



Minutes of the Board meeting – 22 November 2022

Present

Professor Kevin Shakesheff (KS) *Chair*
Dr Robin Buckle (RB)
Professor Paul Evans (PE)
Professor Christopher George (CG)
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 Vicky Robinson (VR)
Dr Sadhana Sharma (SS)
Professor Jon Timmis (JT)

Apologies

Ms Linda Horan (LH)
Dr Clive Roper (CR)
Ms Emma Stokes

Office

Dr Katie Bates
Dr Natalie Burden
Dr Elliot Lilley *item 3*
Dr Nathalie Percie du Sert
Ms Kayleigh Purdon (KP) *Secretariat*
Dr Suzanne McArdle (SM) *item 5*
Dr Cathy Vickers

1. Welcome

- 1.1. KS welcomed members to the meeting.
- 1.2. KS and VR thanked outgoing members, DL and JT for their invaluable contributions over the years.

2. Board minutes 28 September 2022

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

3. Chief Executive update

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

Board appointment

- Two new Board appointments have been made:
 - Professor Cathy Abbott, University of Edinburgh, will begin her tenure in January 2023
 - Dr Andy Scott, Unilever, will take up his appointment in January 2024

Meeting with Home Office Minister

- VR attended a meeting with the Home Office Minister, Lord Sharpe, to discuss the work of the NC3Rs and its relationship with Animals in Science Policy and Coordination Unit.

Research Funding

- A total of ten awards were made under the 2022 PhD Studentship scheme. An additional two awards in collaboration with the British Heart Foundation (BHF) are likely to be made in the new year following their ratification by the BHF Fellowships Committee.
- Funding decisions for the joint call with the BBSRC on non-animal technologies have been made. Details of the awards will be published following final agreement with the BBSRC.

CRACK IT

- A Phase 2 award for the Virtual Dog Mega-Challenge has been made. A formal announcement of the award will be made in February following the first kick-off meeting with the contractor and sponsors.
- Two applications have been received for the Single Phase Challenge and four applications for Two Phase Challenge for the 2022 competition. The Challenges focus on minimising animal use in the areas of endocrine disruption and cell therapy. The review panels will meet towards the end of the year to make funding recommendations.

Experimental design and reporting

- Following a tender exercise, a supplier has been appointed to develop the automated ARRIVE compliance checker. The software will assess compliance with the ARRIVE Essential 10. The tool will enable stakeholders to monitor the quality of the animal research they publish or support, and to assess the impact of any strategies they have implemented to improve the quality of reporting.

Animal Welfare

- The annual Primate Welfare meeting was held at the start of November. This was the first large hybrid event for the NC3Rs with 200 delegates attending (67 in person and 133 virtually). Positive feedback was received following the event.

3Rs Prize

- GSK has confirmed sponsorship for the annual 3Rs Prize. The competition will be launched in the new year. The Board acknowledged the continuing support from GSK.

4. World Health Organisation (WHO) project update

- 4.1. EL gave an update on the WHO project to review animal use requirements in quality control and batch release testing guidelines for biologicals. The Board noted the impressive work that has been undertaken and the activities that EL and the international expert working groups have managed to accomplish, including the review of 81 WHO guidelines and engagement activities to better understand the barriers to the adoption of the 3Rs. A report outlining the groups' findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Expert Committee on Biological Standardization in October 2023.
- 4.2. There is potential for the NC3Rs to continue to be involved in the project following the submission of the final report and for the Centre to develop a broader programme of work looking at vaccines and biological therapeutics. This will be discussed in greater detail at a future Board meeting.

5. Communications workplan 2023/24

- 5.1. VR provided an update on communications and the planned activities for 2023/24. This included refreshing the remaining NC3Rs microsites including Experimental Design, Macaques, Self-Assessment Tools and Chronic Implants, to bring them in line with the Drupal system update and to meet accessibility requirements. Following an internal review, the Communications team have decided to discontinue the podcast from February 2023. This decision was based on a number of factors including a static number of listeners and the level of resource required to deliver the podcast.
- 5.2. The Board were supportive of plans to increase outreach activities to identify new opportunities for public engagement to promote the 3Rs and support grant holders to champion their research within wider society.

6. Review of the NC3Rs Risk Heatmap

- 6.1. The Board reviewed the NC3Rs risk heatmap and noted the graphical representation of the Centre's risks. Members agreed the risks identified were appropriate and felt the scores were in general a true representation of the current climate. However, it was requested that scores for the following risks be updated:
 - R- 0240 – Lack of funding: Decrease impact score to medium in light of RB comments that NC3Rs core funding would be unlikely to be affected if MRC were to receive a reduced budget.
 - R- 0294 – Staffing: Increase impact score to high to reflect the challenges in recruiting specialist skills to support specific programmes and the difficulty in implementing succession plans give the Centre's size.

6.2. In line with UKRI Risk and Assurance framework, it was agreed the Board will review the risk heatmap on a bi-annual basis.

Action: SM to invite the Risk and Assurance Business Partner to a future meeting to give an update and overview of UKRI's risk management strategy.

7. Animals in Science Policy and Coordination Unit update

7.1. Will Reynolds, Head of the Animals in Science Regulatory Unit at the Home Office, provided the Board with an overview of the new animals in policy unit and outlined its priority areas. The Board thanked Will for the update.

8. AOB

8.1. There was one item of AOB:

- The Board asked that their thanks and appreciation be passed on to Hazel McLaughlin, NC3Rs Research Funding Officer, who will be retiring at the end of the year.