

Minutes of the 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 11:00, held online

**PRESENT**

Kevin Jones (Chair)	David De Roure
Andy Gordon	Amir Hussain
Chris Johnson	Jie Xu

**BY INVITATION**

Nadia Berthouze (Membership Panel Chair)	Edmund Robinson (CPHC)	Glenn Goodall (EPSRC)
Alastair Irons (BCS Academy)		

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Maxine Leslie (BCS)	Ruth Lehane (BCS)
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**APOLOGIES**

Julia Adamson (BCS)	Michelle Busson (IET)	Michael Fisher
Jane Hillston	David Hutchison	Ahmed Kotb (IET)
Rachel Lamb (EPSRC)	Bill Mitchell (BCS alternate)	

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting particularly the new Executive Committee Observer, Glenn Goodall (EPSRC/UKRI rep). Apologies for absence were received as above.

G Goodall introduced himself to the committee, followed introductions from all those in attendance.

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – Tuesday 26 October 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26 October 2021 were APPROVED and are now ready for transfer to the UKCRC website. *[Post meeting note: action complete]*

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Royal Society Sectional committee nominations: K Jones explained that Andrew Blake had taken over from Stephen Furber as Chair. Nominations need to be sent in to Andrew Blake from the Working Group by early June. K Jones as Chair of the WG asked for Exec member volunteers to reach out to a small group to suggest names. The workload would not be heavy, a few meetings over the course of the next few months and it would help greatly if more diverse groups could be represented. A Hussain volunteered and it was agreed that further discussion will take place offline.

**ACTION: K Jones**

It was confirmed that A Hussain had volunteered to be UKCRC observer at CPHC meetings and that the vacant Committee roles have now been filled (see also item 10 below).

#### **4. CHAIR'S REPORT [K Jones – verbal]**

K Jones explained that following a conversation with D Hutchison on 7 March 2022, a discussion was needed regarding what UKCRC does. K Jones had spoken with several people who think UKCRC is a good thing but they're not sure what it does. The vision statement was written in 2004 and needs revising. UKCRC engages with Government bodies and advisors within those bodies, but those bodies already have advisory panels. There is a need to be clear about the breadth and depth of UKCRC and how it can be projected to the end users, not just the Government bodies but also industry, with more industry representation on UKCRC and more clarity about what services UKCRC can offer. UKCRC plays an important part in consultations which is very dependent on C Johnson.

A skills list will be going to out all members inviting submission of a skills profile, but a communication needs to accompany it to explain why it's being done and what it's for. Members currently do not feel connected with the Exec and don't feel there's an open communication channel. Members need to feel it means something to be a member.

A Gordon agreed and quoted the mission statement. There is a body of workers from industry and academia and it's about how they are treated, what do they think UKCRC should be doing on their behalf and what could UKCRC be doing for the body of research workers?

A Irons stated that this would be mirroring what is happening within the Academy Board (ACB). The ACB is currently looking at how the ACB, UKCRC and CPHC work together, the role BCS plays and how they are looking at bringing voices as a community to government, industry and to business so that we're talking as one rather than a diverse set of individuals. It is timely and part of something bigger.

A Gordon questioned why there is UKCRC, CPHC and BCS -& IET – and how they all differ. C Johnson explained that he had been working with Bill Mitchell for a unified voice on consultations, but it has highlighted the different perspectives emerging from the diverse groups.

D De Roure supported the previous comments made and confirmed that he works on the website and communications. D De Roure talks about UKCRC frequently and would be interested in looking at the mission statement.

E Robinson echoed comments agreeing that there were many different bodies which may be a historical accident, but it does mean there are many different interest groups. UKCRC tended to represent the Russell Group's research interests. The CPHC has stronger links with non-Russell Group institutions and strong industry engagement. Plus, the CPHC has an income stream, but UKCRC doesn't. There may be a better way to organise all the groups and 'fly in formation' with our colleagues as the groups are broadly engaged in similar things.

A Irons agreed and explained that 15 years ago the Academy Board was set up as an umbrella group but this has drifted and needs revitalising to get the right structure in place to ensure that everyone is heard. The Academy Board is 18 months through a major review of accreditation, but it is complex partly because of Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes v4 (AHEP4). A Irons would be happy to update further at a future meeting if

needed. The BCS is also trying to re-build a relationship with IFIP, a joint workshop with Technical Committee 3 happened just last week. It is important to ensure that members are kept informed of such activities.

K Jones summarised by confirming that an email will be sent to the membership explaining that the Exec are looking at the vision statement and inviting members to be involved. This will go out in conjunction with the skills list. UKCRC could unify better with other organisations and better align with funding agencies and government bodies.

**ACTION: K Jones / Secretariat**

A Irons suggested a monthly catch up with K Jones and the new CPHC Chair to discuss how the groups can be mutually supportive ahead of the CPHC conference.

**ACTION: Secretariat**

K Jones stated that none of organisations should see themselves as redundant. Each has a different role to play.

## **5. CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS [C Johnson]**

**UKCRC/2022/02**

C Johnson stated that UKCRC is not an independent external organisation but made up of BCS, IET, CPHC.

As noted above, C Johnson reported that that he had been working productively with B Mitchell on consultations for the last few months. The Cyber Council consultations are just about industry and not research or Higher Education. C Johnson and B Mitchell are working to put together a response to be included as an appendix to reflect the views of Computer Science research in higher education. There is a concern that those who write the consultations don't understand what UKCRC does. Many learned bodies are considering how they interact with government, and how they may bring academics and career civil servants closer. It would be useful to have visibility of papers before they go to consultation – it seems that the government currently consult with academics at a later stage. A number of members could be put forward for pre-consultative work and could sense check the consultations that go forward to being written in legislation.

C Johnson reported that since the AGM, he and B Mitchell had been working on two consultations (details in [report](#)); DCMS: Embedding standards and pathways across the cyber profession by 2025 and DCMS: Proposal for legislation to improve the UK's cyber resilience. There is a further consultation being worked on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-a-national-cyber-physical-infrastructure-to-catalyse-innovation>

Enabling a national Cyber-Physical Infrastructure to catalyse innovation

We're seeking views on the opportunities for connected digital twins and other advanced cyber-physical systems to enable a national capability in CPI.

C Johnson encouraged the committee to read and respond to the consultations. Comments will be compiled and forwarded in the usual way.

K Jones noted that it was frustrating that the channels aren't in place to ensure that the right people are involved in the consultations stating that many bodies call on people they happen to know.

K Jones thank C Johnson for his continued work on consultations.

## **6. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY**

### **6.1 EPSRC Update [G Goodall]**

**UKCRC/2022/03**

G Goodall highlighted some parts of the paper submitted prior to the meeting. There have been some ICT Team changes. The Trusted Research and Innovation programme has moved on and the UKRI has put together Q&As to provide further information. G Goodall reported on the development of the first EDNI strategy and encouraged the committee to comment on the open consultation which has a closing date of midday on 28 March.

G Goodall also outlined delivery plans for digital futures, next generation computing, sustainable ICT and future communication systems. For the next generating computing, they will be asking for volunteers as fresh pairs of eyes.

## **7. REPORTS**

### **7.1 Membership panel [N Berthouze]**

N Berthouze had nothing new to report, but new applications will be coming soon.

### **7.2 International Matters inc Informatics Europe [J Xu]**

J Xu reported that he has been involved in some events for IE but there is no funding to support travel so has used research grants as funding. It's easier when the meetings are online, but funds are needed to attend annual meetings in person. However, J Xu continues to play an active role and the two letters to support open access activities, discussed at the last meeting, have been signed and submitted.

J Xu is also doing some work on EDI with the UKRI / EPSRC. A new group was established in February by Jessica Philips and J Xu and E Robinson have been invited to join the group and will report back on progress. J Xu stated that EDI should be an important element when working on the new vision of UKCRC.

### **7.3 CPHC [E Robinson]**

E Robinson stated that CPHC has a budget and J Xu may use these funds to attend meetings if representing both organisations. E Robinson also confirmed that he had been invited to join the EDI panel for UKRI / EPSRC.

The CPHC will be running a programme giving small grants for staff to put teaching developments during the pandemic into the public arena. This will be reported on further at the conference in April.

There will be changes to the committee. There will be a new Chair of the CPHC and E Robinson will continue for a further two years as immediate past Chair.

E Robinson also reported that he had attended an Engineers Professors Council meeting where they had spoken about various mentoring schemes. There are many mentoring schemes in the pipeline, and it would be good to co-ordinate so as not to tread on toes or confuse people.

#### **7.4 BCS Academy [A Irons]**

A Irons reported that there was currently a review of accreditation taking place – it needs to be robust but simpler which is challenging.

Support for new Computer Science academics has been piloted over the last 12 months and is now being expanded. There is a community of practice with a Special Interest Group which will get web space through BCS.

There is some interesting work happening in the devolved nations committees that report to Academy Board. The Scottish computing group (SCEC) has college and higher education representation and is responding to Scottish government policy. The Northern Ireland group (NICEC) is just starting and has had two meetings which A Irons has attended. T Crick is leading on setting up a similar group in Wales.

A Irons will be speaking at the SCAC meeting on the following Monday about whether A level Computer Science should be a pre-requisite to CS degrees, Highers, BTEC National Diplomas. Looking at UCAS, it seems that no one asks but students may get 'preferential treatment' if they have CS A-level.

#### **7.5 IET [M Busson / A Kotb]**

Neither M Busson or A Kotb were present at the meeting.

### **8. National Science and Technology Council's work on bringing strategy strands together across govt depts. [G Goodall]**

G Goodall added the following link to the chat shared the following [slides](#).

[UK's quest to be a global science superpower - Civil Service \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

G Goodall reported that a new National Science and Technology Council was set up in June and will be chaired by the Prime Minister. Sir Patrick Vallance will head up the new Office for Science and Technology strategy. The aim is to bring together a Science and Technology strategy across Whitehall and place it at the centre of policy and public services.

There will initially be four main areas of focus; to create an environmentally sustainable and resilient UK, to lead the world in health and life sciences, to strengthen security and defence at home and overseas and to create a digitally and data driven economy.

E Robinson stated that the community would like to be part of all of it as all of the areas of focus involve computer science which is everywhere.

G Goodall confirmed that there is no finance, it is all pure strategy, and it will be the role of the host department in Government to make these things happen.

### **9. MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE RESEARCHERS IN THE UK – [A Gordon]**

A Gordon will be attending a meeting organised by Sally Fincher on 9 March 2022 to discuss mentoring programmes. A Irons and Alan Hayes who are involved in the BCS mentoring scheme will also be present. An overview document, aimed at Heads of Departments will be produced to advise them of the different schemes available to staff or PhD students. A Gordon had also spoken directly with A Irons and Alan Hayes about their scheme. A Gordon is proposing to approach UKCRC members to become volunteer mentors. They could help with: CV writing, salary or career break negotiations, grant proposals, job applications, how to deal with graduates, building expertise in pedagogy, writing journals and so on. It could also help mentors become better professionals. Mentors would need to be matched up with Mentees. A Gordon proposes to send an email to membership summarising the above to request involvement. The email would be written after the meeting with S Fincher and approved by K Jones before sending.

K Jones asked if there were any objections and offered strong support adding it fits well with skills database mentioned earlier in the meeting.

A Irons expressed that he was really pleased to be having these conversations with A Gordon as there are members with a strong research background and those wanting to pursue a career in research. Buddying up with others at the same point in their careers could also be considered which is a much less onerous mentoring activity. There is also reverse mentoring where those reaching the end of their careers can learn from those just starting out.

K Jones confirmed support of A Gordon's proposal across the board.

**ACTION: A Gordon**

## **10. COMMITTEE ROLES**

No changes to the Committee roles. Secretariat to distribute list of committee roles.

**ACTION: Secretariat**

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of AOB. K Jones thanked members for their time and input.

### **COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2022 (11:00-13:00)**

**Tuesday 7 June** – Online

**\*Tuesday 25 October** – BCS Offices, London

### **AGM**

**Friday 2 December (14:00-15:00)** – Online

\*to be co-located with CPHC Committee meeting if possible

*NB:* F2F/online format TBC; BCS and IET rooms subject to availability on these dates

**National Science and Technology Council's work on bringing strategy strands together across govt depts. [G Goodall]**

# National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)

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## What is NSTC?

### NSTC

- Set direction on an overarching science and technology strategy to boost UK economic prosperity, societal wellbeing and national security;
- Review delivery of this science and technology strategy across departments; and
- Consider insight and intelligence that might impact cross-HMG goals and long-term strategy.

<https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/08/uks-quest-to-be-a-global-science-superpower/>

### OSTS

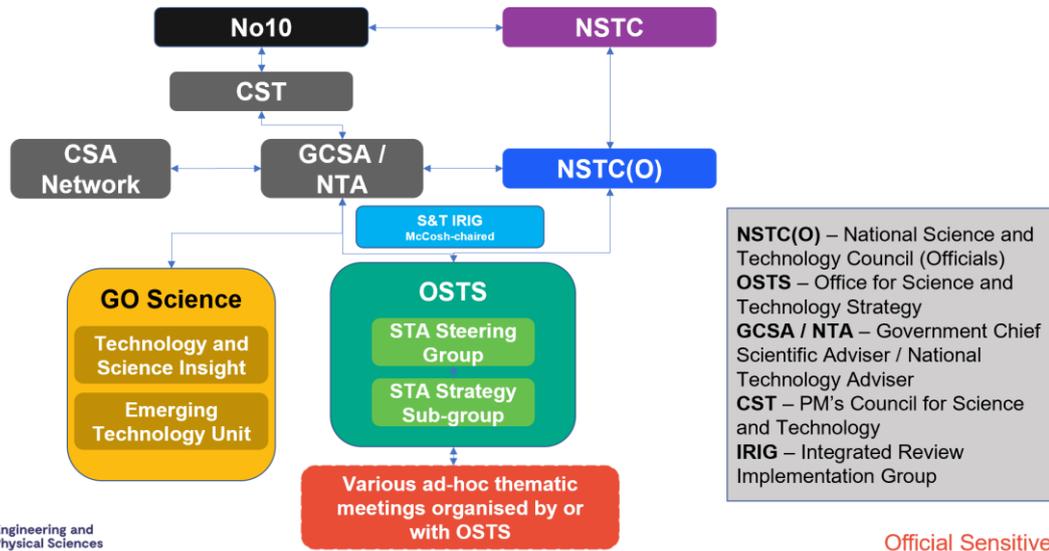
- Based in the Cabinet Office
- Led by the Sir Patrick Vallance (GCSA)
- OSTs inform and deliver the vision of the NSTC
- It helps government to align UK capabilities behind science and technology advantage.

### NSTC(O)

- NSTC(O) sits one month before the meeting of the NSTC
- Senior official meeting of NSTC to shape papers and conversation at NSTC

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# NSTC in the wider landscape



## NSTC Goals / OSTs Priorities

At its first meeting the NSTC agreed to focus UK science and technology capabilities on four key areas:

1. Sustainable environment
2. Health and life sciences
3. National security and defence, including space
4. A digitally and data driven economy