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Minutes of the Bioscience for Society Strategy Advisory Panel meeting held on 12 July 2016 at Double Tree by Hilton Hotel, 92 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4BH.

Those Attending:

Panel Members

Professor Robert Dingwall (Chair)
Professor Mark Hankins
Professor Christine Hauskeller
Professor Brian Ilbery
Mr Ben Johnson
Dr Martyn Pickersgill
Dr Patrick Sinnett-Smith
Professor Sarah Wolfensohn
Mr Rob Yorke

BBSRC Office

Dr Charly Cureton
Mr Paul Gemmill
Dr Patrick Middleton

Apologies:

Dr Jane Calvert
Professor Joanna Chataway
Dr Lawrence McGinty
Mr Patrick Mulvany
Dr Erinma Ochu
Dr Kate Weiner

ITEM 1: CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION (ORAL)

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received from Dr Jane Calvert, Professor Joanna Chataway, Dr Lawrence McGinty, Mr Patrick Mulvany, Dr Erinma Ochu and Dr Kate Weiner.
3. It was noted that Dr Calvert, Dr Chataway, Dr McGinty, Mr Mulvany and Dr Ochu had sent in comments on the papers and they were considered under the relevant agenda items.
4. Members were reminded to check their details currently held on the Declared Interests Register and update as necessary.

ITEM 2: A 'BIG PICTURE' UPDATE FROM BBSRC (ORAL)

5. The Panel was provided with an update on two significant topics under this item; British withdrawal from the European Union (termed herein Brexit) and developments with respect to the creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the associated Higher Education and Research Bill.
6. Mr Gemmill reiterated the formal position of the UK Government to leave the EU following the Brexit vote and BBSRC's role in following the Government's position. He explained that he was aware that some adverse impacts had been felt by the UK and EU science community following the vote, which had included pressure for UK researchers to not participate in Horizon 2020 grants and employment impacts for both UK and EU scientists. Mr Gemmill reiterated the position expressed by the Universities and Science Minister, Jo Johnson, that at present the UK is still a full member of the EU and consequently should have full access to the EU funding mechanisms and explained that BBSRC wanted to collect evidence where adverse impacts were incurred in order to present direct evidence to Government.

Action: Panel members to inform BBSRC of examples of adverse impacts on UK science associated directly with the Brexit vote

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7. The Panel was informed about ongoing work between the Research Councils (RCs) and a range of other key UK science institutions to provide a unified voice aimed at agreeing a shortlist of priorities for future EU negotiations, required to ensure that the UK maintains its world leading position as an international centre of science, these included:
 - Access to EU funding
 - Guarantees for the EU funding where research is already underway, to provide shorter-term certainty
 - Press for free movement of research labour within the UK and between the EU and UK
8. Mr Gemmill then provided an update on the creation of UKRI, explaining that, following the Brexit vote, it was still the intention of the Government to proceed with the creation of UKRI. He explained that the associated Higher Education and Reform (HER) Bill was awaiting its second reading and, subject to scheduling, it was anticipated that this could take place ahead of the summer Government recess. Mr Gemmill explained that, irrespective of the HER Bill reading timetable, the Government was aiming for UKRI to be set up and running by 1 April 2018. He informed the Panel of the appointment of the interim Chair of UKRI, John Kingman, before outlining the intended appointment timetable for the Chief Executive and shadow management team.
9. Mr Gemmill went on to describe John Kingman's vision for UKRI before informing the Panel of the changes that had already been made within the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to support the creation of UKRI, whilst also maintaining 'business as usual' in the transition period. Mr Gemmill informed the Panel of his own related appointment, following a competitive process, to the role of RCUK Director for Reform Planning (on a part-time basis), with the focus of this role being on the delivery of UKRI, working with BIS, Research Council, Innovate UK and HEFCE colleagues.
10. The Panel congratulated Mr Gemmill on his new, part-time appointment.
11. Mr Gemmill concluded his update by describing some of the challenges ahead, including a lack of certainty around future science budgets and the fiscal climate. He then reiterated the importance of the ongoing programme of work by the Research Councils to ensure that they work as efficiently as possible together, to ensure excellent science continues to be funded.
12. A Panel member proposed a potential future role for BSS to assist BBSRC in deciding 'what is good science', but this potential role was not discussed further during the meeting.

ITEM 3: A 'LITTLE PICTURE' UPDATE FROM BBSRC (ORAL)

13. Mr Gemmill provided the Panel with a short update on the Institute Assessment Exercise, informing the Panel that the current exercise was focusing on science and science funding in the context of reduced programme funding being available. He explained that the Institutes had submitted Institute Strategic Programme Grants (ISPGs) and these were currently being reviewed and would be considered by an assessment panel at the end of September, ahead of final decisions being made at the BBSRC Council meeting scheduled for December 2016. Mr Gemmill explained that public engagement and communication was not being specifically reviewed during this assessment exercise.

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14. The Panel was made aware that, despite a reduced ISPG funding envelope being available, Institutes would be eligible to apply for funding through other mechanisms, including the Global Challenges Research Fund funding stream.
15. Dr Middleton then updated the Panel on recent staffing changes within the External Relations Unit (ERU) at BBSRC, including the appointment of Matt Goode to the position of RCUK Director of Communications and Public Engagement and his own temporary promotion to Associate Director of Communications and External Relations at BBSRC and the appointments of a new Head of External Communications (Jools Granville), Digital Communications Manager (Kathryn Ratcliffe) and Media Officer (Kristin Shives).
16. The Panel congratulated Mr Goode and Dr Middleton on their new appointments.

ITEM 4: PANEL UPDATE ON BBSRC'S REVIEW OF HOW IT ACCESSES AND CONSIDERS WIDER PERSPECTIVES (BSS 02/2016)

17. Dr Cureton introduced this item, providing an update on the progress BBSRC has made with its review of how it accesses and considers wider perspectives, including an overview of the BBSRC Executive Group (EG) discussions.
18. The Panel was informed that EG was strongly supportive of embedding the consideration of appropriate and credible wider perspectives into BBSRC's strategic planning and decision making and recognised the timeliness of implementing such changes at this time. The Panel was updated on the EG-agreed 'direction of travel', including measures to learn from other organisations who have undergone similar change, the requirement to ensure capacity to consider wider perspectives is not limited to BBSRC staff but is extended to everyone who provides advice to BBSRC and recognition of the relatedness of the BBSRC's openness agenda with the embedding wider perspectives consideration.
19. The Panel welcomed the EG-agreed direction of travel and commended BBSRC for committing to this change at a time of such uncertainty. Members reflected on the importance of BBSRC being well positioned with respect to its consideration of wider perspectives with the creation of UKRI and the potential benefits of harnessing the culture of adaptability and responsiveness that can be evident during times of such change. Panel members were also asked to identify examples of successful and unsuccessful culture change that BBSRC could potentially learn from.

Action: Panel members to provide the Secretariat with any examples of successful or unsuccessful change to culture that BBSRC could learn from, doing so in the knowledge that this information will not be published or attributed to individuals

20. Dr Cureton introduced the Panel to draft text outlining a set of outcomes BBSRC would like to realise from embedding wider perspectives consideration within its strategic planning and decision making. She explained the purpose of having such text was to provide clarity and definition to the change process. The Panel was asked for their input to refine and finalise the desired outcomes text.

Action: Secretariat to disseminate updated copies of the draft desired outcomes for comment and further revision by BSS members

Action: Panel members to provide the Secretariat with amendments to the updated draft desired outcomes text

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21. Dr Cureton then presented the Panel with a draft framework of questions that have been compiled to provide definition to the types of questions BBSRC wants to consider as part of its wider perspectives consideration. She explained that the questions built on the large body of literature supporting Responsible Research Innovation (RRI) and the Synthetic Biology Deliberation tool, co-funded and co-developed by BBSRC in association with Forum for the Future and Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)¹.
22. Dr Cureton explained that the questions were not intended to be a definitive and prescriptive list, instead it was hoped that they would be applied flexibly on a case by case basis. The Panel was then asked to review the categories and questions and suggest amendments and additions ahead of a first version of the questions being finalised.
- Action:** Secretariat to disseminate updated copies of the framework of questions, for comment and further revision by BSS members
- Action:** Panel members to provide the Secretariat with amendments to the framework of questions
23. The Panel raised the importance of defining a set of measurable success factors to be used to monitor the effectiveness of culture change and the need to undertake a formal benchmarking exercise at the start of this work. Dr Cureton explained that part of the paper presented to EG included a list of success factors that could be used to demonstrate the embeddedness of wider perspectives consideration and the intention to refine these factors to ensure that these are measurable and realistic.
24. The Panel commended the work undertaken to date drawing together the framework of questions and its presentation during the meeting.

ITEM 5: ROUND TABLE HORIZON SCANNING SESSION (ORAL)

25. Professor Dingwall invited Panel members to raise any new topics they thought would be of interest to the Panel. The following topics were raised:
- UK aquaculture and the potential of land-based aquaculture as a means to help tackle food security, whilst also minimising environmental effects
 - The potential of agroecology - soil/bacteria/fungi relationships to increase yield without using more land to address issues of food security
 - A Member noted, from their work in Germany, that no new applications for importing human Embryonic Stem Cell (hESC) lines had been received by the relevant oversight authorities over the last 6 months, presumably due to a focus on the development of induced pluripotent stem cells for Cluster Regularly Interspaced Short Palindrome Repeats (CRISPR) technology research (in Germany you are not permitted to make hESC – all hESC allowed for import must have been created before a long past historical date).
 - Concern was raised regarding the apparent lack of consideration of the impact of future changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on biodiversity, sustainable intensification and marginal areas of the UK following the Brexit vote
 - Query regarding whether or not BBSRC (and Research Councils as a collective) is likely to follow a number of other funders (including NIH) in restricting its

¹ <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/documents/1507-synthetic-biology-deliberation-aid-pdf/>

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funding to organisations that have secured at least an Athena Swan silver level award.

- Tree diseases

26. In addition to the topics discussed above, the Panel encouraged BBSRC to consider the balance of news coverage across its remit, reflecting that with predominance towards cereal-related news, it could limit the readers understanding of the breadth of BBSRC's remit.

ITEM 6: GENOME EDITING: ACCESSING WIDER PERSPECTIVES (BSS 03/2016)

27. Dr Middleton introduced this item, providing a very brief overview of genome editing, BBSRC's interest in the technique and its current position on its use. He explained that BBSRC has published a position statement on the use of genetic editing and now wanted to engage more broadly with stakeholders on this topic.

28. Dr Middleton provided an overview of recent activity in this area, before seeking the Panel's support for the formation of a small working group, to explore the purpose of BBSRC accessing wider perspectives and how this might be achieved, ahead of making recommendations to BBSRC. He explained that he anticipated the composition of the sub-group to include members of BSS and the Exploiting New Ways of Working (ENWW) Strategy Advisory Panel, as well as external expertise, before asking BSS members to register their interest ahead of the membership being agreed.

29. The Panel endorsed the formation of a Genome Editing: Accessing Wider Perspectives Working Group

Action: Panel members who have not yet registered their interest in serving on the Genome Editing: Accessing Wider Perspectives Working Group should do so as soon as possible

30. Dr Middleton then briefed the Panel on the development of the Knowledge Integration Template (KITe) tool² that BBSRC has developed with academics at the University of Nottingham and King's College London to increase the robustness of its stakeholder mapping. He explained how the tool was being trialled to inform BBSRC's Genome Editing Engagement Strategy, before describing the underlying approach and the insights that had been realised to date.

ITEM 11: AOB (ORAL)

31. The Panel was informed that BBSRC anticipated holding another BSS meeting later this year but that the date was yet to be confirmed and would be dependent upon the scheduling of a number of the EG-agreed next steps associated with the ongoing wider perspectives work.

Action: Secretariat to consult BSS members for their availability for a meeting later in the year when dates associated with the wider perspectives review actions are known

² [https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/bbsrc-knowledge-integration-tool\(7995d6c1-27b9-4344-9d67-d29ee826e98d\).html](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/bbsrc-knowledge-integration-tool(7995d6c1-27b9-4344-9d67-d29ee826e98d).html)