



Minutes of the Board meeting – 21 September 2021

Present:

Professor Kevin Shakesheff (KS) *Chair*
Dr Robin Buckle (RB)
Professor Paul Evans (PE)
Professor Paul Garside (PG)
Professor Christopher George (CG)
Ms Linda Horan (LH)
Professor Jane Hurst (JH)
Dr David Lovell (DL)
Dr Tom Matheson (TM)
Professor Cathy Merry (CM)
Professor Nick Plant (NP)
Dr Sally Robinson (SR)
Dr Sadhana Sharma (SS)
Dr Vicky Robinson (VR)

Apologies

Professor Jon Timmis (JT)
Dr Clive Roper (CR)

Office:

Dr Matthew Brooke *item 5*
Ms Vanessa Chauhan *item 4*
Dr Esther Pearl
Dr Anthony Holmes *item 5*
Ms Kayleigh Purdon (KP) *Secretariat*
Dr Suzanne McArdle (SM)
Dr Fiona Sewell (FS) *item 5*

1. Welcome

1.1. KS welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Board minutes 11 June 2021

2.1. The minutes from the June meeting were agreed to be an accurate account of the discussions.

2.2. VR and SM provided an update on the outstanding actions:

Annual 3Rs Prize

A meeting with GSK to discuss continued sponsorship and the prize remit has been scheduled. The NC3Rs is considering adapting the remit so that it better supports early career researchers, team science approaches and tackling the 3Rs valley of death. VR will provide the Board with an update after the meeting.

NC3Rs risk register

The Board's comments and feedback from the last meeting have been raised with the UKRI Risk and Assurance Business Partner for clarification. Due to busy schedules, discussions are still ongoing but SM will provide an update to the Board Chair in October.

3. Chief Executive update on activities

3.1. VR updated the Board on a number of core business activities and highlighted that workloads across the team remain high. The update included:

Research funding and early career awards

- A total of seven awards were made under the 2020 call for Project grants. The outline application for the 2021 call will open in November.
- SR has been appointed as the new Studentship Assessment Panel Chair and will take over from PG in 2022. The Panel will meet in October to triage the 90 full applications received for the 2021 call.
- 19 applications have been received for the 2021 Training Fellowship call. The Training Fellowship Panel will meet in November.
- Grant holder visits have continued to take place virtually. Positive feedback from grant holders has been received, on the participation of Board members at progress meetings. There are a total of 24 visits left for this year.
- Analysis of the 2021 researchfish® data has been completed. Part of the analysis will be presented to the Board at the November meeting for a wider discussion as part of the review of the Early Career's Funding programme.
- The Research Funding team have continued to work closely with F1000 to publish papers on to the Gateway. There has been an increase in the number of manuscripts being drafted. Over the last four months, one new paper has been published with another two at the approval stage here are 25 articles in the pipeline in total.

CRACK IT

- A Two-Phase Challenge and a Mega-Challenge have been launched for the 2021 competition with co-funding secured from new sponsors, Gilead and Genetech. Both Challenges will look to address issues surrounding the use of animals in toxicology and environmental risk assessment.

Staff-led programmes

- A new resource to help to technicians to evaluate the suitability of environmental enrichment for animals within their facility has been launched in collaboration with the RSCPA and the Institute of Animal Technology.
- New rules are being added to the Experimental Design Assistant (EDA) to encourage including both sexes to improve experimental designs. This aligns with a project being undertaken by the MRC.
- A total of 23 applications have been reviewed through the Peer Review service in the last three months and renewed funding has been secured from Wellcome to support the service. In addition to this, Wellcome are also providing funding for a new project to establish international standards to improve the welfare of non-human primates used in research.
- Two new Regional Programme Managers have been appointed to support the university consortia in the Midlands and the Crick Institute and King's College London.
- The Communications team are continuing to migrate the NC3Rs website to its new content management system, Drupal X. Once fully migrated, the new site will meet the Government guidelines on accessibility.

4. Update on financial accounts for 2021/22

4.1. VC gave an update on the NC3Rs mid-year financial accounts for 2021/22 which now reflects the Quinquennial Review (QQR) allocation. The accounts are in a good position and VC has been meeting regularly with budget holders to review predicted spend. However, the Board noted that future planning continues to be challenging due to the sustained impact of COVID-19 and that there is a need to be flexible and agile.

5. NC3Rs workplan 2022/23

5.1. The programme leads for Safety Assessment including the WHO project, Experimental Design and Reporting and Animal Welfare, provided the Board with a high levelhigh-level update of each programme and their planned activities for 2022/23.

Safety Assessment including the WHO project

- FS and AH presented the planned activities for Safety Assessment and the World Health Organisation (WHO) project which includes promoting the uptake of new approach methodologies and completing the recommendations for 3Rs integration within the WHO guidelines for quality control in biological testing.
- The Board noted the risks around resource and changes in the external landscape and their potential to influence the output of in-house projects. However, the Board were supportive of the

mitigating measures being put in place to ensure the delivery of the programmes are not disrupted.

Experimental design and reporting

- MB gave an update on the activities being undertaken by the Experimental, Design and Reporting team and the priorities for 2022/23. This included expanding stakeholder engagement activities to support universities, funders and journals to implement action plans that provide practical advice on integrating the ARRIVE guidelines into their policies and practices and in addition to helping to address issues around the 3Rs valley of death as it relates to reporting practices.
- The Board were supportive of the plans to develop guidelines to support the reporting of *in vitro* research. The RIVER guidelines will set out a list of recommendations focusing on three key areas, experimental design, experimental procedures and materials and data handling and visualisation. The recommendations will not be exhaustive and are intended to help identify the top priorities when reporting *in vitro* research.

Animal welfare

- VR provided a brief overview of the planned 2022/23 activities for the animal welfare programme in the absence of the Director of Policy and Outreach. The main focus for the coming year will be on the revision of the 2010 guidelines on the use and welfare of animals used in cancer research in collaboration with the National Cancer Research Institute. The team will also be working with the BBSRC to review respective animal welfare portfolios to identify the impacts of activities in this area.

6. AOB

6.1. There were no AOB items.