



Natural
Environment
Research Council

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

Executive Chair

Candidate Pack
February 2023



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Ministerial Foreword

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Executive Chair of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), one of the constituent Councils within UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

NERC was formed in 1965 from the merger of several environmental research related organisations. It became part of UKRI in 2018 alongside the other Research Councils.

NERC is the UK's main public funding body for research into the environmental sciences, meaning it has the responsibility for funding research in the critical fields of climate change and the key wider earth and marine sciences. NERC also has a wider role maintaining a range of national science infrastructure such as several Antarctic research stations, a number of Royal Research Ships, aircraft that monitor atmospheric conditions as well as satellite technologies, data centres and monitoring stations around the world. NERC is also responsible for the British Antarctic Survey, which maintains the UK's scientific presence in Antarctica, as well as the British Geological Survey responsible for monitoring seismic and other environmental activity.



NERC is an increasingly important UK Agency on the frontline of the UK's Science Superpower mission. The Government is strongly committed to furthering the UK's excellence in science, research and innovation and in ensuring the research base remains strong and competitive. In 2022/23 NERC, operating from both Swindon and London, has a core budget of £288m rising to £325m in 2024-25, in addition to cross-cutting funds from UKRI. The role of the NERC Executive Chair represents a unique opportunity to lead this key national funding body and be part of our mission to bring forward the UK science superpower deliverables.

In launching this recruitment campaign, I and my Ministerial colleagues are committed to fair and open recruitment processes across all public appointments that we make. We actively encourage and hope to see applications from across the UK, and from a wide range of diverse backgrounds. Should you need any further assistance, my officials would be happy to talk to you about this and other senior roles in the public sector.

I trust you will find the information enclosed in this pack of interest and we look forward to receiving your application.

George Freeman
Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation



About UKRI

The UKRI context

[UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) is the UK's largest public funder of research and innovation. We invest more than £8 billion annually to advance our understanding of society and the world around us and deliver benefits for society, the economy and the environment.

Our organisation comprises nine councils – the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK, the seven disciplinary Research Councils and Research England, which is responsible for supporting research and knowledge exchange at higher education institutions in England. As a UK-wide organisation, we work across the four UK nations and with the devolved funding bodies and governments to understand and support different priorities that span research and innovation in different parts of the UK.

Through our Councils and the critical national capabilities provided by our centres, units and institutes, we deliver, support and champion the creativity and vibrancy of research and innovation in the UK, for the benefit of society.

UKRI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

Find out more in our new 5-year strategy, [Transforming Tomorrow Together](#)





About NERC

UKRI is now seeking to appoint an exceptional candidate to lead the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

NERC is the UK's largest public funder of research, training and innovation in the environmental sciences, which is delivered through universities and research centres. Its remit places NERC at the forefront of vitally important work across a number of key areas including biodiversity, pollution, management of earth resources and the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. NERC-funded research is seeking the answers we urgently need to address these challenges as they develop and work with all the Councils of UKRI to find solutions.



NERC advances the frontier of environmental science by supporting new research, infrastructure and training that deliver valuable scientific breakthroughs. We do this because understanding our changing planet is vital for our wellbeing and economic prosperity. NERC is also directly responsible for two important research centres – the British Geological Survey (BGS) and British Antarctic Survey (BAS) – and funds crucial ongoing science at a number of independent institutes (e.g., the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) and National Oceanographic Centre (NOC)). The responsibility for BAS also carries with it the wider responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the UK presence throughout the British Antarctic Territory.

By investing in world-leading science, NERC aims to help us sustain and benefit from our environment, predict and respond to natural hazards and understand environmental change. We work closely with policymakers and industry to make sure our knowledge can support sustainable economic growth and wellbeing, delivering knowledge, skills and technology to meet the UK's innovation needs.



Environment & Offices

UKRI has many locations across the UK and the world. Our head office is based in Swindon with two other main administration offices in London and Bristol. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, these offices were closed leading to many colleagues to work from home. Listening to our employees, UKRI has now adopted hybrid working. Hybrid working means most of us will work part of the time from UKRI locations and part of the time remotely, although the degree to which we can do this will vary depending on our different roles and activities.

A gradual approach

Since we are a hugely complex and multi-faceted organisation, there is not a single model of hybrid working that will work for everyone. We are therefore adopting a gradual phased approach, so that we can learn from our experience what works best for each role, activity and location. We are actively encouraging team leaders, in consultation with their Senior Leadership Teams, to experiment with and evolve hybrid ways of working that are appropriate for them.

As of June 2022, we have been using this learning to plan for longer term changes to our office space and other working environments at different locations; and to consider whether we need any additional locations.

The NERC team is primarily located in the Swindon and London areas. Whilst an ability to lead and build relationships at a distance is beneficial, this is also a role where visibility is key, so travel to our offices and sites on a regular basis is expected.



We believe that the way we are structured and the flexibility of how to handle your work and that of your team makes us one of the more attractive employers for managing your work/life balance and caring responsibilities.



About the Role

The Executive Chair, advised by NERC's Council Members, is responsible for setting and then delivering the strategic vision for NERC, and contributing to the wider direction and activities of UKRI. As the visible and credible leader of NERC you will be responsible for delivering its research, skills and infrastructure investments.

As a member of UKRI's Executive Committee, you will be accountable to, and work closely with, the UKRI Chief Executive Officer. The NERC Executive Chair will have a critical role within UKRI and beyond, in championing and increasing the impact of environmental research.

The Executive Chair will work closely with Government, including the devolved administrations, and in particular through DEFRA and FCDO. The Executive Chair will also work closely with the Higher Education Funding Councils and with stakeholders, including industry, through a variety of approaches aimed at promoting the translation and take-up of the outcomes of NERC-supported research.

The post is also likely to include specific UKRI roles to address cross-cutting UKRI priorities, to be agreed with the UKRI CEO. This can further be explained by outlining the two overarching responsibilities the Executive Chairs have.

First, they have a responsibility to ensure the health and vibrancy of their domain. To achieve this, Executive Chairs have delegated responsibility for a budget awarded by the Secretary of State. The budget is set through recommendations to the Secretary of State from the UKRI Board, which is in turn advised by the UKRI Executive Committee.



Executive Chairs have freedom to operate to deliver this budget through their council, including through collaborative programmes with other councils, with advice from their council's Council and aligned with the UKRI Strategy. Executive Chairs are also encouraged to work closely with and expand their connections within their domain community. This enables Executive Chairs to harness the strategic insight they gain to build key relationships across the research and innovation system, and to foster engagement.

Second, as members of the UKRI Executive Committee, Executive Chairs have a responsibility for the health and vibrancy of the entire UK research and innovation system, recommending strategy to the UKRI Board. This includes making recommendations about and holding responsibility for the UKRI Strategy, for collective UKRI budgets, and for the leadership and delivery of collective UKRI programmes.

These two responsibilities overlap. Often, they will be fully aligned and synergistic, with collective working delivering clear domain-specific benefits. But occasionally, there will be trade-offs to be made. Executive Chairs must work to ensure domain-specific impacts are understood, maximising benefits for the wider UK Research and Innovation system.



Responsibilities

Leadership:

- develop and define NERC's strategic direction and ensure the successful delivery of NERC objectives and outcomes, providing the inclusive leadership, and the vision to develop the quality, outputs and impacts of its research, skills and capital investment portfolio
- work closely with the rest of the leadership team and Board to provide overall leadership and direction to UKRI; modelling the culture and behaviours required to bring to life UKRI's values
- lead and develop the capacity and capability of the NERC Executive team

Stakeholder Engagement:

- work with the Senior Independent Member (SIM) of NERC and other Council members to lead and develop NERC's strategic approach to world class environmental research, innovation, infrastructure and training
- provide overall direction and management of the NERC Institute portfolio, including BGS and BAS as well as the strategic funding of CEH and NOC
- ensure the effective operation of the British Antarctic Territory including its infrastructure and supply
- overall oversight of Antarctic Modernisation Programme and other NERC major capital programmes
- be a core member of the UKRI Executive Committee, working to deliver the best value from the overall research and innovation funding system and actively contribute to delivery of mission of UKRI
- act to ensure UKRI provides a strong, unified voice for science, research and innovation in the UK and globally, both in facilitating the dialogue with government and partners on the world stage
- work collaboratively across UK Research and Innovation Councils to foster interdisciplinary work and build on collective capabilities, providing support and challenge when required. This may include specific responsibility for the strategy and delivery of one or more cross cutting area on behalf of all the Councils
- represent and develop positive relationships between NERC and its numerous and diverse stakeholders in government and public funding agencies, higher education institutions, academic and research communities, business and the public at large and internationally



Finance, Planning and Analysis:

- maximise efficiency and ensure value for money from public investment
- work closely with the UKRI CFO to ensure robust budget planning and financial control
- work closely with the UKRI Executive Directors for Strategy to ensure robust analysis underpins decisions and evidence outcomes; and ensure alignment between NERC's objectives and overall UKRI strategy

Your skills and experience

The successful candidate will be able to command confidence and represent NERC at the highest level of Government/Academia and be able to meet the following criteria:

Essential:

- able to demonstrate the highest standards of research expertise in the environmental sciences, with a broad understanding of their current developments and relevance to the social and economic wellbeing of the country
- ability to develop a clear strategic vision for NERC with high quality programmes and collaborations, built on meaningful engagement with stakeholders
- a good communicator able to command confidence and build strong working relationships across the academic domains of NERC and the wider stakeholder landscape including with Government Ministers
- credible experience of senior leadership and management able to run an organisation to be high performing while tackling issues of equality and diversity
- commitment to the overarching goals of UKRI, multidisciplinary working and the health of a wider and more integrated R&D landscape

Desirable:

- expertise and credibility in communicating the insights from environmental science and its wider impact

Benefits

Working for UKRI has numerous benefits, from being at the cutting edge of business developments and working with innovators globally, to a flexible environment and rewarding culture.

Additional to a competitive package of pay, and a rewarding career, you can enjoy:

- excellent pension



- 30 days of annual leave (excluding bank holidays)
- flexible working arrangements
- season ticket loans
- rent deposit loans
- Employee Assistance Programme providing confidential help and advice
- employee discounts and offers on hundreds of retail and leisure activities
- free eyesight tests and glasses, if related to the role
- tax-free childcare
- cycle-to-work scheme.



Terms of Appointment

Appointment Term: An initial period of 4-6 years (To be discussed at interview)

Remuneration: £130K – £145K + an opportunity for performance related pay

Time Commitment: Full Time. However, the role could be reduced to four days per week to allow for research activity to be maintained

Location: Swindon or London

Nature of Appointment: This is a Public Appointment by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The post holder would be an officeholder and an employee of UKRI

Availability: The successful candidate/s will be encouraged to take up their appointment as soon as possible, following the successful completion of pre-appointment checks and security clearance

Timescales and Selection

The selection process will consist of an interview and presentation. Please note, candidates may also be required to complete a short, written piece as part of their application.

As these roles are subject to pre-appointment scrutiny, the successful candidate may be subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the Science and Technology Select Committee.

Interviews will take place in London.

The timeline for this campaign is indicative and therefore subject to change.

Advert Closes	23:59 Sunday 5 th March 2023
Panel Sift	TBC – Expected April 2023
Panel Interview	TBC – Expected May 2023
Candidates Notified of Outcomes	TBC – Expected June 2023



Pre-Appointment Hearing	TBC – Expected July 2023
Appointment Confirmed	TBC – Expected August/September 2023

The members of the Advisory Assessment Panel are:

- **Panel Chair and BEIS Representative:**
Alexandra Jones, (Director, Science, Research and Innovation)
- **Representative of the Organisation:**
Dame Ottoline Leyser (CEO)
- **Independent Panel Member:**
Professor Sir Charles Godfray (Director, Oxford Martin School)
- **Independent Panel Member:**
TBC

How to Apply

Your application should be submitted in two parts.

Both parts must be submitted by **23:59 on Sunday 5th March 2023** in order for your application to be considered complete. Applications received after this date will not be considered.

Part one: CV and Statement of Suitability

Please submit your application via the UKRI Careers Portal ([click here to be taken through](#)) by 23:59 on Sunday 5th March 2023. You will need to supply:

- A curriculum vitae; and,
- A supporting statement

Your curriculum vitae and supporting statement must each be no longer than two A4 pages in length. Please ensure your documents are named as 'Surname, first initial – URN575 – NERC Executive Chair – CV/Statement of Suitability'.

Your Statement of Suitability should provide specific information about why you believe you would be suitable for appointment into the NERC Executive Chair role and a flavour of what you would want to do in this role, if successful. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience, personal attributes, and vision for the organisation, and take full advantage of the space available. Use practical examples where possible and ensure you refer to the essential criteria for this role. Please include a section that sets out what you believe the main challenges and opportunities to be for NERC and how you might address them. Again, please aim for no more than 2 A4 pages.



Please note, you will only be assessed on the content of your CV and supporting statement, and not the 'experience' section of the application.

Should you have any problem with submitting your application via the UKRI Careers Portal, please do send an email to seniorrecruitment@ukri.org with 'URN575 – NERC Executive Chair' in the subject heading. A member of our team will then be in touch.

Please note, to apply via the UKRI Careers Portal you will receive a notification confirming your profile has successfully been created (if you have not previously set up an account) and a second notification confirming your application for this role has been submitted. If you do not receive the second notification confirming your application for this role has been submitted, please contact seniorrecruitment@ukri.org, so we can ensure your application has been received.

Part two: Diversity Monitoring and Conflicts of Interest Form. Please click [here](#) to complete this form.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UKRI believes that everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be provided with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed within an ethical and trusted working environment that enables them to do so, and that is attractive and accessible to everyone who is interested in developing their career with us.

We are committed to increasing the diversity of our board and executive positions and bringing in talent, regardless of its origins. We encourage applications from all candidates regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity.

We also value diversity of thought and experience and are committed to creating systems that value difference so that everyone can feel welcomed, included and nurtured throughout their time with us.

Arrangements for candidates with a disability: As a Disability Confident leader, we guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the essential criteria for the post. More details on the criteria can be found in this pack. If you wish to apply through the Disability Confident scheme, you will need to tick that option on the Diversity Monitoring form that you will submit alongside your application.

Adjustments: All candidates are entitled to request reasonable adjustments at any stage of the application process. If you would like to discuss reasonable adjustments prior to submitting your application, please contact UKRI Senior Appointments team at seniorrecruitment@ukri.org

We know actions speak louder than words. For further information, please visit the UKRI web page: ['How we support EDI in the workforce'](#)



Annex A: Conflicts of Interest

Public Appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest that might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

It is important that those appointed as members of public bodies maintain the confidence of Parliament and the public. If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment, or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you bring them to the attention of the Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue(s) in your application. In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media. The Panel may explore issues with you before they make a recommendation on the appointment.

As part of our due diligence checks we will consider anything in the public domain related to your conduct or professional capacity. This will include us undertaking searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publicly available information. This information may be made available to the Panel and they may wish to explore issues with you, should you be invited to interview.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss further, please contact the UKRI Senior Appointments team at seniorrecruitment@ukri.org

Annex B: The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life

In 1995 the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles for public life. All candidates for are expected to demonstrate a commitment to, and an understanding of, the value and importance of the principles of public service which are:

1. Selflessness
2. Integrity
3. Objectivity
4. Accountability
5. Openness
6. Honesty
7. Leadership

Further information on the principles of public life can be found [here](#).



Annex C: Complaints Procedure

If you feel you have reason to complain you should direct your concerns in the first instance to the BEIS Public Appointments team (publicappointments@beis.gov.uk) 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 BEIS Complaints Procedure [here](#).

The Commissioner for Public Appointments is the independent regulator of public appointments.

The Commissioner's primary role is to provide independent assurance that public appointments are made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. The Commissioner also investigates complaints and may conduct an inquiry into the policies and practices followed in relation to appointments processes which he regulates. The Commissioner will not investigate complaints relating to non-selection unless it appears that the appointments process has breached the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

You can contact the Commissioner by email at publicappointments@csc.gov.uk or by post, as follows:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments

Room G/8, 1 Horse Guards Road

London, SW1A 2HQ

Further information on the role of the Commissioner or the appointments process is available at: publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk