



## Minutes of the Board meeting – 23 November 2021

### Present:

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

### Apologies

Dr Rob Buckle (RB)  
Ms Linda Horan (LH)  
Professor Cathy Merry (CM)  
Professor Jon Timmis (JT)

### Office:

Dr Katie Bates (KB) *items 4, 5 and 6*  
Dr Anthony Holmes (AH)  
Ms Kayleigh Purdon (KP) *Secretariat*  
Dr Suzanne McArdle (SM)  
Dr Mark Prescott *item 7*  
Ms Emma Stokes *item 7*

### 1. Welcome

1.1. KS welcomed members to the meeting.

1.2. KS and VR thanked outgoing Board member, PG, for his invaluable support and contributions to the NC3Rs over the last seven years.

### 2. Board minutes 21 September 2021

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

### 3. Chief Executive update on activities

3.1. VR updated the Board on core business activities. The update included:

### New approach methodologies (NAMs)

Programme leads are currently working on developing the strategy for the new approach methodologies project. The strategy will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

### Project review and approval process

Frances Rawle, former Director of Policy, Ethics and Governance at the MRC, has been contracted to lead a specific piece of work looking at how project reviews and approval processes for animal research can be adapted to better support and promote the adoption of the 3Rs.

## **4. NC3Rs research funding portfolio**

4.1. The Board reviewed the terms of reference to establish two expert groups as part of the planned review of the NC3Rs research funding portfolio. The two groups will conduct thematic reviews of cardiac safety and microphysiological systems, which were identified as priority areas following analysis of Researchfish data and the re-classification of the portfolio to include details on award positions within the development, validation, and application pipeline.

4.2. The Board agreed to the terms of reference and noted that a report from each expert group will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

## **5. Review of the Early Careers programme**

5.1. The Board reviewed proposed plans to revise the PhD Studentship and Training Fellowship funding schemes to better support early career researchers. Under the revised proposal, emphasis will be placed on strengthening the cohort effect of the current schemes by helping to establish networks to bolster support and guidance available for researchers in the early stages of their career. The networks will also provide an opportunity for researchers to work collaboratively and to help drive the uptake of 3Rs approaches.

5.2. The Board discussed the new format and agreed that it would help to address the NC3Rs mission to bridge the 3Rs valley of death. However, the Board considered that additional investigation and stakeholder engagement would be required to inform the plans. The Board also suggested exploring how the NC3Rs could continue to further support and engage with early career researchers once their NC3Rs funding has finished.

## **6. Update on the NC3Rs Gateway**

6.1. The Research Funding team have continued to actively promote the gateway. This has included engaging with grant holders through one-on-one interactions, creating a resource hub on the NC3Rs website to provide further guidance and holding dedicated sessions at the annual PhD Summer School and Fellows meeting to build awareness of the gateway and discuss potential publications. Other activities also include NC3Rs Regional staff working closely with F1000Research to host a series of outreach sessions at their respective universities.

6.2. The Board noted the update on activities and the controls put in place to sustain the publication pipeline. This included increasing the number of NC3Rs staff trained to assist with the draft review process from three to 12. However, given the resource required to sustain the gateway, the Board agreed that expanding it to non-NC3Rs funded authors would not be appropriate at this time. This will be reviewed on a regular basis with the Gateway Advisory Board.

## **7. NC3Rs workplan 2022/23**

7.1. The leads for communication activities and collaborating with research funders provided the Board with a high-level update of each programme and their planned activities.

### Communications

- The revised Communications strategy for the next five years was circulated to the Board ahead of the meeting. The updated strategy highlights how effective communications are integral to driving the NC3Rs mission as well as providing a framework to further strengthen the dissemination of programme outputs.
- ES provided the Board with a preview of the new NC3Rs website, which is now in line with government requirements on accessibility. The Board noted the large amount of work that had also been undertaken to improve the way in which information on the site is grouped and categorised to enable stakeholders to easily view and access materials and resources relevant to them.
- The Board were supportive of the updated Communications strategy and commended ES on the new NC3Rs website.

### Working with funders

- MP gave an update on the activities being undertaken by the Peer Review team and outlined their priorities for 2022/23. This included, ensuring the NC3Rs maintains its high quality peer review service to the 28 funding bodies it provides advice to, working with UKRI and the research councils to facilitate the harmonisation of animal research policies and development of resources to support grant applicants, reviewers and funding bodies to better embed the 3Rs during the peer review process.
- The Board were supportive of the plans and noted the opportunities taken to work with new funders.

## **8. Horizon scanning workshop**

8.1. The Board dedicated part of the meeting to hold a Horizon scanning workshop to identify potential areas of development for both the 3Rs and the NC3Rs. The Board also took the opportunity to discuss the implications of changes within the external landscape and the impact they may have on 3Rs activities. This discussion was not minuted.

## **9. AOB**

9.1. There were no items for AOB.