

MINUTES OF UKRI-BBSRC COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2018.

Those attending:

Dr Belinda Clarke
Professor Ian Graham FRS
Professor Martin Humphries
Dr Deborah Keith
Professor Andrew Millar FRS
Professor Malcolm Skingle CBE
Professor David Stephens
Professor Melanie Welham (UKRI-BBSRC Executive Chair, Chair of the meeting)

Also attending:

Dr Michael Booth – for item 8
Dr Paul Burrows
Dr Amanda Collis
Dr Jef Grainger – for item 8
Jan Juillerat
Dr Karen Lewis
Dr Rowan McKibbin – for item 6
Dr Paul Reeves – for item 10

Dr Richard Brown
Helen Meade (Secretary)
Sharon Southwood

ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS

1. Melanie Welham, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Patrick Middleton, Deputy Director Communications UKRI, attending as an observer.
2. Apologies were received from Ottoline Leyser, Laura Green and Ian Boyd.
3. Martin Humphries, Senior Independent Member (SIM), shared comments gathered from Council members on current ways of working and future, effective operation of the Council. The appraisal of Council in Spring 2019 will provide an opportunity to reflect on the first six months of the new Council. Council **AGREED** with the current approach of the UKRI- BBSRC Executive Chair acting as Chair of Council.

ITEM 2: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2018 (UKRI BBSRC 09/2018)

4. Minutes were **AGREED** as a correct record of the meeting, with one comment to rename the upcoming potential cross-council initiative to 'Population Biology of Managed *and wild* Systems'.

ITEM 3: PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING (ORAL)

5. Council requested that appropriate materials and briefings are shared through CouncilNet to ensure Council is effective and can fulfil its role. In particular Council requested a list of acronyms for the next Council meeting. **ACTION: BBSRC to provide Council with a list of commonly used acronyms ahead of the December Council meeting.**
6. An update on all actions 'in progress' will be provided at the December meeting.
7. A summary of key messages and decisions from the meeting will be circulated to all Council members before sending into UKRI.

ITEM 4: EXECUTIVE CHAIR'S REPORT (UKRI BBSRC 10/2018)

8. Melanie presented the *Report from the Executive Chair*, which provided Council with an update on BBSRC's main areas of activity, encompassing both retrospective highlights and future plans. As BBSRC develops its Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP), it will explore opportunities to further update the format and content of the report, in particular to include key performance indicators to help Council monitor progress against the key deliverables set out in the SDP.
9. The Executive Chair highlighted the following:
 - 76 outline proposals were received for the 2018 Strategic Longer and Larger (sLoLa) call for proposals focused on frontier bioscience and following assessment 14 were invited to submit full proposals in January 2019. Up to £16M is available
 - The ERA-NET Cofund on Biotechnologies (ERA CoBioTech) is expected to launch its second transnational call in October, with a budget of over €10m. The call aims to help transform the global economy from dependence on fossil-derived raw materials to a sustainable bio-based economy
 - The £90m Transforming Food Production (TFP) challenge, funded through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) opened its first collaborative R&D competition in August 2018. £1.5M has been made available under the Community of Practice stream to support 15 Seeding Awards
 - The UK Animal and Plant Health partnership held a workshop in September to identify shared animal and plant health research priorities. The opportunities identified will feed into submissions for the 2019 Spending Review by members of the partnership
 - The original BBSRC funding for the Animal Welfare Research Network (AWRN), which has ~500 members and holds regular workshops on a variety of subjects, ends this year. The network has submitted an application for further funding which is currently under review
 - Despite substantial interest (103 Expressions of Interest leading to 40 invitations to apply), only 3 proposals were funded by BBSRC and none by NC3Rs under the joint *New Approaches to Ageing Research* highlight. The highlight will be reviewed to see what can be learned. **ACTION: BBSRC to review the New Approaches to Ageing Research highlight.**
 - There was strong demand for the first call of the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships programme and for BBSRC's David Philips Fellowships
 - In August, BBSRC and DFID held a workshop, hosted by Rothamsted Research, between Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

(CGIAR) centres and key UK research organisations, looking at ways to improve UK-CGIAR collaboration for the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal 2.

10. Council noted the Executive Chair's Report and in particular the plethora of funding opportunities available to BBSRC's community. While the new funding opportunities are very welcome, concerns were raised around community fatigue and loss of morale, as these additional funding opportunities can put significant demand on the community, and which can, for some competitions, be accompanied by relatively low success rates. Over subscription to initiatives, including Follow on Fund, demonstrate demand for certain modes of investment and these areas should be considered for an uplift in funding. Council urged UKRI to capture the value of unsuccessful applications that were still deemed to be excellent, given often low success rates. Council also highlighted a need to consider a two stage funding mechanism, to minimise demand pressures. **ACTION: BBSRC should review success rates across all initiatives/ funding schemes.**

ITEM 5: UPDATES FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS (ORAL)

11. Ian Boyd sent his apologies. The Executive Chair updated Council that the Chief Scientific Advisors and UK Research and Innovation were discussing future opportunities for collaborative working, particularly around the strategic priorities fund.

ITEM 6: UK RESEARCH AND INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURE ROADMAP (UKRI BBSRC 11/2018)

12. The Chair welcomed Rowan McKibbin, Head of Sector – Exploiting New Ways of Working, to the meeting. Rowan presented a paper detailing the background to the UK Research and Innovation Infrastructure Roadmap, and more specifically, the Bioscience, Health and Food sector.
13. BBSRC, along with MRC, are leading on the Bioscience, Health and Food sector, which includes a diverse and broad set of infrastructures. Council provided feedback on the thematic areas, with a general sense that technologies should be considered first. Overall, Council **AGREED** that the thematic areas represented the Bioscience Health and Food sector well. Council provided the following advice:
 - Consider including precision agriculture
 - Consider approaches to horizon scanning to identify emerging technologies
 - Suggest remove reference to 'advanced' in the thematic area titles
 - Consider how to incentivize industry to contribute and consider issues of interoperability and standardisation, for example barcodes, and robotics and automation.
14. Council confirmed that the analysis of the Bioscience Health and Food sector was representative of the broader ecosystem, although the first stage survey showed under representation of innovation infrastructures. The second phase will be led by the UKRI core teams and will actively encourage campuses and catapults to attend the workshops, along with organisations such as National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and Wellcome Trust. The second phase stakeholder engagement will seek to include greater representation from innovation and industry infrastructures.

15. BBSRC showcased some excellent examples of data visualisation of the survey results, these methods of data analysis are being adopted across UKRI. Strong links were seen between e-infrastructures, such as data and computing systems and communication networks, and resources such as data sets, collections, archives and longitudinal and cohort studies.
16. A balance of requirements for capital set-up and operational costs over the 10 year duration is an important consideration for Infrastructures. Currently there is a lack of long-term operational funding, which is a concern as typically 90% of infrastructures plan capacity and capability needs for no longer than six years and are therefore heavily reliant on unsecured funding.
17. Council suggested the UKRI infrastructure roadmap team should consider:
 - Cross-cutting messages for UKRI
 - Innovation ecosystem infrastructure, including incubators, co-working spaces, access to lab space etc.
 - Join up with social science infrastructure, for example anonymous health records, prison records, tax records, Uber data.
18. Council supported the overall key messages being put forward from the Biosciences, Health and Food sector for the interim report and thought they showed a good appreciation of the sector. They reiterated the need to address innovation in the next phase of engagement.

ITEM 7: UKRI TRANSFORMATION (UKRI BBSRC 12/2018)

19. Jan Juillerat introduced this paper and outlined UKRI's current plans for transformation. UKRI has appointed Quartz, world leaders in organisation design, to advise on the best approach to the programme. The first stage of transformation will comprise a 6-8 week diagnostic phase. A tender process is underway for the second phase of transformation for implementation. UKRI Transformation Director recruitment is in process.
20. Council provided the following thoughts and advice:
 - UKRI should seek to minimise bureaucracy, ensuring flexibility and clarity around everything it does
 - There was a need for clarity around roles, responsibilities and the transparency around decision making, in line with supporting and empowering UKRI leadership
 - UKRI should seek to be a unified, high performing and adaptable organization enabling maximum impact to be realized from the growing government investment in research and innovation
 - Greater clarity is required on integrated working across the nine UKRI Councils, recognizing the importance of understanding the needs and expectations of each individual Council's key stakeholders
 - UKRI has a role in enabling, nurturing and developing talent within its organization to collaboratively design and deliver its vision within an innovative and inclusive culture
 - The three-year UKRI Transformation Programme should consider governance and leadership before considering the supportive organizational structure.
 - Corporate reputation is critical for cultivating stakeholder relationships and, specifically, for retaining public trust. The reputation of UKRI sits with every

single employee and all 7,000 employees ought to be aware of their impact on corporate reputation

- UKRI needs to create an inspiring working environment and a physical presence that matches its world-class ambition. This is challenging as UKRI spans a number of different locations

ITEM 8: REVIEW OF BIOSCIENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: WORKING GROUP INITIATION (UKRI BBSRC 13/2018)

21. Jef Grainger introduced this item and presented Council with background information on BBSRC's preparations to conduct a review of Bioscience for International Development.
22. Council were provided with an update on Newton Fund and the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). Key points were:
 - Government are currently reviewing Newton Fund, which provides BBSRC Council with an opportunity to influence its future direction and future partner countries
 - UKRI is the primary delivery partner of GCRF funds. GCRF funding spans a broader range of research and geographies, compared to the Newton Fund. A key early constraint had been community readiness for GCRF, due to the tight spend timelines and ODA requirement
 - The first GCRF Foundations call (£15M) provided an opportunity for the research community to respond. Subsequent calls have focused on more targeted areas of research.
23. Council acknowledged that BBSRC/ UKRI had administered a huge amount of funding in a short space of time, across a range of areas. Future science opportunities may include livestock nutrition, mobile and e-technology, pest management, protein, food safety, high value crops and microbiome.
24. Council **AGREED** and supported the approach to conduct a review of Bioscience for International Development via a working group of Council and supported the proposed membership. BBSRC may want to consider involving Wellcome Trust, international funders, and UK-based NGOs e.g. Fauna & Flora International (FFI).
25. Council **AGREED** the four themes that the working group should consider: high level international development strategy; BBSRC strategic research priorities; ODA country partners; and types of ODA scheme/ funding. Council urged BBSRC to consider the following:
 - How to measure the quality and impact of what is being funded and avoid duplication
 - Develop a consortia of country partners, where countries have shared interests e.g. a number of countries would have interest in Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)
 - Appropriate mechanisms to enable the research community to engage
 - Lessons learned and shared experiences to inform and improve decision making
 - Opportunities for science diplomacy
 - Opportunities to synergize with overseas organisations for example USAID, Bill and Melinda Gates to identify any gaps, areas of potential co-funding, avoiding duplication and share lessons learned.

26. Ian Graham volunteered to be a member of the working group.
27. **ACTION: Council to volunteer themselves to be members of a working group as part of the review of Bioscience for International Development.**
28. **ACTION: Council to be updated on progress of the working group in March 2019.**

ITEM 9: BBSRC STRATEGIC DELIVERY PLAN (UKRI BBSRC 14/2018)

29. Paul Burrows introduced this item, reminding Council that The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires each of the nine UKRI Councils to produce a Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) and all SDPs should draw on UKRI's strategic prospectus and should be joined up and consistent in approach. All nine SDPs will fall under an overarching UKRI SDP, which would address cross-cutting issues.
30. Council was provided with a first sight of BBSRC's developing Strategic Delivery Plan and provided feedback on the current working draft. Council commented that there was a good balance across BBSRC's remit. There were some key deliverables that Council recognised BBSRC needed to consider in 2019/20 and these will be discussed further and agreed at the December Council meeting.
31. Council provided the following feedback:
- Consider the results of the recent 'understanding the rules of life' horizon scanning exercise to inform actions.
 - Consider opportunities arising from the recent statement that *90% of journal publications come from the study of only 10% of genes*.
 - Need a strong industry-academia partnership for UK Research and innovation
 - Embed 'Bioscience for Society' throughout.
 - The third round of Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP3) short term objectives should include a statement about managing early careers, particularly student personal and professional development as well as wellbeing, in line with the Wellcome Trust.
 - 'Collaboration, partnerships and knowledge exchange' – the short-term actions should be interactive and capture the need for a two-way dialogue.
32. Council highlighted the long-term nature of the national capabilities that exist within strategically-funded institutes, commenting that these will strengthen BBSRC's Strategic Delivery Plan and provide continued justification for investment in institutes as well as national capabilities. It would also be important to consider how the individual institutes' strategic plans fit into the BBSRC strategic delivery plan. **ACTION The UK's 'institute' landscape to be a discussion topic at a future BBSRC Dinner.**

ITEM 10: MONITORING AND EVALUATION WITHIN UKRI-BBSRC (UKRI BBSRC 15/2018)

33. Paul Reeves introduced this item. This paper provided Council with an overview of BBSRC's approach to monitoring and evaluation and Council was invited to consider whether it is broadly appropriate, where BBSRC might make improvements and to advise on Council's own role in monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation are essential activities to support evidence-based decision making.

BBSRC follows the government's Green Book policy development cycle ROAMEF (Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback), which Council agreed was a robust evaluation process approach.

34. Council recognised there was a comprehensive suite of evaluation and monitoring tools and supported the current prioritisation approach. BBSRC adopts a multi-dimensional approach to monitoring and evaluation, in order to develop a robust evidence base of performance and achievement, for example through tools such as Researchfish, benefits realisation and logic models, Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Gateway Reviews, economic analysis and use of external data sources (REF, spin out companies etc.) A number of different factors are considered when prioritising monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, timeliness/current landscape, existing evidence coverage, funding commitments. Council was interested to understand the evaluation and monitoring cost benefit ratio and questioned if there was further scope for automation to enable and enhance the management of the portfolio of investments.
35. BBSRC's annual Impact Report was highlighted as being helpful in informing BBSRC's community about the impact of its research and Council recognised the importance of evaluation and monitoring in feeding into decision making.
36. Council discussed the approach that BBSRC should take to enable Council to evaluate BBSRC's performance against its delivery plan through specific KPIs.
37. Council requested regular updates at future meetings to show progress against BBSRC's Strategic Delivery Plan, perhaps through a traffic light system approach being included in the Executive Chair's Report. ***ACTION: Include updates to show progress against BBSRC's Strategic Delivery Plan as part of the Executive Chair's Report, from April 2019.***
38. ***ACTION: Provide Council with the current quarterly reporting and dashboard to the December Council meeting.***

ITEM 11: ADVISORY STRUCTURES – COUNCIL TASK AND FINISH GROUP; TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP (UKRI BBSRC 16/2018)

39. Paul Burrows introduced this item. Council **AGREED** the scope of a task and finish group to review BBSRC's advisory structures and **AGREED** the terms of reference and approach. The task and finish group would comprise four Council members, one of whom would Chair, and two BBSRC senior leaders. Laura Green, Belinda Clark and David Stephens volunteered to be part of the task and finish group.

ITEM 12: COUNCIL MEETING PLAN (UKRI BBSRC 17/2018)

40. Council supported a broad range of locations for future Council meetings, but there would need to be a clear purpose underpinning the choice. Council were invited to suggest agenda items for discussion at future meetings.
41. Alex Marsh, Deputy Director of Strategy, will be the future UKRI observer. Ian Kenyon, Chief Financial Officer of UKRI, will be attending the December Council meeting.
42. Future items Council would like considered were:

- UK Bioeconomy Strategy and BBSRC's involvement in delivering the strategy.
- Stakeholder engagement analysis – BBSRC's key partners and reason for engagement.
- Open data

ITEM 13: ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ORAL)

43. No other business was raised.

Executive Chair's Office
September 2018