



Responsible Business Statement

Our role

NERC advances the frontier of environmental science by commissioning new research, infrastructure and training that delivers valuable scientific breakthroughs regarding our planet. Our research informs decision-making with independent knowledge and evidence, and helps society understand and find solutions to the social, environmental and economic challenges it faces. We do this through engaging and working closely in partnership with other funders, business, government and the public.

NERC has a responsibility not just to our staff, grant holders and partners, but to society and the wider environment. By acting with the highest standards of corporate responsibility across all investments, we build on our public mandate to deliver excellent science.

This document sets out NERC's commitment and approach to corporate responsibility, ensuring that through our business operations we have a positive contribution to society and the environment.

Our commitment

We will go beyond our legal duties and exemplify good corporate responsibility. We will work and act according to these four commitments:

- 1) Environmental sustainability - enhancing our positive environmental impact and minimising harm.
- 2) Social responsibility - engaging and supporting our community, while promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the environmental science sector.
- 3) Responsible decision making – acting in a transparent and fair way across our business practices, with partners that share our ethical values.
- 4) Responsible research - research with integrity, carried out by a diverse and outstanding body of researchers.

What follows will outline each of these four areas in greater detail and represents a commitment to record and share our corporate responsibility activities under each heading.



1) Environmental sustainability - enhancing our positive environmental impact and minimising harm.

1.1. We recognise that we have choices in the way we operate as a business. We will make choices that enhance and protect the natural environment while minimising environmental harm across all our investments.

1.2. Due to the nature of scientific research operations may sometimes result in environmental harm. To minimise future impact we will make responsible, far-sighted decisions as long-term custodians of our environment. We will share our decision-making processes to foster understanding and collaboration for common environmental benefit.

1.3. We are committed to continuous environmental improvement in the way we operate through monitoring, comprehensive reporting and creating an internal culture that embraces these practices and empowers our community to make proactive changes for environmental benefit.

1.4. We are taking a leading role in the implementation of the UKRI Environmental Sustainability Strategy and will ensure our activities are in line with the strategy commitments; including the commitment to have 'net zero' carbon emissions for our directly controlled activities by 2040.



2) Social responsibility - engaging and supporting our community, while promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the environmental science sector.

2.1. Our people are key to our success; those who work for us create who we are. We will invest in and support our staff to be the best they can be, through training and development opportunities while creating a diverse and supportive workplace in which they can prosper.

2.2. NERC's responsibility does not end at the office – it extends to the community, both scientific and the public. Through our public engagement work, we will support initiatives that develop the skills base of environmental scientists and increase public awareness of their work. We will support our staff in identifying local organisations with similar values where they can volunteer their time.

2.3. Just as we ask our staff to keep developing, we will continue improving our policies and practices to create an equal, diverse, and informed workforce who are engaged with our commitment to deliver scientific excellence.

2.4. In line with the UKRI policy we will embed equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels and in all that we do. All our staff have a role to play, creating a working environment which promotes dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued. As a funder we will take active steps to encourage an inclusive and diverse grant holder community, acknowledging difference can support scientific excellence.



3) Responsible decision making - acting transparently and fairly across our business practices, with partners that share our ethical values.

3.1. The independence of NERC science is integral to its value. We commit to protecting that independence through robust systems of governance, and the use of a diverse range of experts in our council and advisory bodies.

3.2. NERC's decision-making will be fair and transparent, holding us accountable to the public we serve. We will prioritise clear and timely communication that articulates not only what we are doing, but the aims and impacts behind our actions.

3.3. Through our transparent business practices, both directly and indirectly through our centres and business partners, we aim to foster public understanding and pride in the work NERC undertakes and funds.

3.4. We will communicate our social and environmental performance to staff and beyond and articulate the wider benefits of our actions through the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development.



4) Responsible research - research with integrity, carried out by a diverse and outstanding body of researchers

4.1. As part of UK Research and Innovation, NERC recognises and embraces its responsibility to promote responsible behaviour and promote good conduct in research. As set out in the UKRI Terms and Conditions, we will abide by 2009 Code of Conduct and Policy on the Governance of Good Research Conduct, 2010 Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research, 2012 Concordat to Support Research Integrity, considered in conjunction with the revised 2019 Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. We will also abide by specific concordats relating to specific policy areas including *inter alia* the Concordat on Understanding Animals in Research and the UKRI's policy on open access.

4.2. We will embed the practices set out in the above through our funding approaches and exemplify it in the way we interact with our research community.

4.3. We will champion UKRI approach to environmental sustainability in our research undertaking and where we fund research by third parties.

4.4. Together with our UKRI partners and the UK research community more broadly, we are committed to national leadership in this area, identifying, articulating and implementing best practice.

We will deliver on these commitment areas through the NERC Responsibility Framework and in collaboration with staff, other UKRI councils and the wider sector.

