



**Council Meeting
Thursday, 16 September 2021
MEETING SUMMARY**

Welcome and Introductions	
1.	The Chair welcomed Dan Shah (UKRI Director of Investment Strategy and System Insight) representing the UKRI Strategy team; Vasanthi Waller (RE Associate Director of Analysis) and Sophie Swainger (RE Funding Round Manager) for the Funding Overview and Budget 2021-22 paper; Anna Lang (RE Associate Director of Research Funding) on behalf of the Research team; and Michael Leonard (DfE NI Head of Higher Education Research and Knowledge Exchange Branch) attending on behalf of Heather Cousins.
RE Staff Return to the Office	
2.	The Chief Operating Officer provided an update on staff returning to the Bristol office. The demand among staff to return to the office is increasing. The aim is to try to accommodate team days for collaborative work as well as individual space as capacity allows.
Executive Chair's Report	
3.	<p>The Executive Chair noted a few highlights from his report, to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UKRI has established a Trusted R&I Programme Board. RE activities will be captured by the UKRI Trusted R&I work plan, which reflects the increased engagement with the sector around this agenda.• Activities attended by the Executive Chair in the reporting period included the Universities UK Annual Conference held on 8&9 September, which revealed that universities are mainly concerned at the moment with education-related issues.• Five SIPF Wave 2 awards have been made. The awards were publicly announced in July as part of the BEIS Innovation Strategy.• BEIS has commissioned an evaluation of GCRF investment to evaluate the process and effectiveness of the fund.• The Research team continues to monitor the effects of covid on capital funding and to support UKRPIF projects as they work through the consequences of covid-related delays.• Panels continue to undertake assessment work on REF outputs. The transition from virtual to face-to-face meeting has proven challenging.• The expert panel for the joint RE and OfS fund to improve access and participation for Black, Asian and minority ethnic students in postgraduate study has convened and has provided advice on which projects RE should fund. Outcomes will be communicated in September with funding beginning in October.
Funding Overview and 2021-22 Budget	
4.	The funding and priorities letter from BEIS to RE sets out the level of funding and guidance on policy priorities for research and knowledge exchange within higher education institutions. The Executive Chair provided an overview to Council of the RE budget, which aims to maintain activity at the level previously supported and to support universities as they work on covid recovery, as they strengthen existing and new partnerships, and as they



	address research culture issues. Council endorsed the proposed RE research and knowledge exchange budgets for 2021-22.
UKRI Strategy Update and Spending Review Update	
7.	The Director of Insight & Engagement provided an update on work on the UKRI Strategy 2022-27. The aim is for the strategy to be finalised by the end of the year and then published in 2022. This will be the first strategy since the formation of UKRI and it is informed by a range of key Government policy announcements (R&D Roadmap, Integrated Review, Building Back Better, Spending Review outcomes, People & Culture Strategy, etc).
8.	The guiding principles underpinning implementation of the strategy (connectivity, diversification, resilience, engagement) were outlined by Ottoline Leyser when she addressed RE Council at their April meeting. The intention is for the principles to inform delivery of five strategic pillars: 1. Fostering a world-class R&I system; 2. Supporting great ideas; 3. Unleashing innovation; 4. Targeting national priorities; and 5. Improving how we work. The five pillars will, in turn, form the basis of strategic delivery plans for each of the nine councils. Council members agreed to provide feedback on the strategy.
9.	Dan Shah provided an update on SR21. He thanked RE for its contribution to the UKRI-wide submission. The formal bid from BEIS has been submitted to Treasury and reflects many priority areas for government such as Levelling Up and Net Zero. UKRI is aiming for a three-year settlement.
Future QR Policy Consultation	
10.	The Associate Director of Research Funding provided an update on the Council QR Funding Policy Subgroup meeting held on 3 September. The subgroup did not think that it was the right time to carry out a consultation in the context of SR outcomes, Future Research Assessment Programme consultation, and stage of the REF cycle. They felt that it would be appropriate to carry out some preparatory work at this stage and then to re-consider how to proceed in the New Year. Council was supportive of this approach.
UKRPIF Net Zero	
11.	The Associate Director of Research Funding provided an overview of a proposal to fund a small capital funding competition for existing UKRPIF-funded research facilities which aligns with the UKRPIF objectives and which contributes to the Government's aim to reduce UK carbon emissions to 78% by 2035 and achieve net zero by 2050. Council was supportive of the proposal.
Risk Report	
12.	Council received an update on RE's strategic risks and an overview of UKRI corporate strategic risk.