

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 12 July 2012

PRESENT

BOARD:

Professor Ian Kimber OBE (IK, Chair)
Dr Phil Botham (PB)
Professor Maggie Dallman (MD)
Professor Jamie Davies (JD)
Dr Tony Peatfield (ACP)
Dr Ian Ragan (IR)
Dr Vicky Robinson (VR)
Dr Malcolm Skingle CBE (MS)
Mr Neil Yates (NY)

OFFICE:

Dr Rubina Ahmed (RA)
Dr Kathryn Chapman (KC)
Dr Anthony Holmes (AH)
Dr Mark Prescott (MP)
Dr Nathalie Percie du Sert (NPdS)
Ms Ashley Scott, Secretariat (AS)
Ms Caroline Shriver (CS)
Ms Emma Stokes (ES)

APOLOGIES:

Dr Lesley Heppell (LH)
Professor Sir Andrew McMichael (AM)

OTHER:

Mr Peter Farquhar (PF), NC3Rs Accountant, *for item 4 only*

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the twenty fourth meeting of the NC3Rs Board.
- 1.2 Members welcomed Ms Caroline Shriver who joined in July, on secondment from the MRC, as Operations Support Manager.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 26 January 2012 and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes from the July 2011 meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of the discussions subject to one amendment – Dr Skingle has a CBE not an OBE.
- 2.2 There were six matters arising from the previous Board meeting, these are as follows:
 - 2.2.1. (3.6) Members noted that in 2011 the number of applications involving non-human primates, cats, dogs and equines peer reviewed by the NC3Rs for the major research funders had increased. This was primarily due to an increased number of funding schemes included in the review. It was agreed that the Office would provide an update to the Board on subsequent award rates. ***MP gave an update to the Board, a summary of the peer review data can be found in the NC3Rs Evaluation Framework document published on 2 July and available on the NC3Rs website at www.nc3rs.org.uk/evaluationreport***
 - 2.2.2. (5.1.2) *Update on CRACK IT plans for 2012* was covered under item 6.
 - 2.2.3. (5.3.2) It was agreed that VR and IK would seek additional funding and that it may be necessary to withdraw some schemes or run on alternate years in order to bolster award rates. It was

agreed that the Board would be kept informed of progress. **VR updated the Board on changes made to funding budgets. Additional funding had been secured from MRC (for CRACK IT), BBSRC (for [2012 Animal welfare highlight call](#)) and EPSRC (for [2012 Mathematical modelling in toxicology call](#)), the duration of studentships had been reduced to three years and the budget for 2012 David Sainsbury Fellowship scheme was reduced as four rather than five awards were made.**

- 2.2.4. (7.1)** MP informed the Board that with the departure of the Communications Manager discussions on the NC3Rs communications strategy would be deferred until a new Communications Manager had been appointed.
- 2.2.5. (9.4)** A new governance document setting out the relationship of the NC3Rs with the MRC and BIS would be prepared. This will include a review of the Board's terms of reference and will be discussed at the next meeting. **CS has been appointed to assist with this and an update will be provided at the October 2012 meeting.**
- 2.2.6. (9.5)** IK informed the Board that key performance indicators would also be developed for the Board based upon those of the MRC Council. This would be discussed at the next meeting. (Deferred to the January 2012 meeting following discussions with IK). **CS has been appointed to assist with this and an update will be provided at the October 2012 meeting.**

3. Summary of activities

3.1 Members noted:

- Progress with a range of activities including the [Joint meeting](#) with ASAB and SEB held on 4 and 5 July, and [2012 Animal Technicians' Symposium](#) being held on 11 September.
- That the NC3Rs first Summer School for NC3Rs funded PhD students was held in June 2012 and was extremely successful and were reminded that all NC3Rs funded students are expected to attend at least one summer school during the lifetime of their NC3Rs award. The summer school will be run every two years.
- That the NC3Rs programmes with the chemicals industry had been put on hold until the new Chemicals Programme Manager had been appointed.
- That the first meeting of the NC3Rs Asthma Advisory Group, chaired by Professor Stephen Holgate CBE, was held in May 2012. The remit of the working group is to identify and explore opportunities for building on current work to advance the 3Rs in asthma research.

3.2 Members were informed that:

- Almost 100 journals had now signed up to the [ARRIVE guidelines](#) and noted that the MRC, BBSRC and Wellcome Trust had published an open letter to the Vice Chancellors of the UK's top 40 universities reminding them that compliance with the guidelines is a condition of grant funding.
- Work on the development of the Experimental Design Assistant (EDA) web resource had commenced with the appointment of the software development company following a tender exercise.
- Two new projects with the pharmaceutical industry and regulatory bodies had started. The first is an initiative with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to identify opportunities to reduce the use of recovery animals in toxicology studies. The second is a cross-company initiative, the Animal Model Framework, which the NC3Rs will co-ordinate to assess the predictivity of animal models for assessing human respiratory and central nervous system effects in safety pharmacology.

3.3 Members commended the Office on the success of the [Parliamentary event](#) held on 2 July at the House of Commons. The event was attended by over 80 NC3Rs stakeholders and MPs and was

used to launch the 3Rs Evaluation Report. The event was sponsored by Lord Willis of Knaresborough and speeches were given by Lord Willis; David Willets MP, Minister of State for Universities and Science; and Professor Jamie Davies, Chair of the NC3Rs Metrics Working Group which developed the 3RS Evaluation Framework. Copies of the Evaluation Framework would be mailed to MPs interested in this area who were unable to attend the event.

4. Financial information

- 4.1 Members noted the FY 2011/12 Management accounts.
- 4.2 PF gave Board members an update on forecast income and expenditure for FY 12/13, which reflected the progress made in reducing the carry forward [as discussed at the January Board meeting].

5. Research Funding

- 5.1 Members noted the outcome of the 2012 Grant Assessment Panel meeting, held on 9 and 10 July, presented in a tabled paper.
- 5.2 The Grant Assessment Panel recommended funding for [eight Project and seven Pilot Study grants](#). In addition the BBSRC would consider a further three project grants, which were within the highlight notice and their remit. *POST SCRIPT: the additional three awards were made with the BBSRC providing an additional contribution of £0.9 Million to the NC3Rs to cover the funding for these.*
- 5.3 Members noted the revised scoring matrix, which will be used for the Project, Pilot, Studentship, Fellowship and Strategic Award funding schemes.
- 5.4 IK commented that the quality of the science was excellent and that feedback from the Panel on the scoring matrix was extremely positive.
- 5.5 Members noted the delays and complications face by the Office in the establishment of the Studentships Scheme on the Je-S system. The scheme was now live on Je-S and the deadline for 2012 Studentship applications is 6 September.

6. Updates

Evaluation framework

- 6.1 Members noted the [Evaluation Framework](#) report which was launched at the NC3Rs Parliamentary event on 2 July. Members congratulated the 3Rs Metrics Working Group and the Office on production of an excellent document.
- 6.2 VR informed the Board that the Office would now work towards matching the Evaluation Framework to all NC3Rs activities.
- 6.3 Members noted that a new online [3Rs 'noticeboard'](#) had been launched as part of the Evaluation Framework activities. The aim of the noticeboard is provide a mechanism for individuals to share information on how their interaction with the NC3Rs impacts on the 3Rs in their work.
- 6.4 Members were informed that the NC3Rs would also be joining the [Research Councils Research Outcomes System \(ROS\)](#) which will enable the Office to capture metrics and impacts of NC3Rs funded research and match these against the Evaluation Framework.
- 6.5 JD thanked the Working Group for all of their contributions and hard work.

CRACK IT

6.6 KC gave an update on progress with CRACK IT. Members were informed that:

- Work on four out of the [five 2011 CRACK IT awards](#) was now underway, and work on the remaining award was expected to commence shortly.
- In addition to CRACK IT Challenges (awards for up to 36 month duration and between £100k and £1 Million) a new [Mini Challenge scheme](#) has been introduced for 2012 with awards of up to £50k for projects of maximum 12 month duration and with one sponsor and one applicant.
- [MRC](#) and [Technology Strategy Board \(TSB\)](#) have each provided £1M.
- A call for Challenge ideas from potential sponsors closed on 11 May. Thirteen Challenges from nine organisations had been received with four selected for the [2012 Challenge call](#) and one for the Mini Challenge call. Detailed proposals were currently being drafted, in consultation with the sponsors, and a launch meeting for interested applicants would be held on 12 September.
- The Office had reviewed the lessons learned from the first round of Challenges. Feedback on the contracts from sponsors and applicants had been taken in account and a new improved contract had now been created.
- The [CRACK IT Solutions](#) scheme, which enables academics and small companies to showcase their ideas or technologies and find a new partner to adopt or validate their research, was gathering interest with four out of six solutions currently on the CRACK IT website having at least one partner.
- The next steps for 2012 would be to evolve the website, develop the CRACK IT Solutions scheme further and explore possible collaborations in areas such as asthma and Alzheimer's disease. Further information would be presented at the October Board meeting.

6.7 IK asked how budgets were set for the Challenges. VR explained that budgets were allocated to each Challenge following discussion with the sponsors and benchmarking by the Office

Coalition pledge

6.8 Members noted that the Office had provided an update on the NC3Rs progress for inclusion in a Written Ministerial Statement on the Coalition pledge to be launched alongside the 2011 Home Office annual statistics on the use of animals in research.

7. Overview of the NC3Rs strategy

7.1 VR reminded Board members that the NC3Rs next Quinquennial Review (QQR) is due in 2014 and asked Board members for their views on what had worked well so far and what the NC3Rs needed to prioritise in the next five years.

7.2 Members were asked to consider ideas for further discussion at the next Board meeting.

8. AOB

8.1 VR informed Board members of a number of recent issues which had impacted on the NC3Rs business and staff workloads including turnover in staff and ongoing issues with SSC support. Recruitment of new staff was underway and in the interim staff workloads were very high. Board members commended the Office on the exceptional efforts in maintaining business as usual in the light of these issues.

8.2 The date of the next Board meeting will be 24 October 2012.