UK Research and Innovation

Approved by UKRI Board: 16 September 2026
Author: UKRI Secretariat

Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 15 July 2026
Location: 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London
Time: 9:00am – 5:00pm

Board Members	
Andrew Mackenzie (Chair)	Nola Hewitt-Dundas
Ian Chapman (UKRI CEO)	Russell Schofield-Bezer
Annie Callanan	Ruwan Weerasekera
Rita Dhut	Jane Norman
Alexandra Jones (DSIT)	Priya Guha
Siobhan Peters (UKRI CFO), for items 1-10	

Attendees	
Juliette Meek (UKRI Finance Director) (deputising for Siobhan Peters)	Anne Ferguson Smith (BBSRC Exec Chair)
Daniel Shah (UKRI Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy)	Poli Stuart Lacey (UKRI Chief of External Affairs and Communications)

Observers	
Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz (incoming UKRI Chair)	Anna King (incoming UKRI Board member)

Item Only Presenters	
Item 5	UKRI Deputy Director Funding Services ESRC Executive Director of Research and Strategy
Item 7	UKRI Transformation Director
Item 8	UKRI Head of Risk
Item 9	UKRI Deputy Director, Planning, Performance and Evaluation UKRI Head of Corporate Planning and Performance UKRI Corporate Performance Lead UKRI Planning and Performance Specialist
Item 10	Director of Enterprise Platforms
Item 11	Head of UKRI Research Sustainability Policies UKRI Deputy Director of Strategy, Insights and Sponsorship

Apologies	
Nigel Toon, Board member	

Secretariat and CEO Private Office	
UKRI Secretariat Lead	UKRI Secretariat Manager
UKRI Chair's Private Secretary	

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1. **Welcome and Introductions**
    1.1. Andrew Mackenzie welcomed members to the Board meeting and introduced Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz as the incoming UKRI Chair following today's meeting and Anna King as a new member of the Board with effect from September 2026, both of whom were attending as observers.

    1.2. Apologies were noted from Nigel Toon. There were no new declarations of interest made.

2. **Committee Administration**
    2.1. The Minutes of 13 May 2026 UKRI Board meeting were **approved.**

    2.2. The Minutes of the Extraordinary UKRI Board meeting on 1 July 2026 were **approved.**

    2.3. The Board noted the Action Log and agreed to close actions **2025.28, 2025.36, 2025.43, 2627.01, 2627.03** and **2627.04** as complete or included in today's agenda. Members were satisfied with the progress of the open actions not yet due.

    2.4. Members noted the Forward Schedule.

DECISION: The Board approved the Minutes of 13 May and 1 July 2026

3. **Board Committee Updates**

    a) Nominations and Remunerations Committee (NomCo)

    3.1. Andrew Mackenzie, Chair of NomCo, updated members on the meeting of 14 July 2026. The Committee received an update from the Chief People Officer who highlighted the current Capita backlog and potential risks and impacts, shared details of the UKRI Pay Award and advised that the workstream for pay harmonisation would commence in autumn 2026.

    3.2. Members were updated on public and senior appointments, ratified the Senior Civil Service Pay Award, and approved Principles for UKRI's Delegated Pay Award 2026, the Senior Performance Related Pay 2025/26 and the CEO Performance Related Pay 2025/26.

    b) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

    3.3. Ruwan Weerasekera, Chair of ARAC, reported on the five meetings held since May Board. He noted that the 2025/26 UKRI Annual Report and Accounts had been laid pre-recess, along with the accounts of Innovate UK Loans Limited, the Medical Research Council (MRC) legacy accounts and the Regional Council Pension Scheme, conveying thanks for the tremendous efforts of all involved. The ARAC had received a teach-in with the UKRI Finance Director in preparation.

    3.4. To address Board Action 2025.36, members were advised of ongoing engagement with the DSIT ARAC Chairs' Forum. ARAC now receives a regular UKRI dashboard for oversight.

    3.5. The ARAC held its 8 June 2026 meeting and annual outreach visit at the Francis Crick Institute which provided valuable insight into an institute receiving majority UKRI funding. The Committee was taken through an MRC deep dive by Patrick Chinnery, Executive Chair. At the July ARAC meeting the Committee will receive a deep dive into the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).

c) Board Investment Committee (BIC)

3.6. Priya Guha, Chair of BIC, updated the Board on the meeting of 16 June 2026. Updates were received about the John Innes Centre, generating discussion regarding how to think about demand and success criteria and ROI for institutes, and the European Spallation Source. The Committee was pleased to hear that UK had secured a cap on contributions and lessons learned would be shared for future business cases.

3.7. Members discussed procurement for the New National Supercomputer Service (NNSS), noting the importance of balancing appropriate governance with need for speed.

3.8. The BIC discussed the scope for a deep dive into Digital and Data for its October meeting and received its standing Strategic Investment and Major Projects updates. The Committee suggested it might be a useful forum to support decision making for decommissioning and ongoing large investment going forward. This would be discussed with the incoming Chair.

d) Growth Committee

3.9. Members noted that the July Growth Committee meeting had been cancelled.

4. CEO (Accounting Officer) Update

4.1. Ian Chapman shared key updates with the Board, highlighting close work with DSIT on key investment decisions and a proactive communications and engagement strategy following external evaluation and publication of the UKRI Strategy 2026-31.

4.2. The Board noted risk associated with the REF and the planned workflow and discussed targets for grant processing times. Members heard about implementation of the UKRI Hybrid Working Policy, the geographical spread of its workforce and the status of recruitment for senior appointments.

5. Managing Grant Application Volume

5.1. Following detailed discussions between the Board and the Executive Committee on 14 July 2026, Andrew Mackenzie summarised the impact to grant management resources caused by the surge in volume of grant applications facilitated by artificial intelligence.

5.2. The impact to UKRI is not unique but members agreed that UKRI is well-placed to show leadership in this area and discussion will be ongoing with the incoming Chair. Real-time monitoring and Board oversight will be needed to track impacts to EDI and other considerations.

6. CFO Update

6.1. Juliette Meek updated the Board on behalf of the UKRI Chief Finance Officer, reporting that there had been no security incidents since the last Board meeting. The incident response team established to monitor operational and financial impacts of geopolitical conflicts has been closed.

6.2. The Board was informed of ongoing work on IR35, Trusted Research and Innovation, and increasing complexity from public procurement reporting requirements. Two procurement notes were issued in June 2026 and members sought clarification on whether changing procurement policies are applicable to research grants.

ACTION B.2627.06: UKRI Finance Director will have clarified how procurement policies apply to research grants

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7. Shaping our Future

7.1. The UKRI Transformation Director provided an update, confirming that progress has continued across programme mobilisation, development of the operating model, communications and stakeholder engagement. Actions relating to programme finances and communications have been completed.

7.2. The Board noted the programme timeline and risk information provided and endorsed the proposed approach as the basis for consultation readiness. Members encouraged the use of internal audit controls across the programme and clarified future Board engagement. A monthly progress report will be provided by the Shaping our Future Programme Board for oversight and any emerging risks, issues or opportunities outside of the scope previously approved by the Board will be brought for discussion.

7.3. Poli Stuart-Lacey, UKRI Chief of External Affairs and Communications, provided details of the associated communications plan for the transformation work and agreed to share the updated stakeholder engagement plan with the Board. Members were keen to ensure wide understanding of the transformation activity being undertaken and DSIT reinforced that research and innovation are integral to achieving government priorities.

DECISION: The Board endorsed the proposed approach as the basis for consultation readiness and the proposed approach for Board oversight

ACTION B.2627.07: Poli Stuart-Lacey, (UKRI Chief of External Affairs and Communications) will have shared the updated stakeholder engagement plan with the Board

8. UKRI Executive Accountability Exercise (including Risk Deep Dive update)

8.1. **Juliette Meek and UKRI Head of Risk** presented the quarterly update on Board level risks, supported by a summary of principal risk deep dives and the outcomes of the 2025-26 Executive Accountability Exercise.

8.2. The Board discussed the principal risk deep dives and was assured that the Executive Committee (ExCo) subcommittees are working well to effectively engage the first line of defence across all areas. The UKRI CFO is the risk owner for a number of organisational risks and members sought clarity of ownership following Siobhan Peters' departure.

8.3. The Board discussed the risk ratings and emphasised the potential benefits and value creation from proactive deployment of strategic tech and use of data. They encouraged clear visibility of risks should there be limited progression in this area and a high-level review of risks to be undertaken with the incoming UKRI Chair.

8.4. Members discussed and ratified the outcomes and recommendations from the Executive Accountability Exercise and noted the approach to identification of the second and third line of defence activity required across the control framework.

DECISION: The Board ratified the outcomes and recommendations from the Executive Accountability Exercise.

9. UKRI Framework for Performance 2025-26 Q4 report

9.1. Dan Shah, Chief of Investment Strategy and Performance, introduced the Quarter 4 Progress and Performance Report, which tracks delivery of UKRI's 2022-27 Transforming Tomorrow Together strategy and agreed key measures for 2025-26.

9.2. The Board discussed the updated performance measures and end of year Key Results review, noting improvements.

9.3. Members requested the development of a corollary quality metric to ensure quality is not compromised in pursuit of reducing grant processing times.

ACTION: B.2627.08: Dan Shah / Hugh Harris will have identified a quality metric for monitoring potential impacts of reduced grant processing times

10. UKRI–UKSBS Operating Model: ERP Platform Ownership and Future Service Model

10.1. Siobhan Peters, Chief Finance Officer, shared the Executive Committee decision to progress development for a Co-Managed Model as the preferred operating model for the relationship between UKRI and UKSBS. She outlined the rationale for that decision and its strategic, financial and workforce implications.

10.2. In developing the business case, which will refine costs, implementation arrangements, workforce impacts and governance, members clarified the risk, the process for system testing and the direction of travel for Innovate UK.

10.3. The Chair noted that the proposed new model will be subject to a successful Outline Business Case, which would empower UKRI to deliver with the appropriate care

11. Institute Governance Review Update

11.1. Anne Ferguson-Smith, BBSRC Executive Chair, introduced the findings of a UKRI review of governance across its portfolio of Centres, Institutes, Catapults and Units ("Institutes" hereon in). The review assessed risks associated with current arrangements and identified a set of actions to ensure strategic alignment of Institutes to UKRI's objectives and mitigate delivery risks. Institutes must deliver a national capability and members were informed of close work with the National Research Organisation (NRO) to improve engagement.

11.2. The Board discussed financial liability, operating models, the nature of UKRI support, equity of access and regional distribution of facilities, noting that UKRI representation in governance isn't linked to level of funding received.

11.3. Members reflected on the aspirations sought and were keen to understand how progress would be monitored, requesting greater clarity and association in the depiction of risk.

ACTION: B.2627.09: Anne Ferguson-Smith will have shared the ExCo paper annex providing details of the Institute Governance Review assessments

12. UKRI IS-8 Programme Deep Dive: Agri-tech

12.1. Anne Ferguson-Smith provided an overview of the emerging IS-8 Agri-Tech Programme, setting out the strategic context, progress to date, forward plans and key risks identified.

12.2. The Board noted that the central International team is involved in the creation of aggregated country plans being developed which will clarify outcomes sought and determine the approach.

12.3. Members discussed the readiness of data sets to mobilise the application of artificial intelligence and the approach to building international relationships based on purposeful collaboration and heard how UKRI is actively seeking relevant regional and industry representation.

13. UKRI IS-8 Programme Deep Dive: Engineering Biology

13.1. Anne Ferguson-Smith introduced a deep dive into the Engineering Biology Programme, setting out its strategic intent, delivery model, progress to date and the principal risks and dependencies that will shape delivery. The programme represents a major cross-UKRI investment across the Spending Review period and is central to UKRI's contribution to the Government's Industrial Strategy and the National Vision for Engineering Biology.

13.2. The Board was informed about close work with DSIT to determine metrics and discussed investment for scale-up to underpin future economic growth and industrial transformation. Members commented on the strong connections and long-standing collaborations with Europe. UKRI will discuss its approach to European engagement with DSIT.

13.3. Members were interested in the technologies detailed and were advised that a regular review system will be established to identify and be responsive to emerging technologies.

14. Any other business

14.1. The Board noted the following:

- UKRI Finance Update – 2025/26 Period
- UKRI External Affairs and Communications Audience Report
- External Affairs and Communications Brand Refresh Project
- UKRI Annual Health and Safety Report Financial Year 2025/26
- UKRI Executive Committee minutes – May 2026

ACTION: B.2627.10: Poli Stuart-Lacey will have established and shared with the Board baseline measurement and benchmarked KPIs for the Brand Refresh project

14.2. Ian Chapman announced the appointment of an interim Chief Development Officer identified internally.

14.3. The Board and DSIT formally thanked Sir Andrew Mackenzie for his valuable contribution and leadership as UKRI Chair. Andrew thanked members for their service and kind words and closed the meeting, handing the Chair to Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz to lead a closed non-executive session.

15. Meeting Closed