

Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting of 13th May 2021

Date: Thursday 13th May 2021
 Time: 09:30 – 15:45
 Location: Legal and General Offices, London & virtually on Teams

Board Members and Observers (* identifies those who attended in person)	
*Sir John Kingman (Chair)	Sir Harpal Kumar
*Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser	Lord Browne
*Siobhan Peters	Professor Julia Black
*Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz	Professor Dame Sally Davies
*Lord Willetts	Professor Ian Diamond
Fiona Driscoll	*Dr John Fingleton
Attendees (* identifies those who attended in person)	
*Isobel Stephen (Exec Dir, UKRI)	Jo Shanmugalingam, BEIS
*Tim Bianek (COO, UKRI)	Harriet Wallace, BEIS for item 4 & 5
Christopher Smith (Exec Chair, AHRC for items 4 & 5)	Melanie Welham (Exec Chair, BBSRC for items 4, 5 & 8)
Lynn Gladden (Exec Chair, EPSRC for items 4 & 5)	Alison Park (Interim Exec Chair, ESRC for items 4 & 5)
Fiona Watt (Exec Chair, MRC for items 4 & 5)	Duncan Wingham (Exec Chair, NERC for items 4, 5 & 9)
David Sweeney (Exec Chair, RE for items 4, 5 & 9)	Mark Thomson (Exec Chair, STFC for items 4 & 5)
Karen Salt (UKRI R&D Culture & Environment for items 4 & 5)	David Rogers (UKRI Investment Director, for item 7)
Bryony Butland (UKRI Programme Director, for item 7)	Mike Biddle (ISCF Programme Director, for item 7 & 8)
Will Lord (UKRI ISCF, for item 8)	Rachel Bruce (UKRI Open Research, for item 9)
Apologies	

Indro Mukerjee (CEO, Innovate UK)	
Secretariat	
*Hannah Berriman (Board Secretariat)	Tim Russell (Head of Governance and Secretariat)
Zena Davis (Board Secretariat)	*Samantha Richardson (Board Secretariat)

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. John Kingman welcomed Board members to the meeting, noting this would be his last meeting as Chair.
- 1.2. John asked Board members to declare any conflicts ahead of the meeting. No conflicts were declared.

2. a) Minutes of 17th March 2021 b) Action Log and c) Forward Look

- 2.1. The Board approved the minutes of 17th March 2021 and noted the action log and forward look.

3. CEO Report to Board

- 3.1. Ottoline updated the Board on a number of live issues not covered on the agenda, including:
 - 3.1.1. Senior Appointments – Ottoline noted that Indro Mukerjee had joined as Chief Executive Officer of Innovate UK.
 - 3.1.2. Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) – Ottoline explained that UKRI was working closely with BEIS to support the establishment of ARIA.
 - 3.1.3. Upcoming Spending Review – The Board noted the importance of highlighting UKRI's co-ordinated response to the pandemic.

4. Trusted Research and Innovation in UKRI

- 4.1. Siobhan Peters updated the Board on the progress of the Trusted Research and Innovation (TRI) programme, noting that in April 2021 the UKRI Executive Committee agreed the indicators of risk of hostile interference by states, the vision for implementation of TRI across UKRI and the programme of work and subsequent implementation requirements. Siobhan explained the UKRI approach to TRI has two strands:
 - Ensuring we have a more consistent and comprehensive toolkit to meet our responsibilities
 - Continuing to engage with the very challenging intellectual and organisational questions raised by the TRI agenda.

- 4.2. The Board acknowledged that some risk in this area was inevitable and thanked Siobhan and team for clearly outlining the steps needed to create the conditions for a consistent and thorough response.
- 4.3. The Board noted the establishment of the Government's Research Collaboration Advice Team, (RCAT) which will offer researchers advice on how to protect their work from hostile activity and ensure international collaboration is conducted safely and securely.
- 4.4. The Board acknowledged that Cyber Security threats evolve quickly and requested an annual update on emerging issues.

ACTION: Siobhan Peters to provide an annual update to the Board on emerging threats in Cyber Security.

- 4.5. The board were supportive of the approach outlined by Siobhan and endorsed the vision and requirements for implementation.

DECISION: The Board endorsed the proposed vision for implementation of Trusted Research and Innovation across UKRI and the proposed implementation requirements.

5. Security Briefing

- 5.1. The Board received a confidential briefing on research security issues.

6. CFO Report

- 6.1. Siobhan Peters presented the Chief Finance Officer's Report, covering the period from 26th February 2021 – 26th April 2021, and provided an update on relevant items not covered by the wider agenda.
- 6.2. The Board noted the Operating Expenditure (OpEx) budgets, in particular noting that we have reduced OpEx as a percentage of the total budget, despite taking on a number of more complex programmes that have a higher running cost. The Board requested the opportunity to look at the OpEx figures in more detail, including how they relate to headcount, to ensure they understand the budget fully.
- 6.3. Tim Bianek updated the Board on the Future Workspace Project (FWP), addressing the Board's concerns about ensuring staff are supported and not disadvantaged by their working preferences. Tim noted the FWP will enter an experimental phase when offices reopen and we will continue to review and evaluate the proposals.

7. Innovation Strategy

- 7.1. David Rogers and Mike Biddle updated the Board on the whole-government Innovation Strategy which is being led by Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The Board noted that we are working closely with BEIS on the development of

the Strategy, with colleagues in Innovate UK and across all Councils engaging closely with the BEIS team.

- 7.2. The Board stressed the importance of developing a strategy that reflects the importance of private sector investment in contributing to innovation and highlights the importance of creating an attractive innovation ecosystem within the UK. The Board also welcomed the approach of recognising research and innovation activity across the whole of UKRI that supports the innovation ecosystem and encouraged the inclusion of activities that UKRI are currently developing or have previously funded, to demonstrate the significant impact of our existing portfolio of work.
- 7.3. The Board acknowledged that while the Innovation Strategy is led by BEIS, it is a cross Government strategy, noting that Innovation was one of the three key pillars in the Government's Build Back Better: Plan for Growth, and therefore encouraged engagement across Government.

8. Challenge Led Funding

- 8.1. Isobel Stephen introduced an overview of the high level strategic, governance and design principles for a new Challenge-Led approach to research and innovation, to be delivered through the next Spending Review. Isobel highlighted the importance of learning and improving on our experience of delivering ISCF. The Board reflected on how far Challenge-Led funding has developed in UKRI, noting in particular the importance of empowering the Challenge Directors and building flexibility into Challenge design. The Board noted the importance of celebrating success as well as looking critically at how Challenge-Led funding is currently working and being willing to make hard decisions when necessary.
- 8.2. Ottoline noted the intention not only to develop a new portfolio of challenges in the context of the Spending Review, but to embed a Challenge capability, which could be deployed in an agile manner with diverse partners. This would allow us to respond to challenges quickly and effectively. The Board were supportive of this intention, noting the importance of creating an impactful programme of work alongside the methodology.
- 8.3. The Board noted the sophisticated performance and metrics indicators used to evaluate and monitor the ISCF challenges. The Board requested an opportunity to discuss the existing Challenges and for Ottoline and the team to provide an assessment on how they are performing, whilst acknowledging that they are in various stages of development and therefore not all challenges will be in a position to be fully assessed.

ACTION: Assessment of existing Challenges to be discussed at a future Board meeting. Secretariat to add to forward look.

9. The Future UKRI Open Access Policy

9.1. Duncan Wingham (Executive Chair, NERC) thanked Board members for attending the additional, more detailed briefing session held on 7th May which also included some discussion of legal issues and advice received from external lawyers. Duncan noted that the Board will be given significant opportunity to review the consultation report and asked Board members to send any comments to the Secretariat within two weeks. The Board will then be asked for formal approval of the policy at the next Board meeting in July 2021.

9.2. The Board noted that the impact of the policy will be assessed continuously from its implementation and requested that a formal review happens earlier than the proposed 3 years. Duncan confirmed he was happy to bring this date forward.

9.3. The Board agreed the policy in principle, noting the plan to approve the policy formally at the July 2021 Board meeting following consideration of the narrative document explaining the policy choices that followed the public consultation and assurances that all reasonable steps to minimise any legal risk have been completed.

DECISION: The Board agreed the UKRI Open Access Policy in principle, ahead of formal approval in July 2021.

9.4. The Board agreed to send a letter to Minister Solloway MP updating her on the Board's discussion, and to offer her the opportunity to provide any additional comments.

ACTION: Duncan Wingham to draft a letter to Minister Solloway to update her on the Board's discussion.

10. AOB

10.1. The Board noted that the UKRI Board and Council Conference held on 12th May 2021 had been a success, while acknowledging there were limitations due to needing to hold the conference online.

11. Non Executive Session