

**IN CONFIDENCE**

**SUBJECT: MINUTES OF THE BIOSCIENCE FOR SOCIETY STRATEGY PANEL  
17 MAY 2012**

**MEETING: BIOSCIENCE FOR SOCIETY STRATEGY PANEL  
12 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**ACTION**

The Panel is invited to:

**APPROVE** the minutes as a true record of the meeting  
**DISCUSS** any matters arising

IN CONFIDENCE

MINUTES of the Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel Meeting held on 17 May 2012 at RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London

Those attending:

Panel Members

Sir Roland Jackson (Chair)  
Ms Wendy Barnaby  
Professor Kenneth Boyd  
Professor Jane Calvert  
Professor Robert Dingwall  
Professor Mark Hankins  
Professor Christine Hauskeller  
Professor Brian Ilbery  
Dr Sandra Knapp  
Dr Gene Rowe  
Dr Patrick Sinnott-Smith

BBSRC Office

Dr Paul Burrows  
Mr Paul Gemmill  
Mr Matt Goode  
Dr Emma Longridge  
Dr Patrick Middleton  
Dr Mark Roberts  
Dr Mari Williams (present for items 1 – 4)

External guest

Mr James Parry UKRIO

Apologies:

Dr Richard Dyer  
Dr Tom MacMillan  
Dr Erinma Ochu  
Professor Russell Foster (observer from BBSRC Council)

**Item 1**

**Chair's welcome and introduction**

1. Sir Roland welcomed the Panel to the meeting and introduced Dr Mark Roberts (present to contribute to item 8 and to observe the meeting), Dr Mari Williams (present to contribute to item 4) and Mr James Parry (UKRIO).
2. Sir Roland thanked Dr Calvert for agreeing to represent BSS on the new Research Panel. The first meeting of that Panel is likely to be in September.
3. The Terms of Reference for BSS have been updated and circulated since they were discussed at BSS's meeting in January. Sir Roland asked the Panel whether they had any further comments on the Terms. There were no further comments and so the Terms of Reference were **agreed**.

**Item 2**

**Minutes of last meeting**

4. The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Future sets of minutes will have page numbers.

*Matters arising*

5. Dr Longridge provided updates on the actions from the last meeting. She noted that several actions will be addressed in papers to be presented at this meeting.
6. Responsive mode Committee Chairs will be asked to comment on how requests for funding for public engagement activities are dealt with through responsive mode at their meeting at the end of June. Dr Longridge will ask for BSS's input on some detailed questions to ask the Committee Chairs via email in the coming weeks.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to ask for BSS's input via email on specific questions to ask Committee Chairs in reference to how they deal with requests through responsive mode for funding for public engagement activities.

7. BSS has now seen the Invitation to Tender for the RCUK 'Review of dialogues'. The report from this project will be available shortly and will also be circulated to BSS.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to circulate report of the RCUK 'Review of dialogues'

8. Responsible Research and Innovation has been suggested to Council Secretariat as a possible Council dinner topic.
9. A pilot has been booked in for 10 July for the BBSRC Public Engagement Training Course and recruitment has begun. This has delayed work beginning with the Working Group around middle level researchers and public engagement. This work is expected to constitute a questionnaire in the first instance to develop an understanding of the challenges researchers working at this level face with respect to public engagement.

**ACTION:** Public engagement training working group to help BBSRC to reflect on how it can help middle level researchers appreciate and do public engagement

10. Other actions, below, will be carried over to subsequent meetings.

**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.

**ACTION:** BBSRC to circulate to BSS the next media evaluation that is completed

**Item 4**

**UKRIO and National Concordat for Research Integrity**

*UKRIO*

11. Mr Parry gave a presentation about the work of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and Dr Williams updated the Panel as to the historical and current relationship between BBSRC and UKRIO.
12. The Panel discussed the challenges associated with preventing and dealing with cases of research misconduct and the role of BBSRC when cases of research misconduct are identified.

*National Concordat for Research Integrity*

13. BSS had seen and discussed the Concordat via email prior to the meeting. This was an opportunity to discuss it in person and with Dr Williams who can feed back comments to those drafting the Concordat.

14. Professor Dingwall highlighted the Academy of Social Sciences' response that had highlighted that the Concordat did not appear to be based on any social science research.
15. There was some discussion about regulation in this area. The Concordat is a soft regulation document but it was noted that it leaves responsibility as being very diffuse and that the need for transparency and accountability could be strengthened. Dr Williams clarified that monitoring will be an explicit part of the assurance process and that discussions are ongoing about how to ensure that employers and funders are aware when an individual has been found to have committed misconduct.
16. Dr Williams outlined the next steps in the process. The Concordat steering group will meet shortly to discuss the comments from the consultation. For RCUK, the Concordat will eventually become part of the terms and conditions on grants. BBSRC will be revisiting its statement on safeguarding good scientific practice and BSS agreed to help with this.

## **Item 5**

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

17. Dr Rowe highlighted some work he is involved in with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to evaluate a dialogue around IVF techniques to prevent mitochondrial disease.
18. Dr Williams gave an update on the Institute Assessment Exercise. Funding outcomes will be announced on 24 May. The grants will be monitored during the five years of funding with an annual report going to Council. BSS agreed to be involved in the monitoring of the public engagement aspects of the grants. Sir Roland asked whether it would be possible to receive comments on how the Institutes responded to the comments from BSS during the assessment process, which was agreed to.

**ACTION:** BSS to be involved in the monitoring of public engagement aspects of the ISPGs over the next 5 years.

**ACTION:** BSS to receive a summary of comments from Institutes in response to comments received around public engagement during the IAE.

19. Ms Barnaby raised the issue of dual use in relation to the recent news about publication of work on H5N1. It was agreed that dual use as an issue appeared later in the papers but that BBSRC should keep an eye on developments with the publication of the H5N1 work.
20. Dr Middleton gave an update on the Global Food Security communications and public engagement work. He noted that BBSRC is only one partner in the Programme. There are four main strands of work, a dialogue project which will incorporate an omnibus questionnaire, the exhibition which is now moving around different agricultural shows and is currently at the 'Fascination of Plants' day in Norwich, communications and public engagement workshops are planned and stakeholder mapping is underway.
21. Mr Gemmill gave an update on activities surrounding the GM trial at Rothamsted Research and there was some discussion about the wider implications for the relationship between BBSRC and the Institutes.

## **Item 6**

### **Citizen Science**

22. Dr Longridge introduced this paper highlighting that it includes definitions of three types of citizen science to aid BSS thinking about how BBSRC might respond to each of these. Dr Middleton emphasised that the proposed actions should be sustainable.
23. The Panel agreed that although citizen science is really a continuum, the three definitions were helpful. Dr Calvert noted the link between the co-design option and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). This co-design option was felt to be the most valuable for BSS to focus on. Dr Calvert also asked for clarification as to why citizen science is on BBSRC's agenda. Sir Roland commented that there are a number of reasons, including the link with RRI and the idea that citizen science has benefits for researchers and research.

Without a greater awareness of the possibilities and opportunities, researchers and society at large could miss out on those benefits.

24. Professor Boyd expressed concerns about the evidence for the usefulness of citizen science. Professor Dingwall noted the work that has gone on in this area in the health sector. He suggested a workshop involving researchers in the health sector to pass on lessons learned.
25. The Panel also discussed issues around only involving a small group of members of the public in co-design projects. Professor Ilbery noted that there are different kinds of citizens who could be involved, including informed stakeholders. It could be more about drawing in a wider group of people with relevant expertise that wouldn't otherwise have been engaged. There will be issues to consider around choosing the area of research to fund a co-design project in so that citizens are motivated to take part.
26. Sir Roland summarised the Panel's views on each of the three definitions of citizen science:
  - Crowdsourcing and the proposals for raising the profile of the opportunities to researchers were supported
  - DIY Biology was not felt to be within BBSRC's remit but should be something that BBSRC keeps a watching brief on
  - The Secretariat should further explore the concept of co-design.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to set up a workshop with health professionals to discuss how they use co-design and to identify learnings for BBSRC.

#### **Item 7**

##### **Dual Use and other issues**

27. The Panel questioned whether there is any evidence of research outcomes having been misused in the past but ultimately felt that such evidence is not necessary as the potential for misuse to happen, and the significant consequences if it did, were enough of a concern to drive action. It is easier to gather evidence of lack of awareness from the research community of issues of dual use and therefore the need to raise awareness and educate.
28. It was felt that progress had been made since the response to Dr Whitby and Professor Dando in the Autumn and Ms Barnaby and Professor Hauskeller suggested sending an update to them.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to draft an update letter for Sir Roland to send to Dr Whitby and Professor Dando.

29. However, it was also noted that there is still room for progress to be made in raising awareness of the potential for misuse and in mitigating against it and it was suggested in that context briefing Committee Chairs.

**ACTION:** Secretariat to brief Committee Chairs on this issue

#### **Item 8**

##### **Responsible Research and Innovation – Synthetic biology as a case study for BBSRC**

30. Dr Middleton introduced this paper as a different way to look at the concept of RRI by using a case study to examine what BBSRC has done, whether it could have done anything differently and what it might do differently in the future. Sir Roland agreed that this was a useful way to help BSS get a handle on the concept and what it means for BBSRC. He summarised RRI as 'taking care of the future' and suggested that it functions at four levels: governance of the research process i.e. at BIS and BBSRC, research institutions and key programmes e.g. Rothamsted Research and Global Food Security, research groups and collaborations within research organisations including how they reflect and learn from each other, and finally, at the level of individual researchers.

31. Professor Boyd suggested thinking about what is irresponsible and minimising those things, rather than thinking about what is responsible. Dr Calvert pointed out however that innovation is disruptive and could be deemed to be irresponsible by definition.
32. It was noted that while the dialogue around synthetic biology was upstream, BBSRC did not ask whether synthetic biology should be discussed at all. In this, the GFS dialogue approach is better in that it starts with a challenge and looks at the potential routes to a solution.
33. The Panel discussed the meaning of 'responsible', the need for people to have power in order to be responsible and the question of who individuals are responsible to. The seven point check list in the paper was felt to be a helpful way of breaking down RRI to make it more meaningful and it was suggested that other ideas could include thinking about the purpose of the research and who benefits and the idea of people taking mutual responsibility. The points could form a check list to ensure that particular approaches are not just about upstream engagement and that they really are about RRI.
34. It was noted that the goals of embedding public engagement and social science into the Networks in synthetic biology was a good goal but that the way that worked in practice could have been improved – outreach activities alone were not enough in light of RRI.
35. Mr Gemmill asked the Panel what BBSRC should do next around synthetic biology. Dr Knapp noted that BIS need to also be thinking along the lines of RRI with respect to synthetic biology. Professor Dingwall commented that specific examples of synthetic biology applications are now beginning to emerge and that end users, researchers and the public need to be working together in the development of those applications.
36. Dr Middleton raised the question that it can be difficult to always look at challenges when BBSRC actually fund technologies. The Panel emphasised the importance of RRI in forming the strategic vision, thinking about who is involved in making those decisions and whether a wider group of people should be engaged.

#### **Items to Note**

37. The Panel noted the update on communications, public engagement and other activities and the Strategy Panel Updates. Sir Roland commented on the variability between the updates received from the Strategy Panels, some of which were very short and therefore conveyed only limited information and were of little value.

#### **AOB**

38. Dr Middleton updated the Panel that he, Sir Roland and Mr Gemmill had attended an RCUK Public Engagement with Research Advisory Panel meeting to talk about BBSRC public engagement activities, which had been well received. **Post meeting note**, Kathy Sykes wrote to BBSRC after the meeting and said in her letter "it is clear that BBSRC are leading in some areas."
39. The Panel discussed the work of an expert working group on Digital Organisms, set up by the Exploiting New Ways of Working Strategy Panel. It was noted that this area of work is very interdisciplinary and Dr Roberts drew the Panel's attention to the fact that EPSRC and MRC are represented on the working group. Comments were made on the suitability of the title 'digital organisms' as this conjures images of computerised organisms which are alive and able to evolve etc when the more likely direction of the work is computer models to help understand experimental systems. Issues around dual use and ownership of the technologies were also raised.