

IN CONFIDENCE

**SUBJECT: MINUTES OF THE BIOSCIENCE FOR SOCIETY STRATEGY PANEL
12 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**MEETING: BIOSCIENCE FOR SOCIETY STRATEGY PANEL
11 JANUARY 2011**

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 12 September 2012
at RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London

Those attending:

Panel Members

Sir Roland Jackson (Chair)
Ms Wendy Barnaby
Professor Kenneth Boyd
Dr Jane Calvert
Professor Robert Dingwall
Dr Richard Dyer
Professor Mark Hankins
Professor Brian Ilbery
Dr Sandra Knapp
Dr Erinma Ochu
Dr Gene Rowe

BBSRC Office

Mr Matt Goode
Dr Emma Longridge
Dr Patrick Middleton

External guest

Dr Darren Hughes (Rothamsted Research)

Apologies:

Professor Christine Hauskeller
Dr Tom MacMillan
Dr Patrick Sinnott-Smith
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 Darren Hughes (present to contribute to item 5 and to observe the meeting).
2. Sir Roland thanked Professor Dingwall and Dr MacMillan for their long and active terms as BSS members, which will come to an end at the end of 2012.
3. It was drawn to the attention of the Panel that BIS Science in Society is seeking feedback on the Action Plans produced by their Expert Groups. BBSRC will be submitting a response and will ask BSS for comment on a first draft. Panel members are also welcome to submit their own responses.
4. Sir Roland also updated the Panel on the BBSRC Strategic workshop in July, which he attended.

Item 2

Minutes of last meeting

5. After one adjustment, the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

Matters arising

6. Sir Roland summarised updates on the actions from the minutes that were not to be addressed in the meeting papers.
7. The Panel confirmed that they would like the Secretariat to pose the question ‘What are the three major social challenges biology is likely to face in the next years?’ to any of the other Strategy Panels who had not yet been asked. BSS is keen to hear the other Panels’ perspectives on this question and to build closer relationships with other Strategy Panels.
8. It was noted that the Secretariat had met with Dr Whitby and Professor Dando and discussed issues relating to dual use of research outcomes. Additional correspondence at this stage was therefore deemed unnecessary.
9. The funders’ (BBSRC, MRC and Wellcome Trust) statement on misuse of research outcomes is being updated; it will be more timely to brief Committee Chairs on this issue once that process is complete.
10. Several 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

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

ACTION: Secretariat to brief Committee Chairs on dual use

11. Sir Roland reiterated the importance (as stated in the minutes) of BBSRC keeping a watching brief on DIYBio.
12. Dr Ochu noted, with respect to the on-going citizen science work, that she had just been awarded a Wellcome Trust Engagement Fellowship to explore the relevance of citizen science to biomedical research.

Item 3

Round table of issues

13. Professor Boyd noted that during ethics training that he provides locally for new researchers who are training for Home Office licences, he explores why and how you might engage with members of the public around the social and ethical issues of using animals in your research. He was unaware of how widely this approach is used but felt that linking in with Home Office training might be a useful way of discussing this issue.
14. Professor Dingwall highlighted the increasing prevalence of publically available chemical databases demonstrating methods for shortcutting the processing steps required in making drugs. He noted the potential for misuse of this data and the potential for the topic and associated issues to sit at the boundaries between Research Councils.
15. Dr Ochu advised the Panel to keep a watching brief on how public engagement agendas and the Research Councils impact agenda might be affected by changes to REF.
16. Dr Knapp highlighted the involvement of the John Innes Centre in the Science Uncovered event at the Natural History Museum on 28 September and invited Panel members to attend.

17. Dr Rowe alerted the Panel to Pegasus, an EU FP7 project looking at public perceptions of animal cloning which included workshops in Newcastle and Italy. He agreed to circulate to the Panel any reports he becomes aware of from that work. Dr Rowe used this example to illustrate the division between the academic community working in the area of public participation and engagement in science, and UK practitioners in this same area.

Item 4

Global Food Security Public Dialogue: discussion of scoping study results

18. Dr Longridge introduced this item by highlighting some of the key findings in the dialogue reports. She asked BSS for advice on how BBSRC should respond, both as a member of the GFS programme and as an individual organisation. Sir Roland drew the Panel's attention to Table 2 of the 'Exploring public views' report which compares and contrasts how GFS and the public frame the challenge of food security.
19. The Panel commented that some of the findings will be useful for helping researchers and GFS think about how they communicate their work e.g. focussing on the whole system rather than complex details of specific projects.
20. BSS noted that genetic modification came up unprompted, illustrating that this is still a top of mind topic, but that it wasn't a dominating issue.
21. The Panel suggested that the balance of partners in the GFS programme could lead to a particular framing of the issues, such as a focus on supply rather than demand. They noted the importance of listening to, understanding, and taking into account different framings of food security. There is potential in the GFS programme for bringing different perspectives together and creating something new; interdisciplinary research should therefore be an important part of how GFS works.
22. BSS also discussed how different viewpoints can be brought into discussions, such as by engaging with informed stakeholders and civil society organisations.

Item 5

Rothamsted Research: experiences and lessons learnt from engagements around the GM trial

23. Dr Hughes gave a short presentation outlining the events surrounding the GM trial at Rothamsted Research and their approach to responding to those events. He noted that the response had been a communications activity in light of a declared threat to the trial rather than a public engagement or dialogue activity as they might have hoped.
24. The events had been valuable for demonstrating again to Rothamsted the value of considering social, economic and other impacts early during a research project. It has also shown how powerful social media can be.
25. In the future Rothamsted would like to build on its increased understanding of what dialogue is and how it can be employed. The next Rothamsted science strategy will provide an opportunity to really embed public dialogue and for public views to be listened to in Rothamsted strategic decision making.
26. BSS discussed how to build an organisation that is open to influence and which is willing and able to discuss its research in context, rather than to simply focus on the science. Professor Boyd noted that people often respond to research outputs from a 'gut reaction' and that researchers need to have an opportunity to consider their work in this way so that they are able to talk to and listen to others on this level. It was suggested that providing researchers

with opportunities to be challenged, perhaps by researchers with different perspectives as well as by stakeholders and members of the public, could be useful in this respect.

27. The importance of use of language was also discussed and being able to describe research projects and their purpose simply and in a short period of time, an 'elevator pitch'. It can be useful for individuals to record these and watch them back to learn what was successful.
28. Dr Ochu noted from her experience at the Manchester Beacon that researchers might respond well to a challenge – How can we support you in public engagement/dialogue? – and then they are able to facilitate culture change themselves.
29. The Panel also discussed the importance of embedding public engagement in everything that goes on so that it is built into the process.

Item 6

Public engagement for strategy setting

30. Dr Middleton introduced this item by recapping on previous email discussion that the Panel had had about the proposed dialogue around the 'Basic Bioscience Underpinning Health' element of BBSRC's strategy. He emphasised that BBSRC Council had given a mandate for embedding dialogue further within BBSRC by using it as a stream of advice in corporate strategy setting and that this project is a way of beginning to introduce that.
31. BSS had recorded some concerns by correspondence about the premise of the dialogue but agreed that if the work was to go ahead as a pilot exercise it would be useful as a learning experience. However, BBSRC should be careful to frame the work as a methodological pilot. This is important both for participants, so as not to give them undue expectations of what their influence will be (on BBSRC's strategy setting *process* but not necessarily on the corporate strategy itself this time), and when discussing the findings. The importance of evaluation was discussed in this context.
32. Other issues that were discussed included:
 - The timing for engaging the public, should stakeholders be engaged first?
 - How will the usefulness of the exercise be judged? It should be about more than just ticking a box
 - There will be challenges in the subject area owing to it being at the boundary of BBSRC's and MRC's remits
 - Findings will have to be discussed carefully, keeping in mind that only 20 members of the public will be involved and that they will be an illustrative rather than representative sample.
33. The Panel were keen to look again at this project once complete and consider how dialogue can be used in the strategic planning process in the future.

ACTION: Secretariat to update BSS on the outcomes of the Basic Bioscience Underpinning health dialogue, including the evaluation

Item 7

Supporting the research community in public engagement

34. Dr Middleton introduced this paper. The Panel said they felt the improved text on the website will provide clearer guidance about BBSRC's expectations in the area of Public Engagement. They suggested a number of small improvements to clarify the main points and to clarify that this is a BBSRC interpretation of public engagement (a definitive definition continues to be widely discussed amongst the public engagement community!).

35. BSS praised BBSRC on the varied types of support available from BBSRC for researchers wanting to do public engagement.
36. The Panel supported the idea of having a broad cross section of researchers, in terms of subject areas represented and career stage, at any one Public Engagement Training course. This will enable maximum opportunity for sharing experiences and ideas. It may be possible to run the training at Universities that receive significant amounts of BBSRC funding as a way of providing better opportunities for researchers all over the country to be involved.
37. The Panel also noted the interesting work on project-level public dialogue and the one-off social and ethical issues workshop to be held with JSBI grantholders.
38. BSS discussed further the 'scoop.it' page that Dr Middleton had set up to compile evidence of the impact of public engagement on researchers. Dr Rowe commented on the different kinds of evidence available; anecdotal evidence from practitioners and case studies published in peer reviewed journals. Dr Knapp commented that the Natural History Museum will have examples to include and Dr Ochu added that the NCCPE are writing a paper with an evidence case for public engagement.

Items to Note

39. The Panel noted the update on communications, public engagement and other activities and the Strategy Panel Updates. Sir Roland commented that this was a very useful document.

AOB

40. Dr Calvert noted that she will be attending the Research Panel meeting on 25 October.
41. As it was his last meeting, Professor Dingwall thanked the Panel for having him.