



Minutes of the Joint UKRI Board & Executive Committee Meeting of 19th January 2021

Date: Tuesday 19th January 2021
 Time: 13:00-15:15
 Location: By Zoom

Board Members and Observers	
Sir John Kingman (Chair)	Fiona Driscoll
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser (UKRI, CEO)	Sir Harpal Kumar
Siobhan Peters (UKRI, CFO)	Professor Max Lu
Lord Browne	Vivienne Parry
Sir Peter Bazalgette	Professor Dame Sally Davies
Professor Julia Black	Professor Ian Diamond
Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz	Dr John Fingleton
Lord Willetts	
Executive Committee and Observers	
Christopher Smith (Exec Chair, AHRC)	Duncan Wingham (Exec Chair, NERC)
Melanie Welham (Exec Chair, BBSRC)	David Sweeney (Exec Chair, RE)
Lynn Gladden (Exec Chair, EPSRC)	Mark Thompson (Exec Chair, STFC)
Alison Park (Exec Chair, ESRC)	Isobel Stephen (UKRI, Exec Director)
Mike Biddle (Exec Chair, Innovate UK)	Mike Blackburn (UKRI, Interim COO)
Fiona Watt (Exec Chair, MRC)	Sue Donaldson (UKRI, CPO)
	Katrina Nevin-Ridley (UKRI)
Attendees	
Jo Shanmugalingam, BEIS	Rosie Cornelius (for item 2)
Alex Marsh	Caroline Batchelor (for item 2)
Karoline Vinsrygg (Egon Zehnder)	Freddie Jones (for item 3)
Sue Donaldson	Helen Cross (for Item 3)
Katrina Nevin Ridley	Karen Salt (for item 4)

Secretariat	
Hannah Berriman	Tim Russell
Zena Davis	Samantha Richardson

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. John Kingman welcomed Board and Executive Committee members to the joint session.
- 1.2. The Board noted that this would be Mike Blackburn and Alex Marsh's last Board meeting and thanked them for their work over the last few years.

2. Update on the new Performance Management Framework

- 2.1. Deputy Director of Analysis and Performance introduced the item, providing an update on progress to develop the new UKRI performance management framework and balanced scorecard. Rather than piloting the whole scorecard in quarter 3, the team will look at each measure individually and identify how they could be rolled out across future quarters, noting that not every measure will need to be collected at each quarter. The team emphasised that the measures were not a set of Key Performance Indicators.
- 2.2. The Board thanked the team for the clear update and provided comments on the proposed measures, including requesting;
 - greater emphasis on return on investment, noting this would be of interest to ministers
 - specific reference to the REF exercise, while noting that the REF concerns the wider UK R&I System, not just UKRI.
 - Additional work into identifying appropriate measures for looking at business, noting some of the traditional measures may be too narrow (eg. They should focus on whether we are delivering prosperity and growth). The Board recommended the team look at the innovation ecosystem and identify what supports or inhibits growth.
- 2.3. The Board raised concerns about the number of measures included, noting that this could potentially be overwhelming to those contributing and that we should be cautious with our level of ambition. The Board recommended that the framework focuses on a smaller number of measures in the first instance, identifying priorities for the coming year, noting the commitment to being a less bureaucratic organisation.
- 2.4. The Board acknowledged the measures would need to be a good balance between narrative and numbers, valuing both quantitative and qualitative data in order to give a rich picture. The Board agreed the framework should be manageable and sensible.

- 2.5. The Board emphasised the importance of highlighting when UKRI has worked closely with other organisations or government departments, noting that working in partnership is vital to the R&I ecosystem.
- 2.6. The Board noted that the Performance Framework is an evolutionary process, which will develop as we test and learn. The focus will be to develop a pragmatic and useful set of measures, which are not too burdensome on the organisation or community.

ACTION: Performance Framework, including more thinking on specific measures and priorities for the coming year, to be included on a future Board agenda.

3. UK R&D Places Strategy

- 3.1. David Sweeney, Executive Chair of Research England, introduced the item providing an update on the plans to publish a UK government R&D Places Strategy and highlighting the potential UKRI commitments. David highlighted that the strategy would focus on supporting stronger outcomes and impacts from R&D across the country, while identifying issues and developing a plan to overcome these. The Board noted that further engagement will be needed as we feed into the strategy, which will develop as we get steers from Government.
- 3.2. The Board acknowledged that there are a lot of unknowns regarding the strategy, but that we do have a direction of travel, noting the strategy was due to be shared with ministers shortly. The Board highlighted the need to be ambitious and to consider the long term. The Board also noted that this will be of great interest to the devolved administrations and will need to work closely with them as the strategy and the draft UKRI commitments develop.
- 3.3. The Board discussed the strategy and the draft UKRI commitments, making recommendations including;
 - Considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic noting that the significant impact on the higher education sector will likely affect the regional agenda.
 - Recognising UKRI's responsibility to build local partnerships, and noting how important those relationships are.
 - Leveraging the capabilities and knowledge in the research and innovation community to support R&D interventions to help the levelling up agenda
- 3.4. Individual members noted a number of points, including: the role of UKRI in supporting regional skills development (in partnership with others), ensuring the strategy helped to 'level up emerging places, not level down existing centres of excellence', thinking holistically about innovation, including adoption and diffusion as well as cutting edge development, and developing a clearer sense of how UKRI and the government could intervene differently in different places according to their strengths and potential.

- 3.5. The Board highlighted the importance of learning from successful and unsuccessful interventions and being the champion of rigorous thinking. The Board thanked David and team for the update and gave its endorsement for the direction of travel, acknowledging that things may need to move very quickly.

4. Trusted Research

- 4.1. Lynn Gladden, Executive Chair, introduced the item providing an update on Trusted Research and the potential organisational and reputational risks that UKRI may face. Karen Salt, Deputy Director of R&D Culture and Environment noted that UKRI is developing a programme to respond to these risks. The Board agreed that Trusted Research covered a wider range of issues and activities, including export controls, ethical research, intellectual property and information security. Concerns were raised that these issues had the potential to flare up and become problematic.
- 4.2. The Board noted that a Task Force had been established, with the aim of ensuring the knowledge in councils was captured and utilised in a collective way. Siobhan Peters is working closely with the Trusted Research work to ensure security concerns are embedded. The Board acknowledged that there was pressure from government regarding addressing Trusted Research issues, noting that potential legislation remains a key issue.
- 4.3. The Board agreed that Siobhan Peters (CFO) should act as Board level champion to work alongside Lynn Gladden (as SRO) to help steer and advise UKRI on cross-sector and cross government Trusted Research work. The Board also noted that it would be important to have a non-executive member retain oversight in case of reputational risk. Siobhan confirmed she would be happy to work with the Board as needed.

DECISION: Siobhan Peters to act as Board level champion for Trusted Research work, alongside support from non-executive members

ACTION: Board to identify a suitable Non-Exec champion to work alongside the CFO.

- 4.4. The Board acknowledged the importance of this area, and would welcome further discussion, including further information on detailed protocols and a more defined risk map.

ACTION: Trusted Research to be added on to a future Board agenda for further discussion.

5. AOB

- 5.1. The Board thanked the Executive Chairs for joining the session.

Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting of 20th January 2021

Date: Wednesday 20th January 2021
Time: 10:00-15:30
Location: By Zoom

Board Members and Observers	
Sir John Kingman (Chair)	Fiona Driscoll
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser	Sir Harpal Kumar
Siobhan Peters	Professor Max Lu
Lord Browne	Vivienne Parry
Sir Peter Bazalgette	Professor Dame Sally Davies
Professor Julia Black	Professor Ian Diamond
Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz	Dr John Fingleton
Lord Willetts	
Attendees	
Isobel Stephen (Exec Dir, UKRI)	Mark Thompson (for item 7)
Jo Shanmugalingam, BEIS	Bryony Butland (for item 7)
David Rogers (for item 5)	Fiona Watt (for item 8)
Karen Salt (for item 6)	Simon Page (Egon Zehnder) – am only
Rebecca Veitch (for item 6)	Satyajeet Thakur (Egon Zehnder) – pm only
Secretariat	
Hannah Berriman	Tim Russell
Zena Davis	Samantha Richardson

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1. John Kingman welcomed Board members to the meeting.

2. a) Minutes of 11th November 2020, b) Action Log and c) Forward Look

2.1. The Board approved the minutes and noted the Action Log and Forward Look without comment.

3. CEO Report

3.1. Ottoline updated the Board on a number of live issues not covered on the agenda, including;

3.1.1. Recent lockdown - Ottoline noted that discussions about the appropriate response to the latest lockdown are ongoing, noting that the new lockdown has

caused renewed issues for researchers in addition to the cumulative pressure on the system. Ottoline was keen to improve communications to the community. Ottoline reported that internal communications such as the regular Webinar and newsletter were keeping staff informed, whilst acknowledging that there is a lot of uncertainty across the organisation.

3.1.2. Innovate UK – Ottoline noted that the recruitment process for the permanent Executive Chair was moving forward and BEIS hoped to make an announcement shortly. The Board acknowledged the importance of ensuring communications to the R&I sector take account of the innovation and business community.

3.1.3. Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund – Ottoline noted we have received the draft National Audit Office (NAO) review. Engagement with the NAO has been very positive and the report highlights how well the Fund has generated interest from both industry and academia.

3.1.4. COVID-19 response – Ottoline noted she will act as Accounting Office for three of the National Core Studies project that are being driven by Patrick Vallance;

- Data and connectivity
- Longitudinal health and wellbeing
- Immunity

3.1.5. Talent – The Board noted the huge amount of interest from government in creating the right pipeline, looking to ensure the skills needed in the R&I community are developed. Ottoline reported there was an extraordinary demand to the Future Leaders Fellowship scheme and the team were putting a system in place to help support staff and reviewers. The Board noted the FLF scheme was very strong and supported both academics and those in industry.

3.1.6. International – Ottoline noted that the focus of the international team had been on developing alternatives to the EU schemes. With association it was important to ensure influence on the relevant governance structures, noting that the UK is currently not well represented. The Board commented that we will also need to galvanise the community to apply for European calls. BEIS noted that ensuring effective association with Horizon Europe was a priority and they will be developing a plan to facilitate this.

3.1.7. Communications – Jo Shanmugalingham noted the importance of ensuring UKRI and BEIS are joined up in terms of communications.

3.1.8. Transformative Technologies – Ottoline noted that Lynn Gladden (EPSRC) had brought together information about national strategies for a range of platform technologies under one heading, 'Transformative Technologies'. A generic framework to capture our research base and build strong pull through from, and adoption and diffusion across, the business and innovation landscape is being developed.

ACTION: Secretariat to share the Transformative Technologies papers with the Board.

3.1.9. The Board requested follow on discussions regarding the Industrial Strategy when more information becomes available. The Board noted that the arrival of the new Secretary of State will create space for exciting new things to happen, with a lot of focus on innovation. The Board also requested further discussions on sustainability of the wider research system, including looking at policies for schemes requiring matched funding.

ACTION: Industrial Strategy to be included on a future Board agenda for further discussion.

ACTION: Sustainability of Research and Innovation System to be added on to a future Board agenda.

4. CFO Report

4.1. Siobhan Peters presented the Chief Finance Officer's Report, which covers the period from 29th October 2020 to 7th January 2021.

4.2. The Board noted that Bronze, Silver and Gold business continuity teams have kept COVID-19 working arrangements under review as Government restrictions have changed. Siobhan noted that Bronze teams will work with HR and the comms team to ensure staff are getting the messages needed to feel supported during this time. The Board acknowledged that there is still a lot of uncertainty in this area and noted the position will be kept under constant review.

4.3. Siobhan noted that we are on track to deliver a year-end outturn that is within 1%, as per BEIS expectations. The Board noted this has been an exceptional year and the team have worked quickly to identify opportunities and adapt budgets in light of the pandemic. The team continues to work closely with BEIS colleagues.

4.1. Fiona Driscoll highlighted that ARAPC will be held on 25th February, noting that she was confident the team had an excellent grasp on any year end issues. Fiona also noted she felt there had been an improvement on the way we understand and manage risk.

5. Spending Review and Allocations

5.1. Siobhan Peters introduced the item, noting that work is ongoing with BEIS to identify the UKRI allocation following the spending review outcome. The Board noted that the team are taking a swift and pragmatic approach to allocations, but there continue to be a lot of unknowns. The Board will be updated as soon as more information is available.

5.2. The Board noted there were a number of considerations that would drive the allocations advice, including;

- Impact to business and links through to industry
- Government priorities
- Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations
- Our role in sustaining the whole R&D system

5.3. Ottoline highlighted the importance of ensuring the councils and Innovate UK are funded appropriately, as they are the core foundation of everything that UKRI does. Our ability to deliver against top down activities and priorities is critically dependent on the health of the base. The Board noted the need to build a shared vision across UKRI, with the way councils spend their budgets and support the community ideally helping to support the cross-cutting centralised priorities and activities.

5.4. The Board discussed key issues regarding the spending review and allocations, including the need to understand the effect of the future Industrial Strategy, noting that challenge led funding should be discussed at a future Board meeting. The board noted this was a very difficult situation with lots of moving parts.

5.5. John Kingman noted that it is a core responsibility of the Board to provide advice to ministers on allocations, but that we are not in a position to do so yet. Once we have more clarity, the Board will be brought together for further discussions.

6. Establishing the Research Integrity Committee (RIC)

6.1. Deputy Director of R&D Culture and Environment introduced the item providing an update on the proposed approach to the committee's role, highlighting the importance on ensuring it does not duplicate work of established organisations such as UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO).

6.2. The Board noted that the intention was for the committee to remain independent but have oversight from the Board, potentially reporting in on a regular basis (eg. annual report or forward look of priorities). The Board acknowledged that it was important for the committee to be empowered to be the decision maker and it was vital to ensure the Committee's independence from the Board was clearly articulated. The Board noted there would be no expectation of its involvement in any day to day activities or decisions.

6.3. The Board considered the role of the RIC within the wider R&D landscape, noting the importance of avoiding any investigative role regarding individual cases. The Board were reassured there was no intention of the committee conducting investigations.

6.4. The Board welcomed further discussion on the establishment of the Research Integrity Committee, noting the importance of having a strong role in this area but queried some aspects of the governance arrangements.

ACTION: Establishment of the Research Integrity Committee to come back to the Board for further discussion.

7. Withheld from Publication

8. MRC's Work and Priorities and UKRI Health Review

8.1. Fiona Watt presented MRC's work and priorities and an overview of the UKRI Health Review to the Board, which was followed by a robust discussion.

8.2. The Board thanked Fiona for her presentation.

9. AOB

9.1. No AOB was raised.

10. Non-Executive Session