8 Programme Director – ACT/Semiconductors/Cyber - for item 9
IS-8 Programme Director – National Security and Defence - for item 10	Head of Risk & Assurance - for item 12
Director, UKRI Place Programme - for item 13	

Apologies	
Siobhan Peters, CFO	Andrew Mackenzie (Chair)
Deborah Bull	Priya Guha

Secretariat	
UKRI Secretariat Lead	UKRI Secretariat
UKRI Chair's Private Secretary	

1. **Welcome and Introductions**
   1.1. Nigel Toon welcomed members to the Board meeting and noted apologies from Andrew Mackenzie, Siobhan Peters, Deborah Bull and Priya Guha. The Secretariat noted that the Board remained quorate.

2. **a) Minutes of 18 March 2026 UKRI Board meeting; b) Action Log; and c) Forward Schedule**

DECISION: The Board approved the minutes of 18 March 2026 meeting.

   2.1. The Board noted the action log. They were satisfied with progress towards closing open actions. The Board requested action B.2025.36 is kept open until a formal update can be shared with the Board following discussion at Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

   2.2. The Board noted the forward schedule and were invited to suggest future agenda items. Members reflected on the structure of the Board agenda, the ordering of items and highlighted the importance of ensuring there is enough time to talk about strategic items.

   2.3. The Board commented on the need to ensure future outreach events include and focus on the overlapping relationships between academia, industry and government.

   2.4. Nigel Toon and Russel Schofield-Bezer noted new conflicts of interest.

ACTION: Nigel Toon and Russell Schofield-Bezer will have updated their Declarations of Interest on the UKRI register by end of May 2026.

3. **Board Committee Updates**
   a) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)
   3.1. Ruwan Weerasekera, Chair of ARAC, provided an update to the Board on the meeting held on 30 March 2026. Ruwan highlighted that the Committee received an update on the progress of the UKRI Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) for 2025-26

   3.2. Ruwan noted that the DSIT ARAC Chair "buddy system", which had been in place for the past 18 months, had concluded as intended. Members noted ongoing engagement with DSIT ARAC would continue through the ARAC Chairs' Network.

   3.3. The Board was informed that there are no significant audit issues to report in relation to ERP, with assurance work continuing in the background. It was also noted that the next ARAC meeting, scheduled for 8 June 2026, will include an outreach visit to The Francis Crick Institute.

   b) Board Investment Committee (BIC)
   3.4. Annie Callanan updated the Board following the meeting on 23 April 2026. It was noted that the committee had a productive discussion on the planned business case for the National Cryogenics facility, with discussion focusing on commercial viability, as well as supply chain risks. Annie also highlighted that the committee received an update from the UKRI Director for Place on the Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF), highlighting the importance of strong coordination between national and local boards, the establishment of seven ministerially earmarked places, and the mobilisation of the delivery team.

4. **CEO (Accounting Officer) Update**
    4.1. The Board thanked Ian Chapman for his written CEO update to the Board. Ian shared key updates with the Board, including highlighting the development of a pipeline of activity which will highlight all future funding opportunities in one place. The aim is to publish the pipeline on the UKRI website.

    4.2. Ian drew the Board’s attention to the live recruitment campaign for the Chief Finance Officer and provided a progress update on the campaigns to recruit a Chief Development Officer and a Chief Programme Officer. The Board noted that interviews are due to be held in June.

    4.3. Ian highlighted the exceptional work undertaken by the UKRI finance team and thanked Juliette Meek for ensuring the outturn to budget was closed within less than one percent.

    4.4. The Board discussed further areas, including upcoming parliamentary engagements, REF preparedness, publication of UKRI’s objectives and key results (OKRs), and evolving work on Intellectual Property expectations in grant terms and conditions.

5. **CFO Update**
    5.1. Juliette Meek updated the Board on behalf of the UKRI Chief Finance Officer. This included an update on contingent labour arrangements, including understanding the implications of IR35 tax rules.

    5.2. The Board noted that no security incidents had been reported, and Juliette highlighted that an incident response team had been established to monitor the operational and financial implications of the ongoing conflict involving Iran. The Board noted that no significant adjustments have been required, but that the position continues to be monitored.

    5.3. Juliette highlighted that the new UKRI values were launched in April, with activity underway to embed them across the organisation.

6. **Shaping Our Future**
    6.1. The UKRI Transformation Director provided an update, confirming that the Shaping Our Future (SoF) programme coordinates all change activity across UKRI <withheld from publication>

    6.2. <withheld from publication>

    6.3. The Board queried how it could effectively add value to the transformation programme and encouraged the team to develop a process for the Board to monitor progress and measure success. Ian Chapman committed to providing regular monthly updates to the Board.

ACTION: From July, Ian Chapman and the UKRI Transformation Director will have begun sharing a monthly ‘Shaping our Future’ progress update with the UKRI Board.

    6.4. Members emphasised the need for greater visibility of timelines, costs, potential benefits and a clearly defined communications strategy, including stakeholder engagement. The Board agreed that the team will return to the July meeting with a detailed timeline of planned activity, an outline of key risks and associated mitigations and a detailed communication plan. The Board highlighted their ability to advocate for UKRI transformation and welcomed guidance on how they should communicate with stakeholders on this topic.

ACTION: The UKRI Transformation Director will provide suggested lines to take for the Board ahead of sharing wider communications with staff and wider stakeholders

7. UKRI Strategy 2026-2031 and UKRI single Delivery Plan 2026-2027

7.1. Hugh Harris introduced the refreshed UKRI Strategy and single Delivery Plan and noted that the team has progressed development of these documents supported by a range of internal and external engagement, including with DSIT and HM Treasury.

7.2. The Board welcomed the overall direction and clarity of the strategy but suggested improvements to flow, tone, and overall length. Members noted a gap between high-level ambition and measurable delivery, highlighting the need for clearer links between OKRs and strategic outcomes, including how progress will be monitored and managed over time. Members discussed the importance of defining success metrics and ensuring alignment between the five-year strategy and one-year delivery plan, with further work requested to strengthen this link.

7.3. The Board emphasised the need for a clear and accessible communications approach, including a concise shorter summary which could be published alongside the documents. The team noted that ahead of final publication the documents will be proofread to ensure consistency of language and tone. The Board noted the importance of clearly articulating return on investment, stakeholder engagement and alignment with wider frameworks.

ACTION: Hugh Harris will have developed a set of metrics for measuring progress and evaluating success of UKRI's performance against the five-year strategy, the mission and objectives by the July Board.

8. UKRI People Strategy and Delivery Plan

8.1. Gemma Bailey presented the UKRI People Strategy, noting that it is a key enabler of the wider organisational strategy, with a strong focus on addressing existing gaps and supporting delivery of the new mission. The Board discussed the document as primarily internally focused, with delivery overseen through the People and Workforce Planning Committee. The Board welcomed the prioritisation that has been set out in the document, but noted that clearer, more defined timelines would be beneficial. The importance of accountability sitting across all leaders was highlighted.

8.2. Gemma explained the proposed operating model of a unified HR function with business partners embedded across the organisation. The dependencies on the SoF programme were discussed and acknowledged. The Board also discussed engagement with Trade Unions, plans for more regular pulse surveys, and the importance of ensuring language in the strategy is inclusive and appropriate. The Board agreed that success measures should be clearly linked to organisational performance outcomes.

9. UKRI IS-8 Programme Deep Dive: Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT), Semiconductors, and Cyber Deep Dive

9.1. Charlotte Deane introduced a deep dive on the Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT), Semiconductors and Cyber priority programme. It was noted that, while these areas have historically been grouped within a single programme, they are not fully integrated and are operating at differing levels of maturity.

9.2. The Board discussed the increasing complexity of the Semiconductors programme, highlighting growing external pressures, particularly in relation to AI hardware. Members noted the rising strategic importance of this area, including recent engagement from the Secretary of State seeking clarity on UKRI's approach. The absence of additional funding flexibility was recognised as a constraint, alongside the need to better support UK industry in a rapidly evolving landscape. The Board also considered governance arrangements, including the existence of a separate Semiconductors Board, and reflected on whether this remains the most effective structure.

9.3. The Board raised questions on programme coherence, delivery frameworks and performance measurement, including how success will be assessed against the overall £700 million ambition. Members noted that Monitoring and Evaluation processes will play a key role in providing this clarity over time. The Board also discussed the need for clearer reporting, including the potential for dashboard-style updates to support oversight.

9.4. Members reflected on the dynamic nature of the portfolio. The importance of agility was emphasised, including the ability to reallocate funding in response to emerging priorities.

9.5. The Board highlighted the importance of trusted research in this space and the need to balance openness with risk management. Members also discussed challenges in engaging larger industry players, particularly in Semiconductors. Finally, the Board noted the importance of improving access to support and resources for researchers and innovators, including clearer signposting and stronger mechanisms for knowledge sharing and technology transfer across institutions.

10. UKRI IS-8 Programme Deep Dive: National Security and Defence

10.1. Charlotte Deane introduced a deep dive on the National Security and Defence priority programme. It was noted that this is a comparatively less mature area within IS-8, having only recently emerged as a coherent programme. Members recognised that some of the most sensitive and strategically significant activity in this space will sit outside the remit of the Programme Board, reinforcing the importance of strong alignment with wider activity across government and UKRI.

10.2. The Board highlighted the value of the Programme Board as a forum for information sharing, stakeholder alignment and testing delivery progress, while noting that it currently functions as a necessary coordinating mechanism rather than a fully mature delivery tool.

10.3. Members highlighted the importance of balancing trusted research with international collaboration, alongside recognition that large-scale investments will often involve political decision-making. The Board expressed broad support for the programme's direction, while stressing the need for clearer approaches to tracking impact, strengthening investment prioritisation and improving articulation of return on investment.

11. UKRI External Affairs and Communication Plan and Priorities 2026-2027

11.1. Poli Stuart-Lacey introduced the UKRI External Affairs and Communications Plan and Priorities for 2026–27, noting that this phase will pilot a more consolidated and consistent approach, with a subsequent phase focused on embedding and scaling delivery. The Board noted the current fragmented nature of communications and the ambition to move towards a more coherent model. Recent place-based pilots in Swindon and Sheffield were highlighted as examples of how national investments can be translated into locally relevant stories. The Board also noted plans to strengthen partnership working, including the establishment of a Science Communications Board, closer alignment of public engagement activity, and a more structured approach to stakeholder engagement and narrative development.

11.2. The Board discussed the proposed operating model, including the need to build capability, make greater use of AI and rationalise UKRI's public engagement activity into a more coordinated community with clear objectives. Members welcomed the focus on impact measurement, including the development of monthly tracking metrics, and noted the relatively low-cost delivery of recent campaigns.

11.3. The Board provided a range of reflections on the approach, including the importance of partnerships beyond UKRI and the need to balance public engagement with stakeholder-focused brand building. Members discussed how best to raise UKRI's profile, particularly among government, stakeholders and investors, and questioned how success should be defined across different audiences. The Board also highlighted the need for a more proactive and agile approach to narrative development, including responding to misinformation and maximising opportunities to promote UKRI's impact.

12. UKRI Board Risks Update – May 2026

12.1. The Board approved the risk update for May 2026 and noted the development of Trusted Research and Innovation risk, reflecting the evolving geopolitical landscape. The Board welcomed the level of detail provided and noted that the Shaping our Future (SoF) risk continues to have a cross-cutting impact on all principal risks. It was recognised that, over the longer term, a number of risks are likely to move outside of appetite during the period of significant organisational transformation

12.2. The Board discussed how risk is being managed and prioritised as the landscape evolves, noting previous limitations in systems and data, and the introduction of improved controls and oversight. Members highlighted the importance of understanding aggregated risks and maintaining clarity over mitigation strategies, particularly in relation to transformation and financial sustainability.

12.3. Members queried the accuracy and timeliness of risk data, including flight paths and the scheduling of deep-dives, noting that some reviews are overdue and that greater transparency in reporting would be beneficial. The Board agreed that this should be clearly reflected in future papers. The Board also noted forthcoming National Audit Office and Parliamentary Affairs Committee activity, with assurance that updates will be provided, including verbal or out of committee updates to members where timing does not allow for full written consideration.

13. Local Innovation Partnership Fund Deep Dive

13.1. The Board considered the Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF) deep dive and noted the strong progress made in delivering a high-profile ministerial priority. The Board recognised that LIPF represents a distinct and increasingly important role for UKRI, focused on place-based innovation clusters and co-creation with local partners. Members highlighted that delivery has been more resource-intensive than initially anticipated, requiring significant on-the-ground engagement to build capability, governance structures and partnerships. The Board acknowledged this as a cultural shift for UKRI and noted the need for strategic decisions on resourcing if this model is to be sustained and scaled.

13.2. The Board discussed the programme's current position as it transitions from development into delivery, noting that LIPF has demonstrated clear added value. Members emphasised the importance of maintaining quality and coherence in the context of wider system pressures and a growing funding envelope. Members welcomed ongoing work to capture lessons learned, including case studies and evaluation activity, and highlighted the importance of stress-testing priority areas and embedding learning into future programme design. The Board also noted varying expectations across local partners, particularly in relation to governance arrangements post-award, and the need to ensure clarity and consistency in approach.

13.3. The Board noted that UKRI retains full accountability for funding and delivery, and underlined the need to maintain robust oversight, including the ability to monitor performance closely.

14. AOB

14.1. The Board noted that UKRI had received a letter from the Secretary of State requesting an overview of UKRI's investments in artificial intelligence, including a summary of current activity and UKRI's input into emerging opportunities relating to AI hardware.

14.2. The Board noted the following:

- UKRI Finance Update – 2025/26 Period 12
- UKRI External Affairs and Communications Audience Report
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report to Board 2025/26
- Board Investment Committee Report to Board
- Update on Public and Senior Succession and Appointments
- UKRI Board Investment Committee minutes – 23 April 2026
- UKRI Executive Committee minutes – 24 February 2026 and 31 March 2026

15. Non-Executive Session