

Minutes of the Board meeting

14 May 2018

Present:

Professor Stephen Holgate CBE (SH) *Chair*
 Professor Chris Denning (CD)
 Mr Paul Finnemore (PF)
 Professor Paul Garside (PG)
 Dr David Lovell (DL)
 Dr Ceri Lyn-Adams (CLA)
 Professor Stefan Przyborski (SP)
 Dr Frances Rawle (FR)
 Dr Ian Ragan (IR)
 Professor Blanca Rodriguez (BR)
 Professor Jon Timmis (JT)
 Professor Lucy Walker (LW)

Office:

Mr Martin Carmack (MC) *item 3*
 Dr Anthony Holmes (AH) *item(s) 5,8*
 Dr Kasia Makowska (KM) *item 6*
 Dr Nathalie Percie du Sert (NPdS) *item 9*
 Dr Mark Prescott (MP) *item(s) 7, 10*
 Dr Suzanne McArdle (SM) *item(s) 4, 11*
 Kayleigh Purdon (KP) *Secretariat*

Apologies:

Dr Paul Brooker (PB)
 Professor Ian Jackson (IJ)
 Dr Vicky Robinson (VR)

1. Welcome

1.1. SH welcomed members to the meeting and introduced the newest members:

- Professor Paul Garside, University of Glasgow
- Dr David Lovell, St George's Medical School, University of London
- Dr Frances Rawle, MRC
- Professor Jon Timmis, University of York

1.2. Tony Peatfield has retired from the MRC and the NC3Rs Board. Dr Frances Rawle, Head of Governance and Policy has replaced him as the MRC representative.

SH to write to AP to thank him for his support and contribution to the NC3Rs.

2. Minutes and actions from the meeting on 8 June

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

2.2. MP provided an update on the following action:

6.1 Working with the Home Office. VR to raise a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dr Will Reynolds, Head of ASRU, and update the Board at the next meeting.

A draft memorandum of understanding between the NC3Rs and Animals in Science Regulation, which sets out the expectations of each organisation is in its final stages.

3. Finance update

3.1. MC provided the Board with an update on the NC3Rs medium-term outlook for the next four years and discussed the management of accounts for 2017/18; highlighting the opportunity to maximise income in the coming financial year and the sustainable levels of annual funding achieved across the response and managed mode funding schemes.

4. 2018 audit of the NC3Rs

- 4.1. In March, the Audit and Assurance Service Group (AASG) conducted an audit of the NC3Rs structure and governance framework, which included independence from the MRC, financial and risk management, and grants processes. Based on the outcome of the work undertaken, the classification of assurance was 'Substantial Assurance'.

The AASG made one recommendation, which is to periodically evaluate the Board and Chair. Members agreed that an evaluation process should be implemented to demonstrate good practice and suggested looking at the MRC's process for assessing its Council as a starting point.

FR will formally respond to the management recommendation and feedback to the AASG.

SM to develop an assessment plan with input from FR to be discussed at the next meeting.

5. NC3Rs summary on activities and updates

- 5.1. The Board noted the update on current activities. SH highlighted the following

CRACK IT

The planned review of the CRACK IT programme to highlight its 3Rs and business impacts.

Ecotoxicity

The re-convening of the ecotoxicology working group and the importance of identifying new projects.

Working with the charity sector

The new collaboration with Cancer Research UK (CRUK) and further opportunities to engage with the charity sector.

6. Communications update

- 6.1. KM gave members an update on the communications strategy, current challenges, resources and future plans. The Board noted its support for the breadth and quality of the work.

7. Embedding the 3Rs in organisational culture

- 7.1 MP provided an update on the ongoing work to embed the 3Rs in the policy and practice of research institutions.
- 7.2 The NC3Rs Regional Programme Managers continue to provide 3Rs support in the Midlands and the North West of England/Yorkshire. Feedback from the universities has been excellent and staff are currently in discussion to renew both posts for a further two years. Two new Regional Programme Managers for the University of Oxford and the GW4 consortium of Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter Universities have recently been appointed. Discussion is ongoing with other universities regarding additional posts.
- 7.3 The 3Rs self-assessment tool, a framework which will allow universities and other research organisations to benchmark their 3Rs activities, is in progress with the tender documents finalised. A pre-engagement meeting will be held in June for potential suppliers.
- 7.1. The NC3Rs has responded to the REF consultation highlighting the importance of including 3Rs impacts. MP, NPdS and SH will be meeting with the HEFCE officials in June to discuss embedding the 3Rs, including experimental design, in the REF process.

8. Research funding update

8.1. AH provided the Board with the following updates:

Grant holder interactions

Since November, the funding team have held 17 teleconferences and made 24 visits to grant holders to discuss progress and provide advice on the dissemination of 3Rs impacts. Seven of these visits were also attended by Board members. Feedback on the joint visits from Board members and grant holders has been very positive.

PhD Studentships

There were 65 outlines received for the 2018 competition of which 16 fell within the field of cardiovascular research (and are therefore eligible for the joint British Heart Foundation BHF/NC3Rs award). The outlines are currently being reviewed by the Office.

In March, the NC3Rs held a joint Cardiovascular workshop with the BHF. The workshop consisted of talks from NC3Rs-funded researchers and PhD students. Staff from the NC3Rs and BHF also gave talks on funding opportunities.

The three-day PhD student summer school will take place in July in Manchester. As part of the regional collaboration with the Universities of Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, non-NC3Rs funded students have also been invited to attend.

Project grants

There were 84 formal outlines received, of which 19 fell under the remit of the joint NC3Rs-BBSRC ageing research highlight notice, and three under the systematic reviews for 3Rs purposes highlight. 31 applicants were invited to submit a full proposal following assessment by the Panel. Short-listed applicants were also invited to attend the NC3Rs workshop on experimental design and articulating 3Rs impacts prior to submission.

Full applications are currently out for peer review and funding decisions will be made in July.

Skills and Knowledge Transfer

Three awards were made in the second competition.

Following feedback from grant holders and Panel members the maximum project duration will be extended from 12 to 24 months.

CRUK has agreed to contribute up to £125k per annum towards the scheme for an initial three-year period. A workshop will take place in September to launch the collaboration.

Training Fellowships

The 2018 competition will open in July.

A two-day NC3Rs Fellows meeting took place in April. The meeting was attended by 24 Fellows and early career researchers on other NC3Rs grants. The workshop consisted of presentations on commercialising research, the NC3Rs gateway, statistics and grant applications, and tools for recruiting, managing and leading research teams. There was also a workshop-based session focusing on grant writing skills.

David Sainsbury Fellowship

The NC3Rs is continuing to seek opportunities to allow the David Sainsbury Fellowship scheme to be reinstated.

Highlight notices

The 2019 highlight notice will be launched at a workshop in September. The remit and scope of the highlight notice is facilitating research partnerships between rodent and non-mammalian model organism users.

9. NC3Rs/ F1000Research gateway

- 9.1. NPdS gave an overview of the NC3Rs gateway on F1000Research. The gateway will be launched on the 15 May with four articles. These include, three method papers and one review. Guidance and templates have been developed for article submission and reviews to ensure full exposition of the 3Rs. A range of communication activities have been developed to support the launch of the gateway, including an editorial, press release and blog.
- 9.2. An advisory panel to provide high level direction and oversight has been established. The panel will be chaired by SH. A 3Rs reviewers pool has been appointed with 71 current and former funding panel members agreeing to participate.

10. Non-human primate activities update

- 10.1 MP updated the Board on the non-human primate activities and the challenges faced engaging with a small part of the neuroscience community who object to the NC3Rs peer review of their grant applications.
- 10.2 The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) have signed up to use the NC3Rs peer review service. The proposals submitted have been challenging to review as they include testing of vaccines against multiple viruses in numerous species and at multiple laboratories, with the procedures often involving severe suffering in non-human primates. A joint workshop with CEPI on welfare issues has been proposed.

11. Annual review of the risk register

- 11.1 Members reviewed the NC3Rs corporate risk register and noted the changes made to incorporate UKRI and the transfer of IT support and systems to MRC.
- 11.2 The Board noted the remaining risks and existing control measures as appropriate.

12. AOB

- 12.1. SH asked SM for a breakdown of the rental and service charge paid to the Wellcome.