

COUNCIL MEETING

Two hundred and ninety fifth meeting of NERC Council
to be held at the Marriott Hotel, Cardiff on Thursday 9th December 2010.

Natural Environment Research Council

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Two hundred and ninety fifth meeting of NERC Council, to be held at the Marriott Hotel in Cardiff on Thursday 9th December 2010 commencing at 09:00.

AGENDA

Introductory items

			Strategic Objective
1	09:00	Chairman's welcome and introduction	Oral
2	09:05	Financial forecast and context	NERC 10/48 (P) 15
3	09:15	Update from BIS representative	Oral 3
4	09:25	Rolling Programme	NERC 10/49 15

Items for discussion

5	09:35	Planning for the Spending Review period 2011-15	<u>RESTRICTED</u> Oral	15
	11:15	<i>Refreshments</i>		
6	11:30	Further updates on: i) Progress towards integrated NC strategy ii) Delivery of integrated NC strategy iii) Prioritisation of National Capability	Oral Oral NERC 10/50 (P)	13
	13:00	<i>Lunch</i>		
7	13:30	Evaluation of NERC's Responsive Mode	NERC 10/51 (P)	12

Standing items

8	14:10	Executive Report	NERC 10/52 (P)	15
	14:50	<i>Refreshments</i>		
9	15:00	Science and Innovation Strategy Board report	NERC 10/53 (P)	15
10	15:15	NERC Council Audit Committee report	NERC 10/54 (P)	15
11	15:25	Progress on delivery of NERC's Strategy – Quarter 2 2010/11 report	NERC 10/55 (P)	15
12	15:40	i. Unconfirmed minutes of 294 th meeting of NERC Council ii. Decisions and actions and matters arising	<u>RESTRICTED</u> NERC 10/56 (P) NERC 10/57 (P)	
13	15:50	Any Other Business	Oral	
	16:00	Meeting close		

Papers for information

Evaluation of progress with delivering NERC's Climate System Theme	NERC 10/58 (P)	5
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Additional papers for reference

- i) Common NERC Acronyms
- ii) Membership of Council 2010
- iii) Attendance at NERC Council 2010
- iv) The Mission of the NERC
- v) Council Policy on Vested Interests

NERC COUNCIL

ROLLING PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS (COVER)

Purpose of this paper

1. Council members are asked to discuss future items and highlight any necessary additions to the Council Business Whiteboard.

Link to NERC strategic objectives

2. Strategic Objective 15 – Run a forward-looking organisation that is efficient, effective and flexible, underpinned by sound governance and risk management.

Responsible Director

3. Dr Steven Wilson – Director, Strategy and Partnerships

Author of paper

4. Miss Samantha Way – NERC Council Secretary

Annexes and website links

5. **Annex A** - Mapping of Council business against responsibilities
Annex B –2010 Council Business Whiteboard

Vested interests

6. N/A

Action

7. Council members are asked to:
 - i) **DISCUSS** whether any amendments or additions should be made to NERC business whiteboards
 - ii) **CONSIDER** whether they could provide input to any of the Council papers currently in development.

NERC COUNCIL

ROLLING PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS

Issue

1. Council members are asked to discuss future items and highlight any necessary additions to the Council Business Whiteboard.

Discussion

Future Council meetings

2. As highlighted at the September meeting, it is likely that an additional meeting will be required in early 2011 to further discuss the outcomes of the Spending Review and how NERC will move forward with the Delivery Plan. The proposed dates for this meeting are now **03/04 February 2011** (one of the dates will be selected based on availability of members). Members are asked to hold these dates in their diaries for a one day meeting, most likely to be in London.
3. The next scheduled Council meeting will be the retreat on 01-03 March 2011 in Swindon. In addition to standing items, provisional agenda items for the March Council meeting are:

Planning for Spending Review period 2011-15
Update on People Action Plan
Annual report from the Audit Committee

4. As previously communicated, the main 2011 meeting dates are:
1 - 3 March (Council Retreat)
11/12 May
13/14 July
28/29 September
7/8 December

Implementation of actions delegated to

5. Miss Samantha Way, NERC Council Secretary

Communication plan

6. The outcome of this paper will be communicated to the NERC Business Coordination team so that the business whiteboards can be updated. Council Secretary will liaise with Directors and paper authors regarding Council's feedback.

Action

7. Council members are asked to:
 - i) **DISCUSS** whether any amendments or additions should be made to NERC business whiteboards
 - ii) **CONSIDER** whether they could provide input to any of the Council papers being developed.

Council responsibilities:	NERC's Strategic Objectives **	2010					2011			
		February	April	July	September	December	March	May	July	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To advise on new scientific opportunities, scientific direction and user needs, in line with NERC's charter. To establish the Mission and Strategic Plan and approve the Delivery Plan (including the strategy, use of resources and key performance indicators and targets). To ensure that Council's views are reflected in the pursuit of RCUK objectives and to be informed of their views of RCUKEG and the JSG 	<u>Research Priorities and Partnerships:</u> i. Strategic partnerships and collaboration to deliver world-leading research and knowledge exchange that addresses the key environmental science priorities identified by NERC strategy. (Obj 1)									
	iii. Decide on funding priorities within NERC's Strategic science themes (Obj 5 -11)	Update on consultation re: UK Space Sector								
		Planning future NERC investment levels (also fits into RM funding and NC)	Mid Cycle Actions: Discipline-based process research and Natural Hazards			Mid term evaluation of Theme Action Plans process	Climate Systems evaluation report		Theme Action Plans	
	<u>Sustainability:</u> i. Responsive funding: Support excellent research to sustain the UK's position as a world leader in environmental sciences (Obj 12)		Responsive Mode Action Plan				Responsive Mode Evaluation report			
	ii. Ensure that NERC's National Capability meets the needs of current and future strategy priorities. (Obj 13)						National Capability prioritisation		National Capability Action Plan	
									Asset Management Strategy	
		RRS Discovery replacement project								
	iii. Ensure skilled people to deliver current and future science priorities (Obj 14)	NERC Training Strategy	NERC Training Strategy					Progress update on People Action Plan	NERC Training Strategy	
<u>Economic and Public Policy impact:</u> i. Deliver impact from NERC-funded research, data and information by driving knowledge exchange between researchers and users (Obj 2)	Science Information Strategy - Implementation plan			Impact Action Plan				Research integrity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain high standards of corporate governance, and through reports from the Executive and advisory boards : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) ensure that Council's decisions and actions are followed through effectively ii) monitor risk management and progress of high risk projects iii) ensure proper use of public funds and that NERC does not operate outside of the limits of it's delegated authority iv) receive and reviewing regular financial information concerning the performance of NERC. v) comply with all relevant employment legislation, adopt management practices which use resources in the most economical, efficient manner and ensure that NERC staff have appropriate access to relevant advice and training opportunities. vi) ensure that Council and advisory boards are fit for purpose and that Council makes use of the independent audit committee. To ensure that action is taken to inform the Secretary of State, DGSR and BIS of any changes impacting on the delivery of the Strategy and Delivery Plan, and any measures put in place to address these. 	<u>Efficiency and effectiveness:</u> i. Build effective working relationships with HM government so that the value of public investment in NERC is recognised and prioritised (Obj 3). ii. Run a forward-looking organisation that is efficient, effective and flexible, underpinned by sound governance and risk management (Obj 15).									
									Annual Delivery report	
			Planning for the Spending Review	Planning for the Spending Review	Planning for the Spending Review	Planning for the Spending Review	Planning for the Spending Review period 2011-15	Planning for the Spending Review period 2011-15		Feedback from CE following Centre Activity Resource Plan (CARP) discussions
			Refreshing the NERC Strategy							Review and refresh of NERC Strategy
			Annual report of Council Audit Committee					Annual report of Council Audit Committee		Annual Health and Safety and Security reports
				Meeting of Council sub-group - Senior Staff Salaries Review Committee						

* The Executive Report includes, amongst other adhoc issues, updates on: Swindon Office based Directors' areas of responsibility; NERC's Risk Register; Halley VI, SSC and any other high profile projects; Health and Safety; Research Centre activity and key issues highlighted by Chief Executive.

** The groupings of Strategic Objectives in this document are based on the headings in the NERC/DIUS Scorecard 2008/09.

No.	Task	Main Statement					
			1 - 3 March	12-May	14-Jul	29-Sep	09-Dec
1	Advise on new scientific opportunities, scientific direction and user needs	MS	March				
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, DGSI 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	Update from BIS representative		√	√	√	√	√
13	Strategic Management Tool update /quarterly reports		√		√	√	√
14	Planning for the Spending Review Period 2011-15		√	√	√		
15	Annual Report from Audit Committee on its activities		√				
16	Action plan for people element of Strategy		√				
17	Theme Action Plans (TAPs 3) and National Capability Action Plan (NCAP 2)			√			
18	Annual Delivery Report			√			
19	NERC Training Strategy			√			
20	Research Integrity			√			
21	Receive Annual Report on Health and Safety and Security in NERC				√		
22	Review and refresh of the NERC strategy					√?	
23	Feedback following Centre Activity RP discussions					√?	
24	Evaluating National Capability						

NERC COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE REPORT – DECEMBER 2010 (COVER)

Purpose of this paper

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. Strategy and Partnerships;
 - ii. Science Delivery;
 - iii. People, Skills and Communications;
 - iv. Finance and Operations;
 - v. Health and Safety
 - vi. Security
 - vii. Shared Services Centre
 - viii. Halley VI
 - ix. NERC Research Centres
 - x. Chief Executive's key issues and activities

Author of paper

2. Information collated by Miss Samantha Way, NERC Council Secretary

Annexes and website links

3. Annex A – NERC Top Risks
Annex B - Financial report

Vested interests

4. None declared

Action

5. Council is invited to:
 - i. **NOTE** the information in the report

NERC COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE REPORT – DECEMBER 2010

Items highlighted in grey should be treated as Management in Confidence

1. STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic Management

Inputs to Government

- a. Since January NERC has been working to improve the quality and co-ordination of inputs to government including evidence for the Spending Review. Work includes producing targeted impacts case studies, coordinating visits with MPs and identifying the economic value of impacts. In addition, NERC has received very positive feedback from BIS on the quality of mandatory reports we have produced (for example, Economic Impact Baseline (EIB), Delivery Report and Economic Impact Reporting Framework (EIRF)).

BIS performance monitoring system

- b. NERC has also provided the lead for the Research Councils in working with BIS to help streamline the BIS performance monitoring system. To date, it has been agreed to replace the Annual Report and Delivery Report with a single report, and merge the EIB and the EIRF. Work continues to streamline annual and quarterly planning and reporting processes.

International

Third Meeting of the Belmont Forum

- c. The Third Meeting of the Belmont Forum of funding agencies took place on 26-27 October, Co-Chaired by Alan Thorpe, and NSF Associate Director, GeoSciences Tim Killeen. The meeting was hosted by the National Research Foundation of South Africa, in Cape Town.
- d. At the meeting, the world's main funders of environmental science agreed a common vision for the environmental research priorities needed over the next decade needed to deliver the knowledge and capability that society will need to take action and adapt to environmental change in the 21st century. This vision is articulated as the 'Belmont Challenge' and set out in a White Paper "*The Belmont Challenge: A Global Environmental Research Mission for Sustainability*". An important goal of the Belmont Challenge is to integrate observations, models and assessments into a seamless *Earth System Analysis and Prediction System (ESAPS)* to provide decision-makers with an holistic support system.
- e. The meeting also recognised the considerable alignment between the funders' vision, and those developed recently by international research and operational service provider communities, in response to similar drivers. Recognising the significant opportunities for convergence in implementing the visions, the Belmont Forum, in consultation with ICSU and a representative of WMO, proposed a new single, top-level 'Alliance' to marshall the necessary resources to meet the visions.
- f. The Alliance proposes to launch its 10 year environmental research mission for sustainability at the *Planet Under Pressure* Conference, sponsored by NERC, to be held in London, in March 2012.

- g. Professor Alan O'Neill from the University of Reading has been appointed to chair ESA's Earth Science Advisory Committee (ESAC). A key role will be to oversee the selection of ESA's next Explorer mission, continuing a series of research missions dedicated to increasing our understanding of the Earth's environment. Link to UKSA website for further information: <http://www.ukspaceagency.bis.gov.uk/News-and-Events/News/20002.aspx>

Knowledge Exchange

- h. The LWEC Business Advisory Board (BAB) has met 3 times since its establishment in early 2010. Specific topics discussed include infrastructure and resources, with the next meeting covering water and adaptation to climate change. The Research Councils, TSB and Defra are playing a key role in both items with clear potential for input to policy evidence needs alongside highlighting research and KE needs.
- i. The BAB reviewed proposals from NERC theme leaders on resources at its last meeting, providing input on the potential focus of new programmes. However, the methodology for ensuring clear input to NERC strategy is still being developed as the BAB wants to look across the whole landscape of existing funding within LWEC for each topic area rather than looking at individual programmes in isolation.
- j. The Science Minister will be attending the next BAB meeting to discuss business opportunities and barriers to the uptake of knowledge relating to environmental change.

2. SCIENCE DELIVERY

Delivering Theme Action Plans - Summary

- a. Up-to-date news of NERC science is published online at www.planeteearth.nerc.ac.uk, and a schedule for announcing new research programme opportunities is available on the NERC website at www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/opportunities.asp
- b. Of the 17 Research Programme actions approved by Council in the 2009 TAP, 14 have issued calls for research proposals¹. The process-research actions approved 2010 have issued calls for proposals. Awards have recently been made to: Storm Risk Mitigation (£4.9M, with Met Office and Environment Agency); Valuation Network; Network of Sensors (£4.2M).
- c. Professor Paul Whitehead (Geography, Oxford) has been appointed as Director of the Macronutrient Cycles programme, with the first call for proposals planned for January 2011.
- d. The QUEST finale event was held on the 4th November, with key note presentations from Sir John Beddington, and from Prof. Joseph Alcamo, Chief Scientist of the United Nations Environment Programme. QUEST has driven forward Earth-system science, both in the UK and internationally. Outputs include: reducing uncertainty in the assessment and predictions of the global CO₂ budget and trends; analysing how risks change as temperatures increase, across a range of sectors including agriculture, fisheries, water resources, biodiversity, and human health ; identifying global impact hotspots. The programme has also developed the QUEST Earth System Model as a new national capability, enabling the interactions and feedbacks between climate, the biosphere and atmospheric chemistry to be explored.

¹ The 2009 TAP programmes that have yet to issue calls for Research Proposals are: Ice Sheets, Macronutrient Cycles, and BESS.

Research Highlights

Impacts of wildfires on the Earth's atmosphere

- e. NCEO scientists have developed novel approaches based on radiant heat measurements derived from geostationary satellites, to provide real-time information on the effects of wildfires on the Earth's atmosphere, so integrating excellent science into operational systems to improve accuracy of models and forecasts. NCEO is exploiting these developments as part of the GMES Core Atmospheric Services. More at: http://www.nceo.ac.uk/documents/NCEO%20Brochure%202010_1.pdf

How hot magnetospheric electrons affect upper atmosphere chemistry

- f. Space research published in *Nature* by British Antarctic Survey and the University of California has settled decades of scientific debate by finding the final link between electrons trapped in space and the glow of light from the upper atmosphere known as the diffuse aurora. This research advances understanding 'space weather' and how space storms affect the Earth's atmosphere from the top down.

UK Ocean Acidification research programme - international activities.

- g. The UK Ocean Acidification research programme and the German BIOACID and FP7 EPOCA programmes held a 200-strong joint science workshop in Bremerhaven, Germany. The group has planned joint activities such as joint fieldwork, co-supervision of students, and postdoctoral exchanges. In addition, the FCO's Science & Innovation Network has agreed to fund Collaboration Development Awards to strengthen the links between the UK and US ocean acidification programmes.

Shared Service Centre

- h. The Shared Service Centre grants "go-live" is scheduled for 6 December. We have entered a phase of business calming, which means that neither new nor existing proposals can be progressed through the system until after "go-live". Delays in delivering grants will occur both in the lead up to and post go live periods, but a successful transition will mean that these will be small.

3. PEOPLE, SKILLS AND COMMUNICATIONS

People and skills

People Action Plan

- a. NEB is about to consider a paper, prior to Council review in early 2011, outlining progress and priorities for 2011/12 on the People Action Plan – through which the People element of the NERC Strategy is being delivered. Six of the 21 workstreams have been completed. Of the outstanding 15, it recommended that six should be given the highest priority in the coming year, including completion of Personal Deal discussions with all staff, greater emphasis on workforce planning, and more significant take-up of Research Associate Programme appointments. Two activities – Pay and reward policies and an Interchange Programme – should be de-prioritised, given other demands during the next year.
- b. [Management in confidence]

Postgraduate training Allocation and Delivery Review

- d. The Review established after Council agreement to the current Training Strategy is now well under way. The Review Group has established success criteria against which allocation and delivery mechanisms should be judged and will be considering a number of alternative models at its next meeting. The Review will report to SISB in March 2011.

Skills Review

- e. The ERF (now LWEC) review of postgraduate skills needs in the environmental science community has been well-received and is seen as an important first step in establishing a reference point that can be maintained and refreshed and used across the community to determine priorities for training and professional development. SISB will be asked to consider it against the current NERC training portfolio, again in March 2011, with the outcomes of the Training Allocation and Delivery review.

Communications

Events and Activities

- QUEST research programme finale event (4th November)
- Local and national newspaper, local radio and national TV coverage of Conker Science experiment supported by NERC.
- Collaboration with BBC- identifying researchers to advise on content of a new programme about the planet's seasons
- Working with Martin Redfern, BBC Radio 4 and World Service, on a series of radio programmes about the atmosphere, to be broadcast in the New Year.
- 'Science in the new parliament' event held in collaboration with RCUK to introduce new MPs and other stakeholders to the Research Councils.

Publications

- NERC annual report is completed and awaiting ministerial approval.
- Planet Earth autumn e-mag was published at the beginning of October.
- PE online continued to publish one new feature and 4/5 news stories per week, fortnightly podcasts and blogs from a number of projects. PEO site visits for all content totalled 70,363 for September and October.
- From September, Planet Earth Online has collaborated with The Naked Scientists to share PE podcast content (www.thenakedscientists.com) on radio and online. Through this relationship our podcast material was downloaded 170,000 times in September and 185,000 in October, this is in addition to the 50,000 radio listeners per week.

Formal press releases and briefings

- 9 Sept - 'Experiment Earth?' Public have their say on technologies to reduce global warming.
- 30 Sept - Reappointment of the Chair of NERC.
- 4 Oct - Nature could drive growth and cut poverty in the developing world.
- 8 Oct - Expedition to trace ocean's vital nutrients.
- 11 Oct - UK's most wanted: People with the maths and communication skills to save our planet! (Publication of ERF Skills Review).
- 22 Oct - Falkland Islands radar to monitor activity that creates the 'Southern Lights'.
- 3 Nov - Spanish workers are ruthless revolutionaries while British are loyal to their queens.

4. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Discovery replacement project - status update

- a. The contract to design and build the replacement for the RRS Discovery is now 20% through its planned duration and is proceeding to time and budget. Scale model tank tests of the hull design have been satisfactorily completed and detailed engineering of the ship's systems is in progress. Construction started on the new vessel on the 11th November 2010 which triggered the second stage

payment to the shipyard. All of the long lead time equipment for the ship has been ordered. The keel will be laid in mid-February 2011 with the vessel is due to be delivered to NERC on 3rd June 2013.

Finance update

- b. The financial report for 2010/11 is provided at Annex B to the Executive Report. The overall financial forecast and context is provided in a separate paper (NERC 10/48 P) to be discussed at agenda item 2.

Risk update

- c. The high level summary as at end November 2010 is provided at Annex A to the Executive Report

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a. There has been one reportable incident since the last meeting. The incident occurred at BAS, Bird Island, South Georgia. A man fell overboard from a small cargo tender that was unloading items from the James Clark Ross. The procedure requires a small boat in attendance should such an accident occur. The man was pulled from the water within a minute without injury.

6. SECURITY

- a. Nothing to report.

7. SHARED SERVICES CENTRE

Project Implementation

Payroll

- a. Implementation of the remaining non-grants parts of the SSC project is nearly complete. Delivery of the pensions payroll was achieved successfully on time at the end of September and the NERC staff payroll also went live successfully at the end of October. Only the NERC mariners payroll and one other payroll provided by NERC remain to go live and these are on track to go live at the end of November.
- b. With positive movement over the last month or so around long-outstanding issues such as i-recruitment, fixed assets and user provisioning, all remaining NERC non-grants functionality/ services are set to be in place by the end of the calendar year.

Grants

- c. Much work continues to be undertaken to prepare NERC to receive grants processing services from the SSC Ltd. I advised members in my last update that re-planning of delivery timelines was underway following the RCUK SSC Programme Board's decision that all Research Councils were to be live with grants by the end of March 2011. Weighing up all its business risks, drivers and opportunities, NERC decided to aim for a go-live date for grants of December 2010, together with EPSRC. The project is still on track to meet this deadline.

Project risk

- d. The risk register is in the process of being amended in relation to the SSC-related risks in order to reflect the fact that, aside from grants, project implementation is nearly complete and the focus has switched now much more to service delivery and benefits realisation issues.

SSC Service Delivery.

- e. NERC's Research Centres and its Corporate staff remain routinely affected by service delivery issues. The issues are attributable to three major areas:
- Genuine service weaknesses within the systems and processes of SSC Ltd, some of which is inherited from weaknesses carried from SSC Project;
 - Developing understanding of roles and responsibilities between SSC Ltd and NERC staff;
 - NERC staff not yet adopting and adapting to post-go live ways of working.
- f. In all instances, work remains on-going to understand the root cause of weaknesses and to correct them at source. This will be a programme of work that will need to continue intensively whilst NERC remains in Stabilisation and on an enduring basis to accommodate developmental changes in scientific and business requirement.

8. HALLEY VI UPDATE

- a. Key BAS and Morrison personnel are now on site in Antarctica. Despite poor weather and some consequential travel delays, the site has been well groomed and essential snow management has been done after a particularly heavy winter. Two blue modules have already been moved to their construction line positions, and more construction workers should arrive this week. RRS Shackleton's relief call is programmed for 25 December 2010, but as always this date depends on sea ice conditions. The blue module heated through last winter (as a test) has showed no sign of distress.
- b. [Management in confidence]
- c. The overall risk rating of the project remains as before. The complexities of this season's mechanical and electrical work will require close attention, but it is inherently of lower risk than the construction and cladding of the modules themselves.
- d. The existing Halley V Laws Platform is close to the snow surface, but is still expected (with some precautionary work) to remain useable until after completion of Halley VI.
- e. The Research Councils Internal Audit Service Audit in October 2010 focussed on scientific and operational planning for Halley VI, and gave a Substantial Assurance. It gave a Full Assurance for project programme, risk management and control. All previous Audit actions have been completed.



9. NERC RESEARCH CENTRES

BAS

Space weather – science into policy

- a. British Antarctic Survey scientists contributed this month (November) to an enquiry into scientific advice to Government over future emergencies. The Science and Technology Select Committee called for evidence on the impact of ‘space weather’ events on the national grid, on satellite communications and on aviation. The BAS team provided responses directed to case study questions on solar storms where the British Antarctic Survey has particular expertise. It was supplementary to the input from the Research Councils UK.
- b. On 21 October new space research published in Nature by British Antarctic Survey and the University of California has settled decades of scientific debate by finding the final link between electrons trapped in space and the glow of light from the upper atmosphere known as the diffuse aurora. This research advances understanding ‘space weather’ and how space storms affect the Earth’s atmosphere from the top down.

Exploring Climate Science – British Antarctic Survey

- c. BAS scientists have contributed to the development of an ice core exhibit in the Science Museum’s new permanent gallery ‘Atmosphere: exploring climate science’. From December members of the public will have an opportunity to find out about the science behind climate change through a mixture of recorded interviews, images, videos, displays and animations from BAS.

US Award for ozone scientists

- d. The outstanding contribution made by British Antarctic Survey scientists Joe Farman, Brian Gardiner (both retired) and Jonathan Shanklin to the protection of the Earth’s ozone layer has been recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Montreal Protocol Award. The Nature paper that marked the discovery of the Antarctic ozone hole 25 years ago has become one of

the most cited papers in atmospheric environmental sciences and continues to generate media and public interest. The discovery of the ozone hole was highly influential in leading all United Nations countries to sign the Montreal Protocol.

BGS

Hungarian Red Mud Catastrophe

- e. Approximately one million tonnes of red mud, an alkaline waste product from aluminium production, escaped from a holding dam near Ajka, Hungary on 4th October 2010, when a tailings dam collapsed, killing 9 people and seriously affecting nearby villages, rivers and 40 square kilometres of land. HMG via CSA offered technical and scientific help to Hungarian Authorities resulting in a team from BGS and Newcastle University visiting the site from 4th to 6th November 2010.
- f. Hungarian Authorities have mounted a comprehensive and impressive clean-up operation, which has been implemented very rapidly. They have an excellent scientific and engineering understanding of the problem and its immediate remediation, but could benefit from additional capacity and technologies. BGS and the University of Newcastle have proposed Specific Areas for UK Assistance and will provide a series of joint projects with the Hungarians that will be presented at the December meeting of UK and Hungary Prime ministers.

CEH

Rodenticide residues in the environment

- g. The latest report from the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme (PBMS), run by the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH), suggests that more barn owls carry residues of potentially toxic rodenticides than previously thought. The PBMS is a long-term national monitoring scheme that monitors exposure by measuring residues of chemicals in species such as the barn owl, red kite and kestrel, thus assessing the risk of contaminants to UK wildlife and the wider environment. The importance of the monitoring carried out by PBMS is recognised by both government agencies and industry supported initiatives such as the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use, an organisation directly involved in communicating the science behind PBMS to end users.

Countryside Survey – Integrated Assessment report published

- h. The Countryside Survey (CS) Integrated Assessment (IA) report was published on 27 October 2010. The report uses CS data to investigate the ecosystem services provided by the British countryside. IA analysis was led by scientists from CEH working with colleagues from CS partner organisations. The CS Integrated Assessment tested novel approaches for using CS data alongside other national scale datasets to understand how different ecosystem services respond to anthropogenic pressures over time. The analysis enabled CEH scientists to quantify four services, make maps of where the services are provided, to determine possible causes of changes in services over time, and even to model what might happen under ‘what if’ scenarios.

New Defra projects

- i. CEH are involved in two of the three new projects within a £12.6m Defra initiative aimed at improving understanding of how UK agriculture contributes to climate change. Agriculture contributes about eight per cent of all UK greenhouse gas emissions. CEH scientists will help to bring together existing data to create a new inventory model and carry out more specific work on N₂O emissions.

NOC

NOC Strategic developments

- j. The Directorate of Science and Technology has recently completed a review of how it will manage its staff and research projects. The outcome is that five research groups have been established and Heads and Associate Heads appointed. Interviews for the post Director of Planning and Resources will be held 25th Nov. An Advisory Board for the new Centre is being constituted. Professor Sir David King has agreed to chair it.

Highlights

- k. First ERC starting grant to NERC owned centre: Marine geoscientist Dr Veerle Huvenne has been awarded a grant worth around 1.4 million Euros over five years to map complex habitats in the deep ocean and study the biodiversity they support. The European Research Council (ERC) 'Starting Grant' scheme aims to fund young, early career scientists wishing to start up their own research groups. The grants are highly competitive, and this is the first award to a NERC managed laboratory.
- l. Belgian EU Presidency events: NOC Director Ed Hill chaired the final session of EurOCEAN 2010 where the Ostend Declaration, was adopted. Two European Commissioners (for Research and Innovation and for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) participated. Ed also gave a keynote in the European Parliament to MEPs and their advisers on how marine science could contribute to grand societal challenges.
- m. Census of Marine Life During the past ten years scientists at NOC have contributed to the Census of Marine Life report which was published in London at end October. <http://www.coml.org/> The census shows that life in the ocean is richer, more connected and more impacted than expected.

10. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

- a. The Chief Executive attended the Belmont Forum meeting of the main international environmental research funders in Cape Town, South Africa in the week of 25 October. Substantial progress was made in creating an Alliance of research funders, international science programmes (via ICSU) and operational services (via WMO).
- b. The Chief Executive met Gary Goodyear, Canadian Minister of State for science and technology on the 5 November to discuss the MoU we have with Canada on Arctic and Antarctic research collaboration.
- c. On behalf of RCUK, the Chief Executive hosted a visit by the new BIS Permanent Secretary, Martin Donnelly, on 18 November 2010.

NERC COUNCIL

**UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY FOURTH MEETING
OF NERC COUNCIL, HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, READING ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2010**

Purpose of the paper:

- 1: To confirm that the unconfirmed minutes of the 294th meeting of NERC Council are a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Discussion led by

- 2: Chairman

Author of paper

3. Miss Samantha Way, Secretary to NERC Council.

Action

4. Council is invited to **CONFIRM** the minutes of the 294th meeting.

NERC COUNCIL

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY FOURTH MEETING OF
NERC COUNCIL, HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, READING ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2010**

Members Present:

Mr EA Wallis (Chairman), Professor AJ Thorpe (CE), Professor PJ Curran, Professor HC Davies, Mr R Douglas, Professor AH Fitter, Professor LA Glover, Professor C Godfray, Professor AN Halliday, Mr PF Hazell, Professor M Lockwood, Professor TR Meagher, Professor J Slingo, Professor A Watson, Professor BM Wilson.

Apologies: Professor R Watson.

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

NERC Directors: Mr NFD Bloomer (Finance and Operations), Mr B Butler (Finance and Operations), Dr P Newton (Science Delivery), Dr SHS Wilson (Strategy and Partnerships), Mrs JE Timberlake (People, Skills and Communications).

Other Attendees: Professor DJ Wingham, Chairman of Science and Innovation Strategy Board, all items.

Dr P Heads, Acting Head of NERC Strategic Management, for items 5-6.

Mrs C Exton, Head of Business Coordination, all items as an observer.

Secretary: Miss SJ Way

1. Chairman's welcome (Oral)

1.1 Chairman welcomed attendees to the 294th meeting of NERC Council and, in particular, welcomed Mrs Carol Exton, Head of Business Coordination, who was attending as an observer and Mr Brian Butler, Acting Director of Finance and Operations. Chairman gave apologies for absence for Professor R Watson.

1.2 Chairman thanked Mr Bloomer for his considerable contribution to NERC and wished him well in his new role in the Shared Services Centre.

1.3 Professor Thorpe informed Council that Mr Wallis had been re-appointed to the role of NERC Chairman for a further three years and confirmed that a press release had been issued.

2. Financial forecast and context (NERC 10/40 P)

2.1 [Management in confidence]

2.2 Mr Bloomer clarified that the planning assumption for 2011/12 is currently flat cash based on an assumption that any significant cuts would have to be implemented over the Spending Review period rather than immediately. It is hoped that the balanced position forecast for 2011/12 will allow NERC to reduce the impact of any immediate cuts.

3. Update from Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) representative (Oral)

3.1 [Management in confidence]

3.2 Council was informed that RCUK had asked that a group be set up, chaired by BIS, to consider e-infrastructure, including High Performance Computing, in the light of a number of reviews. Mr Williams clarified that there is not enough time for decisions on this to feed into Spending Review allocations but a long term strategy would be developed.

3.3 [Management in confidence]

3.4 Council noted that pressure to make data freely available is likely to increase but stressed that greater clarity is required regarding how this applies to raw data, content and value-added products. Mr Bloomer advised that the updated NERC Data Policy, approved by the NERC Executive Board and due to be published in January 2011, will be included for information in December Council papers.

4. Rolling Programme (NERC 10/41)

4.1 Dr Wilson confirmed that the next Council meeting will be held in Cardiff on 9th December 2010, with a presentation and dinner (with key local stakeholders) on the 8th December. Council noted that this will no longer be an Open meeting due to the likelihood that the agenda will include restricted Spending Review items. Dr Wilson also highlighted that members should hold 27th and 28th January 2011 in their diaries in case there is a need for an additional Council meeting. Council Secretary is still exploring options and will send the provisional dates to Council attendees.

Action: Council Secretary

4.2 Although the December agenda may be dominated by discussions regarding the Spending Review (depending on how much information is available), Directors outlined other provisional agenda items: the NCAG prioritisation exercise which will feed into Spending Review planning; an update on the People Action Plan and outcomes of the Responsive Mode evaluation. Members were reminded that if they wish to input to developing Council papers they should contact Council Secretary offline.

5. Mid term evaluation of the Theme Action Plan (TAP) process (NERC 10/42 (P))

5.1 Chairman welcomed Dr Phil Heads, Acting Head of Strategic Management, to the meeting and Dr Wilson introduced the paper, outlining the scope of the evaluation, the key findings and the recommendations. Council was asked to discuss the management response to these recommendations.

5.2 Professor Wingham reported that SISB had discussed the evaluation and agreed that the current model has a number of strengths. He also commented on the wide range of skills required to carry out the Theme Leader role: a strong grasp of the scientific content, breadth of focus and the ability to prioritise science investments effectively. It was highlighted that successful theme leaders need all of these attributes. Council commended the work of the Theme Leaders and discussed ways that NERC could better support them in their challenging role.

5.3 In further discussion regarding the evaluation and the management response, Council commented that:

- i. the Theme Action Plan model has significant strength and has been a bold step for NERC.
- ii. whilst progress has been made, the Theme Leader role still needs to be more clearly defined.
- iii. National Capability still needs to be better integrated with Research Programmes.

iv. NERC should consider ways of developing talent to carry out the Theme Leader roles in the future. For example, early career scientists could work alongside Theme Leaders to ease time pressures and learn more about the role.

5.4 Chairman concluded that the evaluation had been carried out effectively, that the management response was adequate and that, although some adjustments are required, the current model is fit for purpose. Council recognised that the approach may need to be reviewed once the Spending Review outcome is known.

6. Spending Review planning for the period 2011-15 (NERC 10/43 RESTRICTED)

Introduction

6.1 Dr Wilson introduced the Spending Review (SR) item and provided an update on progress since the last meeting. Professor Thorpe gave feedback from RCUK meetings with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Science Minister and informed Council that he hoped to have a similar meeting with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

6.2 [Management in confidence]

Draft NERC Delivery Plan

6.3 Council discussed the development of the draft Delivery Plan, including the initial feedback received from BIS, and Dr Wilson agreed to circulate the associated slides to Council. Council emphasised areas that NERC should focus on in building the strongest case.

Action: Director, Strategy and Partnerships

[Management in confidence]

Consultation meeting on 27th July 2010

6.7 Council noted the feedback from a meeting on 27th July 2010 attended by Heads of Department from NERC funded universities, Research Centre Directors and representatives from Learned Societies. The event debated ways of working together to tackle the possible implications of the Spending Review in terms of training, grants and research concentration. In response to a query, Council was reminded that the Skills Review had provided an opportunity for wider stakeholders to input ideas regarding training. Council welcomed the news that Heads of Department were supportive of demand management at a department level.

[Management in confidence]

7. Executive Report (NERC 10/44 P)

7.1 Dr Newton highlighted that a BAS study as part of the Census for Antarctic Marine Life (CAML) suggests that there is evidence of a trans-Antarctic seaway from an interglacial as recently as 125,000 years ago. He also updated Council on a large, collaborative project that BAS is involved in. The project involves deep ice core drilling and may provide an idea of what the climate was like at the time of the last interglacial.

7.2 Mrs Timberlake advised Council that the Skills Review is now complete, that the top 15 critical skills gaps have been identified in a summary report and that, whilst some gaps were not a surprise,

others were new and emerging. The results will be presented to Council as part of the update on the People Action Plan, currently scheduled for the December Council meeting.

- 7.3 Under Finance and Operations, Council welcomed the news that NERC has achieved Carbon Trust Accreditation. This is a positive achievement in its own right but also means that NERC will be near the top of the performance table for the Carbon Reduction Commitment. Mr Bloomer reported that the NERC accounts are almost ready to be signed off now that issues with the SSC contribution to the accounts have been resolved. [Management in confidence]
- 7.4 Council noted the timetable for the transition of Payroll to the SSC and the delayed timetable for the transition of Grants which is scheduled to take place in December. Dr Newton added that there is a risk in being first to go live with Grants but going first should ensure as much support as possible from SSC during the transition. Mrs Timberlake reported that she would take over Mr Bloomer's role as NERC representative on the SSC Ltd board and that Mr Butler would become the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for NERC on the SSC project.
- 7.5 [Management in confidence]
- 7.6 Dr Newton provided feedback on the CEH and BGS open days which were both very successful, providing excellent examples of work being undertaken and its economical and societal impact.
- 7.7 Professor Thorpe advised Council that Emily Shuckburgh, a senior BAS scientist, is currently seconded for part of her time to DECC to improve science briefings to Ministers but also to address the better representation of climate science in the media. It was suggested that Emily should be invited to report back to Council on any lessons learned in 2011. **Action: Council Secretary**

8. Science and Innovation Strategy Board report (NERC 10/45 P)

- 8.1 Council noted that SISB had not met since the last Council meeting. Professor Wingham advised that much progress has been made on the NCAG prioritisation since the last SISB meeting and that this would be presented to Council in December. He emphasised that the exercise has involved a considerable amount of effort and valuable work from NCAG, Centre Directors and colleagues.

9. Council Audit Committee report (Oral)

- 9.1 Mr Hazell informed Council that the Audit Committee had not met since the last Council meeting and that the next meeting will be on 6th October. There were therefore no specific issues to report.

10. Unconfirmed minutes and decisions and actions from the 293rd meeting of NERC Council (NERC 10/46 P and NERC 10/47 P)

- 10.1 The minutes of the 293rd NERC Council meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record.
- 10.2 Council noted the progress made on decisions and actions from previous meetings. There were no matters arising.

11. Any Other Business (Oral)

- 11.1 Council Secretary highlighted that panel member nominations for the REF sub-panels needed to be submitted by 8th October and that if members have any applications that they wish NERC to support they should contact Council Secretary in the first instance for further details regarding the process.

- 11.2 Council members were reminded that their biographies and register of interests are updated annually and that they should let Council Secretary know of any changes. Council Secretary will send a link to the relevant pages on the NERC website. **Action: Council Secretary**
- 11.3 Professor Glover reiterated the importance of encouraging individuals from under-represented groups to apply for Council vacancies and felt that existing Council members should take a proactive role. Council Secretary provided an update on the measures being taken to increase the diversity of applicants, although appointments will obviously be based on merit.

NERC COUNCIL

**DECISIONS, ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 294TH
NERC COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2010 (COVER)**

Purpose of this paper

1. The meeting of NERC Council on 30 September 2010 resulted in a number of decisions and actions. This paper reports on progress made on the decisions and actions.
2. To provide Council with an opportunity to discuss any matters arising from the decisions and actions.
3. To highlight outstanding and recently completed actions from meetings prior to September 2010.

Author of paper

4. Miss Samantha Way – NERC Council Secretary

Annexes and website links

5. N/A

Vested interests

6. None declared

Action

7. Council is invited to:
 - i) **NOTE** the progress of the decisions and actions from the 294th meeting.
 - ii) **NOTE** outstanding and recently completed actions from meetings prior to September 2010.
 - iii) **DISCUSS** any matters arising from the decisions and actions.

DECISIONS AND ACTIONS FROM NERC COUNCIL HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2010

Part 1

Type	Agenda Item	Min Ref	Decision/Action Description	Owner	Target Date	Progress Update
A	Rolling Programme (NERC 10/41)	4.1	Send Council members provisional dates for an additional Council meeting in January/February 2011.	Council Secretary		Completed: Dates included in email from Professor Thorpe and in December Council papers.
A	Spending Review planning for the period 2011-15 (NERC 10/43 Restricted)	6.3	Post initial BIS feedback regarding the draft delivery plan on the secure Council members' website.	Director Strategy and Partnerships		Completed
D		6.5	Management in Confidence			
A		6.5	Management in Confidence			
A		6.6	Management in Confidence			
D		6.8	Management in Confidence			
D		6.9	Management in Confidence			
A		6.7	Management in Confidence			
A	Executive Report (NERC 10/44 P)	7.7	Invite Emily Shuckburgh to report back to Council on lessons learnt from her part time secondment to DECC.	Council Secretary	2011	Progressing: Council secretary liaising with Emily Shuckburgh re: an appropriate time to report back to Council.
A	Any other business (Oral)	11.2	Council Secretary will send a link to Council's biographies and register of interests so that members can highlight any necessary changes.	Council Secretary		Completed

COMMON NERC ACRONYMS

AEDC	Antarctic Environmental Data Centre	ERFF	Environment Research Funders Forum
AFI	Antarctic Funding Initiative (Research Programme)	ES	Ecosystem Sustainability
AHRC	Arts & Humanities Research Council	ESF	European Science Foundation
APPRAISE	Aerosol Properties, Processes and Influences on the Earth's climate (Research Programme)	ESFRI	European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure
BADC	British Atmospheric Data Centre	ESPA	Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation (Research Programme)
BAS	British Antarctic Survey (NERC)*	ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
BBSRC	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council	ESA	European Space Agency
BERR	Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform	EuroHORCs	European Union Research Organisations Heads of Research Councils
BGS	British Geological Survey (NERC)*	EYF	End of Year Flexibility
BNSC	British National Space Centre	FAB	Funding Allocation and Budgeting Project
BODC	British Oceanographic Data Centre	FOG	Finance and Operations Group
BPM	Business Performance Management	FP	Framework Programme
BPMF	Business Performance Management Framework	FREE	Flood Risk from Extreme Events (Research Programme)
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method.	GCSA	Government Chief Scientific Adviser
CASE	Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering	GERB	Geostationary Earth Radiation Budget Experiment (Research Programme)
CEOI	Centre for Earth Observation Instrumentation**	GMES	Global Monitoring for Environment and Security
CEH	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (NERC)*	HEC	High End Computing
CEE	Centre for Environmental Evidence	HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
CPB	Centre for Population Biology**	HEFCW	Welsh Higher Education Funding Council
CSA	Chief Scientific Adviser	HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review	HIRDLS	High Resolution Dynamics Limb Sounder (Research Programme)
CWC	Changing Water Cycle	HPC	High Performance Computing
D4RP	'Discovery for Replacement' project	IODP	Integrated Ocean Drilling Program
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government	IMP	Individual Merit Promotion
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	IPY	International Polar Year
DfID	Department for International Development	ISG	Information Strategy Group
DfT	Department for Transport	ITAG	Information Technology Advisory Group
DGSR	Director General Science and Research (formerly DGSI)	ITT	Invitation to Tender
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly OSI and then DIUS)	Je-S	Joint electronic-Submission
DMAG	Data Management Advisory Group	JSG	DIUS/RCUK Joint Strategy Group
EA	Environment Agency	LWEC	Living With Environmental Change
EIC	Environmental Information Centre	MBA	Marine Biological Association
EC	European Commission	MRC	Medical Research Council
EHFI	Ecology and Hydrology Funding Initiative	NC	National Capability
EHH	Environment and Human Health	NCAG	National Capability Advisory Group
ENI	Environmental Nanoscience Initiative (Research Programme)	NCAS	National Centre for Atmospheric Science*
EO	Earth Observation	NCEO	National Centre for Earth Observation**
EOF	UK Environmental Observation Framework	NDGC	National Geosciences Data Centre
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	NE	Natural England
EPSRC	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council	NEB	NERC Executive Board
ER	Environmental Radioactivity	NEODC	NERC Earth Observation Data Centre
ERC	European Research Council	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

* NERC Research Centre ** NERC Collaborative Centre

Updated 06/07/2009

NIC	NERC Investment Committee	TAP	Theme Action Plan
NMF	National Marine Facilities	ToR	Terms of Reference
NMF-SS	National Marine Facilities – Sea Systems	TSB	Technology Strategy Board
NOCS	National Oceanography Centre, Southampton	TSEC	Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy (Research Programme)
OGC	Office of Government Commerce	UAI	Urban Atmospheric Infrastructure
OPMs	Output and Performance Measures	UKCDS	UK Collaborative on Development Sciences
OSG	Operations Strategy Group (RCUK)	UKERC	UK Energy Research Centre
PAG	Personnel Advisory Group	UKIODP	UK Integrated Ocean Drilling Program
PCSG	Personnel Corporate Strategy Group	UKPOPNET	UK Population Biology Network (Research Programme)
PGP	Post-Genomics and Proteomics (Research Programme)	UKRO	UK Research Office (Brussels)
PML	Plymouth Marine Laboratory**	UKSOLAS	Surface-Ocean/Lower-Atmosphere Study (Research Programme)
POL	Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory*	UKSB	UK Space Board
PQQ	Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (Procurement)	VO	Virtual Observatory
PSG	Pay Strategy Group	WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
PSN	People and Skills Network		
QR	Quality related (in context of HEI funding)		
QUEST	Quantifying and Understanding the Earth System (Research Programme)		
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise		
RAPID-WATCH	Rapid- Will the Atlantic Thermohaline Circulation Halt (Research Programme)		
RCIAS	Research Councils' Internal Audit Service		
RCUK	Research Councils UK		
RELU	Rural Economy and Land Use (Research Programme)		
RM	Responsive Mode		
RMAP	Responsive Mode Action Plan		
ROD	Research Outputs Database		
RP	Research Programme		
SAHFOS	Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science		
SAMS	Scottish Association for Marine Science**		
SEBCC	Science and Engineering Base Co-ordinating Committee		
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency		
SHEFC	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council		
SISB	NERC Science and Innovation Strategy Board		
SMRU	Sea Mammal Research Unit**		
SMT	Strategic Management Tool		
SOFI	Strategic Ocean Funding Initiative		
SoR	Statement of Requirements		
SPA	Sector Portfolio Analysis		
SRG	Services Review Group		
SSC	Shared Service Centre		
STAR	System for Targets and Risks		
STFC	Science and Technology Facilities Council (formerly PPARC and CCLRC)		

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

* NERC Research Centre ** NERC Collaborative Centre

Updated 06/07/2009

MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL 2010 (as at 01 August 2010)

Mr Edmund Wallis	Chairman
Professor Alan Thorpe	Chief Executive and Deputy Chairman
Professor Paul Curran	Vice-Chancellor, City University London
Professor Huw Davies	Institute for Atmospheric and Climate Science, ETH Zurich
Mr Rowan Douglas	Managing Director, Willis Analytics for Willis Re
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 Charles Godfray	Professor of Zoology, University of Oxford
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.
Professor Michael Lockwood	Professor of Space Environment Physics, University of Reading
Professor Thomas Meagher	Chair of Plant Biology, University of St Andrews
Professor Julia Slingo	Chief Scientist, Met Office
Professor Andrew Watson	Professor at the School of Environmental Sciences, of East Anglia University
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.

NERC POLICY ON VESTED INTERESTS FOR MEMBERS OF NERC BOARDS AND COMMITTEES¹

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. WHY IS A VESTED INTERESTS POLICY NEEDED?

NERC needs to set out clearly how it expects its committee and board members to act in considering the allocation of funds and in the wider decision-making and advisory contexts.

The aim of this policy is to protect both the organisation and the individuals involved from any appearance of impropriety.

3. HOW DOES NERC DEFINE 'VESTED INTEREST'?

Vested interest is defined as the committee or board member being associated or involved in any way with:

- an *institution*, *department* or *individual* that has submitted a funding proposal or would otherwise benefit from a decision;
- and/or has been involved in the *development*, or *implementation* of proposals seeking Council funds or in the *evaluation* of research investments.

4. HOW DOES NERC APPLY ITS VESTED INTEREST POLICY?

- a. The chair of a meeting will be briefed on vested interests using the *Register of Declarations of Interests* (see section 5), and will draw attention to these before the meeting starts.
- b. NERC will remove all papers relating to a vested interest from the respective member's meeting papers.
- c. *At the start of each meeting the chair should remind the committee/board that they should declare if any item on the agenda is likely to give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest.*
- d. *The chair should consider if the interest is such as to require the member to leave the room when that matter comes up for discussion, or to remain in the room, but without expressing any opinion on the issue.*
- e. If there is doubt as to whether the member should be asked to leave, the chair may discuss this with the rest of the committee. The member may be asked to leave the room while the committee decides.
- f. If the absence of a member who has declared an interest will compromise the committee's expertise, they may be invited to speak on 'matters of fact'.
- g. If the committee member concerned is the chair, then another member should chair that item.
- h. If in doubt, the chair and committee should assume that the actual or potential conflict of interest may call into question the objectivity and impartiality of the committee's consideration of that issue.
- i. *All vested interests declared, and actions taken, should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, ensuring a proper audit trail.*

¹ For the purposes of this statement, Boards and Committees is the generic term used for any group convened by, or acting on behalf of, Council or the Chief Executive.

5. NERC'S REGISTER OF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a. On taking up their appointments, all Committee 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 Committee members' judgment.
- b. NERC will record the declarations of interest centrally and update them every year.
- c. Members should, provide updated information as changes occur.
- d. 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.