

The RIDE Forum:

Research and Innovation for our Dynamic Environment

Background

The Living With Environmental Change Partnership (LWEC) was launched by the UK Research Councils in 2007 as a 10 year programme. It has led to [strong interdisciplinary investments](#) including more recently the [Centre for Evaluation of Complexity Across the Nexus](#), and importantly has succeeded in building strong, collaborative, lasting relationships between the 20 public sector funders with direct interest in environmental science, which comprise its membership. LWEC was instrumental in the UK-wide National Ecosystem Assessment and setting up UKWIR, which has become [the UK Water Partnership](#).

All LWEC partners expressed a strong desire to maintain the relationship and continue to maximise opportunities for collaboration and, in July 2014, decided that LWEC should evolve to carry its partnership benefits forward in a more agile way. The evolution of LWEC reflected the fact that partnership working has become more 'business as usual', requiring less top-down direction but often still benefitting from external facilitation in the early stages of collaboration.

A subgroup of LWEC partners developed a plan for a trial Network to be piloted in 2015/16 and members agreed there would be review in late 2015 to examine what value the Network was adding in helping partners to deliver their priorities for collaborative activities, and to see what level of central resources were required to support it. During this period all external commitments were sun-setted and secretariat staff were redeployed. The decision to transition from a large-scale formal programme was communicated to general stakeholders via the LWEC webpage, which is hosted by NERC.

A decision about the future of the Network was intended for the October 2015 Members Forum meeting based on three options. However, no final decision was made and discussions were deferred to an away-day which was held on 15 March 2016 where the Members Forum asked the Secretariat for pragmatic options that reflected the current resource and environment. The two options were discussed at a subsequent Members Forum meeting on 11 May 2016. Ahead of this meeting views were sought on the benefits of LWEC and future direction. The following synthesises these views along with the discussions from the October 2015 meeting:

Common organisational benefits cited from being part of LWEC

- A unique and increasingly important neutral space for senior-level dialogue between funders and users of environmental change science.
- A Forum to engage with broad range of partners and stimulate collaboration across operational challenges and enabling knowledge, tools and skills.
- The provision of a collective, independent and authoritative perspective
- Task and finish groups for initiatives enabling flexible and agile mechanisms for commissioning and delivery
- The coordination of the Climate Change Impact Report Cards
- The mechanism to develop common strategic directions (e.g. UK Flood Research Strategy)
- Benefits without financial outlay e.g. data-sharing, alignment of already planned investments

Comments about the future

- There needs to be a value-added proposition beyond current collaborative practices – the Nurse Review provides an opportunity to position this partnership forum in the interdisciplinary environmental challenges space.
- The central coordination and independence of the forum are crucial factors to be maintained
- Stability in organisational representation (the individuals involved) should aim to be maintained to

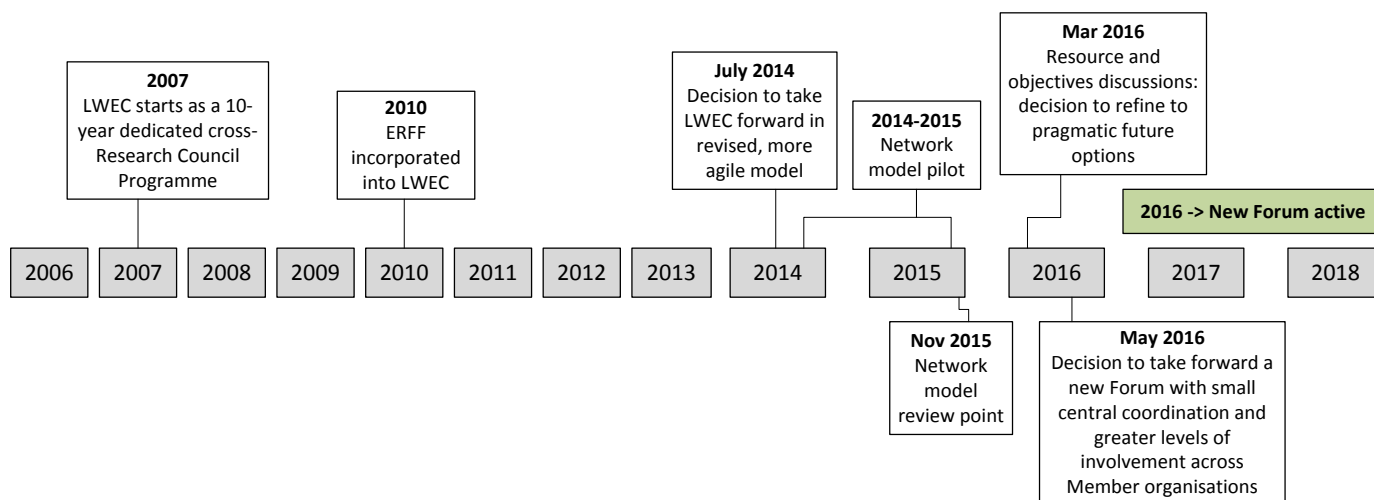
enable working relationships to be established

At the Members' Forum meeting on 11th May 2016 a decision was made to close LWEC as a formal programme reflecting members' view that LWEC has now succeeded in its aims and a distinct convening brand is no longer needed.

A new forum model was initiated to reflect the new spending review, the new environment in which Members sit. The future forum will concentrate on sharing and co-developing strategies, joint priority-setting and drawing out interdisciplinary partnership opportunities from the well-cemented cross-organisation Members group.

Figure 1 below shows the timeline of decisions

Figure 1:



This new Forum, Research and Innovation for our Dynamic Environment (RIDE FORUM Forum) will continue to help Members deliver their own strategic goals, where they require a cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach. It will do this by facilitating multi-lateral collaboration in partner-led activities to co-design and co-deliver research and evidence gathering and to promote the application of its results.

UK Research and Innovation for our Dynamic Environment (RIDE) Forum

A. Goal

The RIDE Forum aims to enhance the beneficial impact of the UK's publicly funded research and innovation in informing policy and practice, effective decision-making and sustainable solutions working with our dynamic natural environment.

It will do this by enabling funders to align, leverage their resources and avoid duplication, resulting in more efficient use of public funds through sharing and co-developing strategies, joint priority-setting and drawing out interdisciplinary partnership opportunities. Through this it will also enable the UK academic community to form independent beneficial and impactful links to the policy and practice community.

RIDE's unique contribution lies in its breadth. It brings together the complementary resources of the many different disciplines and publically-funded sector stakeholders needed to increase our understanding of the natural, social, economic and technological systems interacting with environmental change and the translation of that knowledge into innovating policy and practice. It focuses on the UK perspective and challenges, whilst necessarily placing these in the international context. It will also work

in partnership with business sectors and civil society on specific thematic issues. By taking this overview, it is able to add value to other, more discipline-, sector- or geographically-focused networks, drawing together their expertise in novel coalitions where this is needed.

B. Aims

By bringing Members together, and working through the Members we will:

- 1. Enhance strategic information exchange** - share information between funders and research users to help members identify common interests and priorities, build a strategic view across the landscape and foster partnership opportunities (especially multi- disciplinary).
- 2. Champion environmental change research and innovation**– provide a focal point for raising awareness of the collective work being undertaken.
- 3. Enable organisations to facilitate co-design or policy- and practice-facing research and innovation activities** – build communities of interest between funders, policymakers, businesses and researchers. To providing a focus to explore opportunities for collaboration where ideas and partnerships can develop, to establish projects of scale that help members leverage their own resources. Particularly in areas where Members require access to knowledge, people, skills and capabilities that a single organisation could not do alone.
- 4. Promote the application of research outputs and evidence into policy and practice** – feed into, and endorse, best practice for accelerating the impact of research investments on policy development, implementation and practice.

C. Success factors

Success factors for each of the aims are set out in Table 1 (p.15) and an associated Logic Framework for the RIDE Forum can be found in Figure 3 (p. 16) which includes further detail as to the route from aims to outcomes.

D. Boundaries

- Focus on UK perspectives and challenges (within the international context) framed through environmental change
- Focus on priority areas with multi-partner interest
- Focus on interdisciplinary research and innovation (including translational and secondary research) to inform policy and practice and addressing benefits to society
- Focus on facilitating early-stage development of collaborations, handing over to partners to lead the design and delivery
- Target engagement with business and industry on specific challenges
- The Forum is a convenor, enabler, broker and facilitator; it is not a funder.
- Flexible operation to deliver to Members' needs
- Periodic reviews of operations and outputs

E. Membership and governance of the Members

- Members will be public-sector funders of environmental change research, innovation, training and capabilities and providers and/or users of the resulting evidence who wish to collaborate to enhance the impact of this public-sector investment.
- Other interested stakeholders can engage through specific activities or services.
- It is expected of Members that they engage, share and collaborate with their internal and external communities.
- Members will proactively feed intelligence on relevant activities and strategies from their organisations to the Forum, and vice versa.

- Members will proactively seek out and engage with the Forum’s external stakeholders, including with the business, third sector and policy communities, in order to maximise the impact of their activities. Given the focus of the network on early-phase start up, engagement with external communities will usually be targeted and strategic.
- Members will be represented by a senior leader on the Members’ Forum, and a named nominated deputy responsible for ensuring actions and activities are carried out between meetings.

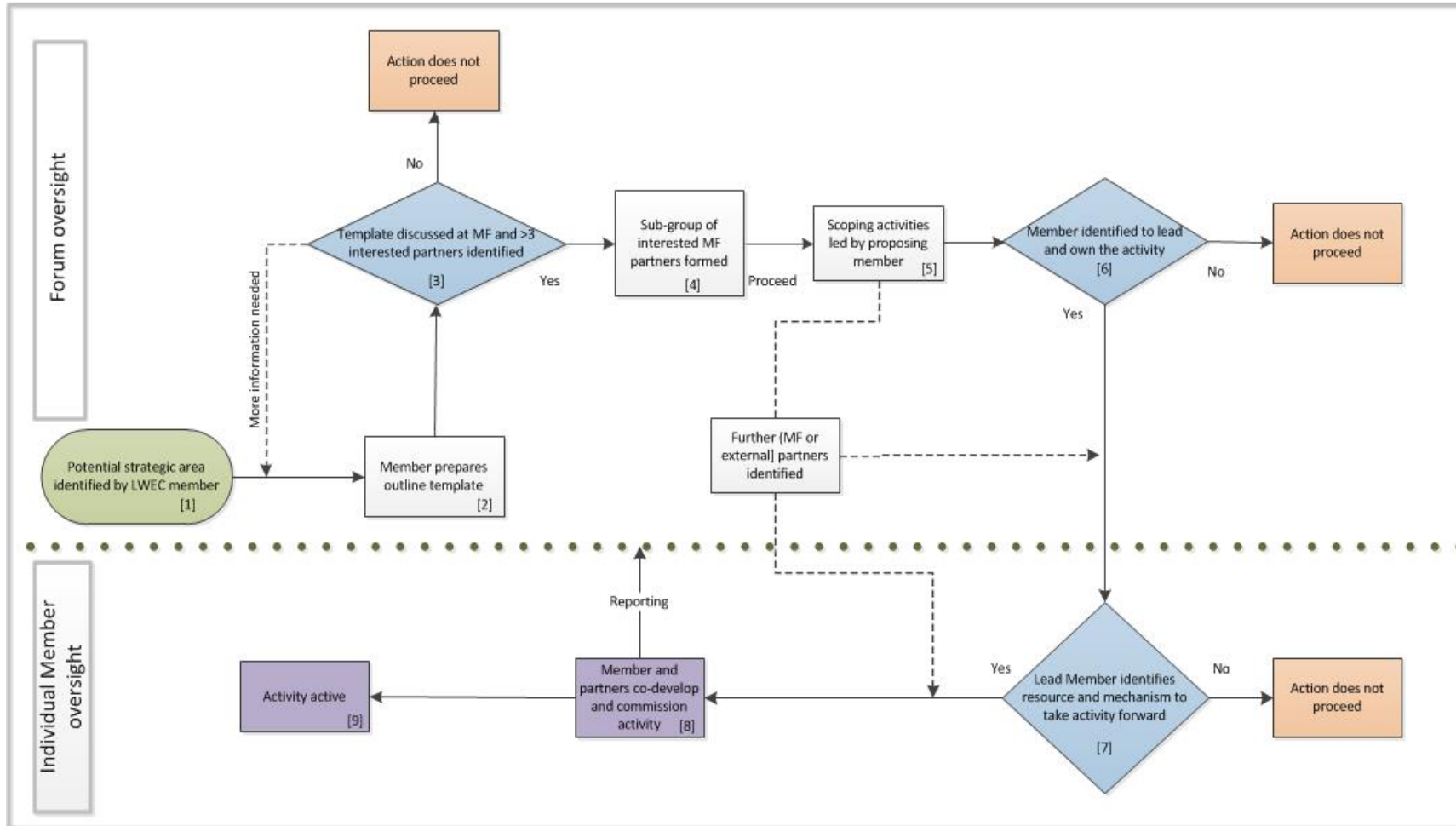
F. Governance

- The decision-making body will be the Members’ Forum which will meet formally twice a year.
- Members’ Forum will be comprised of senior staff from member organisations, with the delegated authority to respond on behalf of their organisation, catalyse decisions and deliver outcomes.
- Representatives on the Members’ Forum will use their organisations’ own internal structures to ensure appropriate championing, advice and approvals.
- Nominated individuals within member organisations will act as deputies.
- Figure 1 (p.14) illustrates the roles of Member organisations, the Members’ Forum and Secretariat coordination in proposing, approving and delivering actions, the decision-making route and timeline.

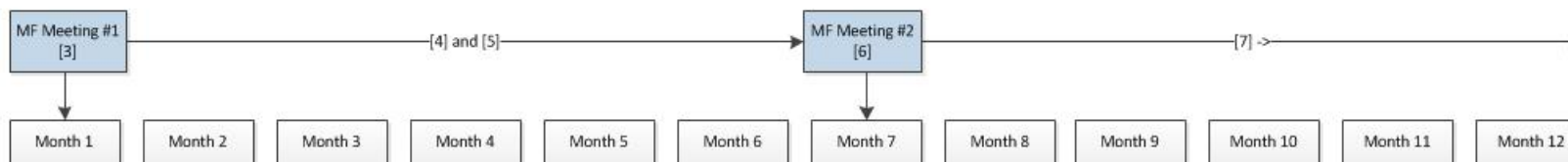
G. Stakeholder advice

- Strategic cross-sectoral engagement with stakeholders, including business, will continue to be a priority. It will be important for members to have clear sight of the major issues identified by business which cross-disciplinary research can play a positive role in addressing. Business advice will be strengthened and deepened through:
 - Seeking to involve relevant businesses in sub-groups and other activities delivering specific projects.
 - Looking for other opportunities to engage high-level business representatives on specific issues, such as through round-table stakeholder fora.
- Routes for third-sector engagement will be considered and implemented along similar lines to above.
- Interaction with other related networks (e.g. ECN, UK-EOF, UK Water Partnership, GFS) will be maintained via the Secretariat to ensure sharing of information and join up where possible. A summary of cross-representation in other networks is provided in Table 2 (p. 19; *currently awaiting input to complete*).

Figure 1: Route to proposing and delivering actions



Example timeline for activity development (1 year)



[1] The need: is it a strategic priority; is it interdisciplinary; is there a lead staff member; is there potential funding?

[2] The proposal: Environmental change challenge; interdisciplinary research, innovation and evidence needs; scale of proposed action; timing of proposed action; what resource and funding already exists; what is required of partners; intended impact

[3] Members' decision #1: Is challenge appropriate for the Forum; which partners have an interest; what resource is needed to support scoping before Decision #2

[4] Scoping: Forum sub-group or commissioning activity set up with Member lead

[5] Scoping: Activities could include workshops, stakeholder events, landscape mapping and analysis, synthesis

[6] Members' Decision #2: A lead Member is identified to take on the progression of the activity (or not). Could be same or different Member lead to [4]

[7] Activity active: Lead Member responsible and accountable; taken forward via Lead Member's organisational processes, with Member (and other) partners; funded by Members (and other partners)

Table 1: Success factors

<p>AIMS → ↓ SUCCESS FACTORS ↓ MEASURES</p>		<i>Enhance strategic information exchange</i>	<i>Champion environmental change research and innovation</i>	<i>Enable organisations to facilitate co-design or policy- and practice-facing research and innovation activities</i>	<i>Promote the application of research outputs and evidence into policy and practice</i>
Members commission policy-relevant, interdisciplinary programmes of work as a direct result of RIDE Forum-induced collaboration.	Measured via number of activities taken forward to scoping per year. And number of activities taken forward to development/commissioning per year.			✓	✓
Opinion-formers in government, business and media, and opinion-leaders in civil society cite the benefits of RIDE Forums's work.	Measured via qualitative statements fed back via Members, and light-touch biennial survey.		✓		✓
Member organisations' advisory bodies and senior leadership use the network as key information source to develop a strategic view across landscape.	Measured via qualitative statements fed back via Members, and light-touch biennial survey.	✓			✓
Public money and facilities are used efficiently and added value ensured through collaboration and joint working.	Measured via level of pooled resource (financial, and in kind) used to address RIDE Forum activities.			✓	✓
Members' able to build communities of interest to explore opportunities for collaboration at early stages.	Measured via number of activities taken forward to scoping per year	✓		✓	
Business representatives feel engaged in the priorities of the network.	Measured via qualitative statements fed back via Members, and light-touch biennial survey.		✓		✓
Policy-makers and business have enhanced knowledge and evidence for decisions in an accessible form appropriate for their needs.	Measured via light-touch biennial survey and number of reports/peer reviewed papers to be produced as a result of RIDE Forum's activities.		✓	✓	✓
Researchers have enhanced opportunities for interdisciplinary working, networking and information sharing.	Measured by number of workshops and calls to result from RIDE FORUM activities and convening of an annual thematic 'conference' for broader community.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tax payer gets better value for money through increased efficiency and impact.	Measured via level of pooled resource (financial, and in kind) used to address RIDE Forum activities.			✓	✓

Figure 3: RIDE Forum Logic Framework

