

**IN CONFIDENCE**

**SUBJECT: MINUTES OF THE BIOSCIENCE FOR SOCIETY STRATEGY PANEL,  
30 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**MEETING: BIOSCIENCE FOR SOCIETY STRATEGY PANEL  
18 JANUARY 2012**

**ACTION**

The Panel is invited to:

**APPROVE** the minutes as a true record of the meeting

## **IN CONFIDENCE**

MINUTES of the Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel Meeting held on 30 September 2011 at MRC, 1 Kemble Street London

### **Those Attending:**

#### Panel Members

Sir Roland Jackson (Chair)  
Wendy Barnaby  
Professor Kenneth Boyd  
Dr Richard Dyer  
Professor Christine Hauskeller  
Dr Tom MacMillan  
Dr Gene Rowe

Professor Foster (BBSRC Council Member)

#### BBSRC Office

Mr Paul Gemmill  
Mr Matt Goode  
Dr Patrick Middleton

### **Apologies**

Dr Sandra Knapp  
Dr Steven Walker  
Professor Brian Ilbery  
Professor Jane Calvert  
Professor Robert Dingwall  
Dr Erinma Ochu  
Professor Vincent Walsh

### **Chairman's welcome and introduction**

1. Sir Roland welcomed the Panel and introduced Professor Russell Foster who was attending the meeting in his role as a BBSRC Council Member. Professor Foster highlighted that he and Council were keen to engage with BSS and that he would report back to Council on the Panel's discussions.
2. Sir Roland also welcomed Dr Jack Stilgoe to the meeting (for items 1 to 5), Sir Roland explained that Dr Stilgoe would be presenting paper BSS22/2011. Finally Sir Roland introduced Matt Goode as BBSRC's Head of External Relations since Dr Monica Winstanley's retirement.
3. Sir Roland thanked the Panel for their input (by email before the meeting) to the draft Global Food Security (GFS) Communications and Public Engagement strategy. Professor Giles Oldroyd, as BBSRC's representative on the GFS Communications and Public Engagement Group (CPEG), had asked for BSS's advice. Mr Goode briefly explained how the strategy would now be taken forward at the next CPEG meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Round table of issues (standing item)**

4. Professor Hauskeller enquired about the outcomes of the Nature and Naturalness BSS working group's work. Dr Middleton outlined that a web article had been published based on the group's paper and that he was hopeful that the group's work would be used in the proposed public engagement training that the Panel would discuss in paper BSS23/2011.

5. Professor Foster highlighted his role on the UK Research Integrity Office's (UKRIO) Advisory Board. UKRIO is concerned with guidelines and best practice around research conduct. Professor Foster suggested that BSS should perhaps be aware of the work of UKRIO and could consider inviting the organisation to present at a future BSS meeting. Dr Dyer noted that research fraud might be relatively common at a low level (such as claiming a paper is 'in press' when it has only been submitted) and that it is important to tackle these issues
6. Dr MacMillan announced that he would be taking on a new position as the Soil Association's Director of Innovation. His brief is to include transforming the Soil Association's relationship with the research community.
7. Sir Roland asked to what extent the approaches that grant applicants propose for public engagement are taken account of by grant assessment panels. Dr Middleton reminded the Panel about the recent changes introduced to the grant application system in which applications are able to apply for funding for public engagement activities; currently there is no additional guidance provided to grant committees on public engagement. Dr Dyer suggested that grant committees focus first and foremost on the academic quality of the grant and that public engagement was unlikely to be considered at all. Mr Goode noted that public engagement would be assessed as part of the applicant's 'Pathways to Impact' submission and that all BBSRC grant holders were expected to do one to two days of public engagement every year. Professor Foster suggested that grant committees could look more holistically at the track record of grant applicants in public engagement. Professor Hauskeller asked how the questions relating to social and ethical issues are also considered by grant committees.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to examine how public engagement is considered by grant committees

#### **Minutes of the last meeting**

8. A number of small changes were made to the minutes after which the Panel approved the minutes.

#### *Matters Arising*

9. Sir Roland noted that many of the Actions will be dealt with at this meeting. He asked that the Action under point 13, relating to asking other panels about social challenges carries over.

**ACTION:** BSS would like to ask each of the new panels the question 'What are the three major social challenges biology is likely to face in the next years?' so that their comments can be reflected back to BSS and the summarised comments from all the Panels, including from BSS, can be shared with them.

10. Panel members also asked that the action under point 3 is repeated.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate details of new Council appointments to BSS

#### **Ethical and Social Issues Working Group Report**

11. Dr Rowe introduced this paper. (NB: this paper was discussed as a collaborative rewording of the draft form and as such is minuted as to the decisions which were reached).

12. It was agreed that:

- a. The form would frame all issues neutrally, i.e. remove the words positive and negative
- b. The bullet point issues would be merged with the tick box questions, and each resulting issues/question would have a free text space for reflection
- c. The issues would be framed with words such as, "please reflect on..."
- d. The number of issues/questions should be kept below ten
- e. The revised form should be forwarded to all BSS for comment

### **Responsible innovation**

13. Dr Stilgoe introduced this paper. He stressed that while this work was commissioned by EPSRC it should be able to inform best practice across the Research Councils and the Technology Strategy Board. Dr Stilgoe introduced Responsible Innovation (RI) as a new way of thinking and noted that it puts strategic consideration of responsibility at the centre of an organisation's practice. He also mentioned that RI was gaining traction across the EU. Dr Stilgoe stressed that EPSRC are concerned that RI remains an opportunity and does not become a bureaucratic burden and that training and support will be needed for researchers and others.
14. Sir Roland commented that the SPICE project had had RI retrofitted to it and that this had produced some complications.
15. Dr Stilgoe agreed, but noted that it was a very positive step by EPSRC to attempt to apply a RI framework to the project and that this asked a lot of the project PI.
16. Professor Hauskeller challenged Dr Stilgoe as to whether RI was anything more than a buzz word and asked about how it would be funded. Dr Stilgoe responded by saying that the project hoped to answer these types of questions and to help EPSRC develop a strategic approach to such questions. Professor Hauskeller went on to mention that RI, as described, encapsulated the work of BSS, but that the word, "Innovation", suggests it has connotations towards more near-market science. Dr Stilgoe agreed that RI has purchase with policymakers because of the impact agenda, but that it should also provide a useful framework for scientists working upstream to consider the implications of their work.
17. Dr MacMillan agreed that the problem statement articulated by Dr Stilgoe was good and that Research Councils should engage with it. However, he raised the question of how much room for manoeuvre the Research Councils have given their remit to fund excellent research. He suggested that the RI agenda should be discussed at the level of BIS or above and that Research Councils had a role to promote these discussions. Dr MacMillan also noted that much innovation is not science-led and questioned whether RI reinforced the misconception that it is.
18. Dr Stilgoe agreed that the Research Councils are only one of a great many actors in innovation but noted that only the Research Councils are keen to engage in the debate.
19. Professor Boyd agree that RI was good because it challenges the narrow view of impact, but at the same time raises many questions, e.g. to whom and for what is RI responsible? Dr Stilgoe agreed and said he felt it was important to ask these questions even if there were no solid answers. Professor Boyd agreed that the process was important.
20. Ms Barnaby raised the point that much of BBSRC's work and that of other funders (including the SPICE project) were international in nature, and would have international impacts. Dr Stilgoe agreed and stressed that the point of RI was to provide space to start these wider

discussions around such things as global regulations – it does not pretend to answer the question. RI should operate at all levels, from the individual to globally.

21. Dr MacMillan noted that RI starts with senior management and trickles down and stressed the role of Research Councils in influencing BIS as 'responsible policy advocates'.
22. Mr Gemmill challenged the Panel to consider whether BBSRC had become complacent to this agenda, having traditionally lead the Research Councils on such issues. He noted that RI appeared to be about embedding ELSI considerations across all that BBSRC does and that it raised important questions that BBSRC should consider – but how?
23. Sir Roland picked up on this by asking the panel if they felt that BSS was a useful excuse that BBSRC used for not considering these questions across the organisation?
24. Professor Foster noted that BBSRC's research largely underpins, rather than leads directly to, innovations. Nevertheless the sort of approach articulated in RI is not integrated to BBSRC and Council does not have discussions along these lines.
25. Mr Gemmill said, noted that it was excellent that Professor Foster was able to attend this meeting but that BSS does not have good links with other panels and nor is there any standing item on other panels to consider such questions that RI raises.
26. Dr Stilgoe noted that the external perception of BBSRC was that it was becoming complacent around these issues and that this presented a reputational risk. He noted that BBSRC has a history of considering ELSI issues and so has failed to revisit how it deals with these questions. In contrast EPSRC has found itself suddenly challenged so is thinking more creatively about its approach.
27. Sir Roland asked the Panel how they felt BBSRC and the Global Food Security Programme (GFS) should move forward on this agenda.
28. Professor Boyd noted that this is a long term issue and that BBSRC needs to be seen to have thought through the issues and to be involved in discussions, for instance around where the boundaries of responsibility lie and who is responsible to whom.
29. Dr MacMillan noted that the Panel would find it useful to understand how the process behind strategy shaping at BBSRC, and how BSS, can and should influence this.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to provide a briefing paper at the next meeting on strategy setting in BBSRC.

30. Mr Gemmill noted that GFS has a communications and Public Engagement Group (CPEG) built into its strategic structure, but that this discussion is a useful reminder that more needs to be done to address the questions raised by the RI agenda.
31. Professor Hauskeller noted that this paper described the role of BSS, but asked what does BBSRC do beyond BSS, to ensure it is responsible. She challenged BBSRC by asking if BSS was just a fig leaf for BBSRC.
32. Sir Roland asked the Secretariat to prepare a paper detailing the impacts that BSS has had over the past two or three years to help answer Professor Hauskeller's challenge.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to prepare a paper detailing the impacts that BSS has had over the past two or three years.

33. Professor Foster offered to raise any points BSS thought useful at Council.

### **Public Engagement Training working group report**

34. Dr Middleton introduced this paper.

35. Dr Calvert commented that the training as proposed appeared to encourage one-way communication rather than genuine dialogue and Professor Dingwall encouraged BBSRC to consider training for engagement with groups other than schools.

36. Dr Rowe asked what the Secretariat saw as the next steps, including who will run the course.

37. Dr Middleton explained that it was BBSRC's intention to run the training in a manner similar to the media training course, i.e. it would be coordinated by BBSRC office who would bring in appropriate expertise to provide training in the necessary skills.

38. Professor Hauskeller noted that good public engagement is about research integrity, the philosophy of life etc. and the training needs to bring together expertise in social science and natural science. She noted that to be really effective, training should start at undergraduate level.

39. Dr Dyer noted that the training would reach only a few hundred people who already value public engagement and asked how would it be possible to reach those who did not see the value of public engagement? One suggestion could be that grant holders in receipt of a lot of BBSRC grant money should have to attend the course.

40. Professor Boyd noted that there was a difference between education and training – education would help spread a culture of engagement, while training gives people the confidence to do it well. Dr Dyer suggested that there were generational differences and that those nearer the end of their careers may not see the value of public engagement as strongly as younger colleagues.

41. Professor Hauskeller raised the question of accreditation and whether PIs applying for grants should be expected to be accredited in public engagement. Mr Gemmill noted that BBSRC was working with the Society of Biology on considering if undergraduate courses could be accredited and that this could include public engagement training. He also mentioned that the upcoming Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) provided opportunities for BBSRC to embed public engagement in the training of PhD students.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to engage with Skills and Careers colleagues around public engagement training in DTPs and similar schemes.

42. Professor Foster suggested using a summer school format for training graduate students.

43. Sir Roland suggested that there were two target audiences for embedding public engagement: early career researchers (including PhD students) and senior academics. The panel agreed that the PE training should target early career researchers and that BBSRC should support senior PIs to value public engagement.

### **Citizen Science**

44. Sir Roland introduced this paper, which was stimulated by discussions between Sir Roland and BBSRC Council member Dr Andy Richards. Dr Richards saw citizen science as a public

engagement activity. He asked the panel to consider the paper and proposal as a stimulus to discussion rather than a firm proposal.

45. Ms Barnaby stressed that it was important that people were properly involved in the research and were able to shape its direction and Dr MacMillan contrasted the approaches laid out in the paper, with the cases where the public steer research direction, such as the Alzheimer's Society's People Panel. Professor Foster noted his experience with the Science Museum in a similar project that generated very useful results and engaged people with the research. He suggested BBSRC could run a call on citizen science through a highlight notice. Mr Gemmill suggested that BBSRC may be able to use its Strategic Opportunities fund to support this activity.
46. Dr Dyer noted that simple and non-expensive projects, such as the recent snail migration study, can garner a lot of media coverage. Ms Barnaby stressed the need for the projects to be about the citizens involved and to respect their input. Sir Roland noted that citizen science could be led by researchers, non-researchers or both and noted that two BBSRC Council members were interested in exploring this concept.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to draft a call for proposals

#### **Bioenergy public engagement update**

47. Dr Middleton briefly introduced this paper.

**ACTION:** Invite Duncan Eggar to BSS meeting

48. Dr MacMillan noted that the membership of the IB (Industrial Biotechnology) Strategy Advisory Panel did not contain expertise outside of research or industry and suggested that the panel would benefit from having access to views that challenged their assumptions to help the group appreciate the wider perspectives around IB and bioenergy.
49. Dr Dyer asked why BBSRC felt it needed the IB Strategy Advisory Panel and Mr Gemmill replied that IB was a key strategic priority for BBSRC because it offers hope to provide multiple benefits to the UK, such as reducing our dependence on oil as a raw material. The panel suggested that, given the earlier discussion around responsible innovation, it might be appropriate to have a function that looked at how the IB is sensitive to the RI agenda, either through broadening the membership of the IB Strategy Advisory Panel or by a separate panel.
50. Mr Goode and Mr Gemmill suggested that the Secretariat would be happy to articulate the concerns and issues that BSS has raised to senior management in BBSRC. Professor Foster noted that BSS should work across all the panels and challenged the Panel and Secretariat to consider how it can integrate more effectively with the other panels.
51. Mr Gemmill informed the Panel that a Council sub-group was currently considering how the strategy panels could work more effectively with one another to provide the best and most appropriate advice to Council.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to articulate BSS's concerns to BBSRC

#### **Institute Assessment Exercise Update**

52. Sir Roland introduced this paper as an item to note.

53. Professor Hauskeller suggested that it would be useful to develop some best practice or lessons learnt from this process while it was still relatively fresh in the minds of BSS.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to explore how to compile best practice for the IAE process

#### **Synthetic Biology Dialogue Update**

54. Sir Roland introduced this paper and asked what was new in the paper and was there any prioritisation to the items? Dr Middleton ran through the items in the paper, highlighting where progress had been made. He noted that the action, "Exploring the use of input from members of the public to help shape the requirements on grant applicants to consider and demonstrate the social context of their work" was not progressing satisfactorily.
55. The Panel agreed that it did not require updated papers at each meeting but only when significant developments occurred. They suggested that the next likely time for this would be when the RCUK 'review of dialogues' reports.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate details of the RCUK review of dialogues

#### **Dual Use**

56. Sir Roland introduced this paper as an item to note.
57. Dr Knapp complimented Sir Roland on the letter and its tone and Dr MacMillan noted that the letter addressed well the 'grant-by-grant' aspects but that the wider questions around the direction of travel of BBSRC in this space still needed consideration.
58. Sir Roland noted that the letter, referring to researcher's awareness, states that, "I would hope that if you asked this question in a year's time we would be able to give you a more satisfactory answer", and suggested that BBSRC and BSS need to be prepared to answer such questions.

#### **Communications and PE programme**

59. Sir Roland introduced this paper as an item to note.

There was no other business.