

OFFICIAL

Minutes of the Bioscience for Society Strategy Advisory Panel meeting held on 16 March 2017 at De Vere West One, 61-65 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5DA.

Those Attending:

Panel Members

Professor Robert Dingwall (Chair)
Dr Lawrence McGinty
Mr Patrick Mulvany
Dr Patrick Sinnett-Smith
Dr Kate Weiner
Professor Sarah Wolfensohn
Mr Rob Yorke

BBSRC Office

Dr Charly Cureton
Mr Paul Gemmill
Dr Patrick Middleton

Apologies:

Dr Jane Calvert
Professor Joanna Chataway
Professor Mark Hankins
Mr Ben Johnson
Dr Erinma Ochu
Dr Martyn Pickersgill

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

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received from Dr Calvert, Professor Chataway, Professor Hankins, Mr Johnson, Dr Ochu and Dr Pickersgill.
3. It was noted that Dr Calvert and Dr Pickersgill had sent in comments on the papers and these were considered under the relevant agenda items.
4. The Chair informed the Panel that Professor Christine Hauskeller had retired from the Panel and expressed, on behalf of the Panel, his thanks for her service over the last six years.
5. The Panel was informed that Dr Jane Calvert had agreed to an extension of service, to remain on the Panel during the transition phase to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).
6. The action list from the last meeting was reviewed and, where relevant, items featured on the meeting agenda.
7. Members were reminded to check their details currently held on the Declared Interests Register and amend as necessary.

Action: Panel Members to review their entry on the Declared Register and update as necessary

ITEM 2: UPDATE FROM BBSRC (ORAL)

UKRI Update

8. Mr Gemmill provided the Panel with an update on progression with the creation of UKRI and the associated Higher Education and Research (HER) Bill. He informed Members that BEIS and BBSRC were hoping to announce shortly the extension of Melanie Welham's appointment as Chief Executive (CE) of BBSRC until the end of March 2018, welcoming the stability and leadership this will provide BBSRC in the transition to UKRI.

OFFICIAL

9. The Panel was informed of a number of key UKRI appointments (subject to the HER Bill receiving Royal Assent):
 - Sir Mark Walport – CE Designate of UKRI
 - Rebecca Endean – UKRI Director of Strategy
10. Mr Gemmill provided the Panel with a brief update on the proposed structure of UKRI and the ongoing work BBSRC is doing to support the creation of UKRI. He described the work BBSRC is undertaking to define its future structure and explained the challenge of undertaking such work whilst also maintaining business as usual activities.
11. Dr Middleton provided the Panel with a brief overview of the work that has been undertaken to date to shape the communication and engagement functions of UKRI and the individual Research Councils (RC) moving forward. He explained that in late 2016 the CEs from the RCs agreed to the formation of a single functional model for communication and engagement, underpinned by a single communications and engagement strategy and that this model has now been agreed by BEIS governance. Dr Middleton explained that a shadow team composed of representatives from all of the RCs (including himself) was in place and increasing in size, to deliver this single functional model and to provide communications and engagement functions for UKRI moving forwards.
12. The Panel commented that care should be taken to ensure that public engagement and dialogue does not become confused with communications in the UKRI single function model and reiterated the importance of deliberative listening and insight being central elements to future UKRI activities.

Institute Assessment Exercise Update

13. The Panel was updated on the assessment process and outcomes of the Institute Assessment Exercise (IAE). Mr Gemmill explained that the Institute for Food Research (transitioning to become the Quadrum Institute) would be undergoing an equivalent assessment process this year (2017), with provision in place to ensure continuity and comparability with last year's process.
14. Mr Gemmill provided an overview of the available IAE budget, the economic pressures and the rationale that underpinned the BBSRC Council decision making process and associated success rate. He explained that despite all 19 applications submitted reaching the fundable threshold; it was only possible to fund 14 grants. Mr Gemmill provided an overview of interim measures, including the provision of a short term flexibility fund, put in place to support Institutes detrimentally affected by the IAE outcomes. The Panel was informed that stringent monitoring would be implemented to ensure maximum success and impact from grants awarded from the flexibility fund.
15. Mr Mulvany queried what research would be stopped as a result of the grants that had not been funded. Mr Gemmill agreed to review the funded research programmes and update the Panel on programmes that would cease.

Action: Mr Gemmill to review the outcomes from the IAE and provide the Panel with an overview of the funding programmes that would cease as a result of the unsuccessful applications

OFFICIAL

16. Mr Mulvany drew to the Panel's attention his comment from the previous meeting, commending Professor Benton's endorsement of research looking at new farming approaches, rather than funding more expensive genome reorganisation work (item 4, paragraph 21) and commented that he hoped that this would be reflected in the funded IAE programmes.

Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

17. Mr Gemmill updated the Panel on the new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF), explaining the purpose, scope and budget profile for the fund and BBSRC's perspective of and engagement with, the fund to date. He provided an overview of the first challenge areas and the work that has been undertaken by UKRI partners and the community to define these. Mr Gemmill explained the significant community interest in these awards and the urgency of work to put in place the necessary mechanisms to enable UKRI to deliver these awards from 2018/2019 onwards.
18. Dr Weiner queried how the ISCF had come about. Mr Gemmill explained that the fund originated from discussions within Government and its desire to link future additional funds to an overarching industrial strategy.

ITEM 3: BSS PRIORITY FUNCTIONS/CAPABILITIES (BSS01/2017)

19. Professor Dingwall introduced this item, explaining that this item complemented work undertaken by the BBSRC Research Advisory Panel (RAP), to support BBSRC's transition planning ahead of the transition to UKRI. Professor Dingwall reflected on some of the discussions that had taken place as RAP considered: 'Biotechnology and biological science in UKRI: The emerging landscape, challenges and opportunities'.
20. Professor Dingwall informed the Panel that, as part of this transition planning process, BBSRC was keen to seek the Panel's views on the critical BSS functions/capabilities it should seek to try and secure in the transition to UKRI and the opportunities for improvement and invited Dr Cureton to lead an interactive session.
21. Using the previously defined BSS roles and responsibilities output (refined during an interactive session with the Panel during its meeting in January 2016) as a starting point, Dr Cureton encouraged the Panel to discuss, refine, prioritise and agree a draft list of critical functions/capabilities that BBSRC should seek to try and secure in UKRI. The agreed draft list is provided in **Annex 1**.

Action: Panel members to review the draft list of prioritised functions/capabilities and suggest amendments

ITEM 4: UPDATE ON GLOBAL CHALLENGES RESEARCH FUND ETHICAL ISSUES (BSS 02/2017)

22. Dr Middleton introduced this item (numbered **BSS 02/2017** in the meeting papers), reminding the Panel that the item had arisen from an item raised under AOB during the last meeting, around the impact on ethics and excellence of science from the delivery of Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) in an environment of haste.
23. Dr Middleton updated the Panel on a meeting that had been held by RC staff with responsibilities for ethics and international development funding, before reviewing the summary of key points from the meeting.

OFFICIAL

24. The Panel welcomed the paper, endorsed its findings and commended the thinking from the RC Group to embed ethical consideration to the greatest extent possible, in all applications to, and awards from, the GCRF. The Panel reflected on the potential role for UKRI to coordinate and embed a single, flexible, RC-wide approach and encourage a step change in ethical consideration.
25. The Panel encouraged BBSRC to consider the role BSS (or equivalent function in the future) could play in monitoring the progress of this work. Members were keen to support other Strategy Advisory Panels (SAPs) with ethical consideration and encouraged this support requirement to be considered as part of the SAP reporting project (Item 5 on the agenda).
26. The Panel provided the following comments:
- The Panel supported the RCs intention to collate and make available, a directory of resources, guidance and best practice to support researchers to operate ethically within an international development research context. The Panel was asked to suggest examples/ guidance to be included within such a list. A number of examples were identified during the meeting and a list of these is included in Annex 2
 - The Panel encouraged the RC's to reflect on the existing knowledge and experience within the RCs, in particular from ESRC and MRC's African Research stations and to ensure that this reflected in the directory of guidance
 - The Panel supported the idea of developing a set of case studies to highlight good and bad practice and lessons learnt
 - Dr Pickersgill cautioned consideration around the phrasing of international development support, to avoid colonial overtones around 'helping' low income countries and encouraging RC's to reflect on contemporary standards of shared benefits and equitable treatment of researchers etc.
 - The Panel encouraged greater consideration of official knowledge of partner countries, in particular understanding around national and regional science policy, customs and practices and infrastructure, during the assessment process, to maximise the impact from the research and the fund
 - The Panel suggested the implementation of a set of questions to be answered by applicants, to demonstrate knowledge and capacity for ethical consideration
 - The Panel questioned the drivers for the current international development research agenda and encouraged consideration of:
 - different 'publics' attitudes towards international development
 - the origins of some of the perceived research challenges

Action: Panel Members to review the draft ethical guidance list (**Annex 2**) and provide further suggestions

ITEM 5: UPDATE ON THE STRATEGY PANEL REPORTING PROJECT (ORAL)

27. Dr Cureton introduced this item, giving a short presentation to provide an overview of the project, its goal, associated timeline for delivery and opportunities for the Panel to engage with the project. She then led the Panel in an interactive session to explore how BSS currently uses information from other SAPs and what BBSRC could do differently moving forwards.

OFFICIAL

28. The outputs from the interactive Panel session can be found in **Annex 3**.

ITEM 6: UPDATE ON THE EMBEDDING WIDER PERSPECTIVES PROJECT (BSS 03/2017)

29. Dr Cureton introduced this item and took the panel through a short presentation which gave an overview of the project progress since the last Panel meeting (24 November 2016). She proposed a series of next steps, before highlighting some of the conversations that have been prompted by the use of the Framework of Questions.

30. The Panel commended the work completed to date and supported the proposed next steps.

31. There was insufficient time to permit any discussion around the conversations that had been raised by the Framework of Questions.

ITEM 7: STRATEGY PANEL UPDATES /HORIZON SCANNING (BSS 04/2017)

32. The Chair introduced this item, inviting link members for each of the SAPs to flag key items of interest to BSS from their SAPs update.

33. Mr Mulvany drew the Panel's attention to the work by the Agriculture & Food Security (AFS) and Bioscience for Health (BfH) teams in mapping the BBSRC BfH and AFS landscape and commented that the teams involved needed to ensure wider perspectives consideration and alternative ecological processes are considered as part of this mapping work.

34. Dr Weiner drew the Panel's attention to an item within the Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy update, looking at strengths, gaps and opportunities and the potential for bioprospecting. Following a brief initial discussion, it was agreed that bioprospecting should be discussed further by BSS at a future meeting.

Action: Secretariat to ensure that a discussion on bioprospecting is tabled for a future meeting

35. The Panel raised a number of inconsistencies in the SAP reports and voiced their exception to a term used within one of the reports.

Action: Secretariat to provide feedback to relevant SAP Secretariats regarding content within SAP Updates

36. The Chair invited to the Panel to identify topics, reports items of interest to the Panel and BBSRC. The following items were proposed by members:

- Primate use review (EU)
- Animal licencing and inspection issues
- Neonicotinoids field research from CEH due shortly
- Academia/industry consortia
- One Health (animals/people/environment)

Action: Panel members not able to attend the meeting, to provide Secretariat with any new topics/reports/items of interest to the Panel and BBSRC

OFFICIAL

ITEM 8: GENOME EDITING: ACCESSING WIDER PERSPECTIVES (ORAL)

37. Dr Middleton introduced this item, providing an update on the current focus of the joint BSS/Exploiting New Ways of Working Strategy Advisory Panel (ENWW) genome editing Sub Group, explaining that the group was currently considering three broad questions:

- Where is the Genome Editing (GE) science going?
- What would be the motives and purpose of any Public Engagement (PE)?
- Do we need a position statement?

38. Dr Middleton provided an overview of sub group activities and the complexity of the task, with so many different contradictory outcomes and motivations for Genome editing approaches. He explained the sub group's ambition was to capture and collate this complexity into a usable graphic/document, to support future group discussions and agree a proposed approach.

39. The Panel was supportive of this approach, citing the additional benefit to public audiences of having access to such information, and their hope that this could prevent some kneejerk opposition to such approaches in the absence of knowledge. Members were keen for the work to also be considered in a global context, to reflect the different levels of government and public support/ concern/suspicion between different countries and the global environment of differing levels of biosafety.

40. The Panel was informed that once the sub group had distilled its thoughts, the Panel would have the opportunity to comment on the resultant proposed approach.

Action: Secretariat to disseminate the GE Sub Group proposed approach to Panel Members once it is available

Action: Panel Members to provide comments on the PE Sub Group proposed approach once it is available

ITEM 9: UPDATE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM ACTIVITIES (ORAL)

41. Dr Middleton introduced this item and provided the Panel with an overview of current BBSRC Communications and Engagement Team (CET) activities. He provided a brief overview of the range of different information channels BBSRC currently uses and the events it delivers or contributes to. Dr Middleton explained that BBSRC was seeing changes in trends for information provision, with audiences increasing looking towards responsive, short, concise messages. The Panel was updated on the enhanced focus of evaluation of CET activities, to ensure BBSRC remains responsive and agile.

Insight/Public Attitudes

42. Dr Middleton drew to the Panel's attention recent insight/public attitudes work that is shedding light on audience segmentation around engagement with research, commenting on the importance of the timing of this work to reflect attitudes in the 'post-truth era'. He explained that CET plans to use this information and review future BBSRC engagement strategies for these audiences.

OFFICIAL

Global Food Security Public Panel

43. The Panel was informed that, in accordance with advice from CET, the Global Food Security (GFS) Programme Coordination Group had decided not to continue with the Public Panel Project. There was recognition that, despite the valuable learning from the project, the current fiscal environment and time investment required to support a public panel was too great and agreed that future requirements for public insight could be better met by GFS partners collectively commissioning individual projects.

ITEM 10: AOB (ORAL)

44. The scheduling of the next BSS meeting was raised. The Secretariat commented that it was likely to be in the autumn (2017) and agreed to canvass availability as early as possible.

Action: Secretariat to consult BSS members for their availability for a meeting in September/October 2017 as soon as practicably possible

OFFICIAL

ANNEX 1: BSS PRIORITY FUNCTIONS/CAPABILITIES

- Critical friend by doing the following:
 - Calling BBSRC to account
 - Challenging BBSRC assumptions
 - Introduce BBSRC to different ways of thinking
 - Show social dimension to science
 - Interdisciplinarity (integrating science and social science)
- Voice challenging insularity in PEST ways of thinking
 - Ethical monitoring
 - Assess openness around wider perspectives consideration
 - Explore tensions between commercial and public good
- Strategic level ethics/oversee process/making sure someone is doing at grant level/oversight/signpost right people
 - Supporting BBSRC with wider perspectives consideration
 - Think about other science and listen to non-scientists
 - Supporting wider stakeholder engagement
- Strategic oversight of wider perspectives/culture change/what we make happen

OFFICIAL

ANNEX 2: GCRF EXAMPLE/GUIDANCE LIST

- European Research Council (ERC) Ethical Panel guidelines
- ERC Executive Agency guidelines
- Olivier De Schutter's (co-chair of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems) presentation to the Oxford Farming Conference
- Medical Research Council (MRC) research stations in Africa
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- CGIAR global research partnership

OFFICIAL

ANNEX 3: BSS OUTPUTS FOR THE STRATEGY PANEL REPORTING PROJECT

How does BSS currently use the information provided by SAPs to offer strategic advice?

- Information provided is of limited use
- Information is opaque and difficult to follow
- Timetabling of RAP and SAP meetings does not permit BSS discussion
- Concern raised by the legitimacy of RAP feedback when the Chair has not had the time to seek the Panel's input
- Is there a 'link scheme' equivalent for other Panels? The scheme is useful to stop all members needing to read all papers/minutes
- Papers and minutes highlight deficits and lack of BSS-type issues considered
- Too many SAPs, are they all necessary?
- Silos
- Enough overlap?
- Time and brain overload

What could BBSRC do differently?

- Single meeting date and venue for SAPs (to permit joint/collective discussions and networking)
- Single extranet for all SAP papers
- Papers to have front sheet with summary 2 paragraphs
- Information presented so that you can drill down the information to the level that you require
- Fewer SAPs
- Shorter papers – less is more when papers are over 150 pages!
- Ensure titles reflect contents of papers
- Need to draw out soundbites effectively
- Set meeting dates earlier
- Set dates for SAP input clearly
- Consider confidentiality of meeting papers to permit wider discussions with colleagues/networks/friends
- Could/should secretariats pick out relevant soundbites for Panels - recognised demand on secretariat and the skill required to do this effectively