

# Minutes of the Board meeting

4 June 2015

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## Present:

Professor Stephen Holgate CBE (SH) *Chair*  
Professor Ian Jackson (IJ)  
Professor Ian Kimber OBE (IK)  
Mr Terry Priest (TP)  
Professor Stefan Przyborski (SP)  
Dr Ian Ragan (IR)  
Dr Vicky Robinson (VR)  
Dr Carl Westmoreland (CW)

## Office:

Dr Kathryn Chapman (KC)  
Dr Mark Prescott (MP)  
Kayleigh Purdon (KP) *Secretariat*

## Attended for specific items:

Dr Rubina Ahmed *item 6*  
Dr Samantha Gan *item 6*  
Dr Anthony Holmes (AH) *item 7*  
Dr Cathy Vickers (CV) *item 7*

## Apologies:

Professor Maggie Dallman  
Dr Tony Peatfield

## 1. Welcome

- 1.1 SH welcomed members to the meeting.
- 1.2 SH informed members that Lesley Heppell had now retired. VR would contact the BBSRC to confirm the new representative to the NC3Rs Board.

## 2. Annual review

- 2.1 Members reviewed the NC3Rs corporate risk register and discussed the following:
  - Lack of funding (R-3100) - Following the outcome of the five year review of the NC3Rs, the Board asked that the risk score should be lowered once formal notification has been received from the MRC.
  - Disaster Recovery (R-3708) - In light of the recent closure of the MRC, One Kemble Street due to an underground electrical fire, it was agreed that it was opportune for the NC3Rs to review its Disaster Recovery plan. VR would update the Board at its next meeting.
  - The Board noted the remaining risks and existing control measures as appropriate.
- 2.2 Members reviewed the NC3Rs governance framework and asked for minor amendments, including additional wording on the oversight mechanisms for CRACK IT.
- 2.3 Members reviewed and endorsed the attendance policy for NC3Rs events. Members noted the importance of providing a safe environment for researchers to discuss their work openly.

## 3. Quinquennial (QQR) review of the NC3Rs

- 3.1 VR provided members with an overview of the QQR outcome and the key themes that had emerged from the review, including the proposed funding allocation.

- 3.2 The Board welcomed the excellent feedback from the Review Panel and endorsement of the NC3Rs future plans. It welcomed the support from the MRC and the commitment to increase core funding (subject to the forthcoming spending review).
- 3.3 MP presented plans to develop an institutional 3Rs self-assessment tool and outlined the advantages and disadvantages of this relative to the 3Rs accreditation scheme favoured by the QQR Review Panel. The Board discussed the merits, risks and resource levels required to support the accreditation scheme and agreed that the proposed self-assessment tool was more appropriate. The Board agreed that the appointment of regional NC3Rs staff should be trialled with one or two posts and SH thanked TP for his leadership on this. It was agreed that VR would approach Universities UK to discuss the NC3Rs plans and to seek opportunities for collaboration.
- 3.4 SP proposed that the Board should re-visit the issue of demonstrating and measuring impact. It was agreed that there would be a presentation at the next meeting to outline current approaches and to scope whether this could be strengthened.

#### **4. Finances**

- 4.1 Martin Carmack the NC3Rs Finance Manager from MRC provided the Board with a summary of the management accounts for 2014/2015.

#### **5. Summary on NC3Rs programmes**

- 5.1 The Board noted the paper summarising progress with current activities. SH asked that the Board be provided with an updated on the experimental design and reporting programme and future plans in this area.

#### **6. Update on funding schemes**

- 6.1 MP provided an update on the recent funding competitions:

##### BBSRC/NC3Rs bovine TB replacing models strategic award

- BBSRC provided £2 million as part of its Integrated Programme of Research on Bovine TB.
- Eight applications were received and three awards made.

##### Project grants

- A two phase process had been introduced for the 2015 competition. 141 outlines had been received and the Panel had selected 26 for full applications. Short-listed applicants were required to attend a workshop on experimental design.
- Awards would be made in July.

##### Studentships

- There are 12 awards available in the 2015 competition, in addition to three awards supported by the British Heart Foundation as part of a new collaboration.

##### Fellowships

- 103 outlines had been received for the 2015 competition.
  - The assessment process is currently being amended in consultation with IJ. Board members were supportive of an assessment day for Fellows involving interviews and group activities.
- All NC3Rs awards (except CRACK IT) have been uploaded onto Gateway for Research.

- Recruitment for new Funding Panel members will take place in September.

## 7. Update CRACK IT and 3Rs commercialisation programmes

- 7.1 CV and AH provided the Board with an update on CRACK IT and Non-Animal Technologies (NATs) programmes.

### CRACK IT Challenges

- Phase 2 awards for the *Neuratect* and *Targeting Off-targets* Challenges would be made in July.
- QSARs was awarded a one year single phase Challenge following the Challenge Panel held in January.
- The 2015 Challenges will be launched in September. These are:
  - *Metaboderm*: Establish, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the extent to which skin metabolism determines xenobiotic availability in human skin.
  - *InMutaGene*: Development of *in vitro/in-silico* assay(s) to enable more effective risk assessment by means of comprehensive characterisation of oncogenicity potential in gene therapy development.
- A CRACK IT Governance framework had been established with an oversight group chaired by IR.

### CRACK IT Solutions

- 27 technology Solutions have been showcased to date. There have been nine applications for funding, with eight awards.

### Non-Animal Technologies (NATs)

- The NATs collaboration with Innovate UK, MRC, BBSRC, EPSRC and Dstl was ongoing. The roadmap was still being drafted and the plan was to publish in September. Applications for the next NATs R&D competition would be assessed in August. The NC3Rs has committed £100k.
- Special Interest Group (SIG): The online platform led by the NC3Rs and funded by Innovate UK was launched in February to connect research and business communities to help develop the NATs programme. 150 members have registered so far.

**Action:** AH to email Board members inviting them to join the SIG online forum.

## 8. AOB

There were no items of other business.