

## **Minutes of UKRI-BBSRC Council meeting on 4 December 2019.**

### **Those attending:**

Professor Ewan Birney FRS  
Dr Belinda Clarke  
Professor Ian Graham FRS  
Professor Laura Green OBE  
Professor Gideon Henderson FRS  
Professor Martin Humphries (Chair of the meeting)  
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser FRS  
Professor Malcolm Skingle CBE  
Professor David Stephens  
Professor Melanie Welham (UKRI-BBSRC Executive Chair)

### **Also attending:**

Dr Paul Burrows  
Dr Amanda Collis  
Dr Karen Lewis  
Paul Gemmill  
Bill Poll  
Mike Blackburn  
Dan Hodges  
Dr Richard Brown (item 8 only)  
Dr Stephanie Williams-Blackwell (item 8 only)  
Lucy Davidson (item 9 only)  
Dr Rob Hardwick (item 5 only)  
Dr Emma Hudson  
Dr Paul Reeves (item 7 only)  
Ksymena Grzybowska  
Sarah Cresswell

### **ITEM 1. OPENING REMARKS**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. In particular, he welcomed the following:
  - Gideon Henderson, DEFRA Chief Scientific Adviser, to his first UKRI-BBSRC Council meeting
  - Mike Blackburn, UKRI Chief Finance Officer
  - Dan Hodges, UKRI Deputy Director, Analysis and Performance
  - Bill Poll, BBSRC Joint Chief Operating Officer (COO). He was appointed to cover Paul Gemmill's role whilst he leads the UKRI Reforming our Business Programme. Bill will be covering the COO role on a 0.6 FTE basis and will be responsible for all aspects of the COO role, except for Institutes, which will remain Paul Gemmill's responsibility.
  - Emma Hudson, Executive Chair's Science Liaison Manager
  - Ksymena Grzybowska, Council Secretariat Manager, who returned from her maternity leave.
2. Apologies were received from Deborah Keith and Andrew Millar.

## **ITEM 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2019 (UKRI BBSRC 23/2019)**

3. The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

## **ITEM 2. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING (ORAL)**

4. Melanie Welham provided Council with an update on actions relating to feedback on the outcomes of Doctoral Training Partnerships to unsuccessful partner organisations.

## **ITEM 4. EXECUTIVE CHAIR'S REPORT (UKRI BBSRC 24/2019)**

5. Melanie Welham introduced her report to Council. Council welcomed the revised format of the report, which included a scorecard intended to enable Council to monitor progress and performance against the Near-Term Actions (NTAs) set out in the BBSRC Delivery Plan. Council agreed that the scorecard should be provided routinely as part of the Executive Chair's Report.
6. *This paragraph was removed as related to business sensitive information.*
7. Council highlighted the importance of developing links with the National Institutes of Health in the USA and helping them understand the funding landscape in the UK. Council noted all work done by BBSRC and that UKRI is developing a framework international strategy.
8. The Chair invited Gideon Henderson to introduce himself. It was his first UKRI-BBSRC Council meeting in his role as DEFRA's Chief Scientific Adviser representative. He is Professor of Earth Sciences at the University of Oxford and until recently its Head of Department. He served on NERC Council and is now Chief Scientific Adviser Representative on NERC Council as well as BBSRC Council. Gideon said that he was looking forward to learning more about how BBSRC operates. It was noted that there will be an item for updates from DEFRA and the CSA network more broadly on Council agendas.
9. Mike Blackburn, UKRI Chief Finance Officer, said that he attended all UKRI Council meetings as he found it useful to see how they operate and what they discuss. He said that recruitment for his post was ongoing. Council noted that Sir Mark Walport (UKRI Chief Executive) was committed to stay in his post until Summer 2020 when he plans to retire. It is hoped his replacement will be announced in the Summer.
10. Dan Hodges provided Council with an update on the early stages of the UKRI 2025 project to build the strategy for the whole of UKRI in consultation with all Councils. The plan is to finalise the document in March 2020. Dan invited Council members to input to this. Council was assured that the UKRI 2025 strategy will connect with Councils' strategic plans and is being developed with the Executive Committee (all Councils' Executive Chairs). Council indicated that the type of funding should be diverse to support a range of programmes across UKRI. Council appreciated an early sight of the project plans and considered ways of engagement at different stages of the project, e.g. meeting with groups of Council members before Council meeting in March 2020.

***ACTION UKRI BBSRC 20/2019: Council agreed that the scorecard should be provided routinely as part of the Executive Chair's Report (Laura Notton, with every report)***

***ACTION UKRI/BBSRC 21/2019: There were opportunities for more alignment between Industrial Biotechnology and Synthetic Biology across UKRI, which potentially could be actioned by establishing a Task and Finish group (Amanda Collis, consider by April 2020)***

***ACTION UKRI/BBSRC 22/2019: It was noted that there will be an item for updates from DEFRA / the wider CSA network on Council agendas (Ksymena Grzybowska, for every meeting).***

#### **ITEM 5. DEVELOPMENT OF COLLABORATIVE TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS (UKRI BBSRC 25/2019)**

11. The Chair welcomed Robert Hardwick to the meeting. Karen Lewis introduced the paper which provided information on the proposed ambition, objectives and key features of the second phase of Collaborative Training Partnerships (CTP2). Council's input was sought on key aspects of the programme. Council considered how to incentivise engagement with SMEs through increasing awareness and ensuring benefits of the scheme were framed for both business and academic audiences. Council also discussed how we can enable and ensure embedding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the partnerships, e.g. by ensuring that assessment criteria supported a diversity of applicants and used appropriate metrics. On the latter, it was noted that UKRI was assessing what EDI metrics could be used. Council emphasised that it was important to analyse how many students worked in industry as a result of the programme.
12. Gideon Henderson commented that there was a role for collaboration with the Government and agreed that language needs to be carefully designed. It was noted that there could be best practice sharing and learning across UKRI.
13. Karen thanked Council members for their input which will be used to develop plans for the next phase of CTPs that will be launched in February 2020.

#### **ITEM 6. STRATEGIC DISCUSSION BETWEEN DUNCAN WINGHAM, EXECUTIVE CHAIR OF NERC AND BBSRC COUNCIL (UKRI BBSRC 26/2019)**

14. The Chair welcomed Duncan Wingham to the meeting and handed over to Melanie. Melanie introduced this item by saying that Duncan was attending this meeting of Council to explore priority areas where BBSRC and NERC could work together more closely in the future. Duncan gave a presentation outlining the top-level interests of NERC and where he saw there were opportunities to work together to support collaborative research spanning the NERC-BBSRC interface, particularly the intersection of agriculture, the environment, and biodiversity in the context of 'net zero'.

15. In his presentation, Duncan talked about NERC funding and its institutes, which are not only service providers, but also strong science centres. He also gave examples of research funding between BBSRC and NERC and emphasised that the planet was the subject of research and that collaboration and engagement, also internationally, is the way to tackle large-scale problems. He said that NERC made substantial contribution to understanding that consumption led to pollution and engaging across the complexity with different communities is important.
16. Duncan's last slide presented a diagram illustrating the decrease of vertebrates caused by several known reasons (e.g. land use, use of chemicals and CO<sub>2</sub>). It is not possible to reduce the gradient on the diagram in isolation and this was one of the major challenges that we should try to address together.
17. Council agreed that more systemic approaches at the BBSRC : NERC interface were required. Council was very supportive of working together with NERC, proposing a joint BBSRC and NERC Council members' Task and Finish group to take this forward, with a remit of defining the scope and priorities. It was noted that this challenge was also a high priority for the Government. Duncan will report the discussion to NERC Council.

***ACTION UKRI/BBSRC 23/2019: Council was very supportive of working together with NERC, proposing a joint BBSRC and NERC Council members' Task and Finish group to take this forward, with a remit of defining the scope and priorities. It was noted that this challenge was also a high priority for the Government. Duncan will report the discussion to NERC Council (Melanie Welham, Duncan Wingham, May 2020)***

**ITEM 7. 2019 MID-TERM REVIEW OF STRATEGICALLY FUNDED INSTITUTES (UKRI BBSRC 27/2019)**

*This item contains sensitive information and it was therefore reported separately.*

**ITEM 8. BIOSCIENCES BIG IDEAS PIPELINE (UKRI BBSRC 28/2019)**

*This item contains sensitive information and it was therefore reported separately.*

**ITEM 9. BIENNIAL RISK UPDATE, REVIEW AND DISCUSSION (UKRI BBSRC 29/2019)**

18. The Chair welcomed Lucy Davidson to the meeting. Council was provided with one of its regular updates on UKRI Risk Management activities operated by BBSRC so that Council members were kept informed and could input and challenge where appropriate. Council reviewed the Risk Register and agreed it reflected BBSRC's responsibility to manage their risks within the context of UKRI. *This section was removed as related to business sensitive information.*
19. Council also noted the update from UKRI on ongoing risk and assurance work to ensure closer links between them.

**ITEM 10. ANNUAL APPRAISAL OF COUNCIL (UKRI BBSRC 30/2019)**

20. Ksymena Grzybowska introduced this paper, which presented the results from the appraisal of Council. Overall, comments from Council members were positive.
21. Following a discussion of inter-Council connectivity, a brief synopsis (e.g. one slide for each Council) of other Councils' strategic priorities was requested. Council also asked that it continued to have 'blue skies' discussions over dinner and asked for topic suggestions.
22. Council suggested that it would welcome views from the Executive on how they see Council perform, e.g. 360<sup>o</sup>approach.
23. UKRI Chief Finance Officer, who was present at the meeting, commented on Council's high level of effectiveness, discussion and conduct of the meeting.

***ACTION UKRI BBSRC 24/2019: Following a discussion of inter-Council connectivity, a brief synopsis (e.g. one slide for each Council) of other Councils' strategic priorities was requested (Ksymena Grzybowska/Emma Hudson, March 2020)***

***ACTION UKRI BBSRC 25/2019: Council also asked that it continued to have 'blue skies' discussions over dinner and asked for topic suggestions (Ksymena Grzybowska, March 2020)***

***ACTION UKRI BBSRC 26/2019: Council suggested that it would welcome views from the Executive on how they see Council perform, e.g. 360 degrees approach (Ksymena Grzybowska, next appraisal).***

#### **ITEM 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS/ COUNCIL FORWARD LOOK (UKRI BBSRC 31/2019)**

24. Council noted the paper listing agenda items for forthcoming meetings, in particular, Council noted the plans for a joint meeting with EPSRC and MRC Councils in March 2020 and agreed to hold the June 2020 Council meeting and dinner with NERC in Edinburgh.

Council Secretariat  
January 2020

Agenda Item	Action Description	Owner	Delivery Date	Status
	<b>Actions from 4 December 2019</b>			
4	<b><i>ACTION UKRI BBSRC 20/2019: Council agreed that the scorecard should be provided routinely as part of the Executive Chair's Report (Laura Notton, with every report)</i></b>	Laura Notton	With every report	Ongoing
4	<b><i>ACTION UKRI/BBSRC 21/2019: There were opportunities for more alignment between Industrial Biotechnology and Synthetic Biology across UKRI, which potentially could be actioned by establishing a Task and Finish group (Amanda Collis, April 2020)</i></b>	Amanda Collis	Consider by April 2020	
4	<b><i>ACTION UKRI/BBSRC 22/2019: It was noted that there will be an item for updates from DEFRA / broader CSA network on Council agendas (Ksymena Grzybowska, for every meeting).</i></b>	Ksymena Grzybowska	For every meeting	Ongoing
6	<b><i>ACTION UKRI/BBSRC 23/2019: Council was very supportive of working together with NERC, proposing a joint BBSRC and NERC Council members' Task and Finish group to take this forward, with a remit of defining the scope and priorities. It was noted that this challenge was also a high priority for the Government. Duncan will report the discussion to NERC Council (Melanie Welham, Duncan Wingham, May 2020)</i></b>	Melanie Welham Duncan Wingham	May 2020	Ongoing. Melanie attending NERC Council in March 2020.

10	<b><i>ACTION UKRI BBSRC 24/2019: Following a discussion of inter-Council connectivity, a brief synopsis (e.g. one slide for each Council) of other Councils' strategic priorities was requested (Ksymena Grzybowska/Emma Hudson, March 2020)</i></b>	Ksymena Grzybowska / Emma Hudson	March 2020	Ongoing
10	<b><i>ACTION UKRI BBSRC 25/2019: Council also asked that it continued to have 'blue skies' discussions over dinner and asked for topic suggestions (Ksymena Grzybowska, March 2020)</i></b>	Ksymena Grzybowska	March 2020	Ongoing
10	<b><i>ACTION UKRI BBSRC 26/2019: Council suggested that it would welcome views from the Executive on how they see Council perform, e.g. 360 degrees approach (Ksymena Grzybowska, next appraisal).</i></b>	Ksymena Grzybowska	Next appraisal	Ongoing
7	<b><i>This action was removed as it related to business sensitive information.</i></b>			
8	<b><i>This action was removed as it related to business sensitive information.</i></b>			
	<b>Actions from 27 September 2019</b>			
7	<b><i>ACTION UKRI BBSRC 19/2019: Invite partnerships assessed as unsatisfactory by the assessment panel to submit revised plans in three years' time.</i></b>	Karen Lewis	May 2022	Ongoing
	<b>Actions from 12 June 2019</b>			
6	<b><i>BBSRC Executive will take forward the recommendations and develop an implementation plan and brief Appointments Board on the new strategy advisory arrangements.</i></b>	Paul Burrows	Update in March 2020	Complete – Report in due course

8	<i>BBSRC Executive Team to keep Council updated on progress with spending review planning.</i>	<i>Paul Burrows</i>		Ongoing
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Chair's Signature: .....

Date: .....