NERC Science Committee 5th Meeting

Summary of Discussion

08 & 09 September 2020, via Teleconference

Members Present: Professor Graham Underwood (Chair), Dr Adrian Baker, Professor Lora Fleming, Professor Alberto Naveira Garabato, Dr Anna Jones, Professor Christine Maggs, Professor Tamsin Mather, Professor Richard Pancost, Professor Andrew Shepherd, Professor David Thomas, Professor Simon Vosper, Dr Doug Wilson.

Ex-Officio: Professor Susan Waldron (NERC Director, Research and Skills)

Apologies: Professor Sir Duncan Wingham and Professor David Viner (whole meeting).

Other Attendees: Whole meeting: Dr Sarah Turner (NERC Associate Director, Strategic Programme Delivery). 9th only: Dr Iain Williams (NERC Director, Strategic Partnerships). Item 3: Georgina Colley (NERC Senior Programme Manager, Strategic Programme Delivery), Dr Caroline Culshaw (NERC Head of Healthy Environment), Rachel Leader (NERC Programme Manager, Strategic Programme Delivery), Dr Simon Kerley (NERC Head of Terrestrial, Freshwater & Earth), Dr Mike Webb (NERC Head of Marine), Dr Ruth Kelman (NERC Head of Resilient Environment), Dr Lizzie Garratt (NERC Head of Atmospheric & Polar); Item 5: Alison Robinson (NERC Deputy Executive Chair & Director, Corporate Affairs); Item 6: Andrea Sharpe (NERC Joint Head of Scientific support & Facilities and Data), Blanch Wynn-Jones (NERC Joint Head of Scientific support & Facilities and Data); Item 7: Sophie Hodgson (NERC Associate Director, National Capability).

Secretary: Gemma Davies

Key issues discussed

Highlight Topics

Science Committee discussed the community ideas for HTs comprising (i) NERC research priorities and (ii) COVID-19 legacy issues, and prioritised these into two separate lists of submissions with the potential to be included in the forthcoming announcement of opportunity. Two ranked lists were recommended to be taken to Council who will consider the balance of Highlight Topic budget to support COVID-19 legacy issues. The Executive will thereafter finalise the number of ideas to go forward from each list.
Executive Chair update

The Committee noted Alison Robinson’s new additional role as Deputy Executive Chair, created to maintain a strong internal system within NERC whilst NERC Executive Chair continues to champion Environmental Science across UKRI and government. The Committee heard about the spending review, noting the UKRI bid deadline of a first outline submission by the 24th September. Ongoing EDI and sustainability work was noted. The corporate strategy between BEIS and UKRI will be published shortly.

National Capability Scientific support & Facilities (S&F) and Environmental Data Service (EDS) - Round 2 Commissioning

Science Committee discussed evidence that could be used in the evaluation of round 1 commissions and advised on the appropriateness and value of the framework for assessment of strategic need for NERC’s S&F and EDS round 2 commissioning.

National Capability Science – Round 2 Process for Multi-centre Science

Science Committee agreed the proposed process and timeline for NC Science Multi-Centre second commission, and the considerations that will be used to assess whether outline bids reflect NERC’s aims for investments in NC Science Multi-Centre.

National Capability Science – Mid-Term Review process for Single Centre Science

Science Committee provided feedback on the proposed process for the mid-term review of National Capability Science Single Centre awards.

Standing items

The Committee confirmed the minutes and noted information papers, Discipline Balance and Financial Forecasts, and the forward agenda.