

COUNCIL MEETING

Two hundred and Eighty First meeting of NERC Council
to be held at the Medical Research Council, London
on Thursday 7th February 2008.

Natural Environment Research Council

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Two hundred and eighty first meeting of NERC Council, to be held in The Council Room, Medical Research Council, Park Crescent, London on Thursday 7th February 2008 commencing at 09.00.

AGENDA

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|---|----------------|
| 1 | 09.00 | Chairman's welcome and introduction | Oral |
| Discussion items. | | | |
| 2. | 09.05 | Halley VI | NERC 08/01 (P) |
| 3. | 10.05 | Oceans 2025/NCAS funding | NERC 08/02 (P) |
| 4 | 10.25 | NCEO Programme Proposals | NERC 08/03 (P) |
| 5 | 11:45 | Report of the Council Sub-group: Research Centre Sustainability and Mission | NERC 08/04 (P) |
| | 12:15 | Lunch | |
| 6 | 12:45 | Report of the NERC Chief Executive | NERC 08/05 |
| 7 | 13:30 | Science and Innovation Strategy Board report | NERC 08/06 (P) |
| 8 | 13:40 | Council Audit Committee: | |
| | i) | Report of the 39 th Council Audit Committee meeting | NERC 08/07 (P) |
| | ii) | Annual report of the NERC Audit Committee | NERC 08/08 (P) |
| | iii) | Update on review of Programme Management | Oral |
| | iv) | Update on Council Self - assessment exercise | Oral |
| 9 | 14:10 | FAB update | Oral |
| 10 | 14:25 | CEH Transition update | NERC 08/09 (P) |
| 11 | 14:35 | Rolling Programme of Business | NERC 08/10 |
| 12 | 14:50 | Unconfirmed minutes of the 280 th meeting of Council held on 28/29 th November 2007 | |
| | i) | Unconfirmed minutes of closed meeting of Council | NERC 08/11 (P) |
| | ii) | Unconfirmed minutes of open meeting of Council | NERC 08/12 |

- | | | | |
|----|-------|---|----------------|
| 13 | 14:55 | Decisions and Actions and Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 280 th meeting | |
| | | i) Decisions and Actions from closed meeting | NERC 08/13 (P) |
| | | ii) Decisions and Actions from open meeting | NERC 08/14 |
| 14 | 15:25 | Any other business | Oral |
| | 15:35 | Meeting close | |

Papers for Information:

- i) Common NERC Acronyms
- ii) Membership of Council 2007/2008
- iii) Attendance at NERC Council 2007/2008
- iv) The Mission of the NERC
- v) Council Policy on Vested Interests

NERC COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE REPORT FEBRUARY 2008

Issue

1. This standing item provides information to Council on key business issues that are not addressed elsewhere in the papers under the following headings:
 - i. People, Skills and Communications;
 - ii. Science and Innovation;
 - iii. Finance and Information Systems;
 - iv. NERC Investment Committee;
 - v. Swindon Office;
 - vi. Shared Service Centre;
 - vii. Strategic Management Tool
 - viii. NERC Research Centres and NOCS;
 - ix. Chief Executive's Activities

Discussion led by

2. Professor Alan Thorpe, NERC CE

Information for paper collated by

3. Samantha Way, Secretary to NERC Council, sway@nerc.ac.uk, 01793 442570

Annexes

4. Annex A – Monthly Financial Report
5. Annex B – NERC Risk Register

Action

6. Council is invited to **NOTE** the report

NERC COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE REPORT FEBRUARY 2008

Items highlighted in grey should be treated as Management in Confidence

I. PEOPLE, SKILLS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Personnel

People element of the NERC Strategy

- a) Despite the slight distraction of the SSC, much work is already being done on the People element of the NERC Strategy. Proposals aimed at managing the career expectations of staff are well-advanced and have been road-tested. These are intended to reinforce the messages that we need flexible, adaptable people, who are capable of linking their research interests to our priorities and who may well build their careers by working in various parts of the environmental sciences community. One of the most welcome aspects of this work has been the way in which we have brought scientific staff and HR specialists together to build solutions – which is the only sensible way to do it.

2007 Pay Award

- b) For NERC staff, the delay in negotiating (let alone delivering) a pay award for 2007 is in danger of becoming a real bone of contention and is undermining some of the work we have done to build a positive image of the organization. Fielding this discontent – and ensuring it does not divert staff from the issues we want them to focus on - such as the initiatives in the People element of the strategy – is a challenge.

Communications

- a) *Press Releases (Nov 07 – Jan 08)*

- Ice-age imprint found on cod DNA
- A new environmental strategy for a rapidly changing planet
- IPCC synthesis report published today
- Spin-out success beckons (Oxford Expression Technologies Ltd spin-out from CEH)
- Like father, like son: attractiveness is hereditary
- Storing carbon deep in the earth
- International research campaign for the West African monsoon
- £14 million available for biodiversity research (BiodivERsA)
- Biodiversity exhibition impresses
- New appointment to NERC – Professor Robert Watson
- Launch of new supercomputer for UK researchers (HECToR)
- NERC science on TV (Special reports from Antarctica)

- b) *Press briefings (verbal) Jan 08*

Two stories were given to Robin McKie of the Observer:

- Mauve stinger jellyfish invasion of British waters – urgency grant awarded to investigate. Story published in 13 January edition of the newspaper.
- RAPID-WATCH – Council’s confirmation of continued funding and why the science is important. Article is likely to appear on 20 January.

c) *Events*

● **11 December 2007 - Ministerial Launch of the DIUS Science Budget Allocations to 2010-2011, London**

NERC (and the other Research Councils) highlighted our work and newly published delivery plan at this DIUS event to launch the science budget allocations to 2010-2011. Alan Thorpe spoke about the cross-council Living With Environmental Change programme to the audience of Parliamentarians and other high profile stakeholders.

● **6 December 2007 - Biodiversity reception - Belfast**

● **28 November 2007 - Science and the Parliament 2007, Edinburgh**

Staff from the British Geological Survey, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, the Scottish Association for Marine Science and NERC Swindon Office took part in the annual Science and the Parliament event on 28 November organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). They highlighted to the Scottish policy-making community how NERC science on alternative fuels for transport, renewable energy, electricity generation and energy conservation can contribute to tackling climate change. MSP's of all parties participated including the Government Minister for Climate Change Stewart Stevenson.

d) *Recent publications*

- NERC Facts 2008
- Planet Earth Winter 2007
- Corporate folder
- Knowledge Exchange brochure

e) *Website developments*

- NERC in the news area of the NERC website, <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/news/mediacoverage.asp>
- NERC film, online
- Theme leaders area on NERC website.
- FAB online
- Darwin 2009 website - Darwin Today. Joint Research Council effort. Launched February 2008.

II. SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

a) *Environment and Human Health*

The Environment and Human Health programme will be holding its first annual science meeting on 11-12 February in Swindon. Awardees will provide an update on progress and a workshop will be held on Systems Approaches & Complexity Science. Guest lectures will be given on Systems Biology, Multi-scale Mathematical Models, Ecosystem and Climate Modelling, Interpreting Epidemiological Data and Complexity with speakers from Oxford, PML, The Hadley Centre, Peninsula Medical School and the SIMBIOS Centre, University of Abertay.

- b) *UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC)*
 The funding partners of UKERC (NERC, EPSRC and ESRC) have held meetings of Stakeholders and the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) of the Research Councils Energy Programme to provide input to the evaluation of the centre and to inform future whole-systems energy work. The SAC meeting was attended by the NERC Theme Leader for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources.
- c) *Strategic Ocean Funding Initiative (SOFI)*
 Wider engagement of researchers at UK universities and Independent Research Organisations with the NERC Oceans 2025 programme, through the SOFI scheme approved by Council, is underway. The first panel meeting for studentships was held in December 2007 and 11 studentships have been awarded which are well spread across the Oceans 2025 Themes and involve 5 of the 7 Oceans 2025 centres. A studentship fund has also been established to facilitate the participation of the students and their supervisors in Oceans 2025 meetings. The panel meeting for research grants will be held at the end of February 2008.
- d) *Living With Environmental Change (LWEC)*
 The 13 December meeting of the LWEC Partners' Board —independently chaired by Lord John Selborne, and with Alan Thorpe attending for NERC — broadly agreed the draft LWEC strategic objectives developed from the November 2007 workshop of the 15 partner organisations. The Board also decided: general processes for refining and delivering these objectives; how to proceed with developing an LWEC performance-management framework; to urgently recruit an LWEC director and associated support; and to invest appropriate effort in a communications strategy. Through the processes agreed by the Board, NERC's Theme Leaders are being increasingly engaged in defining LWEC's specific activities and NERC's contribution towards them, so that this contribution can be appropriately reflected in their Theme Action Plans.
- e) *World Modelling Summit for Climate Prediction*
 NERC is planning to provide sponsorship to a World Modelling Summit for Climate Prediction which is taking place at the European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), Reading on 6-9 May 2008. The goal of the Modelling Summit is to develop a modelling strategy to implement the requirements of the World Climate Research Programme strategic plan "to facilitate analysis and prediction of Earth system variability and change for use in an increasing range of practical applications of direct relevance, benefit and value to society."

III. FINANCE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- a) [management in confidence]
- b) [management in confidence]
- c) As part of CSR07, DIUS have withdrawn our protection from foreign exchange movements on our ESA payments from 08/09. The latest purchase of Euros for this purpose has been at £0.76 per Euro v our planning assumption of £0.69, and our old protected level of £0.62. If the current exchange rate prevails across CSR07 this will increase our ESA payments (and thus overall national capability spend) by £13m versus planning, and by £26m versus what we would have paid under the protected arrangement. Management are consulting DIUS about hedging options, and considering how to flex future spend if the adverse movement continues.

- d) The RRS Discovery replacement is taking place at a time of extreme demand in the shipping market - driven by oil prices and the emerging Chinese market. Market prices are escalating and lead times for yard availability and key component purchasing are extending rapidly (certain marine diesel engines now have a 32 month lead time). The project is examining all options to secure budget and delivery time, and will present a paper to Council shortly. One action already being taken is to shorten the front end administrative lead time as far as possible, which means that major efforts are being made to go through approval processes (at RCUK, DIUS and Gateway) as rapidly as possible. The first Gateway is due at the end of January and feedback will be given to Council.

IV. NERC INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

- a) Since the last Chief Executive report to Council meeting there have been no formal meetings of the NERC Investment Committee although they have approved, by correspondence, the transfer of £4.34m from the High Performance Computing core funds and other SIP surpluses to the consortium funding line to enable the full funding of three consortium grant bids.

The bids funded are:

Bickle - Cambridge (Approx. £2.9m)

Gloor - Leeds (Approx. £2.9m)

Jones - Cambridge (Approx. £2.7m)

- b) The Chief Executive has also received a report from the Audit Committee on their review of the performance of the NIC against their terms of reference in the first year of operation. The recommendations made are currently under consideration.

V. SWINDON OFFICE

- a) Security
No specific issues to report
- b) Health and Safety
The current NERC Health and Safety Advisor, Dr Stuart Dobson, is retiring in June and the recruitment for a successor to carry out this important role is underway.

VI. SHARED SERVICE CENTRE

- a) The RCUK Project has now started implementation and is part way through the detailed design phase.
- b) At its meeting on the 19th December 2007, the RCUK SSC Project Board agreed to sign the contract with ORACLE to purchase the licences necessary to implement the systems within the SSC. At this meeting NERC and other Research Councils expressed concerns in relation to the overall quality approach being adopted by the project and the unrealistic implementation timetable. It was agreed that prior to the next meeting of the RCUK SSC Project Board on the 29th January 2008 that the Project Team and the Councils would work together on the detail of the migration plan, focussing on implementing the highest quality SSC for the Research Councils. It is likely that this will delay both the first implementation and the subsequent migration of NERC.

- c) NERC is actively working with the project and the other Research Councils to try and resolve these concerns and we are optimistic that a robust plan will be completed before the Project Board. It is intended that this will give all the Research Councils the necessary confidence that the SSC can be fully operational by the end of 2009. NERC is supporting both this approach and the likely changes to timescales.
- d) Following this meeting, both the date of the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) of NERC staff to RCUK SSC Ltd and the planned date of NERC migration to the SSC will be confirmed.
- e) Although the project continues to make good progress, due to its scale and complexity, it remains high risk. NERC continues to play a proactive role in the project and will need to invest increasing levels of resource into it as we move closer to migration. The project is already drawing heavily on experienced NERC staff in relevant areas. It is particularly important that the people issues are managed effectively given that around 100 NERC staff will be transferring to the SSC and a number will be made redundant at sites outside of Swindon. It is hoped that the majority of these will be volunteers.
- f) An update on the outcome of the 29th January RCUK SSC Project Board meeting will be provided verbally at the meeting of Council.

VII. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL

- a) Following feedback from November Council on the Strategic Management Tool, Corporate Directors are currently in the process of clarifying performance indicators that support the strategic objectives. The roles and responsibilities of NERC decision-making bodies and Responsible Directors have also been updated based on Council's comments. To ensure consistency and integration with DIUS reporting requirements and associated deadlines, the SMT will become operational in April 2008, with the first quarterly report to Council in July 2008. The first annual review of the SMT will be held at the June 2009 Council meeting.

VIII. NERC RESEARCH CENTRES

British Antarctic Survey

- a) *Exploration of lake hidden beneath Antarctica's ice sheet begins*
A four-man science team led by BAS' Dr Andy Smith has begun exploring Lake Ellsworth, an ancient lake hidden deep beneath the ice sheet in Western Antarctica. The "subglacial" lake – the size of Lake Windermere – could yield vital clues to life on Earth, climate change and future sea-level rise. Glaciologist Dr Smith and his colleagues from the Universities of Edinburgh and Northumbria are camped out at one of the most remote places on Earth conducting a series of experiments on the ice. Early results indicate that Lake Ellsworth is a deep-water body and an ideal site for future exploration missions to detect microbial life and recover climate records. This ambitious exploration of Lake Ellsworth involves scientists from 14 UK universities and research institutes, as well as a range of international colleagues. It is one of the projects being conducted during the International Polar Year and is led by Professor Martin Siegert from the University of Edinburgh.

- b) *NERC Chairman Visits Rothera*
In January 2008, Mr Ed Wallis (NERC Chairman) visited BAS's Rothera Research Station. He was accompanied by Prof Duncan Wingham (NERC SISB Chairman) and Mr John Neilson (Director, Research Base, Science & Innovation Group, DIUS). The visit was hosted by Prof Nick Owens and Drs Tim Moffat and John Turner from BAS. During the five-day visit, the party was introduced to around 100 science and support staff and was briefed on many aspects of BAS' operation and science at Rothera. Ed Wallis also opened the new "Bransfield House" building, which is a new messing and recreation facility to accommodate up to 120 people at Rothera.
- c) *ITV News from Antarctica*
A series of Special Assignment reports were broadcast by ITV News' international editor Bill Neely during the week beginning Monday, 14th January 2008. The live reports, plus recorded packages, were trailed each day of the week, building up to 3 minute features on the re-launched News at Ten with Trevor MacDonald. Reports featured Bill Neely's journey to Lake Ellsworth and interviews with the team led by BAS's Andy Smith, to discover more about the subglacial lake, as well as special reports about the ozone hole - twenty years on from the Montreal Protocol, glacial retreat on the Antarctic Peninsula and the importance of Antarctica for understanding climate change. The reports will be syndicated world-wide via ITN's broadcast partners like NBC in the US. Millions of viewers are expected to watch the flagship news broadcasts. The ITV News website features video blogs - see www.itv.com/news

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)

- a) *Completion of Countryside Survey Fieldwork*
Countryside Survey (CS), currently CEH's biggest project, has completed the Field Survey component. Survey was completed in 94% of all sites originally targeted, despite summer flooding and an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. In total, 591 1km squares were surveyed across Great Britain, making this the biggest CS to date. 9,000 days of surveyor effort were invested by the 90 field staff. Data were captured electronically in the field using innovative new software on tablet PCs. This will improve data quality whilst saving 18 months of data entry and the associated costs.
- b) *New Ozone study published*
CEH has published a major new study "Evidence of Widespread Ozone Damage to Vegetation in Europe (1990-2006)". The study is the first comprehensive assessment of ozone effects on crops and natural ecosystems across Europe, comparing modelled risk maps, used by policymakers, with field data on adverse effects of ozone on vegetation.

The work, funded by Defra and UNECE, forms part of the CEH led International Cooperative Programme on Effects of Air Pollution on Natural Vegetation and Crops which focuses on ozone pollution and atmospheric deposition of heavy metals. This programme reports to the Working Group on effects of the Convention on long-range transboundary air pollution.

- c) *Science Strategy consultation*
CEH recently launched a consultation on its new Science Strategy "Integrated Science for our Changing World" which will cover the period 2008-2013.

The new strategy has been developed to contribute directly to the overall strategic objectives set out in NERC's 2007-2012 strategy. CEH is asking a wide range of organisations and individuals for feedback on what we see as our key scientific challenges and deliverables. The

consultation closes on 31st January 2008. The new Science Strategy will be made public in the Spring at an event at the Royal Society in London.

Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory (POL)

a. *Sea level monitoring*

POL has developed a real-time sea level monitoring system with telemetry based around Inmarsat's Broadband Global Area Network (BGAN) satellite communications. On 20th December the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Inmarsat for the provision of free air-time for fifty "tsunami enabled" sea level stations which will make up part of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System. POL will be providing the first of these systems for installation in Colombo, Sri Lanka in the next few months.

IX. SELECTION OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ACTIVITIES

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 6 th December 2007 | - | Annual Whitley meeting |
| 11 th December 2007 | - | Ministerial Launch of Science Budgets Allocations in London |
| 21 st December 2007 | - | Meeting with Chief Executive, Met Office to discuss IPR issues relating to the Joint Climate Research Programme |
| 11 th January 2008 | - | Visiting Leeds University |
| 14 th January 2008 | - | HECTOR Launch in Edinburgh |
| 16 th January 2008 | - | NERC Research Centres Science Meeting at Castle Donnington |
| 23 rd January 2008 | - | Visiting NSF, Washington with Steven Wilson |
| 30 th January 2008 | - | Science in Society Beacons for Public Engagement Launch in London |

NERC COUNCIL

ROLLING PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND BUSINESS

Background

1. This paper sets out the proposed business for the meeting of Council on 8th May 2008, at Polaris House, Swindon. It also details previous venues of Open Council meetings and suggested venues for Open Council meetings in 2008. The rolling programme of business for the remainder of 2008 is attached at Annex A.

Issue

2. Council is asked to discuss possible items of business for the meeting of Council on 8th May 2008, consider whether any further items of business should be added to the a Council Business White Board, and decide where the 2008 Open Council meeting should take place.

Annexes attached

3. Annex A, NERC Boards, Business White Board

Discussion led by

4. Chairman

Author of paper

5. Samantha Way, Secretary to NERC Council, sway@nerc.ac.uk, 01793 442570

Action

6. Council is asked to:

- i) **DISCUSS** any additional items of business for the Council meeting on 8th May 2008,
- ii) **DECIDE** whether any further items of business should be added to the NERC Boards White Board, and
- iii) **DECIDE** the venue of the 2008 Open Council meeting.

NERC COUNCIL

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Persons responsible for implementing outcome

3. Council Secretary – items of Council business
Janice Timberlake, Director, People, Skills and Communications – Open meeting

Discussion

4. **Provisional agenda items for 8th May 2008 meeting, in addition to standing items:**

- Review of SISB's Terms of Reference
- CEH Wallingford BREEAM Excellent proposal
- RRS Discovery

5. **Open Council**

The first open forum and meeting was held in Birmingham in 2001. Since then, meetings have been held each year, in Cardiff, Aberdeen, London, Manchester, Norwich and Leeds.

6. **Possible venues for the 2008 Open Council meeting:**

- i) North East of England – Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- ii) Northern Ireland – Belfast, Ulster (N.B. NERC does not fund any studentships in NI)
- iii) South West – Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth

7. **Value of NERC funded grants and spend on studentships in areas suggested for NERC Open Council meeting:**

	Number of Current Grants	Value of Current Grants £	Current Studentships
North East	291	30,669,884	48
Northern Ireland	61	3,846,326	0
South West England	584	66,485,501	96

(source NERC Grants on the web, December 2007)

8. The next meeting of Council will be on 8th May 2008, at Polaris House, Swindon. Future meetings are to be held on 3rd July, 23-25 September and 27th November. Council is asked to select a venue for the 2008 Open Council meeting which will be held in November.

9. **Communication plan:**

The outcome of this paper will be communicated to the NERC Business Coordination team and appropriate NERC staff.

10. **Action**

Council is asked to:

- i) **DISCUSS** any additional items of business for the Council meeting on 8th May 2008,
- ii) **DECIDE** whether any further items of business should be added to the NERC Boards White Board, and
- iii) **DECIDE** the venue of the 2008 Open Council meeting.

COUNCIL Agenda Overview 2008

NERC 08/10 Annex A

No.	Task	Main Statement					
			6/7 Feb	7/8 May	2/3 July	23-25 Sept	26/27 Nov
1	Advise on new scientific opportunities, scientific direction and user needs	MS	As Required				
2	Establish the Mission and Strategic Plan and approve the Delivery Plan	MS	As required				
3	Ensure that action is taken to inform Sec of State, DCSI and OSI of any changes impacting on the delivery of No. 2	MS	As necessary				
4	Satisfy itself of the proper use of public funds and that NERC operates within its limits of delegated authority	MS	As required				
5	Receive and review regular financial information concerning the performance of NERC	MS	√	√	√	√	√
6	Ensure Council's views are reflected in pursuit of RCUK objectives and to be informed of the views of RCUKEG and JSG	MS	As necessary				
7	Maintain high standards of corporate governance, including making use of the audit committee	MS	As necessary				
8	Approve minutes from previous meeting and receive update on progress of matters arising		√	√	√	√	√
9	Receive report from Chief Executive on agreed areas		√	√	√	√	√
10	Receive rolling programme of Council business		√	√	√	√	√
11	Receive report from Chairs of SISB and Audit Committee on previous meeting(s)		√	√	√	√	√
12	Consider open Council meeting issues		√				
13	Annual Report from Audit Committee on its activities		√				
14	Receive Annual Report on Health and Safety and Security in NERC				√		
15	Consider Annual Forward Look of agenda and business for following year						√
16	Review NERC Ethics Policy				√		
17	Consider NCEO programme proposals		√				
18	Receive report on review of SISB from Audit Committee						
19	Review SISB's ToRs			√			
20	Update of FAB		√	√	√	√	√
21	CEH Transition Report Update		√	√	√	√	√
22	Final report on Council Sub-Group on Research Centre Mission and Sustainability		√				
23	International strategy				√		
24	Strategic Management Tool				√	√	√
25	Theme Action Plans				√		
26	National Capability Action Plan						√?
27	Responsive Mode Action Plan				√?		
28	Efficiency and KE discussion				√?		
29	Peer Review College Review report				√		
30	CEH Wallingford BREEAM excellent proposal			√			
31	RRS Discovery			√			

NERC COUNCIL

CONFIRMED OPEN MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH MEETING OF NERC COUNCIL HELD IN WEETWOOD HALL CONFERENCE CENTRE, LEEDS ON WEDNESDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2007.

Issue

1: To confirm that the unconfirmed open minutes of the 280th meeting of NERC Council are a true and accurate record of the meeting. (*These Minutes were confirmed at the February 2008 meeting of NERC Council as a true and accurate record of the 277th meeting.*)

Discussion led by

2: Chairman

Author of paper

3: Mr Mark Hinder, Acting Clerk to Council.

Action

4: Council is invited to **CONFIRM** the open minutes of the 280th Meeting.

NERC COUNCIL

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH MEETING OF NERC COUNCIL (OPEN SESSION), HELD IN THE LAWNWOOD SUITE, WEETWOOD HALL CONFERENCE CENTRE, LEEDS, ON 29th NOVEMBER 2007

Members Present:

Mr E Wallis (Chairman), Professor AJ Thorpe (CE and Deputy Chairman), Professor T Davies, Professor AN Halliday, Mr PF Hazell, Mr E Jenner, Professor M Lockwood, Professor TR Meagher, Mrs K Morgan, Mrs S Parkin, Professor BM Wilson.

Apologies: Professor PJ Curran, Professor HC Davies, Professor AH Fitter, Professor LA Glover, Professor JFB Mitchell, Mr C Paynter, Professor RJ Watson.

Representative of the Secretary of State: Mr PJ Williams, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

NERC Directors: Mr NFD Bloomer (Finance and Information Systems), Mrs JE Timberlake (People, Skills and Communication), Dr SHS Wilson (Science and Innovation).

Apologies: Mr JG Hansford (Swindon Office)

Other Attendees: Professor D Wingham (all items), Ms H Jeffery (all items), Ms JM Parker (Open Forum)

Secretary: Mr M A Hinder.

1. Introductory Remarks (Oral)

1.1 Chairman welcomed members of the public to the seventh Open meeting of NERC Council and outlined how the meeting would be conducted and that there would be the opportunity to ask questions of Council in an open forum after the business agenda had been completed.

2: Summary of the NERC Council closed meeting 28th November. (Oral)

2.1 For the benefit of the members of the public attending the meeting Chairman provided a short synopsis of the business conducted in the closed meeting which included:

- A presentation from the British Antarctic Survey on the progress of the project to build a replacement scientific laboratory at the Halley site and the measures to be taken to ensure that the project is delivered within approved budgets.
- Details of the NERC headline allocation following the announcement of the result of the CSR exercise and the implications for delivery of the new NERC Strategy.

- Agreeing to the publication of the NERC Delivery Plan on the 11th December to coincide with the publication by Treasury of the Science Budget Allocations booklet.
- Noting the Chief Executives report that included NERC's input to the House of Commons report into UK Marine Science and an update on the implementation of a new management structure in the British Geological Survey.
- A presentation on the report of the Polar Sciences Working Group
- Agreeing to a suggestion from the Chairman of the NERC Audit Committee that in line with good governance practice for Boards to undertake a self-assessment exercise.

3: NERC Strategic Management Tool (SMT) (NERC 07/77).

- 3.1 Chairman welcomed Ms Jeffery to the meeting and asked her to lead Council through the paper and the actions required of them.
- 3.2 Ms Jeffery reminded Council that the SMT aimed to provide an overview of strategic delivery processes and appropriate use of resources. Council had agreed 18 strategic objectives at their meeting in September and were now required to comment on draft performance indicators and a reporting structure for the SMT.

Roles and responsibilities

- 3.3 Council discussed the roles and responsibilities highlighted in Annex B to the paper and sought clarification of the involvement of Council members, as a 'critical friend' and how their role would develop. It was noted that it would be difficult for individual Council members to develop a detailed knowledge of the 18 objectives but they should maintain an overview of them all whilst concentrating on a couple of specific objectives as proposed.
- 3.4 Council agreed that they would reconsider the roles and responsibilities again when their comments were incorporated. The updated version would be circulated to Council members ahead of the February meeting.

Performance Indicators

- 3.5 Council noted that a number of other funding agencies are currently developing performance metrics and mechanisms for assessment of success criteria and suggested that there was scope for learning from these other exercises. Professor Thorpe confirmed that there is an on-going dialogue at RCUK level with HEFCE and other funding Councils and that as processes develop reviews of metrics will identify those that NERC could use to their advantage and incorporate in their process, which it is intended will be fluid and evolve over time. Members agreed to look at the NERC performance indicators and provide any comments to Ms Jeffery by Christmas.
- 3.6 Council considered whether the four groupings of the strategic objectives were appropriate but noted that there were many different ways they could be grouped. No changes were proposed.
- 3.7 To move the development of the SMT forward, and start using it from 1st April 2008, Council agreed that responsibility for signing the document off should be delegated to the Chief Executive and that the SMT should be reviewed on an annual basis with the first review to be undertaken in June 2009.

4: Open report of the NERC Chief Executive (NERC 07/78).

Shared Services Centre

- 4.1 Council noted the progress with the TUPE staff transfer process. NERC staff in Research Centres, affected by the move were, considering their options of relocation or redeployment.

High Performance Computing link to the Met Office

- 4.2 Council noted that the negotiations over the proposed agreement with the Met Office have started and that a Joint Climate Research Programme is to be set up.

Knowledge Exchange activities:

- 4.3 Professor Thorpe reported the successful launch of new spin-out companies arising from work conducted by CEH.
- 4.4 Council asked to be kept informed of on-going performance of these companies. It was agreed that this would be included in the annual report on commercialisation activity.

CE activities:

- 4.5 Council noted Professor Thorpe's involvement with the Beacons of Public Engagement awards in his role as RCUK champion for Science in Society, and his recent visit to India with Sir David King to promote UKIERI (UK India Education and Research Initiative) projects dealing with Climate Change.

5: RAPID-WATCH Directed Programme (NERC 07/79)

- 5.1 Dr Wilson introduced the paper and reminded Council that they had, on SISB's recommendation earmarked £15.1m for the RAPID-WATCH Directed Programme at their meeting in September 2006. The award was contingent on:
- The outcome of the independent evaluation of the Meridional Overturning Circulation (MOC) observing system;
 - Developing a more strategic alliance with the Met Office, Hadley Centre;
 - Additional funding from International partners
 - Provision of a detailed work plan
- 5.2 Professor Wingham confirmed that these issues had been addressed and that SISB strongly supported the proposal.
- 5.3 Council confirmed that £15.1m should be allocated to the RAPID-WATCH Directed Programme.

6: FAB update (Oral)

- 6.1 Dr Wilson provided Council with an update on activity on the project and confirmed that this remained on-track to implement the new processes in the new year. The Theme Leaders are currently working on their Theme Action Plans for consideration by SISB in February and the Research Centres have been identifying their current National Capability (NC) and Research Programme (RP) funding ratios ahead of the new funding arrangements.
- 6.2 It was also noted that consultants (Arthur D Little Ltd) had been engaged to:
- i) Help test the robustness of the definitions of NC and RP to ensure that they cover all aspects of the NERC mission; are complete and robust in the face of challenge and scrutiny but provide useful guidance and support for users that is neutral with respect to competing research providers guidance provided; and
 - ii) Assess the initial mapping undertaken by Centres and provide guidance on improving the process

The report concluded that NERC and its Centres have a sound footing to adapt to the new funding regimes.

- 6.3 Mr Bloomer advised Council that having developed the transition arrangements for the Research Centres it was time to consider the implications for Collaborative Centres and their contracts. A standard contract template was being developed and this would be shown to Council in due course.

7: NERC procedure for dealing with Safety and Security when working overseas (NERC 07/80)

- 7.1 Council noted and welcomed the paper prepared jointly by the NERC Health and Safety and NERC Security Advisers.
- 7.2 Council recognised that the advice contained within the paper was applicable to anyone working overseas, and that NERC should consider whether to make it available to NERC students and Fellows and those working on NERC grants. Before making this advice more widely available NERC should consult with its legal advisers to ascertain whether there was an implied duty of care if it were to circulate the information.

8: Non-financial governance

i) Council Business Agenda planning (NERC 07/81)

- 8.1 Council noted its forward agenda and offered some suggestions for inclusion at future meetings.

ii) Meeting Structure (NERC 07/82)

- 8.2 Council re-affirmed the decision taken in the closed meeting that the meetings for 2008 should be scheduled over one day unless the volume of business dictates otherwise.

9: Any Other Business (Oral)

9.1 Professor Wingham asked whether the present arrangements for Council members interface with SISB was sufficient and whether Council members should attend meetings of SISB on a rotational basis. Council members were asked to forward their views to Professor Wingham who would propose a suitable process to Council in due course.

10: Closing remarks (Oral)

10.1 Chairman thanked members for their contributions over the course of the meeting and confirmed that the next meeting of Council would be on Thursday 7th February in London.

11: Open Forum (Oral)

11.1 The Council meeting was followed by a 40-minute question and answer session between the members of the public in attendance and Members of Council, facilitated by Ms Judy Parker.

Mark Hinder
Acting Clerk to Council
December 2007.

NERC COUNCIL

DECISIONS, ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE OPEN MINUTES OF THE 280th NERC COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28/29 NOVEMBER 2007

Issue

1. The open meeting of NERC Council on 29 November 2007 resulted in a number of decisions and actions. This paper reports on progress made on the decisions and actions recorded in the minutes that are not addressed elsewhere on the agenda.
2. To provide Council with an opportunity to discuss any matters arising from the meeting.

Discussion led by

3. Chairman

Author of paper

4. Mr Mark Hinder, Acting Secretary to NERC Council, mark@nerc.ac.uk , 01793 411537

Action

5. Council is invited to:
 - **NOTE** the progress of the decisions and actions from the open meeting and any matters arising.
 - **DISCUSS** any matters arising from the open meeting.

NERC COUNCIL

DECISIONS, ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF NERC COUNCIL HELD ON 28/29 NOVEMBER 2007

OPEN MEETING

No.	Minute Reference	Decision/Action	Person responsible for communicating decision:	Person responsible for Action	Progress update
1	Minute 3.3	Strategic Management Tool (NERC 07/77) To clarify the definitions of the roles and responsibilities, particularly that of 'critical friend'.	Director Swindon Office	Ms H Jeffery	Paper submitted to January NEB meeting.
	Minute 3.4	To consider the SMT roles and responsibilities again when their comments have been incorporated.	Director Swindon Office	Ms H Jeffery	To be completed following feedback from NEB meeting.
	Minute 3.5	To provide comments on the Performance Indicators by Christmas.	Council Members	Ms H Jeffery	No comments received.
	Minute 3.7	To delegate to the Chief Executive authority to finalise the SMT	Director Swindon Office	Ms H Jeffery	Complete.
	Minute 3.7	To review the SMT annually with a first review in Summer 2009	Director Swindon Office	Ms H Jeffery	Agreed. SMT review will be included in 2009 Whiteboard.

2	Minute 4.4	<p>Open report of the NERC Chief Executive (NERC 07/78)</p> <p>To include a review of performance of NERC spin-out companies in the annual report on commercialisation.</p>	Director Finance and Information Systems	Mr R Blackmore	Agreed. Review will be included in 2009 Business Whiteboard.
3	Minute 5.3	<p>Rapid-Watch Directed Programme (NERC 07/79)</p> <p>To approve the allocation of £15.1m to the programme.</p>	Director Science and Innovation.	Dr P Newton.	Complete.
4	Minute 7.2	<p>NERC Procedure for Safety and Health and Safety when working overseas. (NERC 07/80)</p> <p>To consider making the advice available to all NERC funded students and fellows after consulting legal representation on the ‘duty of care’ implications of circulating the information.</p>	Director Finance and Information Systems/ Director Swindon Office	Dr Dobson/ Mr Herman	NERC H & S Procedures are published on the NERC website and available to NERC funded students and fellows.
5	Minute 8.1	<p>Non – financial governance: Council Agenda Planning (NERC 07/81) and Meeting structure (NERC 07/82)</p> <p>To incorporate the suggestions for business items on forward agendas.</p>	Director Swindon Office	Council Secretary	Complete
	Minute 8.2	<p>To restructure meetings as proposed but recognise that business needs may require different meeting arrangements</p>	Director Swindon Office	Council Secretary	Complete

6	Minute 9.1	<p>Any Other Business (Oral)</p> <p>For Council members to provide views on attending SISB meetings to Professor Wingham who will propose an attendance process to Council.</p>	Director Science and Innovation	Professor Wingham/ Council and SISB Secretariat	Discussions are underway between Professor Wingham and Council/SISB members as to how this could be achieved.
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COMMON NERC ACRONYMS

AHRC	Arts & Humanities Research Council	EuroHORCs	European Union Research Organisations Heads of Research Councils
APPRAISE	Aerosol Properties, Processes and Influences on the Earth's climate (Directed Programme)	EYF	End of Year Flexibility
BAS	British Antarctic Survey (NERC)*	FAB	Funding Allocation and Budgeting Project
BBSRC	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council	FAOG	Finance and Operations Group
BGS	British Geological Survey (NERC)*	FP	Framework Programme
BNSC	British National Space Centre (DTI)	FREE	Flood Risk from Extreme Events (Directed Programme)
BPMF	Business Performance Management Framework	HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
CASE	Co-operative Awards in the Science of the Environment	HEFCW	Welsh Higher Education Funding Council
CASIX	Centre of Observation of Air-Sea Interactions and Fluxes**	HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
CGAM	Centre for Global Atmospheric Modelling (part of NCAS)	HPC	High Performance Computing
CCLRC	Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils†	IODP	Integrated Ocean Drilling Program
CEH	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (NERC)*	IMP	Individual Merit Promotion
CLASSIC	Climate & Land Surface Systems Interaction Centre**	IPY	International Polar Year
COMET	Centre for Observation and Modelling of Earthquakes and Tectonics**	ISG	Information Strategy Group
COSMAS	Core-Strategic Measurements for Atmospheric Science (Directed Programme)	ITAG	Information Technology advisory Group
CPB	Centre for Population Biology**	JIF	Joint Infrastructure Fund (OSI/Wellcome Trust)
CPOM	Centre for Polar Observation and Modelling**	JSG	OSI/RCUK Joint Strategy Group
CSA	Chief Scientific Adviser	LOCAR	Lowland Catchment Research (Directed Programme)
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review	LWEC	Living with Environmental Change
CTCD	Centre for Terrestrial Carbon Dynamics**	MBA	Marine Biological Association
CWVC	Clouds, Water Vapour and Climate (Directed Programme)	MRC	Medical Research Council
DARC	Data Assimilation Research Centre**	NC	National Capability
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	NCAS	National Centre for Atmospheric Science**
DGSI	Director General Science and Innovation (formerly DGRC)	NEB	NERC Executive Board
DMAG	Data Management Advisory Group	NIEeS	National Institute for Environmental eScience**
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry	NOCS	National Oceanography Centre, Southampton (formerly Southampton Oceanography Centre - SOC)
EA	Environment Agency	OMG	Operations Management Group (RCUK)
EC	European Commission	OPMs	Output and Performance Measures
EFCHED	Environmental Factors in the Chronology of Human Evolution and Dispersal (Directed Programme)	OSI	Office of Science and Innovation (DTI)
EHH	Environment and Human Health	PCSG	Personnel Corporate Strategy Group
EO	Earth Observation	PGP	Post-Genomics and Proteomics (Directed Programme)
EPSRC	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council	PML	Plymouth Marine Laboratory**
ERC	European Research Council	POL	Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory*
ERFF	Environment Research Funders Forum	PPARC	Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council†
ESF	European Science Foundation	PSG	Pay Strategy Group
ESFRI	European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure	PT	Polluted Troposphere (Directed Programme)
ESPA	Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation	QUEST	Quantifying the Earth System
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council	RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
ESA	European Space Agency	RAPID	Rapid Climate Change (Directed Programme)
ESSC	Environmental Systems Science Centre**	RCUK	Research Councils UK
		RELU	Rural Economy and Land Use (Directed Programme)
		ROD	Research Outputs Database
		RP	Research Programme
		RSU	NERC Research Ships Unit

* NERC Research Centre ** NERC Collaborative Centre

SAHFOS	Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science
SAMS	Scottish Association for Marine Sciences**
SBRI	Small Business Research Initiative
SEBCC	Science and Engineering Base Co-ordinating Committee
SHEFC	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
SISB	NERC Science and Innovation Strategy Board
SMA	Science and Management Audit
SMRU	Sea Mammal Research Unit**
SOLAS	Surface-Ocean/Lower-Atmosphere Study (Directed Programme)
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreement
SSC	Shared Service Centre
STAR	System for Targets and Risks
STFC	Science Technology Facilities Council†
TSB	Technology Strategy Board
TSEC	Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy (Directed Programme)
UGAMP	Universities Global Atmospheric Modelling Programme
UKERC	UK Energy Research Centre
UKIODP	UK Integrated Ocean Drilling Programme
UKRO	UK Research Office (Brussels)
UKSB	UK Space Board
UTLS-OZONE	Upper Troposphere and Lower Stratosphere (Directed Programme)

† PPARC and CCLRC will merge to form the STFC wef 1st April 2007

A full list of NERC Directed Programmes can be found on the NERC website at: www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/

MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL 2007/2008

Mr Edmund Wallis	Chairman
Professor Alan Thorpe	Chief Executive and Deputy Chairman
Professor Paul Curran	Vice-Chancellor University of Bournemouth
Professor Huw Davies	Institute for Atmospheric and Climate Science, ETH Zurich
Professor Trevor Davies	Pro-Vice-Chancellor - Research, University of East Anglia
Professor Alastair Fitter	Department of Biology, University of York
Professor Anne Glover	Chief Scientific Advisor for Scotland, School of Medical Sciences, University of Aberdeen
Professor Alex Halliday	Head Mathematical Physical & Life Science Division, University of Oxford
Mr Peter Hazell	Chairman of the Argent Group. Chairman of the Audit Committee for: BRIT Insurance PLC, Smith & Williamson and UK Coal PLC. Member of the Competition Commission.
Mr Edwin Jenner	Technology and Business Consultant
Professor Michael Lockwood	STFC & University of Southampton
Professor Thomas Meagher	Chair of Plant Biology, University of St Andrews
Professor John Mitchell	Met Office
Mrs Karen Morgan	Vice Chairman, Royal Agricultural College
Mrs Sara Parkin	Forum for the Future
Professor Robert Watson	Chief Scientific Advisor, DEFRA
Professor Marjorie Wilson	School of Earth & Environment, Leeds University
Secretary to Council	
Miss Samantha Way	01793 442570, e-mail sway@nerc.ac.uk

The Mission of the Natural Environment Research Council is:

The Natural Environment Research Council delivers independent research, survey, training and knowledge transfer in the environmental sciences, to advance knowledge of planet earth as a complex, interacting system. Our work covers the full range of atmospheric, earth, biological, terrestrial and aquatic sciences, from the deep oceans to the upper atmosphere, and from the poles to the equator. Our mission is to gather and apply knowledge, create understanding and predict the behaviour of the natural environment and its resources, and communicate all aspects of our work.

In fulfilling its mission, NERC will:

- support high quality research and technology and maintain long-term capability to understand and predict the environment, natural resources and their response to change;
- foster the health and vitality of the UK environmental science skills base through education, training and career development;
- collect, manage and supply environmental data and provide information to meet the needs of users;
- provide objective, independent expert scientific advice and information to underpin national and international policy and sustainable growth;
- provide specialist scientific facilities and services to meet the needs of UK environmental sciences;
- work in partnership with users and other science suppliers and promote effective knowledge transfer;
- encourage public understanding of environmental issues and the role of science;
- ensure openness, accountability and value for money in the delivery of the NERC mission.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

COUNCIL POLICY ON VESTED INTERESTS

1. **Introduction:** NERC uses the expertise, knowledge and advice of the international academic and research community, government agencies, industry and elsewhere. Their involvement is an essential contribution to the Council's decision-making processes, many of which lead to the allocation of public funds.
2. **Issue:** NERC needs to set out clearly how it expects its Council and Committee members to behave, in order to reduce the risk of improper conduct of business or allocation of funds. It is therefore also important that Council's procedures are documented and easily understood, to allay public concern. This can be done by following HM Treasury's guidelines for publicly-funded agencies. All members of NERC Committees who have a vested interest should therefore follow the arrangements below. Vested interest is defined as:
 - the committee member being associated with an institution, department or individual that has submitted a funding proposal or that would otherwise benefit from a decision;
 - being involved, in any way, in the development, or implementation of proposals seeking Council funds or in the evaluation of research investments, or otherwise standing to benefit from a decision.
3. **General Expectation:** If it is not obvious or immediately apparent, Committee members must inform the NERC official acting as Secretary to the Committee, or the Chairperson, of the exact nature of their vested interest. This applies in all instances where a decision could result in the allocation of NERC funds or other resources, or otherwise provide benefit.
4. **Standards:** It is Council policy that:
 - On taking up their appointments, all Council members must declare any private, professional or commercial interests that could conflict with NERC's interests. These interests may be direct or indirect, monetary or non-monetary, which the public might reasonably think could influence the Council members' judgment.
 - NERC will register the declarations of interest centrally and update them every year. Members should, however, provide updated information as changes occur. NERC will put the register on its website so the public can inspect it, and the website detail will be published in the NERC Council's annual report.
 - The chairperson of a meeting will be briefed on interests using the register, and will draw attention to any possible conflicts of interests before the meeting starts.
 - Normally, members with vested interests should leave the meeting while the proposal or issue is being discussed or considered.
 - If the Committee agrees, the Chairperson may use their discretion to allow members with vested interests to remain in the meeting, if their absence will compromise the Committee's expertise, or if they are invited to speak on 'matters of fact'.
 - NERC will remove all papers and background information relating to a vested interest from the respective member's meeting papers.
 - All Committee members are expected to abide by the *in confidence* nature of much of

the business conducted at meetings.

- All vested interests declared, and actions taken, should be recorded in the Committee minutes, ensuring a proper audit trail.

The meeting Chairperson must ensure that the above procedures are followed.

(*) For the purposes of this statement Committees is the generic term used for any group convened by, or acting on behalf of, Council or the Chief Executive.