

NERC Science Board Meeting
Summary of Discussion
22 September 2016
Alexandra Park, Swindon

Members present – Professor Angela Hatton (Chair), Professor Paul Bates, Professor Mike Begon, Dr Jennifer Collier, Professor Peter Cox, Professor Lora Fleming, Professor Rosemary Hails, Professor Ian Poll, Professor Simon Redfern, Professor Bill Sutherland, Professor David Vaughan, Professor Susan Waldron, Professor Mathew Williams

Apologies - Professor Elizabeth Baggs, Professor Rowan Sutton, Professor John Brodholt

Ex-officio - Professor Duncan Wingham, Professor Tim Wheeler

Other attendees - Dr Ned Garnett, Dr Caroline Culshaw

Attendees for specific items - Dr Nicki Badcock, Dr Katie Tearall, Mr David Roberts, Dr Avril Allman, Mrs Julia Maddock

Secretary – Lyndsey Jones

Key issues discussed

CE Update

Professor Wingham gave an update on how UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) planning and the Higher Education and Research Bill are progressing. The intention to appoint a UKRI Chief Executive by the end of the year was noted, as was the ongoing discussion around the design of UKRI and its delegated authorities.

ODA research update

Professor Wheeler reported that the Global Challenges Research Fund call for evidence has expanded the priority areas to include more areas of relevance to environmental science, and that the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy decision on the Newton Fund extension is expected in early November.

Science Board received an update on work NERC is undertaking with the US Rockefeller Foundation and the Economic and Social Research Council to think about research needed to deliver the United Nations Global Goals, taking a longer-term and holistic view across the Goals.

The Board discussed the support NERC Head Office is providing to Research Centres to understand Official Development Assistance requirements and articulate potential downstream development impact.

National Capability Commissioning

Science Board discussed and provided input into the guiding principles for commissioning National Capability science delivered by single centres (NC-Single) and National and Public Good (NPG) categories (see <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/nc-funding/#ncnat>). The Board endorsed the concept of the proposed three-stage iterative process for NC-Single and NPG and recommended that NPG is evaluated separately to ensure the perspectives of beneficiaries are included.

Centre for Doctoral Training Priority Areas

Science Board reviewed the Centre for Doctoral Training priority areas proposed by the Training Advisory Board and provided its perspective of the relative priority of each area with respect to the environmental sciences landscape.

Demand Management Review

Science Board discussed plans for an upcoming review on the impact of demand management, recommending that the focus should be on whether the policy has increased success rates and the unintended consequences or benefits for applicants and institutions. The range of data needed for the review was discussed and a targeted survey was recommended to complement data held by NERC Head Office.

Management Information for Science Board

Science Board heard about work ongoing within NERC to improve management information and agreed to incorporate Science Board requirements into the project. A working group will be convened to understand information needed by Science Board to fulfil its terms of reference to advise and report to Council on strategy delivery.

Communicating with the Science Community

Science Board agreed measures to increase transparency of Board decision making, including the publication of meeting summaries and the register of members' interests on the NERC website. Science Board also had a broader discussion on community awareness and understanding about strategic research processes and funding, making suggestions for more interactive engagement that the Executive will consider.

Into the Blue

Science Board welcomed the impressive programme of events scheduled for the *Into the Blue* public engagement activity.

Capital Roadmap

Science Board noted progress on developing the capital roadmap and provided feedback about community engagement and future headroom in the budget.

Standing Items

Science Board noted the finance report and forward agenda.

Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 7 and 8 February 2017 in London.