



Natural  
Environment  
Research Council

## UK Research and Innovation Appointment of Council Members – Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Candidate Brochure – May 2025



UK Research  
and Innovation



Department for  
Science, Innovation  
& Technology

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[UKRI](#) is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined annual budget in excess of £8 billion, we employ over 7000 staff who support some of the world's most exciting and challenging research projects, and who operate some of the most remarkable scientific and innovation facilities in the world - with key activities in London, Swindon, Harwell, Daresbury and Bristol. We work in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish.

UKRI comprises a corporate centre, seven disciplinary [research councils](#) (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC, STFC), Research England (which is responsible for supporting research and knowledge exchange at higher education institutions in England), and the UK's innovation agency Innovate UK.

We work together in innovative ways to deliver an ambitious agenda, championing the creativity and vibrancy of disciplines and sector-specific priorities and communities. Whether through research council grants, quality-related block grants from Research England, or grants and wider support for innovative businesses from Innovate UK, we work with our stakeholders to understand the opportunities and requirements of all the different parts of the research and innovation landscape, maintaining the health, breadth and depth of the system.

Our [Strategy 2022-2027 Transforming Tomorrow Together](#) signals the start of an exciting new chapter in UKRI's history, providing us with a five-year vision and unity of purpose to work together with and for our many partners and stakeholders. It sets out how we will catalyse transformational change in the system and in how we work as an organisation.

We are currently undertaking an ambitious programme of organisational change that will help us to create a simpler, better, future together – where we deliver more world-leading research and innovation by being the most efficient, effective, and agile organisation we can be (our sixth strategic priority). This includes:

- Creating a modern technology infrastructure, giving people the tools they need to be efficient and effective.
- Streamlining processes and removing unnecessary bureaucracy to improve the funding experience for our research and innovation communities.
- Breaking down barriers so we can optimise our ability to collaborate and tap into the talents of people across our organisation.



## The UKRI Board

Delivering these ambitions requires strong and empowered leadership. UKRI is supported and challenged by an independent Chair and Board who are critical to ensuring the success of the organisation and currently comprises:

- The Baroness Bull CBE
- Annie Callanan
- Rita Dhut
- Priya Guha
- Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas
- Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser
- Sir Andrew Mackenzie FRS
- Professor Jane Norman
- Siobhan Peters
- Russell Schofield-Bezer
- Nigel Toon
- Ruwan Weerasekera
- Alexandra Jones





[The Higher Education and Research Act](#) [HERA 2017] sets out the functions and roles within UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). As required by HERA, the [UKRI Board](#) delegates executive responsibility to the UKRI Chief Executive as Accounting Officer. Specific responsibilities are further delegated to council Executive Chairs for making decisions and advising on scientific, research and innovation matters in their domain specific area. In delegating functions, the Board adopts a principle of subsidiarity so that functions are delegated to councils in line with maximum overall effectiveness, efficiency and economy.

The Councils of the research councils, Research England and Innovate UK are an advisory committee to the Executive Chairs and perform a vital function for UKRI, in which ordinary Council members contribute their significant expertise and insight to influence, and provide constructive challenge and advice to Executive Chairs.

The UKRI Board, Executive Committee and councils' Councils work in partnership to address the UK's major technological and innovation challenges, meeting annually to discuss strategic matters.

The [terms of reference](#) for councils' Councils have recently been refreshed as part of the organisational change programme to maximise organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

# About the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

## Council Introduction

[NERC](#) is the driving force of investment in environmental science in the UK. We advance the frontier of environmental science by commissioning new research, infrastructure and training that delivers valuable scientific breakthroughs.

NERC invests public money in world-leading science, designed to help us sustain and benefit from our natural resources, predict and respond to natural hazards and understand environmental change.

NERC is seeking five new Council Members in 2025.

## The Role

### Council Responsibilities

In carrying out their advisory responsibilities Councils:

- Act as an advocate supporting UKRI's vision and the importance of research and innovation to society and the economy;
- Contribute to the development and implementation of overall UKRI strategy, including through encouraging collaborative working across UKRI and the wider research and innovation communities, and as required, providing advice to the UKRI Board;
- Provide expertise in the development and delivery of the Council's long-term strategy by developing the Strategic Delivery Plan for submission to the UKRI Executive Committee and UKRI Board for approval;
- Provide independent scrutiny, challenge, and support to the Executive Chair to ensure the effective delivery of the Council's mission, including:
  - the correct balance of the investment portfolio and delivery of outputs and outcomes;
  - distribution of funding between areas within a Council's field of activity and expertise;
  - oversight, development, and management of institutes, facilities and major investments within their area of activity and expertise;
  - advising the Executive Chair in managing risk in relation to large investments, and where applicable Institutes;
  - the effective use of peer review;



- The effective use of wider influence and levers to foster a thriving research and innovation system;
- Utilise its collective expertise and influence to help grow connectivity between the Council's business and other domains across UKRI;
- Keep under review the structure and scope of any Council sub-committees, minimise their number, ensure their use is as simple as practicable, and keep as much business within the Council as possible;
- Be responsible for additional Council-specific activities as set out in the Higher Education Act and the UKRI Delegations Framework.





## Individual Council Member Responsibilities

The Council members responsibility includes but is not limited to:

- Supporting the UKRI Board, Executive Committee and council in operating effectively within the overall UKRI organisational framework;
- Actively participating in council business, acting as a critical friend, providing scrutiny, advice, and challenge to the council Executive Chair;
- Supporting the council Executive Chair, providing advice to ensure executive decision- making is robust and can stand up to external scrutiny;
- Supporting the council Executive Chair in discharging their responsibilities for risk and assurance in relation to large investments, and where applicable institutes and catapults;
- Encouraging and facilitating collaborative work across UKRI as appropriate;
- Acting as an advocate supporting UKRI's vision and the importance of research and innovation to society and the economy;
- Engaging with external stakeholders and thinking to develop ideas, raise awareness and disseminate latest thinking and ideas;
- Taking on ad hoc assignments as requested by the council Executive Chair, such as membership or chairing of subgroups, including cross-UKRI activity;
- Participating in the council's evaluation and planning activities;
- Championing equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Championing environmental sustainability;
- If necessary, raising concerns about the operation of the council or, where policies and programmes do not appear to align with the Strategic Delivery Plan, with the Executive Chair and the Council Senior Independent Member.



## Person Specification

Essential Criteria	Desirable Criteria
An understanding of the research & innovation environment; how it can best produce knowledge and economic and societal benefit, and the elements, systems and approaches best used to affect this.	Experience leading and influencing at a senior level within a commercial environment.
A strategic and objective mindset with the ability to develop and communicate the strategic vision for the relevant council.	Experience working within academia, industry, business and innovation, user community, Governmental or third-sector organisations in Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland.
The ability to tackle and reach conclusions on complex issues (e.g. in commercial contexts or in relation to policy).	Experience of policy-making in academia, industry, business, innovation, user community, Governmental, or third sector organisations.
The ability to critically evaluate and/or advise on new research and innovation opportunities within the remit of the respective council.	Experience of working across international boundaries.
An understanding of public engagement within research, innovation or commercial fields.	
Demonstrable experience of successfully operating within a highly complex landscape of stakeholders.	
Demonstrable behaviours that encourage inclusive and collegial operation.	
Excellent listening, influencing and communication skills.	

## Council Specific Criteria

NERC is seeking to recruit up to five members with expertise in research, innovation, regulation or business considerations relevant to one or more of the following areas:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>environmental data and sustainable AI.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>novel technology development for environmental science (e.g.: environmental sensing including Earth Observation, autonomy, cyber-physical)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>systems solutions to Net Zero.</li> </ul>

## Terms of Appointment

Members will normally be appointed for a period of up to three years. Whilst there is a possibility that Members can be reappointed or extended after their term ends, maximum overall tenures are currently set at 6 years.

An annual honorarium payment of £6,850 will be paid to eligible Council members. This is premised on an expected 20 days contribution per year, which includes regular meeting attendance. Government officials, civil or public, are not permitted to receive an honoraria payment.

UKRI's registered address is Polaris House, Swindon, SN2 1FL. However, Council members will be expected to attend meetings in various locations across the UK.

## Timescales and Selection

Please note that these dates are only indicative at this stage and could be subject to change.

Stage	Timescale
<b>Application closing date</b>	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> June
<b>Shortlisting</b>	Throughout July
<b>Panel Interviews</b>	Late August – Early September

Executive Chairs of councils will recommend new appointments to be approved by the UKRI Chief Executive Officer.





If you wish to apply for this position, you will need to supply the following for consideration:

- A comprehensive CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements. Please provide details of two professional referees together with a brief statement of the capacity and over what period of time they have known you. Referees will not be contacted without your prior consent.
- A supporting statement (maximum two sides A4) highlighting your suitability and setting out, with clear examples, how you meet the essential criteria as highlighted in the person specification. Please note that the supporting statement is an important part of your application, it is an evidence-based document and is as much the means by which you will be assessed as your CV. Please include where you heard about this role.

You will also be asked to complete a Diversity Monitoring Form as part of your application. Completed applications should be uploaded at <https://PLusPortal.PerrettLaver.com> quoting reference **7866** by the **deadline 09:00 BST on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June**.

For an informal discussion about the role, please contact Lucy Roper at [Lucy.Roper@perrettlaver.com](mailto:Lucy.Roper@perrettlaver.com).

If you require any reasonable adjustments to assist you in the selection process, please advise us of these so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

We welcome your interest and look forward to receiving your application. Please specify in your covering note the Council you wish to apply to; this is to ensure your interest is captured correctly.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to apply for this role. All data is processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

UKRI is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and welcomes applications from all. Applications from women, those with a disability, and members of minority ethnic groups, who are currently under-represented at senior levels in some sectors of the research and innovation community, are therefore especially encouraged. UKRI is a Disability Confident Employer.

## Privacy Policy

*Protecting your personal data is of the utmost importance to Perrett Laver and we take this responsibility very seriously. Any information obtained by our trading divisions is held and processed in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. The data you provide us with is securely stored on our computerised database and transferred to our clients for the purposes of presenting you as a candidate and/or considering your suitability for a role you have registered interest in.*

*Perrett Laver is a Data Controller and a Data Processor, and our legal basis for processing your personal data is 'Legitimate Interests'. You have the right to object to us processing your data in this way. For more information about this, your rights, and our approach to Data Protection and Privacy, please visit our website <https://perrettlaver.com/privacy-statement/>.*

UKRI is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and welcomes applications from all. Applications from women, those with a disability, and members of minority ethnic groups, who are currently under-represented at senior levels in some sectors of the research and innovation community, are therefore especially encouraged. You can read more about our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion [here](#).

## Key Principles

- Equality, diversity and inclusion is a critical aspect of a healthy research culture – from how it's designed, how it's carried out and who is involved.
- Research and innovation should be 'for everyone, by everyone' – a dynamic, diverse and inclusive research and innovation system in the UK is an integral part of society and should give everyone the opportunity to participate and to benefit.
- We need to be diverse to accommodate that research and innovation is unpredictable, is often created through new and unanticipated combinations, and can take many forms.
- By recognising and nurturing all people in the system and diversifying interactions, we will enrich our lives by creating knowledge, enabling us to understand the world around us and empowering us to tackle the many challenges we face as individuals and as communities, nationally and globally.
- The whole workforce are key contributors in the research and innovation system – from the lead researcher or innovator to those who keep the lights on or maintain the large infrastructure and equipment in our laboratories, small businesses or on our research vessels.
- By valuing all, we recognise that a diversity of ideas, opinions, knowledge and people enriches our work and enlarges our knowledge economy.





The seven principles of public life (the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes people who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in:

- The civil service
- Local government
- The police
- The courts and probation services
- Non-departmental public bodies
- Health, education, social and care services

## **1. Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

## **2. Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

## **3. Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

## **4. Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

## **5. Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

## **6. Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

## **7. Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## Complaints Procedure

If you feel you have reason to complain you should direct your concerns in the first instance to the Senior Appointments team ([SeniorRecruitment@ukri.org](mailto:SeniorRecruitment@ukri.org)) who will make every effort to deal with these and respond to you within 48 hours.

If your complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily, you can find information about the steps you can take under [UKRI Complaints Procedure](#).





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